

Guidelines for Undertaking a Dissertation in Bachelor (Honours), Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree Programs

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Document URL	http://policies.griffith.edu.au/pdf/Guidelines for Undertaking a Dissertation.pdf
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Description	<p>The University requires students to undertake a dissertation component or equivalent outcome in the visual and performing arts in all Bachelor (Honours) programs, which are offered in the form of an additional full-time year of study following the completion of a Bachelor degree program. In addition a dissertation component is a requirement of some Graduate Diplomas and in Masters (Extended and Coursework) programs.</p> <p>These guidelines set out the University's expectations of students undertaking research at Bachelor (Honours), Graduate Diploma and Masters (Extended and Coursework) levels and identifies the role of supervisors in supporting students undertaking such research. These guidelines may be adapted by each Group of the University to meet the expected outcomes of a research project within its defined disciplines.</p>

Related documents

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[Postgraduate Qualifications \(AQF Level 8 & 9\) Policy](#)

[Student Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

[Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity Among Students](#)

[The Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

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1. THE DISSERTATION

These Guidelines apply in Honours programs involving an additional year of study following the completion of a Bachelor program, Graduate Diploma programs in research studies and in Masters (Extended and Coursework) programs, where students are required to undertake a research-based project, which is normally a minimum of 30CP of supervised independent research leading to a dissertation or equivalent outcome in the visual and performing arts.

The dissertation or its equivalent undertaken within the Honours, Graduate Diploma or Masters (Extended and Coursework) program is normally the first piece of extended research and writing undertaken by students during their university studies. It is the established means of demonstrating a capacity for future independent research at Masters (research) and doctoral levels. As such, the

dissertation or its equivalent in the visual and performing arts, is an important part of training towards higher degree research studies, because it allows students to begin to locate themselves in their particular research culture or tradition.

Undertaking supervised research leading to a dissertation can be divided into five steps:

- i. Finding a supervisor and agreeing on a topic;
- ii. Submitting a proposal and getting approval to proceed;
- iii. Carrying out the practical work of the research;
- iv. Analysing the results; and
- v. Writing up the research as a dissertation for submission, or producing the final body of work/performance.

2. CHOOSING A DISSERTATION TOPIC

In choosing a dissertation or practical topic, the following questions should be considered:

- Is there a recognised need for research in the area?
- Is the research achievable within the allocated time?
- Does the topic match the student's capabilities and interests?
- Is the research area open to further professional development?
- Are research facilities and/or data available to the student to undertake all necessary research in the topic area?

3. SELECTING A SUPERVISOR

In selecting a supervisor, the following questions should be considered:

- Is this person well acquainted with the topic of the research?
- Does the person have an active interest in the proposed area of research?
- Is this person's working style compatible with completion of an independent piece of research in a short timeframe?
- Is this person's theoretical framework compatible with the focus of the research?
- Is the person available for the entire supervisory period?
- Is the person appropriately qualified in the relevant discipline for the purpose of supervising the dissertation?

4. DISSERTATION OR PROJECT PROPOSAL

If an application for admission is approved, a student will be required to produce a written proposal of the research to be carried out. This process is undertaken in consultation with the proposed supervisor. The proposal should indicate:

- the field of research;
- the research question(s) to be addressed;
- the anticipated outcome(s);
- the research method(s); and
- an indicative bibliography.

The purpose of the proposal is to protect the student from investing effort in an impractical research project. Since it takes several weeks to approve a proposal, it is absolutely critical that students begin to develop the proposal by the end of week 3.

The proposed supervisor's comments on the proposal will be submitted to the relevant Program Director and the candidature confirmed or the student asked to resubmit the proposal.

5. CHANGING A DISSERTATION OR PROJECT TOPIC

A student who wishes to make significant changes to the proposed topic should first discuss them with the supervisor and then apply in writing to the relevant Program Director for permission. The relevant Program Director will advise the student in writing that the request for the proposed change to the dissertation topic has been approved or not.

6. SUPERVISION

A supervisory relationship is a qualitatively different form of teaching and learning. At the Honours, Graduate Diploma and Masters degree (Extended and Coursework) level it is assumed that:

- the student will generate much of the direction for the dissertation;
- the student will be able to work independently for most of the time.

The relationship between the student and supervisor by its very nature is relatively unstructured. It is meant to meet the diverse needs of students and to be able to deal with the range of individual issues which arise at any time during the production of the research work.

The Honours dissertation is normally undertaken at the University. Honours students will have one supervisor, however an additional supervisor may be appointed where appropriate. For research-based projects within the Graduate Diploma, and Masters degree (Extended and Coursework) where the research component is equal to or greater than 30CP, the supervision context is individually based.

The supervisor of Honours dissertations and research-based projects within the Graduate Diploma and Masters degree (Extended and Coursework) is to be appropriately qualified in the relevant discipline at least one qualification higher for the purpose of supervising the dissertation, normally involved in research, and a member of the Group and/or School that hosts the degree program in which the student is enrolled.

The relationship between the student and supervisor can be enhanced by:

6.1 Supervisor's Responsibilities

- recognising that the supervisor has a responsibility to ensure the research training is conducted in an effective manner;
- establishing regular meeting times, identifying a timetable for completion of the various elements of the research proposal, and specifying when written work is to be completed so that progress can be monitored;
- establishing a clear relationship between all parties if there are two supervisors;
- providing adequate feedback, both in terms of the timing and comments;
- providing guidance as to the delineation of a clear topic, methods to use for the research, the relevant body of literature to consult and the timing of the research and writing aspects of the project; and
- keeping notes of advice given at meetings.

6.2 Student's Responsibilities

- submitting draft work in a readable form, and indicating briefly where the piece of work fits into the plan of the dissertation as a whole;
- attending meetings with a set of clear questions to be answered; and

- keeping notes of advice given at meetings.

In the majority of cases, it is expected that students and their supervisor(s) will be able to establish and maintain a close consultative relationship. It is recognised, however, that there may be occasions when differences of a personal or professional nature may militate against the development of a productive working relationship. Should problems of this nature arise, students should immediately bring this to the attention of the relevant Program Director and ask him/her to consider appointing an alternative supervisor.

7. WRITING THE DISSERTATION

A dissertation should be a coherent exposition of a research study and follow an ordered sequence in which the research objectives, relationship to other scholarly work, methodology and strategies employed, and the results obtained are identified, analysed and evaluated. The main text should include a discussion of the conclusions or results. The dissertation may take any of a number of forms, depending on the field, e.g., a report, an argument, or a critique. The dissertation or body of studio work or performance will be assessed by experts in the field who will have an expectation that the dissertation meet the commonly accepted standards for a piece of academic research in their field. It is expected that any written component will be in English.

The following strategies may be employed in the work leading to the submission of a dissertation or its equivalent:

- definition or location of a problem, topic or theme;
- identification of a theoretical framework and/or methodology;
- literature review, to establish the relationship of the problem, topic or theme to the scholarly context;
- accumulation of relevant data or creative work;
- analysis of information or material obtained;
- arrival at conclusions in light of material analysed; and
- writing of the dissertation or production of studio/performance work.

Students may benefit from giving early consideration, in consultation with their supervisor, to matters such as the development and presentation of their material. The task of writing the dissertation or producing the practical work is part of the research process and is often best undertaken progressively.

8. LENGTH OF THE DISSERTATION

A dissertation or its equivalent is intended, among other things, to demonstrate the student's capacity to report on the research in a clear and succinct manner. It is recognised that the extent of a dissertation or project may vary according to the topic and the discipline. Students are advised to consult their supervisor regarding appropriate word limits or expectations concerning the amount of work to be produced in their disciplines.

9. SUBMISSION DATE

The due date for submission of the dissertation is:

- Friday of the first week of June for students submitting in Trimester 1.¹
- Friday of the last week of October for students submitting in Trimester 2.

¹ Submission date for Graduate Diploma and Masters students completing their dissertation in Trimester 3

The Program Director may approve an extension of time to submit the dissertation no greater than 20 working days on the grounds of illness, accident, disability, bereavement or other compassionate circumstances. In granting the extension, the Program Director is to ensure the length of the extension is commensurate with the time the student was unable to work on their dissertation and the extension does not unduly advantage the student over those who submitted in accordance with the University's deadline.

Candidates may apply for special consideration in respect of their performance across the dissertation course/s in accordance with Section 9.1 of the *Assessment Policy* where there are exceptional circumstances. An application for special consideration should be provided with the dissertation to the examiners. Examiners are to advise whether the percentage marks for the dissertation are awarded with due consideration of the candidate's circumstances.

10. DISSERTATION PREPARATION AND FORMAT

Responsibility for the format of the dissertation or project rests with the student after consultation with the supervisor. A high standard of presentation is required. Students are encouraged to use a leading word-processing or desktop publishing computer package to ensure that presentation of text and any illustrative matter is both clear and attractive to the reader. A major consideration in the presentation of the work is the ease with which an examiner can undertake the task of examination.

It is recommended that a written dissertation be prepared as follows:

- The font size should be at least 10 point;
- The lines of the text should be in 1.5 or double line spacing;
- Each page should have a left-hand margin of at least 3cm;
- Top, bottom and right-hand margins should be at least 2cm;
- The pages should be numbered sequentially; and
- Depending on the referencing system used, references/footnotes should be consistent and appear either in the body of the text, at the bottom of each page, at the end of each chapter or at the end of the dissertation.

The supervisor within a defined discipline will determine the format and preparation required for a visual or performing arts product.

The front page of the written dissertation should contain the following information:

- the full title of the dissertation;
- the full name and academic qualification of the student;
- the name of the Group in which the program was undertaken, and the name of the University;
- the name of the degree for which the dissertation is submitted including the words: "Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of"; and
- the date (month and year) of submission of the dissertation.

The contents of the written dissertation normally should take the following order:

- a short synopsis of approximately 700 words;
- a signed statement of originality including the words: "This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation itself."
- a table of contents, a list of all diagrams and illustrations and a list of supplementary material if any;
- a statement acknowledging the extent and nature of any assistance received in the pursuit of the research and preparation of the dissertation;
- the main text;

- appendices (including a confidential appendix where appropriate);
- the bibliography/references; and
- other material separate from the dissertation and submitted as part, or in support, of the dissertation such as computer code, films, DVDs, models, music scores, recordings, etc.

Small diagrams and tables should be incorporated into the text.

11. USE OF COPYRIGHTABLE MATERIALS

There is no requirement for students to seek permission to use third party copyrightable materials (such as images, diagrams, maps or the author's published articles whose copyright belongs to the publishers) in their dissertation for assessment purposes or for use as an exemplar on Learning@Griffith.

Students of digital dissertations that will be published will be required to sign a statement certifying that they have obtained all required permissions.

12. REFERENCING AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Other researchers upon whose work or publications the dissertation has drawn must be acknowledged. Adequate documentation of sources is expected and relied upon by the dissertation examiners who may wish to consult sources quoted in a dissertation. Failure to adequately document sources could lead to a concern that a breach of academic integrity has occurred. Only recognised referencing styles should be employed. Students should consult with their supervisors on the most appropriate form of referencing for the field in which they are working.

All third party materials mentioned in the body of the dissertation must appear in the bibliography/references. The form in which a bibliography is presented may vary depending on the field of research. Supervisors can advise on what is appropriate for the field of research.

Each student is required to sign an academic integrity declaration on every assessment item they submit, including dissertations in Honours, Graduate Diploma and Masters (Extended and Coursework) programs. The University has a standard form of words for the declaration, and every school/department and program is required to use it.

The University supports the institutional use of 'text matching' software to deter students from academic misconduct by reducing the opportunities for misconduct. The software is available for use by students and supervisors as an educational tool in the production of the dissertation and to assist academic staff in the detection of breaches of academic integrity.

13. THE USE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

It is recognised that there will be instances when a dissertation will contain confidential information which cannot be made freely accessible. Wherever possible, confidential information should be used as supplementary material rather than as the principal basis for the dissertation. If practicable, confidential material should form a separate confidential appendix. Supervisors can advise on what is appropriate to include in a confidential appendix.

14. DIGITAL DISSERTATION SUBMISSION

Students are required to submit a digital copy of their dissertation including any accompanying supporting materials for examination. The dissertation will be submitted with a University Assessment Coversheet available electronically. Students are responsible for ensuring they complete all sections of the Cover Sheet and that they have agreed to the Academic Integrity Declaration.

In addition the Cover Sheet asks students to indicate whether they agree or do not agree to their work, without disclosure of the contributor's identity, to be used, and reproduced as an assessment exemplar for standard setting and moderation activities. Students have the right to deny this request.

Dissertations submitted without a Cover Sheet will not be marked by an examiner until a cover sheet is provided. Dissertations with the appropriate Cover Sheet are to be submitted electronically through Learning@Griffith using the Assessment tab and the *Turnitin* assignment link.

15. DIGITAL LODGEMENT OF DISSERTATION AND RELATED MATERIALS

When the student has completed any changes to the dissertation as recommended by the examiners and the Dean (Learning and Teaching) is satisfied that the student has completed all academic requirements for the specific postgraduate award in the case of Graduate Diploma and Masters degree (Extended and Coursework) or accepts the recommendation of the Honours Program Director for the Honours classification, the student is to lodge a digital copy of the dissertation and any supporting materials to the School that hosts the Honours, Graduate Diploma or Masters degree (Extended and Coursework) in which the student is enrolled.

The School is responsible for placing the digital document on the specified network drive for automatic ingest into the record keeping system.

Any dissertation or related materials which are not submitted in a digital form must be managed locally by Schools as records.

16. USING DISSERTATIONS AS EXEMPLARS

Providing students with exemplars of past dissertations is achieved by placing digital copies on Learning@Griffith where only staff and students at the University can view the dissertations. This can be managed locally by Schools with copies being loaded to the relevant course site. Written permission will be obtained from the student, via the University Assessment Cover Sheet, to have their dissertation used in this way. Whilst the dissertation is used as an exemplar, the permission should be stored so that it can be readily retrieved if ever required.

17. SEMINAR PRESENTATION

A requirement of a course of supervised research leading to the completion of a dissertation or project in some Honours, Graduate Diploma or Masters (Extended and Coursework) programs may be the presentation of the major findings of the research project in a seminar format. The seminar is used as a *vive voce* to check the student's conceptual understanding of the findings of the piece of supervised research that they have independently undertaken. It is usual for the examiners of the dissertation to also assess the seminar presentation as one of the elements contributing to the mark they assign to the dissertation.

18. CRITERIA BY WHICH EXAMINERS WILL BE ASKED TO EVALUATE THE DISSERTATION OR EQUIVALENT PROJECT

Important requirements that form the basis for examiners' assessments are:

- a contribution to knowledge through independent research;
 - evidence of the exercise of scholarly judgment;
 - clear presentation - including definition of research questions, organisation of argument, clarity in terms of writing style and illustrative materials;
 - execution of research;
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- selection of appropriate techniques and justification of methodology;
- ability to locate, use and synthesise published literature and source materials;
- ability to analyse data and to present logical conclusions; and
- ability to present in a seminar format the findings of the research.

Prior to the evaluation, examiners will be advised of the following basis for marking honours and masters dissertation:

7 - High Distinction - Student demonstrated an *exceptionally* high quality of performance or standard of learning achievement.

6 - Distinction - Student demonstrated a high quality of performance or standard of learning achievement.

5 - Credit - Student demonstrated a good quality of performance or standard of learning achievement.

4 - Pass - Student demonstrated a satisfactory quality of performance or standard of learning achievement.

3 - Fail - Student demonstrated an unsatisfactory quality of performance or standard of learning achievement. There was evidence of achievement of desired learning outcomes close to the passing standard but insufficient to pass.

2 - Fail - Student demonstrated an unsatisfactory quality of performance or standard of learning achievement. There was evidence of achievement of desired learning outcomes below the passing standard.

1 - Fail - Student demonstrated an unsatisfactory quality of performance or standard of learning achievement. There was evidence of achievement of desired learning outcomes significantly below the passing standard.

Minimum Dissertation Percentage	Grade for Minimum Dissertation Percentage
80%	7
70%	6
60%	5
50%	4

To ensure these grades are appropriately awarded, the course needs to be configured with the 'honours dissertation' grading basis.

19. ACCESS TO DISSERTATIONS AFTER EXAMINATION

Access to dissertations after examination will be possible in the following ways:

- through a request to Records Services (noting that dissertations will be retained for a period of 10 years and that dissertations older than 10 years may no longer be accessible)
- on Learning@Griffith where exemplars have been made available (students and staff only)
- through Schools (in instances where the non-digital dissertations are managed locally)

Schools should retain one copy of any failed dissertation for a minimum retention period of 5 years.

It is recommended that students retain their own personal digital copy of their dissertation and related materials.