

Guidelines for Supervisors and Supervisees

Choice of topic and allocation of supervisors

All MSc students in Economics attend a dissertation workshop which covers a range of issues including; developing a research topic and a research strategy; planning and undertaking a literature review; the dissertation supervisor's role; writing and structuring a dissertation; plagiarism; and research planning and time management.

Each staff member is allocated a fixed number of students, based on teaching allocation. Students are allocated to supervisors according to the MSc programme they are on, so that as far as possible they are supervised by appropriate specialists.

Each member of staff advertises topics they want to supervise. Ideally this comprises a one-paragraph outline of each topic. In the spirit of “research-led teaching”, these can be closely related to the staff member's research interests. Topics can be widely or narrowly defined, and it is admissible to supervise students in groups. Lecturers in the same subject area can collaborate in what topics they wish to offer on a block basis.

A list of advertised topics will be posted on the web by the end of February. Students then approach staff on a first-come first-served basis. Staff and students can negotiate about what the dissertation involves. Once a title has been agreed, and registered with the School Postgraduate Office, the slot is deemed filled and removed from the web.

As an alternative route, students will still be permitted to choose their own topic, but will need to write their own proposal and find their own supervisor (from amongst those not already “full”).

It is expected that this process will be finished before the end of April. Any student who fails to choose a topic by the beginning of the summer re-start, will simply be allocated to a supervisor who is not full.

Following allocation to a supervisor, each student is required to submit a dissertation outline based on a topic agreed. This should consist of the agreed dissertation title; 200-300 words outlining research objectives and methodology; and a draft Contents page with numbered chapter/section headings. In addition, each student should provide a list of key references, sources of any data required and an assessment of their availability. A research plan is also prepared at this point, which should identify: efforts required to obtain primary data and other material not available in Manchester; assistance/instruction required (e.g. in bibliographic search techniques or specialised computer software); and an allocation of time to be devoted to library searches and reading, data collection, analysis, writing, reading and commenting on drafts by supervisor, revision of initial drafts, preparation of final manuscript, binding and submission.

Contact with the supervisor

First meetings between supervisors and supervisees should take place soon after supervision arrangements have been agreed and must take place before 30 April, since this is the deadline for the return of Dissertation Title & Ethics Decision Tool forms to

the School Postgraduate Office. The dissertation outline and research plan may form the basis of discussion in this initial meeting, which will work towards a focus for the dissertation.

Students can expect no more than four one-hourly meetings with their supervisor, unless by prior arrangement. Any help given in excess of the four hours will incur penalties, at the discretion of the two examiners. Supervisors will not be available at all for consultation between 15 July and 1 September.

Supervisors are not expected to read drafts of the dissertation. Instead, students will submit a five page summary of what the dissertation will look like, and feedback will be given back, fairly immediately, on the basis of this document.

Supervisor's role and responsibilities

Students may expect their supervisors to give advice about the nature of the dissertation (title, viability, methodology, university regulations), literature and other sources (including SSCI, BIDS, Econlit and other electronic sources), required techniques (econometric analysis etc.), the planning of the dissertation (organisation into chapters, sections etc.), and the standard of work expected (without prejudging final mark). The role of supervisors is to guide students towards the production of their dissertation by discussing each part of the process. They will advise on relevant areas of literature, help a student to develop their thoughts on their topic, give guidance on the development of chapters and on the conventions of dissertation writing. They will **not** act as proof-reader of the student's work.

Student's responsibilities:

Whatever the circumstances, students may NOT expect their supervisors to provide detailed feedback on drafts of each chapter. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of students to arrange meetings with supervisors (taking account of any periods of holiday or work-related absence over summer) and attend them, discuss with supervisors the type of guidance and comments which they find most helpful, and maintain progress and meet deadlines. Students should also take the initiative in raising problems, ensure that submitted work is their own (i.e. avoid plagiarism) and, should serious difficulties arise, see their MSc Programme Director. *It is the responsibility of the student to take the initiative throughout the dissertation writing process: raising problems or difficulties, discussing issues arising from feedback, taking appropriate action, and maintaining the progress of work as agreed with the supervisor.*

Difficulties or problems:

The supervisor will ensure that a student is made aware when progress on the dissertation is below the standard expected and is given guidance as to how the problem should be rectified. If a student feels that the dissertation is not proceeding satisfactorily and is unable to resolve the difficulty with the supervisor, s/he should seek advice by writing to the MSc Programme Director. If the Programme Director is the supervisor, s/he should write to the Head of Economics.