



The University of Manchester

## School of Environment, Education & Development

### Planning & Environmental Management

#### **Taught Masters programmes in Planning and Environmental Management: Notes of guidance on dissertation preparation and submission**

This Handbook contains policies, advice and guidance for students submitting dissertations under the following programmes:

**MSc Environmental Impact Assessment & Management**

**MSc Global Urban Development & Planning**

**MSc Planning**

**MSc Real Estate Asset management**

**MSc Real Estate Development**

**MSc Urban Design and International Planning**

**MSc Urban Regeneration & Development**

Year 2018/2019

# Contents

<b>CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Scope of a dissertation .....	4
1.2 Dissertations in the different PEM Masters programmes.....	4
1.3 Submission arrangements.....	5
1.4 Submission arrangements for students with summer resits.....	5
1.5 Penalties for Late Submission .....	5
1.6 Assessment arrangement .....	6
1.7 Further Reading .....	6
<b>2. DISSERTATION PREPARATION.....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Choosing a dissertation topic .....	8
2.2 Submitting dissertation topic.....	9
2.3 Keeping on top of the dissertation process .....	9
2.4 Working with your Supervisor .....	10
2.5 Generic structure for dissertations .....	12
2.6 Structure for design dissertations .....	13
2.7 Ethical and risk assessments .....	13
2.8 Taught Student Ethical Guidelines .....	14
<b>3. SUBMISSION FORMAT.....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1 General information .....	16
3.2 Presentation.....	16
3.3 Style and Language .....	16
3.4 Word limit .....	17
3.5 Graphical material .....	17
3.6 Proof reading .....	18
3.7 Plagiarism.....	18

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3.8 Referencing .....	18
3.9 Appendices .....	19
3.10 Presentation conventions for text and formatting.....	19
<b>4. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1 - POSTGRADUATE DISSERTATION TIMETABLE .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2 – INDICATIVE STRUCTURE OF A DISSERTATION .....</b>	<b>31</b>
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	31
Chapter 2: Literature review .....	32
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	33
Chapters 4 and 5: Fieldwork/results and analysis/evaluation/discussion.....	36
Chapter 6: Conclusions .....	37
<b>APPENDIX 3 – PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4 – CONSENT FORM .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>APPENDIX 5 – FINAL DISSERTATION SUBMISSION CHECK LIST .....</b>	<b>40</b>

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# 1. Introduction

Students on all taught Masters programmes within the School of Environment, Education and Development are required to submit a dissertation, on a topic approved by the Programme Director. Students on the MSc Urban Design and International Planning degree also have the option of submitting a design dissertation, as an alternative to a conventional dissertation. Both dissertations and design dissertations should contain an element of original research. They contribute a third of a programme's assessment (60 credits of 180 for a Masters programme). Dissertations are normally submitted in late August or September at the end of the first year of study or (for part-time students) December after the end of the second year of study.

Students are free to consider a wide range of topics, subject to approval on the basis of supervisory expertise in Planning and Environmental Management, the feasibility of the topic within the timescale of the programme, and the extent to which the topic supplements and extends knowledge gained from following the particular programme of study.

These guidelines have been produced to help you with the process of preparing and completing a dissertation. The document sets out the initial objectives and requirements of the dissertation, advises on dissertation preparation, outlines formatting and submission arrangements and details the assessment criteria. You should use it as an aide-mémoire alongside your Programme Handbook and the advice of your supervisor.

## 1.1 Scope of a dissertation

The overall aim of postgraduate dissertations in the Department of Planning and Environmental Management are to:

- provide students with an opportunity to plan, manage and conduct a programme of research on a topic related to their programme of studies;
- further students' knowledge of a relevant body of both academic and policy/practice literature, and to develop powers of critical reasoning;
- allow students to seek new research findings which add to the existing body of knowledge on a particular subject area;
- develop fully students' knowledge of, and competence in, an appropriate range of research methods, including the development of a study hypothesis, an appreciation of the research methodology and analytical techniques to be utilised, the undertaking of a specific research study, the synthesis and evaluation of findings, and a clear statement of conclusions and recommendations;
- develop students' writing, presentation and referencing skills; and
- develop students' experience of developing and managing a specific programme of work through to final submission.

## 1.2 Dissertations in the different PEM Masters programmes

Dissertations for the MSc in Planning, MSc in Urban Regeneration and Development, MSc in Environmental Impact Assessment and Management, MSc Real Estate and

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MSc Global Urban Development and Planning should be 15,000 words in length. There is no provision for design dissertations for students on any of these degree programmes.

MSc Urban Design and International Planning: Students can submit either a 15,000 word **Dissertation** or, for students on the MSc Urban Design and International Planning, a **Design Dissertation** supported by a report of at least 10,000 words.

A dissertation or design dissertation requires a total input of 600 hours of student time, comprising 100 hours during the second semester (of year two, for part-time students), and 500 hours during the period June-September (or June to December for part-timers).

### 1.3 Submission arrangements

You must submit your final dissertation via Blackboard by **27 August 2019 (or by 2 December 2019 for second year part-time students)**. Details of dissertation submission procedures will be circulated at a later date, via Blackboard. Please see **Section 3** and **Appendix 1** for more details.

Please be warned well in advance that **we do not** grant extensions for dissertations. The submission of the dissertation marks the completion of your degree, and we need the time following the deadline in order to mark, second mark, review and process your grades in time for the Exam Board in the Autumn, and allow time for graduation in December.

Submissions are all made via Turnitin.

If the file is larger than the file size limit (40Mb) and cannot be submitted through Turnitin:

- **a final version of the dissertation** must be sent to the programme administrator, Emma Moores via ZendTo (<https://zendto.manchester.ac.uk/>) or a similar file-sharing service, by the deadline;
- **a text-only version of the dissertation** must be submitted via Turnitin for similarity check by the deadline.

### 1.4 Submission arrangements for students with summer resits

Students who have failed any postgraduate course units and who are completing summer resits for course work or examinations will, by default, have the deadline for dissertation submission deferred to January 2020. This enables the student to be sure they have successfully completed all of their other credits before focusing on their dissertation. Please note that this deadline is for students who are completing summer resits **only** and **all** other students will be required to meet the deadline as outlined in **Section 1.3** above.

### 1.5 Penalties for Late Submission

Please note that in accordance with Faculty policy, any student who submits their dissertation after the submission deadline will receive a penalty, unless they are subsequently able to prove Mitigating Circumstances.

The penalty for late submission at postgraduate level is a loss of 10 marks per day, for which the following principles will apply:

- A loss of 10 marks per day (sliding scale) for up to 5 days after which a mark of

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zero will be awarded;

- A 'day' is 24 hours, i.e. the clock starts ticking as soon as the submission deadline has passed; (Note that a penalty of 10 marks would apply, regardless of whether a piece of work is 1 minute or 23 hours late).
- A day includes weekends and weekdays
- The use of online submission via Turnitin allows us to see when a submission is made after the deadline;
- Where paper copies of assessment work are submitted, students will receive a receipt which indicates the date and time of submission;

Full regulations with regard to your assessment can be found in your Programme Handbook. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fully aware of these regulations. If you are unclear regarding any aspect of the regulations then seek advice from your Programme Administrator, Programme Director or the Student Support Team.

Where relevant, students should alert their supervisor to any extenuating circumstances well in advance of the submission deadline.

As with coursework assessment, the Mitigating Circumstances mechanism also applies to dissertations. Any student who considers that their dissertation may be delayed due to 'unforeseen' and 'unpreventable' circumstances should make their case using the online form [*link below*], with supporting evidence.

<https://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/student-intranet/postgraduate/postgraduate-taught/mitigating-circumstances/>

All work to be considered under mitigating circumstances should be submitted as soon as is practicable, but note that any work submitted after the end of September 2019 may be too late to be marked and considered in time for the December graduation in 2019.

Students who do not submit a dissertation will normally be awarded a Diploma qualification if they have met all the other requirements of their programme. Students who fail the dissertation may be granted the opportunity to resubmit, depending upon performance in other course units.

## **1.6 Assessment arrangement**

Once submitted, the dissertation will be assessed by a minimum of two internal examiners. A sample of dissertations is sent to the relevant external examiner for the programme, who validates standards. Final marks are confirmed by the Board of Examiners, which meets in mid-November (or mid-June for part-time students). A full explanation of the assessment criteria for the dissertation is set out in **Section 4**.

## **1.7 Further Reading**

There is an extensive range of reading material associated with dissertation preparation and research methods. Some of these will be highlighted as part of the postgraduate dissertation lectures course unit. Amongst the more useful texts are:

- Allan, G. and Skinner C. (eds.) (1991) *Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences*, The Falmer Press, London.

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- Berry, R. (1994) *The Research project: how to write it*, Routledge, London.
  - Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. and Tight, M. (1996) *How to Research*, OUP, Buckingham.
  - Bouma, G. and Ling, R. (2005) *The Research Process*, OUP, Oxford.
  - Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. G. (1994) *Analysing Qualitative Data*, Routledge, London.
  - Burns, R. B. (2000) *Introduction to Research Methods*, Sage, London.
  - Coombes, H. (2001) *Research Using IT*, Palgrave, New York.
  - Cresswell, J. W. (1994) *Research Design: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, Sage, London.
  - Denscombe, M. (2001) *The Good Research Guide*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
  - Flowerdew, R. and Martin, D. (1997) *Methods in Human Geography: a Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*, Longman, Harlow.
  - Kitchin, R. and Tate, N. (2000) *Conducting Research into Human Geography: Theory, Methodology and Practice*, Prentice, Hall Harlow.
  - May, T. (1997) *Social Research*, OUP, Buckingham.
  - McQueen, R. and Kaussen, C. (2002) *Research Methods for Social Science*, Pearson, Harlow.
  - Parsons, T and Knight, P. (1995) *How to do your Dissertation in Geography and Related Disciplines*, Chapman and Hall, London.
  - Pole, C. and Lampard, R. (2002) *Practical Social Investigation*, Prentice Hall, London.
  - Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research*, Blackwell, Oxford.

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## 2. Dissertation preparation

This section offers some pointers on drafting postgraduate dissertations. It contains important information relating to the initial process of preparation and (in **Section 2.6**) the structure of the final dissertation.

While many of the points listed below apply to virtually all pieces of research, a few will be of little relevance to your particular chosen area of study. This emphasises the importance of consulting your supervisor as a means of gleaning advice related specifically to your dissertation. Nonetheless, many of the suggestions listed offer a general insight into the rules and conventions of research. **It is essential, therefore, that you read (and re-read) these carefully.**

The timetable for dissertation topic selection, supervisory meetings and submission is provided in **Appendix 1**.

### 2.1 Choosing a dissertation topic

It is important that you begin the process of choosing a topic as soon as possible. There are, of course, no hard-and-fast rules on how to choose a dissertation topic. However, a sensible approach is to identify a broad area of study – for example, related to one of your lecture courses – but then to narrow this down to a set of more focused research questions or hypotheses. It is important that you avoid vague and over-generalised topics. Proposals for studies like ‘something on sustainability’ or ‘something on East Manchester’ are insufficiently well-focused. Try to avoid something as vague as ‘issues in housing land release’, and instead choose something tighter and more focused, like ‘The impact of the National Planning Policy Framework on provisions for housing land supply in areas of high demand: a Cheshire case study’.

Secondly, you must select a topic which interests you and will retain your enthusiasm for many months, but also one which is practicable within the available time. This seems an obvious point to make, but one which nevertheless is often overlooked as students select topics which they think will appeal to potential supervisors, but which are of little personal interest. Such an approach is rarely successful since any topic must be of sufficient interest to retain your attention for several months. However, you should avoid an *overly* populist topic: it is advisable to avoid selecting a topic which you think might appeal to a particular supervisor, or a topic based around some current (but often ill-defined) buzz-word (e.g. ‘partnership’, ‘sustainability’, ‘London Olympics’ etc) unless you can grasp precisely what such a term means, and construct a suitably well-defined and focused research topic around it.

For initial ideas, it is often useful to look through recent planning, geography, housing or environmental studies journals to gain an idea of broad fields of contemporary research interest. In addition, practitioner websites such as *Planning Resource* (<http://www.planningresource.co.uk/>) or magazines like *The Planner* contain stories on areas of current professional interest, some of which may offer potential for more detailed investigation. Likewise, newspaper stories might stimulate initial ideas, though journalistic writing will need to be translated into suitably robust academic questions and hypotheses. Recently completed dissertations are held in the Kantorowich library and can offer some initial pointers about possible research topics. Bear in mind, however, that the quality of earlier dissertations varies.



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## 2.2 Submitting dissertation topic

You are required to indicate your proposed dissertation topic, by completing the online **Planning and Environmental Management Dissertation Planning Form**, (by the date shown in **Appendix 1**). Further details, including the link to the online form will be circulated via email. You should note that:

- It is possible for you to amend dissertation topics/titles after the initial discussions with the allocated supervisor, but you must confirm a final, formal title (see **Appendix 1** and see **Section 2.3** below).
- You need not, at the initial stage, agonise unduly about the precise title for the dissertation; the topic is of greater importance. Again, the final title, when it has been agreed, needs to be concise.
- You will not be permitted to conduct primary research without full ethics and risk assessments completed and authorised by the supervisor
- Research planned to be conducted in countries or areas deemed to carry too great a degree of risk (after you have completed the risk assessment with your supervisor), and which are thus not covered by University of Manchester insurance need to be fully assessed; these can be deemed non-conform with SEED policy and alternative plans must be developed;
- You will not be permitted to do primary research with minors, the sick, vulnerable or incarcerated or with any other human groups where ethical consent is problematic, because it is not possible to provide formal Ethical Consent for these groups within the timeframe of an MSc.
- Even where primary research is not being conducted with the aforementioned groups, some procedures of research will also not be permitted for ethical reasons. This would include, although this is not exhaustive, investigative procedures involving subterfuge; undisclosed participant observation; interviewing in non-public spaces.

## 2.3 Keeping on top of the dissertation process

### Planning ahead

When you are planning your schedule, please do remember that your own time and application is only one of the determining factors. You need to take into account your supervisor's time as well as your own when estimating overall time needed; students may find email attachments an efficient way of sending information to their supervisors. Data collection always takes longer than you expect, as does, for example, the writing of a literature review, and even the completion of your reference list, so be on the safe side and double your first estimate. Part-time students need to be sure that they have sufficient time away from work for supervisor meetings or to undertake data collection and analysis. If this is a problem for you, the University can write to your employer to remind them of the time commitments required to complete a dissertation.

### Organising and backing up your work

Organising your work is of key importance. You should build up separate reference files of material as the study develops including notes of all documents read, and photocopies of particularly useful papers or diagrams, and notes of all meetings and discussions. Ensure that all references are complete, using the standard variant of the

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Harvard System employed in Planning and Environmental Management (see Section 3.8). Allow time for the development of ideas and arguments through revision and redrafting and full discussions of each section of study. Preparing summaries of each section as part of the drafts can help you achieve this.

Remember to make back-up copies of any work held on hard or portable disks. This can be done using your university storage space or a free web-based 'cloud' service like Dropbox or Google Drive. If you have a PC or laptop, back-up copies using some of these alternatives. Note that any such 'disasters' of lost work will not justify late submission. Make sure you leave plenty of time to proof read work, format the layout, chase-up any remaining references and print the final copies; these invariably take much longer than you expect.

### The writing process

A golden rule is to write down as much as you can from as early on as you can – and your task will become easier. There are several good reasons for this advice. For some people, actually getting thoughts and methods down on paper presents one of the biggest stumbling blocks. If you feel this way, take comfort that this is a common feeling. However, this must be overcome early in the process. Quite often, it is difficult to spot the flaws in your reasoning until it is set out on paper, so you are well advised to write up bits and pieces in draft as early as possible. An early session with your supervisor should be followed by a period where you get down on paper and develop ideas that have been mentioned.

Another reason for writing early on is that your supervisor will want to see your reasoning is committed to paper; supervisions based on loose discussion can be a waste of time. Some supervisors claim that the most frequent advice they give students is to "go away and write down everything you have just said". One of the reasons why you might be reluctant to do this is lack of confidence. Many people who have not written such an extended piece of work before are diffident about committing their critical thoughts and methodology descriptions to paper. A more positive reason for getting down to it early is that you will be pleasantly surprised at how many words it takes to put down your ideas. The daunting task of 15,000 words does not seem nearly so unattainable when you realise how many thousands you have already written on literature review and a description of methodology.

## 2.4 Working with your Supervisor

### The student's role

The initiative for requesting supervisions lies entirely with you, the student. Agree methods of getting in contact with your own supervisor: email is usually the best way, and if you wish to see your supervisor, you should make an appointment. You must ensure that dissertation supervisors are kept fully informed on progress and difficulties, and are 'interviewed' with prepared questions at supervisory meetings. You should submit chapter drafts in advance of meetings in sufficient time to allow for comment and discussion before proceeding to the next stage. The onus is on you to make sure that you arrange meetings with your supervisor: you will not be 'chased' by supervisors.

Your supervisor will almost certainly be supervising a variety of other dissertations; therefore, you should not assume that (s)/he can immediately recall the last discussion you had together about yours. Supervisions will vary from being group based, to being conducted on an individual manner and always need to be pre-arranged. You should

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never expect on-the-spot supervisions. There will also be periods when your supervisor is not available, either because s/he is heavily committed with other duties such as examining, or on leave for work or holiday reasons. Do make sure that you and your supervisor are aware of each other's periods of absence.

Supervisors cannot judge how your work is going if you just hand over a sub-section that you have written up. You need to have a draft of your contents so that it is quite clear what follows on from what. You may also need to add a note to show if and how the section in question is incomplete. Your supervisor will not have the time to read your entire dissertation as you prepare it. It would be a good idea, therefore, to discuss this and establish which sections s/he wishes to see. Examiners, however, read all of it! Also, supervisors are not to be expected to proof read or to correct spelling/grammar. Students are advised to buy-in or otherwise arrange such services if needed. Even if your supervisor reads your entire dissertation and you make the suggested changes, this is no guarantee that it is of a pass standard; after all, the work is yours and its quality is dependent on your output.

To a large extent, then, the dissertation has to be a self-managed process. Your role is to organise the research programme as a whole, taking advice from your supervisor and taking the initiative in raising problems/difficulties. The supervisor's role is to give advice and help about the nature and standard of the work, and direct you to useful literature and appropriate methodology. But remember, the ultimate responsibility remains yours. Do NOT expect your supervisor to read drafts and re-drafts of every piece of your work, and above all, do NOT embarrass your supervisor in the latter stages by asking whether you will be successful. When submitted, the dissertation is referred to internal and, in some instances, external examiners who will make an independent judgment of your work in its entirety.

The role of the supervisor is to:

- give guidance concerning the nature of the research, providing constructive feedback on the standard of work expected and helping to plan the programme of research involved.
- establish at an early stage the supervisor's responsibilities in relation to the student's written work, including the nature of guidance and comments to be offered as work proceeds.
- be available, where possible, for meetings which should be agreed in advance.
- agree completion dates for successive stages of the work, requesting draft chapters as appropriate and returning written material with constructive criticism on the broad shape and structure of the work (but not on its detailed content).
- provide advice and guidance to help improve the quality of the work. At all times, however, it must be made clear to the student that dissertation preparation for a higher degree is undertaken within the general principle that the dissertation must be the student's own work.

#### Supervisory structure

After your research proposal has been reviewed, you will be allocated to a dissertation supervisor. Over the course of the remainder of the second semester and through the summer period prior to submission, supervision will comprise a programme of group and individual meetings.

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After you have been allocated to a supervisor, your first task is to ensure that you are aware when the first supervision session will be. Your supervisor will contact you about this, but please email them if you are in any doubt. Early supervision sessions are normally on a group basis and focus on assisting you in the framing of your research, and in particular the development of your specific research questions. Subsequent supervisory meetings will focus on the development of your literature review and methodology chapters.

Note that you will normally have a maximum of three or four individual supervision sessions prior to the submission of your dissertation. Therefore there is an onus on you to use this time effectively, and you need to come to each meeting prepared. Try at all costs to avoid rambling supervisions with vague discussions; both of you need to use time economically. Remember that every time you give your supervisor something to read, s/he will need a few days to read it. Supervisions should almost always be based on something written by you, so that the supervisor can give you feedback on your ideas and proposed methods. The initiative should be taken by you rather than your supervisor.

Drop-in dissertation assistance: July and August

During the summer period, extra supervisory meetings may be arranged after consulting your supervisor for availability. During these months you should be either collecting data or writing-up. If you wish to seek advice at a time when your supervisor is away during the summer months, you can also attend one of a series of drop-in sessions staffed by the PEM team. There will be one daily drop-in period per week, each staffed by a different member of staff on a rota basis. The timetabling of these will be arranged before the end of the semester and circulated to students prior to the break. Please email the relevant member of staff to arrange an appointment on their drop-in day.

## 2.5 Generic structure for dissertations

Your dissertation is likely, in the majority of cases, to be structured along the following lines, although you are free to decide on how to structure your work. Your supervisor will have a key role in guiding you on this process, considering the specific nature of your research topic. It is helpful to have brief introductory and concluding paragraphs for each chapter to introduce its content and draw findings together and link to the next chapter.

The dissertation is expected to have a basic structure that typically includes the following components:

- **an introduction** to the study, outlining: (a) **background** to the topic, in terms of key policy and/or research questions, issues and debates; (b) the **shape and scope** of the dissertation, outlining for the reader the broad purpose of the study, where you can choose to introduce the overall aim and the objectives of the research (more frequent in quantitative research); (c) an outline of the **structure** of the dissertation.
- a **literature review**, which provides an overview of a range of literature relevant to the topic chosen, including appropriate policy documents and technical reports as well as other academic work detailing research findings in your chosen field of study. The purpose is to identify gaps in the overall body of research and to outline the (modest) ways in which your research can fill those gaps and expand the larger body of knowledge. It is *not* simply a summary of everything written on

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a particular topic; rather, it is an attempt to locate your research within the broader array of knowledge on a particular subject. This, in turn, provides a detailed justification for, and explanation of, the research questions or hypotheses around which your work will be structured.

- the **methodology**, which details your research plan. You can introduce your overall aim and objectives here, instead of the introduction (more frequent in qualitative research). Here you introduce your methodological framework and justify its rationale. You detail how you have implemented the different methods in order to generate and collect data that are used to address the research questions.
- a **results** chapter, outlining the findings of research undertaken (e.g. review of policy and technical documents, interviews with key actors, questionnaire-based surveys, or analysis of data collected from secondary sources such as the Census). (In some cases it may be more appropriate to collapse this chapter with the subsequent one. Your supervisor will advise you on this).
- an **analysis and evaluation** chapter, exploring the significance of the results, relating them to the 'bigger picture' issues outlined in your literature review and highlighting the implications in light of the research questions or hypotheses. This chapter can be combined with the results chapter.
- a **concluding** chapter, where you demonstrate how you have met your overall aim and the research objectives, discussing the main findings presented in the previous chapters, and highlighting the implications of your work for policies, practices, theories or techniques, and setting out the ways in which your research has advanced or reinforced knowledge of your chosen subject area.
- a full **reference list**, covering *all* works cited in the main text.
- any other relevant reference materials, which may be presented in the **appendices**.

## 2.6 Structure for design dissertations

The basic structure of design dissertations will be presented in a dedicated session scheduled by the Programme Director of the MSc Urban Design and International Planning.

## 2.7 Ethical and risk assessments

It is best to consider risk and ethical review as soon as is practicable, which normally means as you are deciding or committing to a subject area or title. This would normally be done in the FIRST discussion with your supervisor. The University has a duty to protect your safety, and to respect other participants in the research process, and if it cannot cover you within its insurance policy, or is not happy that your procedures are respectful enough you will NOT be permitted to submit that work for your dissertation and you could be subject to disciplinary action.

Due to:

- Due to the scope of the PGT dissertation;
- Due to the time frame in which the student will develop your research;

- Due to the lack of resources (time and financial) associated with the student's research;

And considering the student's interest in submitting the dissertation in due time without compromising the normal graduation timeline:

**At PEM, we strongly recommend PGT students to develop low risk research proposals that are exempt of ethical approval by SEED's Research Ethics Committee (after using the Ethical Decision Tool).**

If you do proceed to undertake fieldwork with human subjects, you will be required to provide them with information about participation in your research (see **Appendix 2**) and to obtain their consent to participate (see **Appendix 3**).

All ethics applications once discussed with your supervisor. Prior to completing your application online all students should use the [ethics decision tool](#) to determine whether your research requires ethical review, if so this should be at **low risk level only**.

Instructions for submitting the ethics and risk assessment will be made available later in semester 2.

Further information on good research conduct, misconduct and policies and guidelines can be located on the Research governance, ethics and integrity webpages: [Research governance, ethics and integrity](#).

Risk will also be assessed using SEED policy for PGT research. Instructions on how to produce a risk assessment and forms will be made available on the Black Board page.

## 2.8 Taught Student Ethical Guidelines

For further information on who should use the school template for ethical applications, the type of research that can be approved at a low or medium risk level, responsibilities of and roles of the school ethics committee and the process to approve applications, please download the ethical guidelines document.

- [Ethical guidelines for SEED applications](#)

Whilst these guidelines are not exhaustive, they indicate a set of obligations to which researchers should normally adhere. Responsibility for both interpretation and compliance rests with the researcher.

Further sources of information

Source of information / act	URL
Economic and Research Council (ESRC)	<a href="http://www.esrc.ac.uk">www.esrc.ac.uk</a>
Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)	<a href="http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/">www.ahrc.ac.uk/</a>
British Sociological Association	<a href="http://www.britsoc.co.uk">www.britsoc.co.uk</a>
Association of Social Anthropologists	<a href="http://www.theasa.org/">www.theasa.org/</a>
Political Studies Association	<a href="http://www.psa.ac.uk/">www.psa.ac.uk/</a>
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check">www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check</a>
Central Office for Research Ethics Committee – COREC (NHS)	<a href="http://www.corec.org.uk">www.corec.org.uk</a>
The Human Rights Act (1988)	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42</a>

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	<a href="#">/contents</a>
Data Protection Act (1988)	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents</a> <a href="https://ico.org.uk/">https://ico.org.uk/</a>
UK Copyright Act (1988)	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/48/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/48/contents</a>
Race Relations Act (1976)	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/74/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/74/contents</a>
Race relations (Amendment) Act 2000	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/34/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/34/contents</a>
Disability Discrimination Act (1995)	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/contents</a>
Freedom of Information Act (2000)	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents</a> <a href="https://ico.org.uk/">https://ico.org.uk/</a>
Communications Act (2003)	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/contents</a>
University of Manchester	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Practice for Dealing with allegations of Misconduct in Research</li> <li>• Disability Discrimination Act Policy</li> <li>• Equality &amp; Diversity Policy</li> <li>• Freedom of Information Act Policy</li> <li>• Health &amp; Safety Policy</li> <li>• Harassment, Discrimination &amp; Bullying Policy</li> <li>• Intellectual Property Policy (guidance on) Plagiarism and other forms of academic malpractice</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/studentnet/policies/">www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/studentnet/policies/</a>
University's data protection policy	<a href="http://www.dataprotection.manchester.ac.uk/">http://www.dataprotection.manchester.ac.uk/</a>

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## 3. Submission Format

### 3.1 General information

All dissertations must be written in English; quotations, however, may be given in the language in which they were written. In exceptional circumstances variation of this regulation may be approved by the University for candidates to submit a dissertation predominantly in their language of research.

### 3.2 Presentation

Marks will be awarded for the degree of professionalism in the style and layout of the dissertation. The overall structure must be clearly presented (e.g. with an organised hierarchy of fonts and typefaces for chapter and section headings), with logical layout of chapters and paragraphs, and with text and graphics integrated in an overall 'house' style. For tips on professional style and layout, consult any of the main town planning, urban studies, environmental studies/science or geography journals in the Kantorowich Library and Main University Library.

### 3.3 Style and Language

The aim should be to use simple prose, but with variety in the construction of sentences and an expansive approach to the vocabulary employed. Sentences are best kept short (maximum of around three lines), but their length should be varied to avoid monotony. Paragraphs should be of reasonable length (normally 3-6 sentences in length) and help to build up the argument sensibly, allowing the reader time to digest one idea or theme before introducing another. Convention requires the use of an *impersonal* style in the narrative past tense, but other tenses may be necessary when, for instance, the writer states an existing or future condition. It is important to adopt a mode of writing which keeps the reader interested, and this can be achieved more easily if the active voice is used (e.g. 'examination of the site revealed...'). Try to adopt this mode of writing right from the start since altering a whole draft can be time consuming. It is also important to use language which is neutral when matters of race and gender are involved. Terminology is often used as verbal shorthand to convey complex ideas (e.g. 'multiplier effect', 'regime approach') and terms employed must be used accurately in the sense by which they are understood among those familiar with the subject.

The most frequently used abbreviations include: *i.e.* (that is), *e.g.* (for example), *etc.* (*et cetera*, other things of the same class), *viz.* (namely), *cf.* (compare with), *no.* (number), *ibid.* (the same place), *idem.* (the same), *sic* (*sic passim*, thus, typically used to denote an error in a quote), *et al* (and others) - be sparing in their use in the main text. Where title abbreviations are used it is common practice to use the full term followed in brackets by the abbreviation on the first occasion of use in the text, and thereafter use the abbreviation only: e.g. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The punctuation between the initial letters of well-known organisations should be omitted in the text, e.g. EU, RTPI. Do not abbreviate units of measurement unless they are preceded by an exact number e.g. 17ft; do not add an s to the plural of an abbreviation e.g. 40cm, 18lb. Where you use a local currency, always



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provide an international currency equivalent – typically US\$ but GB£ or euros are acceptable.

### 3.4 Word limit

The word count for dissertations is 15,000 words<sup>1</sup>. This is a **maximum** word count and should not be exceeded. Markers can take into account minor transgressions of up to 10% within the existing marking criteria, which means that you can lose marks for not being concise and exceeding the word limit.

The **word count includes**: all text, from the title of chapter one to the end of the last chapter, including the body of text, chapter and section titles, table and figure captions, chapter footnotes and endnotes, quotations, tables and figures.

The **word count does not include**: the dissertation title, table of contents pages, declaration of originality, lists of tables and figures, acknowledgements, abstract, the reference list and appendices.

You **must** include a word count on the bottom of your contents page. Failure to indicate the word count, or the provision of a false word count, may lead to disciplinary action.

What are the penalties for exceeding the word count?

- If you exceed the word count by between 10 and 50%, your final dissertation mark will be capped at 50%. You will still be able to pass the dissertation element, but your mark may be lower than you would have otherwise achieved
- Work exceeding the word count by more than 50% will be viewed as not having met the requirements of the assessment. The work will not be marked and a mark of zero will be recorded.

The implications of this are that if you exceed the word count by more than 50% you will be awarded a zero mark, with no opportunity for a resit and will complete the programme with the award of Postgraduate Diploma.

Scale models and computer visualisations are an optional extra. The combination of these different textual and graphical elements is considered equivalent to a conventional dissertation in length. However, the graphics and design components of the study should be treated as word equivalents, so the more of one the less of the other.

### 3.5 Graphical material

Maps, statistical tables, figures, diagrams, graphs and photographs often provide a useful means of summarising complex information. They can also add to the work in a presentational sense. However, you should take care to use these sparingly in a manner appropriate to the topic. For example, dissertations are too often sprinkled haphazardly with too many irrelevant photographs, which bear no relation to (and are not mentioned in) the text. Any graphical figures must be referred to in the main body of text and properly labelled. All illustrations must have a designation, number and title situated immediately above or below, usually with the prefix of Figure or Table in capital letters. Ensure that you can obtain or draw illustrations easily for the final draft. Making

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<sup>1</sup> 10,000 words for a Design Dissertation.

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use of the skills acquired elsewhere in the Masters programme (for example, in relation to Photoshop) should be especially useful. Illustrations may be lifted from other sources, if properly acknowledged.

Statistical tables or graphs should normally be no greater than a single A4 size page. All rows and columns should have unambiguous headings, and use ruled lines sparingly. Graphs should only have as many grid lines as are needed for comprehension of trends and relationships (normally 4/5 being the maximum), and with legends and descriptive notes normally standing clear of the grid lines.

Images, maps, figures and graphs must be inserted in their final location in the text. A responsible use of these elements is advisable. The use of words in graphical elements (such as infographic or maps) will be checked by the markers and the student may be requested to present a count of these words.

Tables, containing both numerical or text information, must not be inserted as images and will be included in the word count.

In design dissertations, graphic presentation is at the service of the design analysis and recommendations. Avoid elaborate graphic effects such as text templates, colour gradations, overprinted background images etc.

Note also that students should not use the University logo in any correspondence (e.g. letters or online questionnaires).

### 3.6 Proof reading

The final draft of your dissertation should be read, where possible, by another person in order to eliminate errors of syntax and grammar, and any typographical errors which are not picked up by standard word processor spell-checkers. Proof reading is time consuming, but extremely important. In particular, you should take care to avoid long, rambling sentences, pretentious and jargon-ridden prose, and bad grammar. Learn how to use the apostrophe in the correct manner. Avoid vague, vogueish jargon like 'sustainability', 'partnership' or 'stakeholder' unless you are sure of the precise meaning of these. ***Note that it is not your supervisor's role to proof-read final drafts.***

### 3.7 Plagiarism

The University's regulations covering plagiarism (copying work from others without reference to the source) is fully set out in your programme handbook. It is regarded as a serious malpractice, and may lead to severe penalties for the work submitted as well as being recorded on the student's record. The most common way in which plagiarism occurs is by the verbatim reproduction of another author's work without acknowledgement, or the 'lifting' of a concept from a specific source without attribution. Reports which contain long quotations or illustrations which are not the writer's own work cannot be published without the express consent of the copyright holder, although dissertations are not generally perceived to be 'publication'. Full and proper referencing of sources is a vital safeguard against plagiarism.

### 3.8 Referencing

References must be consistent throughout the dissertation. A complete reference list of all literature and other relevant documents must be given and properly referenced using the Harvard System, following the standard guidelines outlined in student handbooks.

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All work cited in the main text should appear, fully referenced, in the reference list; all documents should be cited in the main text. This, of course, applies to your final dissertation and, indeed, to all work completed throughout your postgraduate studies.

**It is compulsory that you adopt the University of Manchester referencing style available at <http://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/referencing-harvard>.**

### 3.9 Appendices

Appendices, if necessary and if relevant, can also be included in your dissertation. However, the use of appendices has to be justified and legitimate: they should not just be a repository of disparate information which does not fit anywhere else; nor should they be used to avoid exceeding the word limit. Instead, appendices might usefully contain material such as the list of interviewees canvassed, lists of documents collected, data sources consulted, tables of data, correspondence, questionnaires, or relevant extracts from circulars or statutory regulations. Interview transcripts should not be included in the appendix.

**Bear in mind that appendix material is intended for reference only, and consultation is at the discretion of the reader.** Critical information must therefore be included in the main text of the dissertation.

### 3.10 Presentation conventions for text and formatting

There are a number of conventions to which you must adhere when submitting your completed dissertation. These are listed below.

<i>Title</i>	The title must be short, unambiguous and accurate.
<i>Title page</i>	This should provide a statement as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Title of the dissertation</li><li>▪ the following text: 'A dissertation submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of xxx in the Faculty of Humanities'</li><li>▪ the year of submission (not including the month).</li><li>▪ the candidate's student ID number; and</li><li>▪ the name of the candidate's School ('School of Environment, Education and Development').</li></ul>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	A list of contents, giving all relevant sub-divisions of the dissertation and a page number for each item (in Arabic numerals throughout). The final word count, including footnotes and endnotes, must be inserted at the bottom of the contents page. If illustrative materials are integrated within the text a separate list of illustrations should be prepared.
<i>List of Illustrations</i>	The term 'illustration' refers to all tables, maps, plans, graphs, diagrams, photographs. The list of illustrations should provide number, title, and page references. This usually appears on a separate page unless included in the

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table of contents.

*Abstract*

All dissertations must include an abstract. This should be undertaken when the dissertation is otherwise complete. The abstract should precede the introduction so that the reader/examiner can quickly see what the text is about prior to more detailed reading. Typically the abstract defines the problems the writer sets out to solve, the main procedures adopted, and the principal results and conclusions; it should occupy a single A4 page, and can be single-spaced.

*Acknowledgements*

Assistance given to the student in the preparation of their work must be acknowledged, and could include the supervisor and any key individuals (other academics, individuals from the agencies under study etc.) who have helped. Acknowledgments should not normally exceed one or two paragraphs.

*Declaration*

A declaration stating that: 'No portion of the work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning'.

*Intellectual Property Statement*

All **four** of the following notes on copyright and the ownership of intellectual property rights must be included as written below:

- i. The author of this dissertation (including any appendices and/or schedules to this dissertation) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the "Copyright") and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.
- ii. Copies of this dissertation, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made **only** in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has entered into. This page must form part of any such copies made.
- iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trademarks and other intellectual property (the "Intellectual Property") and any reproductions of copyright works in the dissertation, for example graphs and tables ("Reproductions"), which may be described in this dissertation, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

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- iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this dissertation, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=487>), in any relevant Dissertation restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library's regulations (see <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/aboutus/regulations>) and in The University's Guidance for the Presentation of Dissertations.

<i>Text</i>	Text should be formatted as double or 1.5 spacing, with a minimum font size of 12 for the main text. Single-spacing should be used for indented quotations of more than three lines, footnotes and references. Pages should be single-sided. Chapter headings, section headings should be bold and capitalised; sub-section headings should be bold.
<i>Page sizes</i>	The required size is A4 (197mm x 210mm), although A3 landscape format is acceptable for design dissertations.
<i>Page numbering</i>	Page numbering must consist of one single sequence of Arabic numerals (i.e. 1, 2, 3 ...) throughout the dissertation. Page numbers must be displayed on all pages except the title page. The pagination sequence will include not only the text of the dissertation but also the preliminary pages, diagrams, tables, figures, illustrations, appendices, references etc. Roman numerals must not be used for page numbering.
<i>Maps</i>	Maps should be clearly presented, with sources referenced. See <b>Section 3.5 Graphical Material</b>
<i>Diagrams and tables</i>	These should be clearly presented, properly sourced, and explained in the text. See <b>Section 3.5 Graphical Material</b>
<i>Photographs</i>	See <b>Section 3.5 Graphical Material</b>
<i>Quotations</i>	Direct prose quotation exceeding three lines of text should be set out in a separate inset paragraph in single line spacing (indented about 25mm to the right and left of the main text), without inverted commas. Shorter quotations should be enclosed within the main text, in double inverted commas. If there are gaps in the quotation use three dots '...' to indicate where the words are left out. For all quotes, the author and page number must be stated. If it is desired to draw attention to a phrase in a quotation do this by italics, but note in the reference whether any italics are in the original or have been added by you as author (e.g.

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Smith, 2012, emphasis in original; or Jones, 2012, emphasis added).

*Footnotes*

These should be used very sparingly, if at all. Where footnotes are deemed absolutely necessary, they should be of direct relevance to the topic. They should be placed at the bottom of the page. They should be numbered consecutively throughout the dissertation as a whole. The font should be 9 point (in Time New Roman or similar). Text should be single spaced.

*References*

Should be in UoM Harvard style (full guidance available at <http://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/referencing-harvard>). See section 3.8 of this document.

## 4. Assessment criteria

The four main categories of criteria are:

1. Breadth & depth of knowledge and understanding
2. Structure, style and argumentation
3. Synthesis and critical analysis
4. Transferable skills

Please note that the overall mark is **NOT** derived from a notional average of the levels achieved for each of the criteria.

		Postgraduate Degree Class	Mark
90-100	<b>Exceptional Distinction</b>		
	<b>Exceptional work of the highest quality attaining all learning outcomes of the unit, all criteria of assessment and displaying significant originality and/or deep insight.</b>	Upper-range distinction	100
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exceptional dissertation. Asks excellent research questions. Demonstrates in-depth and very advanced understanding of project context, and addresses wider issues and interrelationships. Shows significant originality in thought. Literature is drawn from extensive sources.</li> <li>2. Outstanding critical analysis of literature including theories, principles, techniques and evidence, and integrates reference to this very effectively with own ideas. Excellent critical evaluation and justification of the research approach adopted, with excellent comparison with data/arguments of others. Identifies and uses a range of materials (academic and policy) to very good effect, from extensive sources, with outstanding critical analysis and insight and very effective integration with own ideas. Makes a clear distinction between facts and interpretation through its clarity, presentation and originality of analysis. Exercises extensive personal initiative and responsibility. Displays a convincing grasp of complex academic concepts and terminology.</li> <li>3. Identifies the characteristics of complex problems and uses highly appropriate and innovative methods. Situates analysis very effectively within current academic and/or policy debates. Excellent writing style and accurate grammar and spelling, which clearly communicates key points with no significant errors. Consistently references sources in line with student handbook guidelines.</li> <li>4. Shows advanced level understanding of the use of methods. Demonstrates sensitivity to and awareness of any key ethical dilemmas. Uses appropriate ICTs and a highly appropriate format/style. Identifies highly appropriate approaches to reflection, and thoroughly and critically evaluates own performance and personal development.</li> </ol>	Upper-range distinction	95
80-89		Upper-range distinction	92
	<b>Outstanding Distinction</b>		
	<b>Outstanding dissertation of the highest quality, demonstrating comprehensive knowledge, excellent critical analysis and/or originality,</b>	Mid-range distinction	88

70-79	<b>high level of accuracy, relevance, presentation and appropriate skills.</b>		
	1. Outstanding dissertation. Asks excellent research questions. Demonstrates in-depth understanding of project context, and addresses key issues and interrelationships. Shows some ambition and perceptive originality in thought. Literature is drawn from a wide range of sources.	Mid-range distinction	85
	2. Excellent critical analysis of literature and integrates reference to this very effectively with own ideas. Excellent critical evaluation and justification of the research approach adopted, with excellent comparison with data/arguments of others. Identifies and uses a range of materials (academic and policy) to very good effect, from an extensive range of data and/or literature sources, with impressive critical analysis and insight and very effective integration with own ideas. Makes a clear distinction between facts and interpretation. Exercises extensive personal initiative and responsibility. Displays a convincing grasp of complex academic concepts and terminology.	Mid-range distinction	82
	3. Identifies the characteristics of complex problems and uses appropriate, logical and original methods. Situates analysis effectively within a coherent and convincing discussion of current academic and/or policy debates. Very good writing style and accurate grammar and spelling, which clearly communicates key points with few errors. Consistently references sources in line with student handbook guidelines.		
	4. Shows high level understanding of the use of methods. Demonstrates sensitivity to and awareness of any key ethical dilemmas. Uses appropriate ICTs and a highly appropriate format/style. Identifies highly appropriate approaches to reflection, and thoroughly and critically evaluates own performance and personal development		
	<b>Distinction</b>		
	<b>Excellent dissertation of high quality, demonstrating extensive knowledge, very good critical analysis, high level of accuracy, relevance, presentation and appropriate skills.</b>	Lower-range distinction	78
	1. Thorough dissertation. Asks very good research questions. Demonstrates in-depth understanding of project context, and addresses key issues and interrelationships. Shows independent and critical thought. Literature is drawn from a range of sources.	Lower-range distinction	75
	2. Very good critical analysis of literature and integrates reference to this very effectively with own ideas. Excellent critical evaluation and justification of the research approach adopted, with excellent comparison to data/arguments of others. Identifies and uses a range of materials (academic and policy) to very good effect, from a range of sources, with thorough critical analysis and insight and very effective integration with own ideas. Makes a clear distinction between facts and interpretation. Exercises extensive personal initiative and responsibility. Displays a convincing grasp of complex academic concepts and terminology but could have shown greater balance in the presentation of academic/analytical information.		
	3. Identifies the main characteristics of complex problems and uses appropriate methods. Shows considerable awareness of current analytical, academic and/or policy debates. Good writing style and accurate grammar and spelling, accurately and clearly communicating key points and containing few errors. Consistently references sources in line with student handbook guidelines.	Lower-range distinction	72
	4. Shows good understanding of methods. Demonstrates sensitivity to and awareness of any key ethical dilemmas. Uses appropriate ICTs and a highly appropriate format/style. Identifies highly appropriate approaches to reflection, and thoroughly and critically evaluates own performance and personal development		



60-69	<b>Merit</b>		
	<b>High quality dissertation, demonstrating very good knowledge and understanding, good critical analysis, accuracy, relevance, presentation and understanding.</b>	Merit	68
	1. Good dissertation. Asks good research questions. Demonstrates sound demonstration of project context, and of key issues and interrelationships. Shows some independent thought. Literature is relevant and generally of good quality.	Merit	65
	2. Contains some critical analysis of literature and integrates reference to this very effectively with own ideas. Shows good critical evaluation and justification of the research approach adopted, with good comparison to data/arguments of others. Identifies and uses a range of materials (academic and policy) to good effect, from extensive sources, with good critical analysis and insight and effective integration with own ideas. Further analysis of the literature could have been included to provide a more critical analysis. Makes a clear distinction between facts and interpretation. Exercises some personal initiative and responsibility. Displays a good grasp of complex academic concepts and terminology.	Merit	62
59% ceiling	3. Identifies some key characteristics of complex problems and uses appropriate methods. Comprehensive writing style and accurate grammar and spelling, accurately and clearly communicating key points, with few errors. Mostly references sources in line with student handbook guidelines.		
	4. Uses appropriate academic concepts and terminology. Uses appropriate ICT and an appropriate format/style. Identifies approaches to reflection, evaluates own performance and personal development		
<b>Dissertations</b> that do not engage with material beyond that in module lectures / workshops / fieldtrips / key texts and/or do not follow referencing guidelines outlined in the student handbook can only get a maximum 59%.			
50-59	<b>Postgraduate Masters Pass</b>		
	<b>Competent/good and generally accurate work, demonstrating some relevant knowledge and breadth, and sound understanding though undeveloped with limited critical reasoning.</b>	Postgraduate Masters Pass	58
	1. Fair answer to the research questions, with some omissions. Shows reasonable understanding of the issues, principles, theories, evidence and techniques, perhaps with some confusion/inaccuracies. Mainly derivative from module material or existent literature, lacks evidence of independent thought/research. Literature does not fully cover the ongoing discussion in the topic.	Postgraduate Masters Pass	55
	2. Identifies and uses a range of materials (academic and policy), but not substantial or restricted to module lectures/core textbooks or of poor quality, with some critical analysis, but mainly descriptive and lacks analytical depth.	Postgraduate Masters Pass	52
40-49	3. Fair structure and coherent argumentation, but arguments may lack focus/depth in some sections. Reasonable awareness of relevant academic and/or policy debates, but with some gaps or minor inaccuracies. Further critical analysis and evidence of independent reading and thought could be incorporated. The dissertation has some methodological issues either in the definition of the methodology or in the application of methods.		
	4. Reasonable writing style and accurate grammar and spelling. Accurately and clearly communicates key points effectively with no significant errors. Consistently references sources in line with student handbooks. Competent presentation skills including use of IT databases and other resources.		
40-49	<b>Postgraduate Diploma Pass</b>		
	<b>Compensatory Fail for Postgraduate Masters</b>		
	<b>Dissertation of limited quality, but sufficient for a pass at postgraduate diploma level, demonstrating some relevant knowledge and fair</b>	Postgraduate Diploma Pass	48

30-39	<b>understanding with possible errors and omissions.</b>		
	1. Basic or simple answer to the research questions lacking detail, depth and with significant omissions. Superficial understanding of the issues and some confusion/inaccuracies. Regurgitates literature material, and/or information provided by lecturers, with no evidence of independent thought/research. Literature has significant problems, not engaging with the current research discussions on the topic.	Postgraduate Diploma Pass	45
	2. Range and use of material (academic and policy) is lacking or not relevant to the question or of poor quality. Mostly descriptive work lacking any substantive critical analysis.	Postgraduate Diploma Pass	42
	3. Weak structure and argumentation. Arguments may lack focus/relevance, evidence and coherence in many sections. Limited engagement with relevant academic and/or policy debates, either dated, with gaps, or too many inaccuracies with a lack of balance discussion. The dissertation has important methodological issues either in the definition of the methodology or in the application of methods.		
	4. Writing style and grammar and spelling may be poor, with frequent errors. Inconsistently and/or incompletely references sources, not in line with student handbooks. May use some inappropriate presentation skills including the poor use of IT databases and other resources.		
	<b>Fail</b>		
	<b>Dissertation below the standard required for a postgraduate Masters or Diploma. There is insufficient evidence of basic understanding and/or achievement, with errors or other inadequacies.</b>	Fail	38
16-29	1. Partial answer to the research questions, with major omissions. Weak understanding of the issues, theories, principles, techniques and evidence, and considerable confusion/inaccuracies. Regurgitates literature or taught or given material with no evidence of independent thought/research. Poor use of the existent literature.	Fail	35
	2. Range and use of material (academic and policy) are lacking or not relevant to the question or of very poor quality. Uncritical and descriptive, with some sections being derivative of other sources lacking in originality or critical analysis.		
	3. Minimal understanding of structure and argumentation. Arguments are poorly focused/irrelevant and/or incoherent/confused in many sections including unsubstantiated arguments/evidence. The dissertation has a weak or unfeasible methodology either in the definition of the methodology or in the application of methods.	Fail	32
	4. Shows problems in writing style and grammar and spelling may be poor, with frequent errors. Inconsistently and/or incompletely references sources, not in line with student handbooks. Uses inappropriate presentation skills including the poor use of IT databases and other resources.		
	<b>Fail</b>		
	<b>Dissertation well below the standard required for a postgraduate Masters or Diploma, which is inadequate and does not demonstrate basic awareness of the subject and is deficient in understanding or relevance,</b>	Fail	28

	<b>weak in execution and/or in presentation.</b>	Fail	25
			22
		Fail	15
		Fail	5
1-15	<b>Poor Fail</b> <b>Dissertation that is profoundly inadequate in quantity and quality.</b>	Fail	0
		Fail	0
0	<b>Zero</b> Absent, work not submitted <b>or</b> unacceptable performance, work of no merit.	Fail	0

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## **Appendices**

# Appendix 1 - Postgraduate Dissertation

## Timetable

Semester 2	
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissertation preparation lectures (see Blackboard for full details).</li> <li>Students submit proposed titles/topics via the online 'Dissertation Planning Form' on or before <b>2pm</b> on <b>1 March 2019</b>. The form will be made available on BlackBoard.</li> <li>Allocation of supervisors <b>by 8 of March 2019</b>.</li> </ul>
March-August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group and individual meetings with supervisor (see Blackboard for full details).</li> </ul>
May	<p>All ethics review and risk assessment once discussed with your supervisor should now be assessed via the Ethics Decision Tool.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submitted by <b>2pm</b> on <b>29 May 2019</b>, via TurnItIn</li> <li>See <b>Section 2.7</b> for more information.</li> </ul>
Late May-Early June	<p>Formative feedback for confirming research: May/June supervision meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student will present a short 5 slides presentation about the research, data collection and proposed analyses and dissertation structure to the supervisor</li> <li>In the late May/June supervisory meeting</li> <li>10 minutes presentation (using template provided), discussion with the supervisor</li> </ul>
Mid-July-August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extra supervisory meetings can be arranged during the summer months after consulting your supervisor for availability.</li> <li>Students can receive support during the summer through a series of drop in sessions staffed by academics. The timetabling of these will be arranged before the end of term and circulated to students prior to the break.</li> </ul>
August	<p><b><u>SUBMISSION FOR FULL-TIME STUDENTS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You should submit an electronic copy of your dissertation in the approved format by <b>2pm</b> on <b>Tuesday 27 August 2019 (full-time students)</b>.</li> <li>Dissertations <b>must</b> be submitted via Blackboard and <b>not</b> to your supervisor. Details of the submission process will be communicated by your Programme Administrator in the final weeks before submission is due. See <b>Section 1.3 Submission arrangements</b> and <b>Section 3 on Submission Format</b> for more information.</li> </ul>

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December	<p><b><u>SUBMISSION FOR PART-TIME STUDENTS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Monday 2 December 2019</b> you should submit an electronic pdf copy of a dissertation in the approved format on or before <b>2pm</b> on this date.</li><li>• Dissertations <b>must</b> be submitted via Blackboard and <b>not</b> to your supervisor. Details of the hand-in process will be communicated by your Programme Administrator in the final weeks before submission is due. See <b>Section 1.3 Submission arrangements</b> and <b>Section 3 on Submission format</b> for more information.</li></ul>
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## Appendix 2 – Indicative Structure of a Dissertation

Note that it is generally not advisable to call chapters things like ‘literature review’ or ‘results’; try to select chapter titles that give a clearer flavour of the focus of your research.

The following checklist gives some tips on the scope and content of each of these chapters, although again it is worth emphasising that the precise content and chapter sequencing may vary, depending upon the nature of your topic.

### Chapter 1: Introduction

#### Background

The dissertation should begin by outlining the background to your topic. This could include both the broad policy context (where relevant), and details of other research studies which have looked at the area of study. For example, if your chosen topic was to assess the degree to which local policy in respect of the supply of housing land complements national goals, via a case study of areas of high demand in Cheshire, you might start off by looking, in a broad way, at the evolution of RPG, RSS and LDFs in light of the historical development of strategic planning, consider the various debates around housing land release in brown and greenfield locations, discuss how the relationship between regional and local level strategic planning has shifted over time, and then consider the potential implications of policy in the wake of the Localism Act, the National Planning Policy Framework and so on.

You must remember that this section should act as a general introduction to the study, and should therefore be short and snappy, avoiding too much detail. A common problem with dissertations is too much contextual, background material, and insufficient analytical detail or synthesis of source documents and interviews. You should merely introduce the topic, and flesh-out some of these ideas later-on in the work, particularly in the literature review, which will involve a much more detailed exploration of key research issues and questions, based on current findings.

#### Shape and scope of the study

The second section of chapter 1 should build upon the background context that you have outlined, and explain in brief the purpose of the study and the broad questions and issues you will be addressing. These can be explained in greater detail at the beginning of the methods chapter, when, on the basis of the earlier literature review, you state the formal aims and objectives of the study and outline any research questions to be addressed or hypotheses to be tested.

#### Structure

The third section in the chapter 1 is normally an outline of the structure of the dissertation. The progression of chapters must be logical, with each building upon material covered in the preceding chapter. This will help focus your mind on the material required for the final report, and in planning your time. The precise structure

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adopted will be dependent on the particular topic chosen, and should be devised in consultation with your supervisor.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

The second chapter might be a literature review, although again the structure will vary according to the precise topic selected and should be discussed at length with your supervisor.

The literature review is something which confuses many students. In essence, the aims of a literature review are two-fold. First, it should bring the reader up to date on **previous research findings** in the field, with particular reference to your chosen topic. This can point towards areas of general agreement (or disagreement) among researchers, highlighting what different studies say about your chosen topic. To use the example of housing land once more, it may be the case that previous research has yielded important findings on strategic housing land release (even if some studies disagree), but there have been recent changes in the policy context or in the nature of household formation which raise new and unanswered sets of questions which your research will proceed to explore. The central aim is to pull out the key ideas and findings from past research and 'locate' your study within that broader body of knowledge.

Secondly, where your chosen topic is related to particular **policies**, your literature review should consider relevant policy and/or technical documents, in addition to the more 'academic' literature. For instance, in the case of the housing land topic, the literature review might also assess the ways in which different strategic planning policies through time have attempted to mould land release at the local level and explore the extent to which (in the eyes of other evaluative studies) they have met with any success in doing so. In other words, some dissertations may have a 'policy review' as well as a 'research review' as part of the overall literature review.

In summary, then, a literature review should *synthesise* others' work, highlighting the key themes to emerge from other studies and applying these to your own research. You should **not** treat the literature review as simply a summary or précis of policy documents, journal articles and books: it should not be, for example, 'everything I know about housing land', or 'everything I know about transport policy'. Instead, the literature review must be related to the tightly defined research questions or hypotheses which your study is intended to address. In other words, it requires your own assessment of the key findings of earlier work which relates to your topic. A literature review has to be comprehensive, covering policy debates as well as theoretical and conceptual issues (i.e. academic literature). It is also important that you concentrate on literature which is of direct relevance to your work; skip-read related material of only marginal relevance.

Problematic or weak literature review chapters tend to be ones which are:

- *disconnected from other aspects of the study.* This can occur in particular when they are written early in the process and not revisited later. Ensure that the chapter leads logically to your selection of aims and objectives and the key themes are referred back to in your later primary research and analysis chapters.
- *overly descriptive.* It can be tempting to spend a lot of time describing policy, but although this demonstrates awareness it doesn't enable you to pick up too



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many marks. Ensure that you spend time analysing the effects and developing this critique as you go.

- *lack a coherent argument.* Although you are reviewing what may be a broad span of literature you should still spend time trying to make it work as ONE narrative – consider the best order to introduce topics to enable the argument to logically develop, with each section building upon what has gone before.
- *lack a powerful end statement.* The literature review is important for scoping the study, but should also be designed to deliver an argument to justify YOUR particular dissertation – what is the research gap you are intending to address? And why is it important? This also helps you link to the following methodology chapter where you explain your selected research approach.

It is also vital that you avoid plagiarism, whether unintentional or deliberate. If you lift ideas, or quote a short passage from others' work – which is, of course, perfectly acceptable – you have to acknowledge the source by full and proper referencing.

A useful starting point for literature reviews is to read a small number of core texts, and then trace back the more detailed articles cited. For example, if your dissertation is on 'The role of the private sector in local economic development initiatives: a case study of Local Enterprise Partnerships in North West England', you might begin your literature review by looking at broad texts on urban policy and surveying the literature on the nature of business involvement specifically, before focusing-in upon more detailed (and directly relevant) work cited in these texts (e.g. other research on Local Enterprise Partnerships, and on the role of the private sector in that initiative).

You should also try to make use of a full range of sources for literature review material. In particular, learn to use the library search facilities which are available 'on-line' from any computer terminal on campus, or remotely by setting up a Virtual Private Network so that non-campus computers can access library holdings (see <http://www.itservices.manchester.ac.uk/vpn/> for further details). In addition to the library's catalogue of books, with which you will already be familiar, try using the journal abstracts available via the e-resources web-pages (<http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/search-resources/>). The Geobase, BIDS and Web of Science databases are particularly useful in unearthing relevant material from academic journals (<http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/search-resources/>).

### Chapter 3: Methodology

The first part of chapter 3 might be used to outline the **conceptual framework** that you intend to employ in the dissertation. If this is the case then you need to think of a conceptual framework in the following ways:

- It is a set of coherent ideas or concepts organised in a way that makes them easy to communicate to others.
- An organised way of thinking about how and why a project takes place, and about how we understand its activities.
- The basis for thinking about what we do and about what it means, influenced by the ideas and research of others.

Your conceptual framework should help you to explain and justify the direction of your project by drawing on the theories, ideas and principles in existing literature to

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help you to establish the theoretical basis of your dissertation. However, the conceptual framework should not be a regurgitation of your literature review. The conceptual framework provides you with the opportunity to interpret the literature and to develop your own ideas, informed by the existing literature. These ideas should then be taken forward in developing your methodological approach, research aim and objectives (see below), and should ultimately be used to frame your empirical work.

Building on the key areas of interest you have identified in the literature review and conceptual framework, the second part of chapter 3 would normally state the overall **aim of the dissertation** followed by a set of **research objectives**.

- **Aim:** this sets out the overall purpose of the study. It is a broad statement which explains what you are trying to achieve to a non-expert reader who may not be familiar with your topic area.
- **Objectives:** these are the specific operational targets which will assist in meeting the broad aims of the study. Since these objectives are clearly set out, they will be used to judge what you have been able to achieve at the end of your dissertation. It is thus unwise to be over-ambitious by setting objectives which are not realistically achievable. At the same time, devising clear objectives at the outset of your research will ensure that the work is sufficiently focused, and avoid the work being too generalised. Throughout your programme of research, you should constantly refer back to your objectives to ensure that what you are doing or writing is relevant, and to ensure that it will help to meet those objectives.

Your aim and objectives should be stated as succinctly as possible, and should be revised, if necessary, as work progresses.

Note you need to build upon the conclusions of your literature review and conceptual framework to justify your research aim and objectives.

Following your objectives you should also identify a limited number of research questions to be addressed by your dissertation, a particular issue to be explored, or a set of hypotheses to be tested. It is vital that you set out in detail the research questions, hypotheses, issues or problems your study addresses. This could take the form of either of the following:

- *Research questions*, e.g. in what ways are rural authorities formulating strategies for housing land supply, what form do these strategies take in different types of authority, and to what extent do these issues conflict with priorities of extra-local institutions (expressed, for example, through the National Planning Policy Framework)?
- *Hypotheses* to be tested, e.g. 'urban deprivation in Manchester neighbourhoods between 2001 and 2015 was not affected by the level of spend on urban regeneration projects'. The veracity of this hypothesis would be tested, possibly by using appropriate quantitative methods linked to Index of Multiple Deprivation data for 2001, 2007, 2010 and 2015 or through interviews with policy-makers. **However, you should bear in mind that it is not always possible to develop such research hypotheses for certain topics; a detailed description of the research question(s) may be more appropriate.** In addition, it is vital that you devise hypotheses which are not over-ambitious: remember that your study is limited in both time and in the

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length of the final dissertation.

While it is important to articulate in a clear manner the purpose of your research, take care not to devise an opaque and overly elaborate array of aims, objectives, research questions and hypotheses. Keep things simple and transparent.

Having generated relevant research questions and/or hypotheses, you have to explain clearly *how* you will go about answering or testing these. In other words, you must give details of the research methods to be used, outlining the overall **research design**, and specifying methods of data collection (e.g. sources of published data that have been used, semi-structured interviews which have been conducted). You must attempt to **justify** the choice of your particular methodology, in light of the chosen research topic: you have to try to demonstrate why the methods selected are appropriate to answering a particular question, or investigating a given hypothesis. Why, for example, is a programme of interviews useful in investigating your topic? Why are particular data sources useful? Why have you chosen to collate a series of policy documents? Why have you selected particular case study areas? And how have you gone about investigating a particular case study?

*Example:* the use of a case study approach. You should explain:

- why a case study approach is the most appropriate method to tackle the research questions;
- why you have used, say, one case study rather than two or more, or vice versa;
- why you have used a particular case study or studies (e.g. previous research might have ignored certain places; a problem or issue might be especially apparent in that area; or the area may be representative of the general pattern);
- the ways in which you have collected information for these case studies, whether it be via interviews, collation of policy documents, or use of published secondary data for that area (it is not sufficient simply to say that you will 'do' a case study, without specifying the means by which this will be conducted).

*Example Two:* the use of interviews. You should explain:

- why you have chosen to use interviews to address the research problem;
- who you have interviewed, and why;
- what questions were asked and why;
- the means by which you conducted interviews (e.g. were they unstructured discussions, structured face-to-face questionnaires, or conducted remotely by email?);
- how you have used the information collected (e.g. tabulations, quotes from interviewees, the use of software packages like NVivo etc.)?

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## **Chapters 4 and 5: Fieldwork/results and analysis/evaluation/discussion**

The dissertation should attempt to build upon the material covered in the literature review through a programme of fieldwork or further desk-based analysis. This might take the form, for example, of:

- a short programme of structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews (e.g. face-to-face, or by post);
- the collation of data from published sources such as the Census of Population or other government surveys (on everything from CLG derelict land data to the House Conditions Survey and the Labour Force Survey – the list is infinite);
- the collation of relevant policy documents, both published and unpublished (e.g. development control files, local authority databases or internal committee reports – again the list is endless);
- a structured questionnaire survey (again, face-to-face, by telephone or email, or using web-based services like Survey Monkey).

While it is important that you consult formal published sources such as reports, books and journal articles, summaries of these alone are insufficient as original research. You must complement the literature reviewed with additional material of the sorts outlined above. In addition, you must also take care to avoid a purely descriptive study which is then dutifully described without interpretation, commentary or evaluation. You must try to develop themes and arguments on the basis of interviews, data assembled or documents collected. Your work must go beyond mere description, to provide an analysis of information collected, and to highlight the implications of your findings. Where you are undertaking a case study, for example, you should ensure that you constantly refer to the bigger picture: what, if anything, does the experience of a case study area or subject say about the broader question you are exploring through your research?

In writing a suitably analytical and interpretative piece of work, it is important that you refer back continuously to your initial objectives and avoid being side-tracked on irrelevant detail, or bogged-down by the superfluous minutiae which surround any topic. At the same time, you must also take care to ensure that the information collected is not simply 'analysed' for its own sake, without identifying the implications for the study: this is one distinction between a dissertation and project work. Throughout this stage of the work, you should constantly ask yourself what is the implication of a given finding for your research question or hypothesis. For example, if an interviewee makes a particular comment, or if you note an interesting quote in a local authority committee report, what are the implications of this for your dissertation topic? It is important to avoid writing in an over-generalised way, neglecting to concentrate on tightly defined objectives for the research. For example, on too many occasions, student dissertations read like 'everything I know about urban regeneration/sustainability/transport in Poppleton', rather than a study which focuses on a clear and well-defined research question and which is of interest beyond a particular case study area.

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In some cases, you might opt to have two chapters devoted to 'results': a first one describing your main findings and outlining the results of any fieldwork; and a second discussing the broader implications. Whether you have one or two chapters is likely to depend upon the topic in question. Again, you will need to discuss this with your supervisor.

The main point to emphasise here is that you need to *analyse*. Read back through each paragraph of your work: are you simply describing results or spending time expanding on the implications for theory, policy and practice? It can be helpful to read back over your literature review at this stage to give you some key themes to add to your analysis, and to help increase the overall coherence of your work.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions**

The concluding chapter should not merely summarise material already covered in previous chapters. Instead, you must attempt to draw together the various messages to emerge from your review of the literature, and from your 'analysis' chapter(s). Again, it is important not to be descriptive, and to concentrate on the research questions posed at the outset of your study. In particular, you should try to highlight the implications of your study for both (a) research and knowledge of a particular topic area, and (where relevant) (b) policy and practice in relation to Planning, Real Estate, Environmental Impact Assessment and Management, Urban Design or Urban Regeneration.

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## Appendix 3 – Participation Information Sheet

University of Manchester  
School of Environment, Education and Development

### Participant Information Sheet *[complete each section]*

What is the title of the research?  
Who will conduct the research?  
What is the aim of the research?  
Why have I been chosen?  
What would I be asked to do if I took part?  
What happens to the data collected?  
How is confidentiality maintained?  
What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?  
Will I be paid for participating in the research?  
What is the duration of the research?  
Where will the research be conducted?  
Will the outcomes of the research be published?  
Contact for further information  
What if something goes wrong?

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## Appendix 4 – Consent Form

University of Manchester

School of Environment, Education and Development

*[insert title of dissertation/project/research]*

*[remove questions 3 and 4 if not relevant within your research]*

Consent Form

If you are happy to participate please read the consent form and initial it:

Please  
Initial  
Box

I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service

I understand that the interviews will be audio/video-recorded

I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

I agree to take part in the above project

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking  
consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

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## Appendix 5 – Final Dissertation Submission

### Check List

You need to check your draft for what might be termed continuity errors. Roughly speaking, this means checking that the whole text is consistent with itself from beginning to end. If you have changed some sections, there might be section headings to re-number, for example. To help you eliminate such errors, here is a checklist:

- are the headings and sub-headings in the contents list the same as those in the text?
- have you given lists of tables and figures as well as chapters in your contents?
- are all chapters, sections, sub-sections numbered consecutively? Numberings from earlier versions may persist and you may have two chapter 4s or no chapter 6. Using the automated Table of Contents wizard in Word can help enormously in this respect.
- are all the cross-references to other sections of the study correct?
- do all the references in the text have a corresponding entry in the reference list, with the same date as the reference in the text?
- where you refer to an article within an edited collection, have you included the full book reference, with editors, as well as the chapter reference?
- are all the references complete, i.e. have you included the publication date and place, as well as the publisher's name?
- tables: check that their numbers and titles are correct, and that references to them in the text are correct.
- figures: as for tables
- have you checked all the calculations in your tables? Have you got correct totals in the tables?
- is there enough labelling information in your tables and graphs? (e.g. if you refer to percentages, is it clear exactly what they are percentages of? Do you make it clear whether raw scores or percentages are being referred to?)
- have you calculated all the figures to the same number of decimal places?
- are you consistent about abbreviations?

None of these proof-checking tasks are the responsibility of your supervisor