

Global Development Dissertation

MGDI30000 (40 credits)

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Overview

A dissertation is... what you want it to be! Within limits of course. But this is your opportunity to engage in a long-form piece of original research on a topic that you are passionate about. The dissertation is *both* an independent, student-driven project *and* your chance to receive extensive formative feedback. Throughout your year-long research and writing process, this feedback can help you hone essential research and writing skills all while developing the dissertation itself.

In terms of concrete expectations, you will work under the supervision of an individual supervisor to produce an **8,000-word dissertation** on a specific research topic in the field of Global Development. Seminars in the Autumn semester will also help guide you from your topic choice through to your game plan for dissertation-writing.

You will identify and refine your topic in consultation with your supervisor. Your dissertation analysis will then be built on **primary data** that you have sourced and analysed yourself. This primary data requirement will add to the originality of the research itself and will further advance your own skills development.

Overall, you will emerge a better, more confident researcher with a deeper understanding of a topic you care about!

Aims and Outcomes

Educational Aims

This course aims to:

- Develop students' ability to evaluate arguments and methods in social science applied to questions in Global Development.
- Develop students' ability to respond to critical feedback on their work.
- Develop students' oral and written communication skills.
- Develop students' ability to identify and apply specific research methods that can be used to address a particular question.
- Develop students' ability to apply numerical and statistical skills.*

* The relative importance of this aim will depend on the student's chosen dissertation topic, as described below.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Intellectual skills

- i. Evaluate social science knowledge and understanding, making effective use of feedback and employing strategies for improvement.
- ii. Identify and apply specific research methods that can be used to address a particular question.

Practical skills

- iii. Appraise the application of numerical and statistical methods appropriate to the research question.

Transferable skills and personal qualities

- iv. Effectively communicate in writing and orally.
- v. Work independently, taking responsibility for time management and organization.
- vi. Appraise the use numerical and statistical skills in academic and professional contexts.

- vii. Demonstrate an open and independent mindset, appreciating the importance of equality, diversity and inclusivity.
- viii. Make effective use of feedback and employ strategies for improvement.

Structure of the Course

Course content

A key part of this course unit is you, as students, identify (i) an appropriate research topic and (ii) appropriate research methods to explore the topic and evaluate relevant arguments. To help you in this task, you will benefit both from both seminars and one-to-one supervision.

The seminars offer guidance on core skills you need to complete the project and are an opportunity for group discussion. Your supervisions are then where you receive bespoke feedback on your independent research. Your supervisor will also provide written comments on up to two-thirds of your dissertation draft dissertation. You will benefit from 12 hours of contact time in total: eight hours of seminars divided into four two-hour sessions in the Autumn semester and four hours of supervision total over the course of the academic year (see below for advice on how to divide these up). There is also a final, fifth seminar which will be an opportunity for staff and students to gather and hear you present your work-in-progress.

It is not anticipated that you will use every research skill and method that they have encountered in the previous five semesters: part of the work for the dissertation will be the selection of specific methods appropriate to the chosen topic, which will require critical judgement. Nevertheless, when selecting the method(s) appropriate for their study, all students will need to show critical understanding of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, and the application of such methods.

The main assessment task is a written dissertation; a supplementary assessment task is a 20-minute recorded oral presentation summarising your work (see the below section, 'Assessment', for details).

Methods & frequency of teaching

Activity	Sessions	Duration	Time	Location
Autumn Semester				
Seminar	5	2 hours	Thursday 10:00-12:00, weeks 2, 4, 6, 9, and 11	Simon_4.05, Simon Building (located on fourth floor)
Autumn & Spring Semesters				
Supervisions	4 hours of supervision total over the year, divided into regular, 30-minute sessions agreed between supervisors and students spread over semesters 1 and 2. See below for additional guidance.			

Seminar schedule

Week	Date	Seminar Topic	Seminar lead(s)
2	1 Oct	Introduction – Topic choice & project planning	Michaela Collord
4	15 Oct	The literature review – Sourcing & reviewing literature	Michaela Collord
6	29 Oct	Research designs – Methods & data collection	Michaela Collord <i>With</i> Lawrence Ado-Kofie
8	19 Nov	Writing bootcamp – How to structure & write your dissertation	Micheala Collord
11	3 Dec	Presentations! Share your project with fellow students and supervisors	Michaela Collord <i>With</i> supervisor team

Expectations, guidance, and support

Dissertation guidelines

The main assessment on this course is an **8,000-word dissertation** worth 90% of your course mark. Note that the word count includes chapter footnotes and endnotes, quotations, and tables. It does not include the bibliography.

You have considerable freedom in the choice of dissertation topic and research approach. However, **your dissertation must incorporate primary data** that you have sourced and analysed yourself. Your empirical analysis will likely also draw on secondary sources, but primary data and appropriate methods of analysis must form part of your research design. Note, this course uses ‘primary data’ more broadly than some disciplines, do. In this instance primary data may be a dataset, a corpus of texts you compile, interviews, a survey, or similar. More details regarding the requirement for primary data analysis are provided below (see also Handbook Appendix 1, ‘Dissertation Marking Descriptors’).

Choosing and Assessing a Topic

You will already have identified your broad topic of interest. Your first step in your dissertation project—and in your meetings with your supervisor (see below)—is then to refine this topic choice. Crucially, you must also determine whether and how it is *feasible as an empirical project*.

There are at least two key questions to ask yourself as you hone your choice:

1. **Does this topic interest me? (Why) is it important?** Identify a topic you have genuine intellectual interest in and that feels important, both to you personally and because of its relevance to key global development challenges, broadly defined.
2. **Is this topic feasible? Are there relevant primary data sources?** Before finalising the topic, assess its feasibility, especially as regards the availability of primary data sources that could plausibly address a topic-relevant question, within the time and resources you have. This means scoping—
 - What data would answer your question (documents, datasets, people to interview or survey)?
 - Whether you can realistically access it (permissions, gatekeepers, cost, language, time).
 - Whether the volume of data is manageable for one undergraduate researcher in the time available.

Note that a topic without an identifiable, accessible primary data source is not yet a dissertation topic, and you will need to revise it. However, part of the challenge is **thinking creatively about sources!**

Linking your topic to primary data sources

Your primary data may be sourced through **original data collection**, requiring ethical approval, or more commonly, through **desk-based research**. Examples include the following:

- **Desk-based primary data compilation** — data that exists in the world and that you compile and analyse yourself:

- A corpus you construct (case specific press coverage, social media posts, parliamentary or organisational records, varieties of archival documents, campaign materials, etc.).
- Quantitative datasets you identify, access, and analyse (official government statistics, survey data, etc).
- **Original data collection** — data you generate directly:
 - Interviews, focus groups, surveys, or observation.
 - These require the standard ethical approval and consent procedures before any data collection begins — build this into your timeline, not as an afterthought.

On this course, ‘primary data’ means material that you select, compile, and analyse yourself and that **has not already been analysed for you**. This definition is broader than in is conventional in some disciplines, where the term covers only data a researcher generates directly. Here, it also includes existing datasets and documents, which other fields might call primary sources or secondary analysis of existing data. Labels aside, the requirement exists so that your argument rests on **your own analysis of evidence** rather than on other scholars’ interpretations. Their findings, summaries, and commentary therefore do not count, including commentary that accompanies a dataset. Below are some examples of where the boundary between primary and secondary data lies.

Table 1 - Distinguishing primary from secondary data

Primary data (as defined on this course)	Not primary data
A government report presenting official statistics, where what you draw from it are the official statistics.	The same report’s policy commentary relating to those statistics.
A dataset, produced by a think tank, a development bank, or similar.	The accompanying analysis of the dataset.
Original news articles, opinion pieces, or press statements, treated as text.	A journalist’s or think tank’s retrospective summary of ‘how the media covered X’.
Parliamentary debates, court judgements, leaked memos.	A policy brief or academic article that summarises what those documents said.

You worry that this requirement rules out many topics. But do not assume too quickly! Many, perhaps most topics, will remain perfectly viable once you appreciate the range of data sources available through desk-based research. For instance, previous first-class dissertations that made good use of primary sources had titles including, ‘*From State-Building to State Dependency: Geopolitics, Elite Bargains, and the Collapse of the Afghan Republic*’ or ‘*To what extent has the expansion of digital financial services contributed to narrowing the gender gap in financial inclusion in the Global South? With a comparative focus on Kenya and India over the period 2011 to 2023.*’

You might ask yourself, **what is ‘enough’ primary data analysis?** As noted in the intro to this section, your empirical analysis can also draw on secondary data. But primary data and appropriate analytical methods must feature as part of the overall research design. There is a four-part test, or four questions you should ask yourself:

1. **Relevance** – Is this the right data to answer your specific research question?
2. **Volume** – Is there enough data?
3. **Method** – Have you identified an appropriate method to analyse this data?
4. **Analysis** – Have you applied the appropriate method, pursuing a systematic analysis of your data?

Below are some examples of what would count as enough versus too little.

Table 2 - Distinguishing too little from enough primary data analysis

Too little primary data analysis (Little data, no identified method of analysis, no systematic analysis)	Sufficient primary data analysis (Identification or collection of a larger volume of data, relevant method identified, systematic analysis)
Five newspaper articles referenced alongside secondary sources and without a distinct method applied to analyse them.	A corpus of press/media outputs relating to a case/topic (e.g., minimum 15 articles) and that you analyse systematically to reconstruct an important sequence of events using a process tracing method, to identify important themes using thematic analysis, to analyse variation in discourse and its significance using discourse analysis, etc.
Reference to a few relevant data points drawn from official sources and with no clear statistical method applied.	A dataset identified and analysed using appropriate statistical methods—either descriptive (e.g. summarising patterns, trends, or distributions in data) or inferential (e.g. testing a relationship between variables), with a sample size and method appropriate to the analysis pursued.

Note that this **four-part test** can be satisfied in more than one way. A further option available involves more **synthetic analysis**. This approach draws on a diverse range of primary and secondary sources to develop and apply a theoretical framework, for instance, a ‘political settlements analysis’ explaining the impact of settlement configuration on policy outcomes. Here, your primary data plays a targeted, evidentiary role; each source is carefully selected because it does specific work that your chosen framework depends on. You may also draw on a more varied range of primary sources (e.g. budget speeches, a piece of legislation, key policy documents, campaigning material, combined with press reviews, but perhaps less expansive). The argument may draw on secondary literature as well, but you need to assess whether your

primary data is doing genuine, non-trivial analytical work, e.g., could the claim it supports stand on secondary literature alone, with the source cited only as illustration? If yes, then its role is illustrative, not analytical, backing up a point already established elsewhere. If the claim's evidential weight rests on what the source itself says—its specific wording, timing, or content—then it is doing the work that synthetic analysis requires.

For examples of synthetic analysis using the above-mentioned political settlements framework, one among *many* frameworks you could apply or adapt, see:

- Goodfellow, Tom. 2014. "Rwanda's Political Settlement and the Urban Transition: Expropriation, Construction and Taxation in Kigali." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8 (2): 311–29, <https://doi:10.1080/17531055.2014.891714>
- Gray, Hazel. 2015. "The political economy of grand corruption in Tanzania", *African Affairs*, 114 (456): 382–403, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adv017>
- Tyce, Matthew. 2020. "Beyond the neoliberal-statist divide on the drivers of innovation: A political settlements reading of Kenya's M-Pesa success story." *World Development* 125: 104621.

Your supervisor will evaluate and sign off on the feasibility of your topic and overall research design through the Ethics Application process (see 'Assessment'). Whether you choose to collect primary data directly or compile an original dataset from existing sources, your project must pass this ethical and feasibility review before you begin. Note that original primary data collection (e.g., interviews, surveys, human participants) typically involves a slightly more elaborate ethical approval process than compiling data through desk-based research, so please factor that in your planning. See below for more detail regarding ethics.

Developing a Research Design

Once feasibility is established, you must develop a literature review and produce a research design that connects your question to your data and your method.

A research design does not just describe what you are interested in but maps out a plan of how you will get from data to answer. You will submit an initial topic choice and research plan with the 'ethics application', and a fuller version—including an initial literature review—through your recorded oral presentation. A final version of your research design will provide the backbone for your actual dissertation.

Your research design must specify:

- **Research question(s)** – articulate questions that are both relevant to your topic and precise enough that you can say what evidence would answer them.
- **Literature review** – identify and situate your analysis relative to key bodies of literature and debates that speak to your question.
- **Data sourcing plan** – indicate how, where, and when you will collect and/or compile your primary data, including any access or ethics steps required.
- **Analysis plan** – explain which method(s) you will apply to that data, and why they suit the question and the data type. N.B. As stated above, your analysis can also draw on

secondary data, but primary data and appropriate analytical methods must feature as part of the overall research design.

- **Scope and limits** – include an explicit statement of what claims your data can and cannot support, whether and how generalisable your findings may be, and related.

On the final point, remember that *all* research has its scope and limits. Identifying these limits is not a problem, more a strength, not a weakness.

Selecting a Method of Analysis

You may use qualitative and/or quantitative methods, mixed as appropriate. The method you choose must satisfy two tests:

- **Intellectually justifiable:** it fits the nature of your data and your research question, and you can explain in your methods chapter why this method rather than an alternative.
- **Feasible:** you can competently execute it, to a defensible standard, within your existing skills and the time available. Ambition is good; a method you cannot actually carry out is not.

Discuss method choice with your supervisor early. Where your chosen method requires skills outside your existing training (e.g. a specific coding scheme, a statistical test, a qualitative software package), identify this at the research design stage so there is time to acquire it, or else select an alternative method more feasible within the given constraints.

Overall timeline and key deadlines

Please review the below section on ‘student supervision’ as well as on ‘Assessment’ for more details regarding your timeline, including when to schedule supervisions and how to structure them. But below is a rough indication of how you might plan your dissertation project over the year.

- **October – Topic refinement and feasibility check** (e.g., what data might you use?)
- **November – Initial literature review and research plan** (bearing in mind that you will need to indicate a research topic and plan when submitting research ethics review form, **due 26 November**)
- **December to January – Expanded literature review and refinement of research design** (you must have this ready for your oral presentation, **due 7 January**)
- **January to March – Data collection, analysis, and continued reading** (without the additional scaffolding of the dissertation seminars, this phase may feel harder to structure, but make sure to plan it carefully with your supervisor and feel free to reach out to the course convenor as well)
- **April – Writing up** (you will likely begin writing parts of your dissertation earlier but leave plenty of time for your final write up!)
- **May – Final editing** (dissertation **due 6 May!**).

Your own timeline may not perfectly align with the above. Bear in mind also that many of these steps are iterative, i.e., you will go back and forth between your reading of the wider academic literature and your own data collection and analysis. But whatever approach you take, make sure that you have a plan!

Student supervision & consultation hours

You should be able to meet with your supervisor during their term-time office hours for 2026/27. Remember that you are entitled to **four hours of supervision total** over the Autumn and Spring Semesters. Make sure to **take advantage of this time!** Supervision is a unique opportunity to receive in-depth feedback on your project.

When to meet your supervisor? Remember, you are entitled to four hours of supervision total. We recommend that you divide this time into **eight half-hour supervisions**, four in the Autumn Semester and four in the Spring Semester.

You should schedule a **first meeting** with your supervisor for shortly after your first group seminar at the start of Autumn Semester, so sometime in the **week commencing 5 October**. Do not let it wait! Following that initial meeting, you are then encouraged to meet at regular intervals throughout both semesters, e.g., roughly every two weeks.

What to cover in supervision? In the Autumn Semester, you are strongly encouraged to map your supervision focus onto the topics covered in seminar, beginning with refining your topic and workplan, developing a literature review, deciding on a research design, data collection, and drafting your dissertation. Seminars will conclude with a recommendation of what to focus on in your next supervision, including ‘homework’ prompts, which the Dissertation Course convenor has also shared with all supervisors.

Suggested supervision schedule? Below is a **supervision schedule for Autumn**, which you should aim to follow with your supervisor. It shows how to align your supervisions with the scheduled seminars and seminar topics.

Table 3 - Recommended Autumn supervision schedule

Week	Date	Meeting type & focus	Academic lead(s)
2	1 Oct	Seminar: Introduction	Course convenor
3	w/c 5 Oct	Supervision: Topic choice & feasibility	Your supervisor
4	15 Oct	Seminar: The literature review	Course convenor
5	w/c 19 Oct	Supervision: Sourcing & reviewing literature	Your supervisor
6	29 Oct	Seminar: Research designs	Course convenor with Lawrence Ado-Kofie
7	w/c 2 Nov	READING WEEK – No meeting	NA
8	w/c 9 Nov	Supervision: Methods & data collection	Your supervisor
9	19 Nov	Seminar: Writing bootcamp	Course convenor
10	w/c 23 Nov	Supervision: How to structure & write your dissertation <i>N.B. Ethical approval and research design sign off due 26 November.</i>	Your supervisor
11	3 Dec	Presentations! Share your project with fellow students and supervisors	Course convenor

			With supervisor team
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Note that these regular Autumn supervisions mean that you will benefit from more iterative feedback as you refine your topic and research question, develop your literature review, and decide on research methods.

They are also essential to **ensure that you are ready: (a)** to submit your ethics review form with your indicative research design (due **26 Nov 2026** latest), **(b)** to delivery your mini presentation (**3 Dec**), and **(c)** to submit your recorded oral presentation (due **7 January 2027** and worth 10 percent of your overall mark).

During **Spring Semester**, the precise timing of your supervisions may be more flexible, aligning with your individual progress. You are nevertheless strongly encouraged to continue scheduling routine, half-hour supervisions to ensure that you continue progressing and to avoid a crunch period at the end. You must also leave enough time to write and receive feedback on (a portion of) your dissertation, which is due **6 May 2027**.

Note that your supervisor may provide guidance on how to divide up and structure your supervision meetings. However, this remains an independent project, and it is ultimately your responsibility to reach out and schedule these meetings.

In addition to your one-to-one supervisions, you are also **welcome to consult with the course convenor**. My office hours are 14:00-16:00 on Thursdays, and you can book by emailing me directly. If you are unable to make my designated office hours, then please email me for an alternative slot (michaela.collord@manchester.ac.uk).

How supervision works

Again, the dissertation is an independent research project, but your supervisor is there to help. Here are some pointers about what both you and your supervisor can expect.

What you can expect from your supervisor:

- Four hours total of one-to-one supervisory meetings before the deadline in May;
- Guidance throughout the year, including advice on formal requirements, project planning (including suggested completion dates for drafts), relevant literature, research methodology, organisation of material, and writing style;
- Guidance on whether and how to apply for ethical approval;
- Feedback and a mark for your oral presentation, due in January (see below);
- Written and/or oral feedback on parts of your dissertation prior to submission;
- Availability to see you during their office hours, or during another mutually agreed time;
- Timely responses to any email communication from you as supervisee.

What your supervisor can expect from you:

- Independent initiative to plan and schedule supervision meetings;
- Reliable attendance during all planned supervision meetings, as well as during the four training seminars;
- Advance notification if you are unable to keep an appointment;

- Advance notification if you plan to change your question or topic, for which you also need your supervisor's agreement ;
- Adherence to all deadlines for the submission of work (either scheduled or agreed informally, e.g., ahead of planned supervision meetings);
- Timely responses to any email communication from your supervisor.

Note that your supervisor will ensure that you are made aware when progress on the dissertation is below the standard expected and are given guidance as to how the problem should be rectified. If you feel that the dissertation is not proceeding satisfactorily and are unable to resolve the difficulty with your supervisor, you should seek advice by writing to the course convenor. If need be, you may also reach out to your personal tutor or, in a final instance, the Programme Directors.

Finally, remember that 'engagement with supervision' is included in the marking descriptors for this course (see Appendix 1).

Seminar participation expectations

In addition to attending your supervision meetings, you are also expected to attend the four dissertation seminars in Autumn semester. Interactive activities and discussion play a key role in preparing you—along with your peers—to develop your skills and write a strong dissertation. Therefore, it is important that everyone tries their best to attend all seminars to help us create a vibrant learning community. As is standard University practice, I will take attendance at the beginning of class so that I have a good understanding of participation. Please consider speaking with me if you have special circumstances that affect your attendance or participation. Perhaps we can find a way to support you in attending and participating better, and if not, we will come up with another way to ensure you still achieve the dissertation course unit aims and intended learning objectives.

Inclusivity statement

The University of Manchester (as an institution) and I (as instructor of this course) am committed to building an inclusive learning space. The university ensures accommodations are available to persons with temporary and permanent disabilities, to students facing mental health and other personal challenges. If you do not already have such accommodations in place, please feel free to speak with me or your academic advisor so we can support you with this.

Undertaking a dissertation is exciting—but also challenging. As a department, GDI is committed to ensuring the design of this unit is inclusive. The ongoing formative assessment through supervisions and seminar discussion is there to support you, whatever needs you may have over the course of this project. Please *do not hesitate to raise concerns*. If you are feeling confused, unsure, or just have a question that you don't think is a bit 'basic', please share! Please do also provide feedback to both your supervisor and the course convenor; building an accessible, motivating learning environment is an ongoing process, and there will always be improvements to make. We all want to hear from you!

Mental health and stress management resources

If you are feeling overwhelmed with your academic workload, please reach out to me or your supervisor. We can try to help you manage your workload or we can put you in touch with someone with professional expertise in this area. The University of Manchester has trained counsellors available to listen and help:

<https://www.counsellingservice.manchester.ac.uk>

Assessment

This course will be assessed on the following basis:

Assessment Type	Weight	Requirements	Due
Research ethics review form	n/a	Variable	2pm, Thursday, 26 Nov 2026
Presentation	n/a	5-minute presentation to fellow students & supervisors with drinks & snacks	10-12am, Thursday, 3 Dec 2026
Oral presentation	10%	20-minutes recorded	2pm, Thursday 7 Jan 2027
Dissertation	90%	8,000 words	2pm, Thursday, 6 May 2027

Please note that even though the research ethics review form does not count towards your final grade, it is compulsory as you will not be able to carry out your proposed research without ethics clearance.

Please note that you will all deliver **mini presentations** (5 minutes, 3 slides max) and participate in a group discussion on Thursday, **3 December**, during the usual seminar time, 10:00-12:00. This is not part of your formal, summative assessment, but will be an opportunity to share your work and hone your ideas. See the section on seminar details for more information.

Please see below further guidance on each of the three assessment types. However, before proceeding with this guidance, a note on AI.

AI and Dissertation-related assessments

All assessments linked to this Dissertation Course match the University's category B for assessments, i.e., 'AI-minimal. Associated guidance for appropriate AI use and disclosure should be strictly adhered to.

Category B, in this instance, means that AI may be used only in limited ways, as outlined below, and must adhere to related **University [guidelines](#)**, including regarding academic malpractice.

On *not* using AI

Before considering AI uses, please remember that **you are not obliged to use AI**.

The assessments themselves are designed to reward independent work, especially the originality of your theoretical insights and your empirical analysis. To ensure that you meet expectations regarding originality, please pay close attention to the earlier section on 'Dissertation expectations' and to the below assessment instructions and marking criteria (Appendix 1). How to ensure originality will also be a key focus throughout the Autumn seminars and in your supervisions.

More generally, you will **not** be penalized if you prefer to avoid permitted AI uses, e.g., AI editing tools (see below for further clarification). These tools can help polish your writing, removing incorrect or idiosyncratic expressions. But remember, some ‘idiosyncrasies’ resulting from independent writing can be good. They constitute your own authorial voice, which extensive use of AI risks removing in favour of something more generic—and potentially less powerful or expressive.

“The act of writing, and rewriting, and rewriting again helps you think through and hone your ideas. If you let AI handle your writing, you skip the thinking part entirely.”

—Ethan Mollick, ‘[Against “Brain Damage”](#)’, 7 July 2025

Remember also that independently editing your own work will help you learn how to write, communicate, and ultimately, think critically and clearly. You will need these skills across a range of contexts and for diverse forms of expression—for writing, yes, but also for oral presentation, in-person reasoned discussion and debate, negotiations, and similar interactions.

On permitted minimal uses of AI

Some minimal AI uses are permitted in dissertation-related assessments.

Permitted AI uses include the following:

- To assist with literature searches and related, i.e., as an augmented search function
- To help explain words or concepts that you do not understand, i.e., to help with reading comprehension, *not* with writing
- To edit your writing, i.e., checking grammar, translating, adapting tone, simplifying a text, etc., but *not* to rewrite text

Please note that **no** AI-generated text is allowed as part of your dissertation-related assessments. As in, you must **not** present AI-generated wording or paraphrase, even with citation and acknowledgement. Your writing must be your own.

You must not cite a source an AI has named until you have **found and read it yourself**. If you try to use AI as a shortcut, you will not learn, and your analysis will be less insightful—and potentially erroneous.

AI is also **not permitted to analyse your data on your behalf**. You must execute and understand your data analysis yourself. You cannot use AI tools to code interviews, run analytical tests, or draw conclusions on your behalf unless you have independently designed and justified the methodology, and can personally verify every step of the analytical process.

More generally, whenever using AI, you must do so in a critical and engaged way. You should **always begin and end with your own independent work**, even when using it to edit for grammar, fluency, etc. AI tools may help refine your work but should never replace it.

We will discuss what critical and minimal AI use entails throughout your dissertation seminars and supervisions, including why this critical use matters beyond academic assessments! But the below table includes some initial examples of bad and better uses of AI.

Table 4 - Bad and better uses of AI

Bad uses	Better uses
Identifying source material for an assignment	
You ask an AI tool to summarise some academic papers and base your work on these summaries.	You ask an AI tool to help you search for relevant literature on a given theme. You then identify the texts most relevant to you and read and take notes on them, basing your work on the resulting critical insights. You also compliment AI searches with other strategies for finding literature, e.g., looking up interesting sounding or important texts cited in your readings.
Helping to edit text	
You use an AI tool to rewrite a chunk of text in a more academic style.	You ask an AI tool to <i>suggest</i> edits to improve grammar, fluency, spelling, or formatting. You then review the suggestions, ensuring you understand the rationale behind them and selecting which to keep and which to reject.

After completing an assignment, it is a University requirement to **disclose your AI use**. You must submit with your video podcast and essay:

- **An AI Use Disclosure Statement** – A one-page declaration of whether and how AI was used, and confirmation that your use complies with the category. Separate versions for individual and group assignments.
- **A full AI Use Disclosure Record** – A table setting out each tool, what you used it for, your prompts, and what you did with the output.

You will find template disclosure statement and record documents **available in Canvas**. Please see the below assessment instructions for details on how to submit the statement and record for the two assessments.

If you have any doubts or questions about what AI use is permitted, then please contact the course convenor and/or your supervisor. You are also strongly encouraged to read the full [GDI Guidance and Resources on Responsible AI Use](#).

*“... The deeper risk is that AI can actually hurt your ability to think creatively... First, once you see AI's ideas, it becomes much harder to think outside those boundaries. AI's suggestions, even mediocre ones, can crowd out your own unique perspectives. Second, people don't feel as much ownership in AI generated ideas, meaning that you will disengage from the ideation process itself. So how do you get AI's benefits without the brain drain? The key is sequencing. **Always generate your own ideas before turning to AI. Write them down, no matter how rough.**”*

—Ethan Mollick, [‘Against “Brain Damage”](#), 7 July 2025

Ethics application, confirmation of title, and risk assessment

While this element of your assessment does not count towards your final mark, **all students are required to complete a [Confirmation of Dissertation Title, Ethical and Risk Assessment Form](#) by 26th November 2026 latest** (early submissions are welcome, as explained below).

You will need to **download the Confirmation of Dissertation Title, Ethics and Risk Assessment Form from the Dissertation Canvas site** (see the section, ‘Assessment & Feedback: Ethics application’).

It is essential that you complete this form carefully following the instructions within it and using the guidance documents attached to the assignment instructions on Canvas. Once completed, you should submit it to the specific Confirmation of Title, Ethics and Risk Assessment assignment submission folder, which you can also find under ‘assignments’ in the Canvas site.

For those who are not planning to pursue data collection requiring ethical approval, the process will be more straightforward. However, the form you must submit still requires you to confirm your project title and description, including details regarding: (1) your project justification and research aims/objectives; (2) description of data collection methods; (3) description of data analysis methods.

Risk assessment

You should consider whether your dissertation research will constitute a ‘risk’ of some description. If you will be going off campus to complete your data collection, then you should complete a risk assessment for this and must inform SEED Estates and the SEED Placements and Fieldwork Team via the following MS Form at the link [here](#).

Detailed guidance on which risk assessment is appropriate for your data collection activities alongside guidance on how to complete the University approved templates can be found in the programme handbook, the relevant information from this can be read here:

[Programme Handbook Information](#)

It is essential that you discuss whether you require a risk assessment for your data collection with your supervisor and if needed which template is appropriate to use for your study. You **MUST NOT** collect any data until either your supervisor has agreed that a risk assessment isn't required or if a risk assessment is required that yours has been completed appropriately and approval has been granted by the relevant member of staff (see programme handbook for further details on this).

Ethics review

Prior to starting any recruitment, data collection, or research, you must ensure that you have completed the University's [Ethics Decision Tool](#). The tool will advise whether ethical approval is required for your specific project. If you wish you can complete the Ethics Decision Tool with your supervisor but if this is not possible, take a screenshot of the outcome and share it with your supervisor for discussion. You should retain a copy of the toolkit outcome to include in your Confirmation of Title, Ethics and Risk Assessment form. You must then agree the next steps for your project with your supervisor.

If both you and your supervisor agree that ethical approval is not required for your project then once your Confirmation of Title, Ethics and Risk Assessment form has been signed off, you can proceed but you must ensure that you comply with all [best practice requirements](#), including GDPR, informed consent and data storage.

If you agree that ethical approval will be required for your project, you then need to decide what type (i.e. school level or full UREC). To do this, please ensure you read the [SEED Student Intranet pages](#) on applying for low or medium risk review. If your study meets all mandatory criteria for either low or medium risk school review, then you can apply for approval using this route. However, if your study does not meet all of the mandatory criteria, you must apply for full UREC review. More information on the UREC process can be found on the [Research Ethics website](#).

It is also advisable to check the timescales associated with each type of review. Please note:

- **High risk UREC application** – This requires a minimum of 12 weeks from the point of submission.
- **Low and Medium Risk applications** - For applications processed within SEED, administrators aim to screen low and medium risk school applications and assign to a reviewer and/or chair as appropriate, within 5-10 working days of receipt. Where committee review is appropriate (usually for medium risk applications only), the majority of applications are reviewed within 10 working days. Chairs' initial decisions following administrator checks, and committee review where needed, are issued within a further 5 working days. During peak periods, this process can be delayed due to the large volume of applications we process, but most low risk applications receive a decision within 10 days and most medium risk applications receive an initial decision and feedback as appropriate within 20-25 working days from submission.

We strongly advise that all undergraduate students adapt their dissertation projects such that they require either no ethical approval or a low-risk application. If you think your project may require an ethics application, whichever level, then please consider submitting it early. While 26th November 2026 is the latest students can submit, nothing prevents you from an early submission enabling us to expedite the process.

Once you have decided on the route of ethical approval that is appropriate for your project, you need to log on to the online [Ethical Review Manager \(ERM\)](#) to create a new ethics application.

Ensure you choose the correct route of review in Section A and answer all questions on the form. Also, be sure to include any relevant attachments such as participant information sheets, consent forms, data collection tools (i.e. interview schedule, focus group schedule, questionnaire, etc) and advertisements. These can be found at <https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/rbe/ethics-integrity/ethics/app-prep/>

Before any recruitment or data collection can begin, you must ensure that your ethics application has been: EITHER reviewed by your supervisor and logged by admin, *if low risk*; OR reviewed and approved by the SEED Ethics Committee or UREC via the Ethical Review Manager (ERM system), *if medium to high risk*. Any required/suggested revisions made by the Committee must be reviewed, your form and supporting documentation updated and then resubmitted back to the Committee for final approval in the ERM system. You must ensure that you receive formal confirmation of ethical approval by email and PDF attachment before you can start your dissertation project.

As all ethics applications are submitted via the Ethical Review Manager (ERM), please read our [guidance on completing the ERM form](#), use the information bubbles next to all questions in the online application form and read our [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) document. **Please use all of these resources before contacting your supervisor with questions.** If there is anything in these resources or the application that you need clarification of, please contact your supervisor in the first instance and if necessary, they will contact the SEED School Ethics Chairs for guidance. These resources will also be useful to consult for those with exempt projects to ensure ethical research is conducted.

Further information on good research conduct, misconduct and policies and guidelines can be found on our [research governance, ethics and integrity webpage](#) on the central University website.

Please also see the additional **useful links in Appendix 1** of the [Confirmation of Dissertation Title, Ethical and Risk Assessment Form](#), including for UoM approved templates for participant information sheets and informed consent forms which can be accessed on the Canvas assignment.

Recorded oral presentation

Whether you are a researcher, a policymaker, or similar, oral presentations are a common way to summarise and road-test your ideas. In this case, imagine you are preparing a presentation for an academic conference where you intend to share early-stage research, i.e., your framing and plans for a new project. In an actual conference, your audience would provide comments and questions. In this case, your supervisor will assess your work and offer feedback.

What to cover

We recommend you cover the following in your presentation:

- **Research topic and motivation** – What is your research topic? Why is it an important area for research? Why did you choose it?
- **The problem/puzzle/challenge/point of interest** – What's at stake with this topic? What do we need to know more about? Use your answer to frame your...
- **Research question** – What is the research question you are addressing?
- **Literature review** – Briefly identify and review the key bodies of literature and debates that speak to your question. Use this review to explain: How are you engaging with,

challenging, and/or building on this literature? How are you using it to frame your analysis?

- **Your research design** – Please see the above section on ‘dissertation expectations’ for details regarding your research design, including the requirement to incorporate **primary data sources**.

In terms of format, you should **(a)** prepare a PowerPoint and **(b)** record yourself with the PowerPoint visible through screenshare. You can cite academic and other sources using in-text citations in your PowerPoint and include a **slide at the end with your bibliography**. The presentation should be no longer than 20 minutes.

Use the final slides of your PowerPoint for your **AI Use Disclosure Statement** and your **AI Use Disclosure Record**.

Recording instructions

In terms of recording tools, you can use Canvas Studio, which you can access via the icon to the left of your screen when in Canvas (see opposite). You are also welcome to use Microsoft Teams, or any other software with which you are familiar. Both Canvas Studio and Microsoft Teams enable you to easily clip your video if there is a section you want to edit out.



For additional guidance on **how to record** your video, you may find these YouTube tutorials useful for Canvas Studio:

- On recording, see [here](#)
- On editing, i.e., how to do a simple cut and trim, see [here](#)

For guidance on how to record and edit in Microsoft Teams, see written instructions [here](#).

Marking criteria

The presentation—both the PowerPoint and the verbal delivery—will be assessed in a manner consistent with GDI’s marking criteria (see the BSc in Global Development [Programme Handbook](#), Appendix 1).

Assessors will pay particular attention to:

- **Content** – Whether the presentation clearly explains your research topic and question, cogently reviews relevant literature and debates with reference to peer-reviewed academic sources, and introduces a robust research design, including a justification of what methods and data you will use, **including primary data sources**.
- **Insight and originality** – How well you justify the research topic, including **why you personally find it important**, how insightfully you review the literature, drawing out key tensions, debates, and their significance, and how effectively you develop your original research design, including your use of primary data sources.
- **Structure** – Whether the material is organised clearly, and the argument is well-structured.
- **Presentation** – Whether the presentation demonstrates an ability to communicate academic content effectively to non-specialist audiences in terms of slide design and verbal delivery.

Formative feedback

The course convenor will provide tips for designing a PowerPoint and oral presentation during Seminar 2 (Week 4, 24 October), and you will be able to ask questions about the assessment. You can also request formative feedback on your ideas during the seminar session in Seminar 4

(Week 9, 28 November). However, crucially, you need to meet regularly and discuss your ideas with your assigned dissertation supervisors, who will provide the most sustained one-to-one support.

This assessment assesses Intended Learning Outcomes i., ii., iv., v., vii., and viii.

Summative feedback

You will submit both your PowerPoint and the recorded video of your oral presentation via Canvas. For detailed submission instructions, please see the 'Assignment' section in Canvas.

Your supervisor will aim to provide summative feedback on your presentation within 15 working days of the submission date. Feedback will be provided via Canvas. If you want to discuss your summative feedback, please make an appointment with your supervisor during their office hour.

Dissertation

The main assessment on this course is an 8,000-word dissertation worth 90% of your course mark. Note that the word count includes chapter footnotes and endnotes, quotations, and tables. It does not include the bibliography.

For details regarding what to include and how to approach your dissertation, please see the above 'Dissertation expectations' section. Remember that the use of **primary data sources** is a key requirement.

Your dissertation will usually be marked by your supervisor, although we cannot guarantee this due to staff leave, ill health, etc. The dissertation will also be double marked by another member of staff.

You can find a complete outline of the dissertation **marking descriptors in Appendix 1**, including expectations in terms of the overall quality of the dissertation (which assesses all intended learning outcomes), knowledge and originality (learning outcomes i., ii., v. and vii.), analysis (i.-iv. and vi.) style and presentation (iv.), and referencing (iv.), and engagement with supervision (i., viii.).

For resources to support you through dissertation writing, please attend all seminars. The course convenor will be adding **additional resources to Canvas** in conjunction with these seminars over the course of the Autumn semester, including guidance on refining your topic, structuring your dissertation, writing, formatting, proof reading, plagiarism, and more.

Finally, additional guidance is available through the library! There are several **online courses** (see [here](#)), including one relating specifically to dissertation writing (see [here](#)). You may also be interested in the library **drop-in sessions** where you can benefit from in-person guidance on a range of skills (see [here](#) for timetables and information about how to book on). For further resources, check out the library's 'My Learning Essentials' section (see [here](#)).

When submitting your dissertation, include your **AI Use Disclosure Statement** immediately after your cover sheet and your **AI Use Disclosure Record** after your references and before any appendices.

Formative feedback

One of the key advantages of the dissertation is that you will have numerous opportunities to receive formative feedback throughout the year, both during the Autumn seminars and, most especially, from your supervisor, who will meet with you regularly, assess your oral presentation,

and provide written feedback on up to two thirds of your dissertation draft before submission. This is an exceptional chance to work through and improve your writing and analysis.

Summative assessment

You will submit your dissertation via Canvas. For detailed submission instructions, please see the 'Assignment' section in Canvas.

Your supervisor will aim to provide summative feedback on your dissertation within 15 working days of the submission date. Feedback will be provided via Canvas. If you want to discuss your summative feedback, please make an appointment to see me during my student consultation hours (i.e. see below).

Seminar details & reading

Below is an outline of each seminar session with a brief list of recommended readings. Please note that unlike your other courses, *there are no required readings on this course*. This is because you will need to use your independent study time to research your own dissertation idea. I nevertheless recommend readings for each of the seminars in case you would like further guidance to help supplement your learning. I will periodically add more resources to Canvas, including lectures slides, activity briefs, and the like, so keep an eye out for new material there.

Seminar 1 – Introduction: Dissertation types, topics, & project planning (w/c 28 Sept)

Welcome to the dissertation! Often, the hardest part of any research project is getting started. With that in mind, this first workshop has three main aims:

1. To inform you about **how the dissertation works** and on how to do well—including through effective time management and planning. You will also have a chance to ask any questions you might have.
2. To explore **different approaches to writing a dissertation and what makes for a good dissertation topic**. Given that you were already asked to identify a topic, many of you will have a sense of what direction you plan to take. However, there is a big difference between, one, identifying an area of interest and, two, refining that interest into a viable research topic, question, and design, which is what this workshop will address.
3. To introduce—as part of the broader discussion about dissertation topics and approaches—what kinds of **primary data sources** you may drawn on for your research.
4. To ensure you **understand the ethics review process** and adapt your topic choice, research design, and **project planning** to ensure that, if needed, you submit an ethics application in a timely manner. Please also read the ethics-related information in the ‘Assessment & Feedback’ section.

Below are a few key references to draw on throughout your dissertation:

- Thomas, Gary. **How to Do Your Research Project: A Guide for Students**. 4th edition. London: SAGE, 2023. *[A basic how to guide]*
- Ackerly, Brooke A, and Jacqui True. **Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science**. 2nd edition. London: Macmillan Education, 2019. *[All the basic guidance you need, but re-evaluated and augmented from a feminist perspective]*
- Swetnam, Derek, and Ruth Swetnam. **Writing Your Dissertation: How to Plan, Prepare and Present Successful Work**. 3rd edition. Oxford: How To Books, 2000. *[An accessible guide to the mechanics of dissertation writing—from time management through to dissertation structure and writing style]*
- Crawford, Gordon et al., eds. **Understanding Global Development Research: Fieldwork Issues, Experiences and Reflections**. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2017. *[As it is not expected that you conduct original field research, this text will mainly help you expand your horizons and reflect on approaches to fieldwork for further studies]*

Seminar 2 – The literature review: Sourcing & reviewing literature (w/c 13 Oct)

Learning to identify and review relevant literature effectively—including by retracing key research trends and debates—is vital to honing your own research focus and critical analytical skills. Through a mix of mini-lectures and hands-on activities, this workshop will introduce effective strategies for sourcing references and structuring a literature review.

We will also discuss the (mis)uses of AI, including ‘principles for appropriate use’ as set out in relevant [GDI Guidance and Resources on Responsible AI Use](#). Please see the section on ‘AI and dissertation-related assessments’ for additional details.

Note I will also discuss expectations for the first assessment, the oral presentation, in this seminar as well as the ethical review process, so do not miss!

In addition to the key texts from the last workshop, you may find the below material useful:

- **Oliver, Paul. *Succeeding with Your Literature Review: A Handbook for Students*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2012.** *[While we may think we know how to write a literature review, this book breaks the task down for you in a clear, accessible way]*
- **Mollick, Ethan. ‘Against “Brain Damage”: AI can help, or hurt, our thinking.’ 7 July 2025. Available [here](#).**

Seminar 3 – Research designs: Methods & data collection (w/c 27 Oct)

This week we are joined by **Dr. Lawrence Ado-Kofie**. We will divide the session in two.

Lawrence will spend the first hour reviewing key lessons from your Year 1 Course on quantitative methods, engaging you in activities to help reflect on how you can best make use of quant methods in your dissertations. Michaela will then guide you through the same but for qualitative methods in the second hour of the workshop.

For additional readings, revisit your Year 1 course handbooks on quantitative and qualitative methods.

Seminar 4 – Writing bootcamp: How to structure & write your dissertation (w/c 14 Nov)

You can have fantastic ideas, but they may become muddled due to poor structure and unclear writing. Conversely, some students resort to abstract prose when they only have a vague idea of what they are trying to say. Writing with clarity thus helps you articulate ideas both to your reader *and to yourself*.

This workshop will address the important topic of how to structure your analysis, particularly in a lengthy piece of writing like a dissertation. It will also address presentation and style, plus adequate referencing. Writing is itself a skill. Writing *with style* can help you think critically, develop your arguments, and share your ideas, making them more accessible (and enjoyable!) for diverse audiences.

Revisit recommended texts from earlier weeks as well as the following on writing and style:

- Williams, Joseph M, and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. Twelfth edition. Boston: Pearson, 2017.
- Strunk, William, E. B White, and Roger Angell. *Elements of Style*. Fourth edition. Pearson new international edition. Harlow: Pearson, 2014.

Seminar 5 – Presentations! Share your project with fellow students and supervisors (w/c 1 Dec)

For this last group meeting of the Autumn semester, we will all gather—students and supervisors—to hear about your dissertation projects. All students will prepare five-minute presentations (three PowerPoint slides max) and present in turn, leaving time for group questions and comments. The presentations are not part of any formal assessment but may help you prepare your longer, 20-minute presentation due in January. They are also a great chance to hear about the interesting work of other students and to receive feedback (and encouragement) from students and supervisors. We'll also share in some drinks and snacks, celebrating your work and the end of the semester!

Appendix 1 – Dissertation marking descriptors

Note on primary data analysis & methodological choices: On this course, **"primary data"** means material that the student selects, compiles, and analyses themselves and that has not already been analysed for them. This is broader than the usage in some disciplines. It includes data generated through original research (interviews, surveys, observation) and data compiled through desk-based research (documents, press coverage, existing datasets). It excludes other scholars' findings, summaries, and commentary, including commentary that accompanies a dataset. See the Dissertation Guidelines, Table 1, for the boundary. Where a student's data falls outside this definition, markers should treat the dissertation as not having met the primary data requirement and reflect this in the mark.

When assessing analysis of primary data, markers should **credit ambitious and well-justified methodological choices**, even where execution is flawed, over safer, more simply executed alternatives. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Rigorous descriptive analysis (e.g. tracing structural patterns, distributions, or change over time in a dataset), which is used to support a claim in the overall argument. **N.B.** This is distinct from description. A student who summarises what a dataset contains, or narrates a sequence of events, without identifying a pattern, comparison, or trend that does argumentative work, has not carried out descriptive analysis, however much data they cover;
- Inferential methods (e.g. regression analysis);
- Original data collection (e.g. designing and administering a survey, conducting original interviews);
- Qualitative methods (e.g. discourse analysis, process tracing, etc);
- The identification and systematic analysis of a substantially larger corpus than the minimum expected (e.g. 30+ news articles spanning several years, systematically analysed using appropriate methods as above);
- Synthetic analysis that draws on a diverse range of primary and secondary sources to develop and apply a theoretical framework—for instance, a political settlement analysis explaining the impact of settlement configuration on industrial policy outcomes—where the ambition lies in the synthesis and framework application rather than a single method applied to a single body of primary data.

A flawed but genuine attempt at any of these should not be marked down relative to a cleanly executed but undemanding one (e.g. sorting a small, conveniently available set of sources into self-evident categories, like for or against a particular policy, without a stated method or sustained interpretation), provided the method/analytical approach was an appropriate choice for the material and the interpretation remains credible overall.

On AI use: Please remember that all dissertation-related assessment falls under category B for assessments, i.e., 'AI-minimal. See the section in the handbook on appropriate AI use for further details.

Range/class (%)	Mark descriptors
Outstanding First (80+)	Overall: Outstanding, potentially publishable.

	Knowledge & originality: Outstanding insight and highly sophisticated understanding with a nuance and depth that demonstrates clear independence of thought. Evidence of extensive independent study and deeper comprehension that extends considerably beyond what was taught. Comprehensive knowledge of topic and associated literature. Analysis: Approach is original and strongly analytical, with a clear, argumentative approach taken to the evaluation of authors and evidence. Primary data is engaged with sustained rigour: an appropriate volume of data is identified or collected, analysed using a method well-suited to the material, and interpreted with genuine analytical sophistication rather than description alone. Consistently engages with the nuances of the topic, including a high degree of sophistication in the interpretation, to provide a genuinely original answer to the question. Style and presentation: Writing is always clear and concise. Structure is clear from the introduction and throughout. Tidy and visually appealing. Professionally formatted. Formatting guidelines (font, spacing, etc.) followed. Demonstrates considerable attention to presentation. Referencing: Impeccable referencing, both in-text and in the reference list. All works in the bibliography are cited in the body of the work. No improvements could have been made to referencing. Engagement with supervision: You engaged fully and proactively with the supervision process, at all stages, with regular meetings through first and second semester. Your supervisor has seen drafts of written work, had a chance to review and discuss your primary data during the analysis stage, and where feedback was given, you have responded to it in ways that are clearly evident in the style, content, and conclusions of the final dissertation.
High First (75-79)	Overall: Excellent Knowledge & originality: Excellent insight and sophisticated understanding of both main content and nuances of the topic. Knowledge is applied accurately and with some deeper insights. No significant errors or omissions. Evidence of independent study and comprehension that extends well beyond what was taught. Evidence of extensive reading in breadth and depth, resulting in strong knowledge of the topic. Analysis: Approach is strongly analytical, with a clear, argumentative approach taken to the evaluation of authors and evidence. Primary data is engaged with rigour: an appropriate volume of data is identified or collected and analysed using a suitable method, with strong analytical interpretation that goes beyond description, though it may fall short of the fullest sophistication. Consistently engages with the nuances of the topic, including independence of mind in the interpretation, to provide an answer to the question which is somewhat original. Style and presentation: Writing is clear and concise. Structure is clear from the introduction and throughout. Tidy and visually appealing. Shows clear awareness of professional standards. Formatting guidelines (font, spacing, etc.) followed. Referencing: Excellent referencing, both in-text and in the reference list. All works in the bibliography are cited in the body of the work. May have very small, superficial errors on one element. Engagement with supervision: You engaged fully and proactively with the supervision process, at all stages, with regular meetings through first and second semester. Your supervisor has seen drafts of written work, had a chance to review and discuss your primary

	data during the analysis stage, and where feedback was given, you have responded to it in ways that are clearly evident in the style, content, and conclusions of the final dissertation.
Low First (70-74)	Overall: Excellent Knowledge & originality: Signs of sophisticated understanding of main content and many nuances. Knowledge is applied accurately and contains many insights. May have minimal errors and omissions. Evidence of independent study and comprehension extending beyond what was taught. Evidence of significant reading in breadth and depth. Analysis: Approach is analytical, with a clear, argumentative approach taken to the evaluation of authors and evidence. Primary data is identified or collected in adequate volume and analysed using an appropriate method, with the analysis consistently moving beyond description. Execution may be imperfect, including the application of more ambitious methods, provided the interpretation remains credible overall. Recognises nuances on most points and demonstrates some independence of mind in the interpretation, to provide an independently minded answer to the question. Style and presentation: Writing is clear and concise, though there may be brief lapses. Structure is clear from the introduction and throughout. Tidy and visually appealing. May contain minor lapses but shows clear awareness of professional standards. Formatting guidelines (font, spacing, etc.) followed. Referencing: Excellent referencing, both in-text and in the reference list. All works in the bibliography are cited in the body of the work. May have very small, superficial errors on a couple of elements. Engagement with supervision: You engaged fully and proactively with the supervision process, at all stages, with regular meetings through first and second semester. Your supervisor has seen drafts of written work, had a chance to review and discuss your primary data during the analysis stage, and where feedback was given, you have responded to it in ways that are clearly evident in the style, content, and conclusions of the final dissertation.
High 2.1 (65-69)	Overall: Very good Knowledge & originality: Good understanding of main content and understanding of nuances on most key points. Knowledge is applied accurately and contains some insightful reflections. May contain very minor errors and some omissions. Evidence of independent study and comprehension beyond what was taught. Considerable reading in breadth and depth. Analysis: Approach is a mixture of description and analysis, with an argumentative position taken on key questions and a recognition of some of the nuances of the topic. Primary data has been identified or collected in adequate volume, with an appropriate method identified, but its analysis may lean towards description rather than sustained interpretation, may not be applied consistently across the data, or may show more significant flaws in execution, including in ambitious methodological attempts. The argument is explicitly linked to the question. Style and presentation: Writing conveys the ideas well and is generally concise. Structure generally clear with minor lapses at most. Tidy and visually appealing. May contain limited errors in the correct application of formatting. Formatting guidelines (font, spacing, etc.) followed.

	Referencing: Very good referencing. May contain some errors in the formatting of in-text or bibliographical citations, but all of the appropriate information is included. All works in the bibliography are cited in the body of the work. Has limited, superficial errors. Engagement with supervision: You engaged properly with the supervision process at all stages, with meetings throughout first and second semester. Your supervisor has seen drafts of written work and had a chance to review and discuss your primary data analysis. There are clear signs of how supervisor feedback has had an impact on the style and content of the final dissertation.
Low 2.1 (60-64)	Overall: Good Knowledge & originality: Sound understanding of main points and some understanding of key nuances. Knowledge is applied accurately with a few insightful reflections. May have minor errors or omissions. Evidence of study and comprehension that sometimes moves beyond what was taught. Familiar with main sources and ideas with some additions. Analysis: Approach is mainly descriptive but demonstrates critical analysis on some points, questioning some of the authors and putting forward a position. Primary data is identified or collected and shows some analytical treatment, even if largely descriptive, inconsistently applied, or limited in volume or methodological fit. Execution may be markedly imperfect, including in ambitious methodological attempts. A lack of methodological ambition—treating primary data purely descriptively, with no identifiable method of analysis attempted—should be regarded as a weakness at this band, even where the rest of the analysis is competent. Offers a clear answer to the question. Style and presentation: Writing conveys the intended meaning but is occasionally confusing and could be more concise. Structure generally clear with some minor lapses. Tidy, though containing some minor errors in the correct application of formatting. Formatting guidelines (font, spacing, etc.) followed. Referencing: Good referencing. Contains some errors in the formatting of in-text or bibliographical citations, but all of the appropriate information is included. All works in the bibliography are cited in the body of the work. Has persistent superficial errors. Engagement with supervision: You engaged properly with the supervision process at all stages, with meetings throughout first and second semester. Your supervisor has seen drafts of written work and had a chance to review and discuss your primary data analysis. There are signs of how supervisor feedback has had an impact on the style and content of the final dissertation.
High 2.2 (55-59)	Overall: Satisfactory but routine. Knowledge & originality: Satisfactory understanding of main points with some errors and omissions on smaller points. Knowledge is applied accurately but superficially to most points. Evidence of study and comprehension of taught material. Familiar with main sources and ideas. Analysis: Approach is accurate but descriptive, providing narrative. Needs critical analysis and a more argumentative approach. Primary data may be present but is treated narratively rather than analytically, described or reported rather than interrogated using any identifiable method. Offers an answer to the question. Style and presentation: Writing usually conveys the intended meaning but could be more concise. Some repetition of ideas, but all material is relevant. Structure is not always clear.

	Reasonably well-presented but contains some persistent errors. Most formatting guidelines followed. Referencing: Satisfactory referencing. Provides enough information to find the original sources but contains consistent errors. All works in the bibliography are cited in the body of the work. May be missing some of the smaller details of reference information or have consistent formatting errors. Engagement with supervision: You engaged with the supervision process, although in a relatively passive and irregular way and with few meetings in first semester. Some aspects of the work (such as your data analysis, or drafts of key sections, or an early iteration of the design) may not have been offered for supervisor review, or feedback given has had limited impact on the content and style of the final dissertation.
Low 2.1 (50-54)	Overall: Adequate Knowledge & originality: Uneven understanding, with some points poorly understood and errors or omissions on some key points. Knowledge is applied accurately to the key points. Evidence of study and comprehension of taught material. Evidence of reading main sources and engaging with key ideas. Analysis: Approach is mostly accurate but descriptive, reporting the key ideas without evaluation. Needs to develop counterargument and analysis, taking a more argumentative approach. Primary data, where present, is reported rather than analysed with no method of analysis meaningfully applied. The overall answer to the question could have been clearer. Style and presentation: Writing is sometimes difficult to understand. Some repetition and occasional inclusion of irrelevant material. Structure is not clear in many places. Reasonably presented but contains some persistent errors that give an untidy effect overall. Most formatting guidelines followed. Referencing: Satisfactory referencing. Provides enough information to find the original sources but contains consistent errors. Most works in the bibliography are cited in the body of the work. Missing some of the smaller details of reference information and has consistent but superficial formatting errors. Engagement with supervision: You engaged with the supervision process, although in a relatively passive and irregular way and with few meetings in first semester. Some aspects of the work (such as your data analysis, or drafts of key sections, or an early iteration of the design) may not have been offered for supervisor review, or feedback given has had limited impact on the content and style of the final dissertation.
Third (40-49)	Overall: Basic Knowledge & originality: Limited understanding of issues raised. Knowledge is applied accurately to a few key points but with errors and omissions of many other points. Evidence of study and comprehension of some of the taught material. Some engagement with key ideas and sources. Analysis: Approach demonstrates variable understanding of the topic and requirements and is very descriptive. Narrates from a single perspective that is limited in scope. Primary data, if used at all, is engaged with superficially or in passing, without sustained or systematic treatment. The overall answer to the question may be unclear. Style and presentation: Writing is difficult to follow, with some sentences not understood. Significant repetition and inclusion of some irrelevant material. Lacks a clear overall

	structure but still has some flow. Has untidy and inconsistent formatting. Some formatting guidelines followed. Referencing: Passable referencing. Provides enough information to find the original sources but contains extensive errors. There may be errors where sources do not appear both in the body of the text and the reference list. Contains formatting and content errors on most entries. Engagement with supervision: You engaged with the supervision process only intermittently. There is little sign of how you have responded to any feedback that might have been given and as a result the supervisor has had little chance to influence your study/design or any element of the final dissertation.
Compensatory Fail (30-39)	Overall: Poor Knowledge & originality: Shows awareness of a very limited range of key content and skills but struggles to apply the knowledge. Identifies key ideas but contains errors and omissions on most key points. Poor understanding of taught material. Limited engagement with key ideas and sources. Analysis: Approach indicates significant weakness in understanding the topic and requirements of the question. The approach is wholly descriptive and misses many key ideas. Primary data is largely absent or referenced without any meaningful attempt at analysis. The answer to the question is unclear. Style and presentation: Writing is very difficult to follow, with some ideas not understood. Significant repetition and inclusion of irrelevant material. Structure is not clear with frequent breaks in continuity. Needs significant attention to presentation. Untidy and inconsistent formatting. A few formatting guidelines followed. Referencing: Poor referencing. Shows very weak understanding of referencing standards. References, where given, are poorly formatted. Missing key information about the sources. Indications of bibliography padding or lack of sufficient referencing that raises questions about potential academic misconduct. Contains formatting and content errors throughout. Engagement with supervision: You engaged with the supervision process only intermittently, and mostly towards the final deadline. There is little sign of how you have responded to any feedback that might have been given and as a result the supervisor has had little chance to influence your study/design or any element of the final dissertation.
Fail (<30)	Overall: Insufficient Knowledge & originality: Makes an attempt but indicates insufficient awareness of the requirements and lacks key content knowledge and skills. Inaccurately identifies key ideas and contains errors and omissions on all key points. Significant misunderstanding of taught material. Lacks engagement with key ideas and sources. Analysis: Approach indicates that the question and topic have not been understood. The approach misses most key ideas, and it is unclear how the information presented is linked to the topic. There is no meaningful engagement with primary data, or its relevance to the argument cannot be established. The answer to the question is very unclear. Style and presentation: The standard of writing significantly interferes with the ability to convey the intended ideas. Significant repetition and frequent inclusion of irrelevant material. Structure is not clear with the coherence between ideas difficult to follow. Needs

	significant attention to presentation. Untidy and inconsistent formatting. Formatting guidelines not followed. Referencing: Poor referencing. Shows no understanding of referencing standards. References, where given, are poorly formatted. Does not provide enough information to find the original sources. Indications of bibliography padding or lack of sufficient referencing that raises questions about potential academic misconduct. Contains extensive formatting and content errors. Engagement with supervision: You did not adequately engage with the supervision process with few to no meetings or highly irregular meetings all clustered towards the final deadline. There is no sign of how the supervisor has had any influence on the final dissertation.
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