



Department of Public Policy
Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy

Dissertation Guidelines

M.A. Public Policy Leadership
M.Sc. Public Policy and Strategic Management



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1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

This booklet contains useful guidelines on the development and writing of your dissertation research for the Master of Arts degree in Public Policy Leadership and the Master of Science in Public Policy and Strategic Management.

The document is divided into four main sections: an overview of a dissertation; its contents; formatting and style and dissertation templates together with some checklists. General guidelines such as these may not cover all circumstances. Some adjustments may be necessary in individual cases. It is therefore important that you consult the University regulations and guidelines (links below), the Department's administration and your research supervisor for specific advice and guidance on matters regarding the design and content of your study. Some matters and required documentation do change over time and it is therefore important that you abide by the latest requirements.

University Guidelines

Periodically, the University of Malta issues guidelines that may be relevant to students preparing for their dissertation. It is therefore important that you regularly visit the website of the University of Malta. The following are some relevant links related to your postgraduate programme.

Regulations

Statutes, regulations and bye-laws

<https://www.um.edu.mt/r/about/governance/statutesregulationsbyelaws/general>

Postgraduate Regulations –

https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/460672/PG_Regs_2021_Normal.pdf

MA Public Policy Leadership Regulations –

https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/218402/MAPublicPolicyBL2014.pdf

MSc Public Policy and Strategic Management Regulations

https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/356754/MScbls2018-web.pdf

Research Ethics and Data Protection

Research Ethics and Data Protection procedures and forms - <https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism Guidelines

https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/436651/UniversityGuidelinesonPlagiarism.pdf

Office of the Registrar: Policies and Forms

Office of the Registrar: <https://www.um.edu.mt/registrar>

UM policies and guidelines:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/registrar/policiesguidelinesforms/policiesguidelines>

UM forms: <https://www.um.edu.mt/registrar/policiesguidelinesforms/forms>

Submission of dissertation:

[Declarations](#) by postgraduate student

https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/254320/authenticityformpg.pdf

Submission of dissertation /thesis for examination form

https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/121105/submissiondissertationorthesis.pdf

Electronic Dissertations - <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/dissertations>

Guidelines for submission of final copy:

https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/404970/ETD_Guidelines_22.pdf

UM Campus life, facilities and services:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/students/>

Registrar's Website for Students (forms) - <http://www.um.edu.mt/registrar/students>

1.1 THE DISSERTATION

In partial fulfillment of the postgraduate degree you are reading for, you are required to undertake and complete a dissertation. The aim of a dissertation is to explore in depth a specific theme, or rather, a very particular aspect of that specific theme. It is recommended that you do not approach a dissertation topic with a preconceived idea of what the findings will be. You may have a hypothesis, but that hypothesis needs to be tested through your research.

The Dissertation is an academic piece of writing seeking to answer a specific research question. In most cases, a strong theoretical framework should be the basis of the research that is to be undertaken. The dissertation must therefore build on previously published scholarly literature. Reference to official documentation may also be made. It is imperative that whenever any concepts, ideas, data and/or texts are drawn from scholarly literature, official documentation or other sources, such sources are duly acknowledged and appropriately referenced.

The process leading to successful completion of your dissertation includes:

- a) Active participation in four dissertation research seminars and delivery of presentation of the student's research work-in-progress – PPL5019;
- b) The completion of a written dissertation and successful defense during a viva voce examination – PPL5009.

DISSERTATION TIMELINE: M.A. Public Policy Leadership

At the end of the first year of the course, the Department of Public Policy will organize an information seminar for MA Public Policy Leadership students who are moving to their second year of study of the degree. This event will provide initial guidelines on the dissertation and the importance of reading to identify potential themes and related research questions.

Students are to dedicate time to read and explore possible themes for their dissertation with a view to selecting a title for the dissertation.

Indicative timeline	Dissertation Proposal
February/March	Second-year MA Public Policy Leadership students will be invited to attend a session to discuss what is expected in a dissertation proposal.
April	The proposal is to be completed and submitted to the Departmental Secretary in April . The student's proposal is evaluated by the MA Dissertation Committee. The Committee may approve or reject dissertation proposals. If a dissertation proposal is rejected, it is returned to the student for resubmission by June. The student may propose a supervisor. However, the Department of Public Policy will make the final decision relating to the assigned supervisor. The student will be informed of the approval of dissertation proposal and the name of the supervisor by the Department's secretary. The student is to communicate with the appointed supervisor thereon.
May/June	The student is to contact the assigned supervisor to set the first dissertation meeting.
Summer after Year 2	Students are expected to work on the literature review during this period.
September	MA Students are to maintain regular contact with and seek the advice of the assigned supervisor. Students are to draft each chapter and submit it to the supervisor for review. Students are to attend four compulsory workshops* which are organized during Year 3 of the course, conduct the research, write the dissertation and defend the research in a viva-voce examination. Dates for the four workshops will be established.
November	Workshop 1: Research Scope, Context, Literature Review (marks to be allocated)
January	Workshop 2: Research Methodology (marks to be allocated)
April	Workshop 3: Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation (marks to be allocated)
May	Workshop 4: Discussion of Results, Contribution to Scholarly Literature and Conclusions from the Research (marks to be allocated)
May	Hand in complete dissertation draft to the supervisor for review. Use the appropriate formatting, style and dissertation templates in this document. Make revisions based on the supervisor's final recommendations. View document: <i>'Checklist for submitting drafts and final copies.'</i>
May/early June	Dissertation - Final Submission View document: <i>'Final Submission Guide'</i> and links on page 5. The deadline for submission will be communicated by the Department of Public Policy.

June/July

Each student will defend the research s/he conducted in a viva. The Dissertation Board will convene on an agreed date and the student will be informed of the details by the Departmental Secretary. The student is asked to leave the room so that the examiners can debate and discuss the outcome of the viva. The student is called in and informed of the outcome. The Dissertation Examining Board may require the student to make amendments to the dissertation. The Board will indicate the timeframe within which the revised dissertation, incorporating the amendments, is to be submitted.

July

Departmental grading. External Examiner's review and grading of dissertations.
Issue of official dissertation marks.

DISSERTATION TIMELINE: MSc Public Policy and Strategic Management

September	<p>The Department of Public Policy will organise an information seminar for students reading for a MSc in Public Policy and Strategic Management in the first semester. This event will provide initial guidelines on the dissertation and the importance of reading scholarly literature to identify potential themes and related research questions. Students will also be informed about what is to be included in a research proposal.</p> <p>Students are to dedicate time to read and explore possible themes for their dissertation with a view to selecting a title for the dissertation and presenting their research proposal.</p>
December	<p>The proposal is to be completed and submitted to the Departmental Secretary in December. The student's proposal is evaluated by the MSc PP&SM Dissertation Committee. The Committee may approve or reject dissertation proposals. If a dissertation proposal is rejected, it is returned to the student for resubmission. The student may propose a supervisor. However, the Department of Public Policy will make the final decision relating to the assigned supervisor. The student will be informed of the approval of the dissertation proposal and the name of the supervisor by the Department's secretary. The student is to communicate with the appointed supervisor thereon.</p>
January	<p>The student is to contact the assigned supervisor to set the first dissertation meeting.</p>
January to November (except August)	<p>MSc Students are to maintain regular contact with and seek the advice of the assigned supervisor, attend four compulsory workshops* which are organized during this period, conduct the research, write-up the dissertation and defend the research in a viva-voce examination (In January of the following year).</p> <p>The tentative dates for the four workshops are indicated below. The co-ordinator of your programme will inform you in case these dates need to be changed.</p>
March	Workshop 1: Research Scope, Context, Literature Review (marks to be allocated)
April	Workshop 2: Research Methodology (marks to be allocated)
July	Workshop 3: Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation (marks to be allocated)
September	Workshop 4: Discussion of Results, Contribution to Scholarly Literature and Conclusions from the Research (marks to be allocated).
October	<p>Hand in complete dissertation draft to the supervisor. Use the appropriate formatting, style and dissertation templates in this document.</p>
<i>Please note and respect that your supervisor will be on summer recess during August.</i>	
September	<p>Make revisions based on the supervisor's final recommendations. View document: <i>'checklist for submitting drafts and final copies'</i></p>
November	<p>Dissertation - Final Submission</p> <p>View document: <i>'Final Submission Guide'</i></p>
January	<p>Each student will defend the research s/he conducted in a viva. The Dissertation Board will convene on an agreed date and the student will be informed of the details by the Departmental Administrator.</p>

The student is asked to leave the room so that the examiners can debate and discuss the outcome of the viva. The student is called in and informed of the outcome. The Dissertation Examining Board may require the student to make amendments to the dissertation. The Board will indicate the timeframe within which the revised dissertation, incorporating the amendments, is to be submitted.

February

Departmental grading. External Examiner's review and grading of dissertations.
Issue of official dissertation marks.

1.2 RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Students are required to submit a research proposal as directed by the Department of Public Policy. Students are to prepare and submit a document of 2000 words to explain what the research will focus on, providing background, a review of key literature, indicative research question(s) and the proposed methodology. It is recommended that two methodological tools are adopted in the process of the research. Any major ethical or data protection issues are to be highlighted in the proposal.

In addition, kindly fill in the Research Proposal Form presented overleaf.

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTANCY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY

Research Proposal Form for Postgraduate Dissertations

1. STUDENT AND DISSERTATION DETAILS

Student Name and ID Number:	UM Email Address:
Course:	Year of Admission:
Proposed Title:	
Proposed supervisor and/or name of a suitably qualified person with whom the proposed study has been discussed.	

2. POLICY/SECTOR/ORGANISATION/INSTITUTION/EVENT/SITUATION

Provide some background information on the policy/sector/organisation/institution/event/situation under analysis for the purpose of this research.
--

3. MOTIVATION

What is it that prompted your interest in this subject? Is another organisation also interested in the subject?
Concisely explain the objectives of your research (ie, what is it that you would like to achieve through your research? What do you aim to explore and/or to understand and/or analyse?)

4. OUTLINE OF YOUR PROPOSAL

Please set out, as clearly and concisely, as you can, the leading question or hypothesis of your proposed study, and explain why you consider this research important.
Identify existing research on the subject and explain what your study could contribute to the present stock of knowledge. Attach a bibliography of journal articles, books, reports and other resources that you have read in preparing the proposal.
Explain what kinds of data you will collect and how you propose to collect it. What difficulties might you encounter in this regard?

5. SIGNATURE AND DATE

--

6. FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Considered by Departmental Dissertations Committee on: Decision:

1.3 DISSERTATION TOPICS

M.A. and M.Sc. dissertation topics can be inspired by:

1. Course study-units
2. Scholarly literature or official documents
3. Work experience and public policy issues.

1.4 SUPERVISOR - STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

What makes an effective supervisory relationship? Factors affecting a good quality relationship include:

From the supervisor

- Constructive and timely feedback on your work
- Encouragement and praise when deserved, identifying areas for improvement
- Trust, support, and understanding
- Clear direction and expectations
- Consistency - in direction and feedback
- Communication
-

From the student

- Commitment to the research
- Regular and good quality work submitted to the supervisor
- Belief in the supervisor's judgement
- Flexibility and adapting to the supervisor's schedule
- Revising own work also based on supervisor's feedback

What is expected of YOU?

- Read the scholarly literature.
- Get the job done – independently.
- Your responsibility is to carry out your work to the expected standard
- Although there should be opportunities for processing ideas, your supervisor will expect outcomes.
- Communicate
- Talk to your supervisor. Express your needs, challenges and intentions in writing. On a regular basis write out what you are doing and any difficulties you are encountering. Writing assists you to process and clarify your intentions allowing your supervisor to give more thorough feedback. Also consider writing up a summary after each meeting.
- Show initiative and create interest.

- Supervisors are very busy so the onus is on you to initiate contact, schedule meetings, seek input, show enthusiasm.
- Be sensitive to the supervisor's schedule.
- Give your supervisor time to review your work.
- Some supervisors might prefer to receive many short bits of writing on a regular basis while others prefer a complete draft. Find out what works best for you and your supervisor.

What should you expect from your supervisor?

Unclear or incorrect expectations about the supervisor's role and responsibilities often lead to frustration. Although supervision styles and time availability vary widely, you can reasonably expect the following from your supervisor:

- Regular communication (meeting, email)
- Assistance with planning your research (e.g., goal setting, tools and resources, recommendations for scholarly literature)
- Support - someone who stands by you
- Room to make mistakes
- Advice and general guidance
- Someone who recognises your abilities and boundaries with respect to work/life balance

What you should NOT expect

- Explicit instruction on direction and day-to-day research activity
- An editor for your writing
- Instant turnaround and feedback on your writing
- Your supervisor to be your friend
- Your supervisor to always be available when you want

If you perceive issues that may result in conflict, raise them with your supervisor. Other people you can consult if your supervisory relationship has run into problems are the Head of Department and/or the course coordinator.

1.5 AMENDING THE TITLE OF THE DISSERTATION

The Department will communicate the approved title for your dissertation. As your research progresses, you may need to refine your title. Any changes to the originally approved title, need to be approved by your supervisor and Faculty Board. For this reason, you need to fill in the Request for a Change in Dissertation form. Your supervisor must endorse this form. You are then to submit the form to the Departmental Secretary.



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy	Request for a Change in Dissertation/Thesis Title		
Student's Name & Surname		I.D. Number	
Current Title			
New Proposed Title			
Reason for Change			
Student's Signature		Date	
Supervisor's Recommendation			
Supervisor's Name		Supervisor's Signature	



**Faculty Board
Recommendation**

Dean's Signature

Date

1.6 DIGITISATION OF DISSERTATIONS

It is important to use a text format that will eventually make digitization possible.

Please prepare your document on an up-to-date word processing file that can be later transformed to .pdf file. Lecturers, secretaries and library staff cannot and may not change any part of the dissertation.

Familiarise yourself with the digitization process as early as possible in your dissertation journey. Refer to the following link: <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/dissertations>.

1.7 RESEARCH ETHICS GUIDELINES

The University acknowledges its responsibility for protecting the rights and welfare of human research subjects and acknowledges that it bears full responsibility for the performance of all research involving human subjects and for complying with laws and regulations that relate to such research.

The University recognises the need for appropriate additional safeguards in research involving subjects which are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children (under the age of 18), prisoners, mentally disabled persons or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons. An Ethics and Data Protection Committee approval will be required if your research involves the aspects above, including the use of personal data.

All students must fill in the Ethics and Data Protection form. The Department of Public Policy will organize an information session about the research ethics process. However, please refer to the University of Malta's website for Ethics and Data Protection Guidelines and forms <http://www.um.edu.mt/urec>. You are to discuss your research ethics and data protection form with your supervisor who must endorse it.

1.8 PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism, that is, the wilful representation of another person's work, without the acknowledgement of the sources as one's own or the deliberate and unacknowledged incorporation in a student's work of material derived from the work (published or otherwise) of another, is unacceptable. Such practice will incur disciplinary action. Refer to the plagiarism and collusion guidelines on:

https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/436651/UniversityGuidelinesonPlagiarism.pdf

1.9 EXTENSION, FAILURE, RESUBMISSION

A student may request an extension of the deadline for the submission of a dissertation not later than two weeks before the deadline, which will be approved if the reason provided is deemed valid by the Board. The extension given may elicit a reduction in marks, if it is deemed that a valid or sufficient reason was not given. Reduction in marks may be applied provided it would not change a mark from a pass to a fail. Please refer to the following regulations.

https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/24868/Assessment_Regulations.pdf

When submitting the dissertation late and without a valid or sufficient reason, the examiners will, in accordance with the Faculty Board decision, deduct marks as follows:

If the dissertation is:

Submitted within 2 weeks – deduction of marks is 10% of the maximum mark possible for that component

Submitted within 4 weeks – deduction of marks is 20% of the maximum mark possible for that component

Submitted within 6 months – deduction of marks is 30% of the of the maximum mark possible for that component

Submitted late without request – 0 F

A student can fail a dissertation if the standards set by the Department are not met. In this eventuality, the student will have to resubmit his/ her work and will be penalised according to the work required on the re-submitted work. Deadlines for resubmission can be obtained in writing from the Department following the assessment of your dissertation. Refer to the general guidelines on:

https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/10831/Postgraduate_Harmonised_Regulations.pdf

2. DISSERTATION CONTENTS

There is no specific template or a specified number of chapters for a dissertation. However, students may wish to consider the following outline.

2.1 DISSERTATION OUTLINE

TITLE PAGE
ABSTRACT Students must give a structured abstract of maximum is 250 words in total (including keywords). See “Abstract Template” in this document.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (view template)
TABLE OF CONTENTS (automated format with updated page numbers)
LIST OF TABLES (automated format with updated page numbers)
LIST OF FIGURES (automated format with updated page numbers)
LIST OF APPENDICES
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION Context Research Objectives and Research Questions Practical Relevance Thesis Outline (by chapter)
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW Introduction Literature Themes and Critique 1, 2, 3... Theoretical Framework or Conceptual Framework guiding the research Conclusion (of the chapter, and link to next chapter)
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY Introduction Philosophical underpinnings Research design (providing justification for choices) Sources of data Data Collection Methodology (including sample selection, interviewees) Data Analysis Methodology (per method of data collection) Methodological Limitations and Ethical and Data Protection Considerations Conclusion (of the chapter, and link to next chapter)
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS Introduction Results (section for each data collection method and cross-refer to the literature) Conclusion (of the chapter, and link to next chapter)

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
Main Research Issues
Discussion of Results and Recommendations
Contribution to knowledge
Recommendations for Further Research
REFERENCES
APPENDICES (if applicable)

2.2 DISSERTATION LENGTH – WORD COUNT

The dissertation should be between 15,000 and 20,000 words long. This word limit excludes the title and contents pages, figures, tables, appendices and references. Refer to the postgraduate regulations and to the bye-laws of your course.

Dissertations exceeding this length will require special written permission (email or letter) from the Dissertation Committee.

2.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this section, you should express thanks to those who assisted you in your research. These should be kept to a minimum and include academic supervisors and people who participated in the fieldwork.

2.4 INTRODUCTION

In the introduction, you should introduce the reader to the background of the study and the nature of the problem being considered. It should therefore set the study in context explaining why this study is important, highlighting significant issues, problems and ideas. The aim and objectives should be stated clearly in this chapter. The research question(s) should be specified.

2.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

In a dissertation, a student is expected to provide a critical review of the existing literature on the research topic being studied. Your review should indicate that you have studied existing and recent work in the field. The literature review should be:

- **Source:** the main SOURCE OF LITERATURE can be derived from relevant books and peer-reviewed journal articles according to your research topic, as well as grey literature.
- **Relevant:** Literature used should support your arguments relating to your research question and aim and objectives of the study.
- **Up-to-date:** Recent literature (most literature used has to be published in the past eight years), however it is important that seminal and important work is also included in the literature review.

- **Use the literature to explain your research.** Your aim should be to show why your research needs to be carried out, how you came to choose certain methodologies or theories to work with, how your work adds to the research already carried out.
- **Summarize** the work you read. Decide which ideas are important to your research, and which are less important and can be covered briefly or left out. Look for the major concepts, conclusions, theories, etc. that underlie the work, and look for similarities and differences with closely related work. Adapted from <http://www.languages.ait.ac.th/EL21LIT.HTM>
- **Analyse the literature** A literature review is not a summary of the literature but an analysis of that literature, comparing and contrasting the research and the writings of those who studied your chosen topic before you. The literature must include international scholarly literature.

2.6 METHODOLOGY

For a comprehensive review of research methods refer to:

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., (2020). *Research Methods for Business Students*, 8th Ed. London: Pearson.

The purpose of the methodology is to demonstrate what you actually did in your research so that your reader may evaluate the design, procedure and findings of your study. Justifications for the choice of research design must be provided. It should give a well-documented outline of the methods used so that any other researcher can replicate the research and test it for viability. This is at the core of scientific research and this makes the methodology chapter one of the most important, if not singularly the most important, in any research project, for it is this capacity to verify the research findings by enabling others to conduct a repeat of the research that enables research to be objectively tested. The method section should be well-structured, written in concise, matter-of-fact manner and should provide answers to the following questions: What was observed? How? When? With what results? How were problems dealt with? What was your approach to data collection? What data analysis tools did you use? Refer to specific books and other scholarly literature on the research methods being adopted for the research.

Additional notes on Methodology:

- Review of Data Collection Methods (an in-depth discussion on the chosen methodology relevant to your area of research and a discussion why other methodologies were refuted / not applicable to your research).
- Secondary Data (analysis of the supporting data to be used in research such as published studies etc.)

- Primary Data (where an in-depth description is given of the tools - such as fieldwork, document analysis, surveys carried out, when it was conducted, duration)
- Criteria for Sample Selection (detailed description of how the sample for your study was chosen. This applies for both qualitative as well as quantitative research)
- Pilot Study (prior to actually collecting the data on which you are going to base your research you need to test the tool for clarity, use of terminology – this is the pilot study any changes conducted to the original tool need to be documented)
- Methods of Analysis (discussion of the methods of analysis used, such as statistical analysis, econometric modelling, thematic analysis, content analysis, deconstruction, textual analysis, semiotics, historical analysis etc, and any software tools that were used such as SPSS, NVivo.)
- Limitations (of the methods used, for example access to informants). You should also show how you have tried to overcome such limitations.
- Ethical and Data Protection Considerations: State that the form was filled in and the form registration number. Discuss any ethical or data protection issues and how these were managed.

2.7 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The findings are analysed and the results are presented and discussed with reference to theories and ideas outlined in the literature review.

For a review of qualitative methods refer to the following suggested textbooks and your study units on Research.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. OUP Oxford.

Ratvitch, S., Mittenfelner Carl, N., (2016). *Qualitative research, Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical and Methodological*, Sage, U.K.

Silverman, D., (2011). *Interpreting Qualitative Data, A Guide to the Principles of Qualitative Research* 4th Ed., Sage, UK.

Yin, R.K. (2014). *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, 5th Ed. Sage, U.K.

Refer to specific books and other scholarly literature on the research methods being adopted for the research.

2.7.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

For qualitative research these two software platforms provide excellent analytical tools:

1. **Mind Mapping**

- a. Concept Mapping Online Software such as a. CMap <http://ftp.ihmc.us/> (free) and
- b. Google mind mapping tools, iTunes mind mapping tools
- c. MindManager

2. **NVivo** or similar software available online, designed for the analysis of textual data – such as transcripts of interviews, articles and focus groups. NVivo works on a system of coding of phrases. The principle is similar to mind mapping.

There are several online software applications which will help you analyse your qualitative data. This section is relevant both for Literature Reviews and for Qualitative Data analysis of interview transcripts and focus groups transcripts.

Literature reviews synthesize the key studies and concepts in a particular area and show relationships between studies, and suggest patterns in the body of literature. Good literature reviews require careful organisation of the literature, which can be accomplished through mind-mapping techniques.

The steps to organising ideas in a literature review are similar to constructing a puzzle. Puzzle boxes hold individual pieces and show a picture of the completed puzzle. The individual pieces of the puzzle in the box are like the articles you gather related to your topic. Just as you would first spread all the puzzle pieces out to get a general impression, you read all material to get an overview of the range of concepts, studies and ideas covered. You organise individual ideas into larger groups or themes, just as you would group puzzle pieces according to colour and shape. "Mind-mapping" is a process to help you move from individual ideas (the puzzle pieces) in the literature review to grouping concepts/studies/ideas around major themes (the whole puzzle).

Write down all the ideas that you have identified from reading all the articles. At this point, do not worry about the order of the ideas or how they fit together. It is best to review all the studies to see what themes run through them and, as importantly, what themes are not covered. Identify the holes or omissions in the current literature that led to your dissertation topic.

The second step in mind mapping involves organising single concepts into groups or themes. Summarising each source individually, which is sometimes acceptable in short essays, is rarely appropriate for a dissertation. Unorganised literature summaries are a common cause of failure.

Identify links between ideas. After you write your ideas on a paper, connect the ideas with lines to show how they are related. This helps you distinguish the main ideas from the secondary ones. It gives you a visual picture of all the points in the literature review and how they fit together. Another useful trick is to use colour pencils to circle ideas that are related, using a different colour for each grouping and writing a note about how they are related.

The themes may be used as headings, which identify and group ideas. Now that individual points are organised into related groupings, you can begin to make logical connections between and among groups. It is these connections between studies, concepts and ideas, not just a summary of specific literature that builds the real strength of your literature review.

In terms of logically presenting your argument, decide whether to begin with the general and move to the specific (induction) or go from the specific to the general (deduction). Use a triangle as a visual guide to help you make the decision about how to present concepts and studies. Use an inverted triangle to represent inductive thinking or a regular triangle to represent deductive thinking. Draw a triangle on a piece of paper. Write your ideas inside the triangle as it makes sense to present them. If you start with the general point first, this would go at the bottom of the triangle and the more specific ideas would be written at the top of the triangle.

Mind-mapping can help you organise separate ideas from a vast literature search into a strong, well-organised literature review.

(Adapted from Heinrich, K. (2001), Mind-mapping: A successful technique for organising a literature review. Nurse Author & Editor, Spring 2001, pp.1-3.)

2.7.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

For a detailed review of quantitative data analysis, refer to the following book on Quantitative research: Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., (2020). *Research Methods for Business Students*, 8th Ed. London: Pearson.

Refer to specific books and other scholarly literature related to your quantitative method of analysis. In case you need to use SPSS for your analysis, the University offers short training sessions, at Introductory, Intermediate and Advanced level of use of SPSS.

2.8 REFERENCES

See the section on “Formatting and Style” and “Dissertation Templates”. Full details of all the books and journal articles cited or referenced throughout the dissertation should be included in this section. A reader should be able to identify the exact source and refer to it directly. The Harvard method of referencing is the recommended system. Refer to:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/guidelinespolicies/referencingguides>

https://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/353662/Harvard_Guide.pdf

RefWorks is a bibliographic management software that allows University of Malta registered users to create a database of references by importing citations for books, articles from online databases (such as JSTOR, PsycInfo, IEEE and others) and the Library’s Online Catalogue. The references can then be

used for creating bibliographies for dissertations, long essays, papers and assignments. RefWorks allows users to produce bibliographies formatted in any of the major bibliographic styles and using your chosen referencing style.

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/refworks>

2.9 APPENDICES

Your working methods, data collection tools and results should be showcased in the main text. Appendices should only be used for, and limited to selective, supplementary material, which would be distracting if placed in the main body of the text.

3 FORMATTING AND STYLE

3.1 LANGUAGE

Select a consistent language format: English UK throughout.

3.2 WRITING STYLE

It is recommended, but not mandatory, that text should be written in the passive voice, using third person singular.

The style adopted and hence used in the dissertation needs to be discussed with your supervisor as the nature of the research may necessitate other formats.

3.3 SPELLING, GRAMMAR AND PLAGIARISM CHECK

- Very good grammar and syntax is expected. It is recommended that dissertation drafts and final versions are proof read thoroughly.

Always proof read your copies for good grammar and presentation *before handing in any drafts to your research supervisor*. Check for non-original text through Turnitin. Check for patchwriting. You need to paraphrase. (See Plagiarism and Collusion guidelines -

https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/436651/UniversityGuidelinesonPlagiarism.pdf).

- Research supervisors will NOT act as your proof-readers.
- Use Turnitin to check for non-original text. Your supervisor will need to create the Turnitin function in your VLE site for your dissertation. The entry for your Dissertation VLE will appear in the format <Name Surname – PG Dissertation/Thesis>. For supervisors, the VLE dedicated to each student's dissertation will appear under the entry <PG Dissertations>.
- Special attention should be given to the final version of your dissertation. Read your own work before submitting it. It is your responsibility to ensure that a good piece of work is presented to the Examiners' Board.

3.4 CONTINGENCY

Be prepared for the unexpected such as hard disk failure, problems with the cloud, loss or corruption of back up files and printer failure. Use online backups computer based back-ups (e.g. Dropbox) or USB copies and always keep updated printed copies of your work just in case you overwrite or lose your work.

3.5 GENERAL TEXT

Text should be double-spaced. (If printed, use one side of the page only.) Leave 1 space between sentences. Commas and other punctuation marks are to be followed by a space.

Font	10pt to 12pt Times or Arial or other fonts that are clear and readable
Line Spacing	2.0 line spacing Check that your paragraphs are not preformatted to add extra spaces before and after the body of the text.
Margins	3.5 cm on the left margin 2.5 cm on the right margin 2.5 cm on the top margin* 2.5 cm on the bottom margin* * May include headers and footers in these margins.
Page numbers	Centred at the bottom of the page.
Roman Numbers	(i, ii....) should be used from the first pages (excluding the title page) until the main body of the text where the Introduction commences on page 1.
Alignment	Headings – 'Left Aligned' Paragraphs and other text can be 'Justified' or 'Left Aligned'.
Paragraphs	No indentation, except for bullets and numbered lists. Start new paragraph after two returns.
In-text emphasis	Use italics or bold typeface.
Paper Type	White A4 sheets

3.6 HEADINGS

Please note the guidelines for the main Headings.

Print size	14, Bold typeface
Chapter titles*	Centre or left aligned. Use of capital letters – either all ' <i>Sentence Case</i> ' or ' <i>Capitalise each Word</i> ' format as set by Microsoft Word.
Headings*	Justified left. Use of capital letters – either all ' <i>Sentence Case</i> ' or ' <i>Capitalise each Word</i> ' format as set by Microsoft Word.
Sub-headings*	Use sub-headings together with a numbering system used in this document thus giving structure to your work. Use of capital letters – either all ' <i>Sentence Case</i> ' or ' <i>Capitalise each Word</i> ' format as set by Microsoft Word.
*In Word, pre-formatted chapter titles, headings, subheading, figures and tables as a 'chapter title' can be used to facilitate automatic content listing.	

3.7 HOW TO CITE 'IN-TEXT'

Please use the Harvard style of referencing for your dissertation. Harvard referencing guidelines are available from:

[Harvard Style \(um.edu.mt\)](http://um.edu.mt)

3.8 BIBLIOGRAPHY, REFERENCING AND CITATION

At the end of the dissertation, a bibliography in alphabetical order must be available. You must ensure that all your in-text citations can be found in this list with all the required details. References must be in Harvard style and carefully checked for completeness, accuracy and consistency. Refer to: [Referencing guides - Library - L-Università ta' Malta \(um.edu.mt\)](http://um.edu.mt) and specifically to [Harvard Style \(um.edu.mt\)](http://um.edu.mt).

3.9 FIGURES

All Figures (charts, diagrams, line drawings, web pages/screenshots, and photographic images) should be labelled and listed in the List of Figures at the beginning of the dissertation. Source of data or of the figure should be indicated at the bottom of the figure. You may need to ask for permission to use certain figures and diagrams depending on copyright. You are responsible to check this out.

3.10 TABLES

Tables should be typed and included in the main body of the dissertation. The table should be clearly labelled in the body of the text with corresponding labels being clearly in the List of Tables at the beginning of the dissertation. Any sources of data need to be duly acknowledged by specifying the source at the bottom of the table.

Ensure that any superscripts or asterisks are shown next to the relevant items and have corresponding explanations displayed as footnotes to the table, figure or plate.

4. DISSERTATION TEMPLATES AND CHECKLISTS

4.1 CHECKLIST FOR SUBMITTING DRAFTS AND FINAL COPIES

For draft chapters, final draft and final version submitted to supervisors and the department.

Before you submit any drafts or final documents go through this checklist carefully:

Have I made sure that the following are correct (see guidelines sections in this document for each item)?

- Proof reading, including spell check and grammar check
- General formatting
- Chapter outline as specified in the guidelines for each chapter
- Word count as specified in the postgraduate regulations and the course bye-laws
- Chapter titles
- Headings
- Sub headings
- Paragraph formats
- Figure and table titles and acknowledged sources
- In-text referencing
- Bibliography – is it complete, in the right order and adopting the Harvard referencing style
- List of contents, figures, tables
- Passes plagiarism check in Draft Submission section on VLE. Have I gone through the non-originality report provided by Turnitin and made the required amendments? Did I patch write anywhere? Did I check the plagiarism guidelines to ensure that I do not have any minor or major plagiarism?
- Did I include the Student Declarations Form (Authenticity and Ethics)
https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/254320/authenticityformpg.pdf
- Did I include the Dissertation Submission Form
https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/121105/submissiondissertationorthesis.pdf

4.2 INTRODUCTORY PAGE TEMPLATE

(Version Submitted to the Department of Public Policy)

<DISSERTATION TITLE>

A dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
(name of the degree) University of Malta

Student Name: Adrian Jones

ID Number: 1234567M

Date: XX/5/202X

Word Count: XX, XXX

Dissertation Supervisor: Professor John Borg

4.3 DISSERTATION FRONT COVER TEMPLATE

(Final Version of the Dissertation)

<TITLE OF DISSERTATION>

<Student's Name and Surname>
(Insert the name of the degree)

Department of Public Policy
Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy
University of Malta

202X

4.4 POSTGRADUATE STUDENT DECLARATIONS

Fill in and insert the postgraduate student declarations relating to the authenticity of the dissertation and to the Research Code of Practice and Ethics Review Procedures. Download the latest form from the Office of the Registrar's webpage: [Forms - Office of the Registrar - L-Università ta' Malta \(um.edu.mt\)](https://um.edu.mt/forms) and [authenticityformpg.pdf \(um.edu.mt\)](https://um.edu.mt/authenticityformpg.pdf)

4.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TEMPLATE

Acknowledgements

You may wish to include a thank you note to those who provided guidance, assisted or supported you throughout the process of completing your dissertation.

Acknowledgements should be given to individuals who have provided substantive and supportive help with the research. This usually includes your academic supervisors and any person who was directly involved in your fieldwork, and your family.

4.6 ABSTRACT TEMPLATE

Supply a structured abstract of maximum is 250 words in total (including keywords) including the list below. The abstract should be written at the beginning of the research process.

Abstract

- Purpose
- Design/methodology/approach
- Findings
- Research limitations/implications
- Practical implications
- Originality/value
- Keywords: Give five (5) keywords that reflect the content and context of your work.

4.6 CONTENTS PAGE TEMPLATE

Table of Contents

Page

Declaration of Authenticity and Research Ethics and Data Protection

Abstract

Acknowledgements

List of Tables and Figures

List of Abbreviations

Chapter 1: xxx

Chapter 2: xxx

Chapter 3: xxx

Chapter 4: xxx

Chapter 5: xxx

(under each chapter, include the sections and sub-headings)

Appendices

Appendix 1: xxx

Appendix 2: xxx

Bibliography

4.8 BIBLIOGRAPHY TEMPLATE

Refer to the section in this document on “Referencing and Citations”

Refer to <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/referencingguides> for a guide to referencing.

5 DISSERTATION MEETINGS FORM

Keep a log of your discussions with the dissertation supervisor.

Date of Meeting	Points Discussed/Next Action

6. SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

There are three stages for submitting your dissertation. One stage is prior to the viva voce examination and two are after the viva voce examination.

Prior to the viva voce examination

The deadline for submission of your dissertation is the deadline prior to the viva. At this stage, you are to electronically submit your dissertation in Word and in PDF format to the Departmental Secretary. This is the version that will be sent to your examiners. Hard copies are no longer required.

You are also to upload your final version, in Word, on VLE. You will find a VLE dedicated to your dissertation. It appears as <your name – PG Dissertation/Thesis>.

You are to ensure that the student declarations form (including the declaration of authenticity and the declaration of adherence to ethics and data protection procedures) is included after the introductory page. The form is to be duly filled in, signed and dated.

The submission form, which is to be sent to the Departmental Secretary, must be filled in by the student and the respective supervisor.

Please check your dissertation thoroughly for spelling, grammar and originality.

Post the viva voce examination

At the viva voce examination, examiners will, in most cases, request some amendments to the dissertation. A deadline for submission of the amended dissertation will be set by the viva voce examining board who will also guide the student as to the manner of submission of the amended dissertation. The supervisor will need to oversee the amendments and the board/chairperson is to ensure that the effected amendments are in line with what was requested. Once the mark has been issued, the final submission of the dissertation can be made.

Final submission:

For details and guidelines about how to submit your final version of the dissertation, please refer to:
[Information for students - Library - L-Università ta' Malta \(um.edu.mt\)](http://um.edu.mt)
[Microsoft Word - ETD Guidelines 22 \(um.edu.mt\)](http://um.edu.mt)

It is the students' responsibility to organise the formats and make sure that the requested copies are ready by the dates set by the Department.

7. DISSERTATION GRADING CRITERIA

The Board of Examiners will award a grade for your dissertation and for your defense during the viva-voce examination according to the following criteria.

Presentation.....10%

- Evidence of planning of presentation as indicated by the way ideas have been organised.
- Readability, meaning flow and clarity.
- Good use of English
- Referencing and good use of footnotes

Literature.....25%

- Evidence of wide reading
- Ability to integrate scholarly ideas into research strategy
- Grasp of ideas and handling of material
- Ability to synthesise

Research Strategies.....20%

- Reasoned choice of research strategy
- Correct or appropriate application of research instruments

Treatment of subject.....45%

- Originality
- Clarity of the research question or objectives.
- Use of evidence
- Ability to analyse central issues of subject,
- Effective marshalling & analysis of evidence & primary data
- Clarity of findings & conclusions
- Contribution to discipline and learning using evidence

This mark will account for 80% of the final mark on your dissertation. The marks acquired during the Dissertation Research Seminars will account for the remaining 20% of the final mark allocated for the dissertation. (For students who will be in the third year after October 2023, there will be only one component mark from the written dissertation and viva voce exam accounting for 100% of the mark of the dissertation.)