



Information Sheet for MA Dissertations

All MA dissertations are to follow strictly the norms detailed in this information sheet. Adherence to the department's Text Conventions and Referencing System is mandatory and is taken into consideration when assessing the work submitted. Students are urged to familiarise themselves with this style early in the course and to adopt it when writing essays and other assignments.

1. LENGTH

MA (taught): 15,000–20,000 words, excluding Notes, Bibliography, and Appendices.

MA (by research):

Option (a): 40,000–50,000 words, inclusive of Notes, Bibliography, but not Appendices.

Option (b): 20,000–30,000 words (inclusive of Notes, Bibliography, but not Appendices) plus carefully curated audio-visual material in support of a presentation of artistic practice.

2. TEXT CONVENTIONS & REFERENCING SYSTEM

Theatre Studies follows the [MHRA Style Guide 4th edition \(pdf version\)](#) for text conventions, referencing as per the 'The Author–Date System' (see MHRA Section §7.13, [online here](#)) with its Bibliography (see §8.4, [online here](#)), and all other format matters. **Students should in the first instance refer to the ['Referencing System and Text Conventions'](#).**

3. PRELIMS

The following order should be followed:

- i. Title-page: use the 'Title Page Template for MA (Research / Taught) Dissertations' available [here](#).
- ii. Abstract
- iii. Dedication (if any)
- iv. Acknowledgements (if any)
- v. Table of Contents
- vi. List of illustrations/maps/tables/graphs/etc.

4. SUBMISSION OF TAUGHT MA DISSERTATION FOR EXAMINATION

Students will submit their dissertation as an electronic copy via VLE. MA dissertations are to be submitted by ***the first Friday of September of the Third Semester (i.e. the summer period which, for postgraduate courses, serves as the final semester)***. After the examination, students will submit the final version of the dissertation in electronic format via email to the departmental secretary. Students need to also submit a signed declaration of authenticity. The signed declaration of authenticity will not be part of the dissertation but will be submitted as a separate document.

5. PRACTICALITIES

(a) For Taught MAs: not later than the end of **the first week of the second year**, students are to submit (to the departmental secretary) a short proposal including a preliminary dissertation title.

Students will then be assigned a supervisor so that by not later than Friday noon of the first week of March, they submit (to the departmental secretary) a dissertation title and detailed research proposal. The department reserves the right to the final decision on the matter, which will be forwarded for official approval to the Board of the School of Performing Arts.

(b) Students are to consult their supervisor regularly. For Taught MAs, the submission date of the final dissertation is the first Friday of September. No consultation with the supervisor is to be sought after mid-July.

(c) The supervisor is expected to read and make remarks on each chapter of the dissertation submitted, once only, following which it is the student's responsibility to make the suggested changes and corrections. Towards the end, the student may submit to the supervisor the whole draft of the dissertation in time for the latter to give their final advice – for Taught MAs, this is typically by mid-July.

(d) The supervisor's role is to guide and coach the student in research, methodology, and other skills, as well as to discuss content and interpretation, but it is not their role to proof-read the dissertation or correct errors of grammar or syntax.

(e) Supervisors will keep a log of meetings with students. This will include any appointments and deadlines missed by students without reasonable justification or notification.

(f) Students will complete a Supervision Report Sheet (obtainable [online](#) or from the departmental secretary) within seven days of each meeting. The report will detail progress since the previous meeting, content discussed during the meeting, and agreed course of action for the following meeting.

(g) Meetings may be substituted by other means of communication (e.g. email, Skype, zoom). Students are encouraged to make the most of their communication time with supervisors, to be prepared and to stick to any deadlines and fulfil tasks that have been agreed upon. Students should inform their supervisor of any problems that might potentially impact negatively their progress.

(h) It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the implications of plagiarism and of the University's policy on the matter. See the '[Plagiarism and Collusion Guidelines](#)'.

(i) Although the Taught MA dissertation study-unit (THS5055) is offered in the third (or summer) semester of the second year, students are strongly advised to start work on it as early as possible in the academic year. *It is recommended that students begin the process of identifying a topic for their dissertation in the third (or summer) semester of their first year.*

Further Guidelines for Taught MA Students

YEAR ONE

Semester 2

Week 14

At the end of your second semester, your attention will be drawn to this Information Sheet so that you can start preparing for your dissertation study-unit THS5055. Considering that in Year Two you have only one study-unit in Semester 1, and that the year study-unit (directed studies THS5054) and Semester 2 study-unit (specialised studies THS5053) are dependent on your research interests, it is highly recommended that you start thinking about your dissertation as early as possible. This will enable you to identify and articulate a research area for your dissertation, as well as to be well prepared for the tasks and deadlines ahead.

YEAR TWO

Semester 1

Week 1

By the end of the first week of Year Two, you will submit the following information in the Google Form on the [Theatre Studies Resources](#) page (maximum 500 words) :

- (1) a tentative dissertation title,
- (2) a summary of the proposed dissertation, to include: (i) hypothesis, i.e. *what* you intend to focus upon (be as clear as possible), and (ii) *how* you intend to discuss your hypothesis (including the relevant bibliographical, historical, theoretical or philosophical detail).

The department reserves the right to the final decision on both research topic and supervisor.

You will be assigned a supervisor in November to assist you in formulating a more articulated and detailed proposal for official approval (by the Board of the School of Performing Arts) in early March. You will then meet your supervisor to plan the way forward, including an agreed plan of action.

Semester 2

March

By latest Friday (noon) of the first week of March, you will email the departmental secretary the following information: (1) a dissertation title and (2) a detailed research proposal (maximum 1,000 words, excluding bibliography).

We appreciate that dissertation proposals are subject to change, but they need to have a level of articulation even at approval stage. Typically, a postgraduate proposal starts with a statement of intent in terms of aims and objectives of the research, followed by a brief contextualisation of the proposed project in the existing scholarship and/or practice, possibly an envisaged breakdown of chapters, a clear statement on methodology, and the envisaged trajectory of the work. It should also contain a preliminary bibliography and, preferably, a schedule of work (e.g. month 1: research on XYZ, month 2: write Chapter 1 etc.).

March – April – May

You will continue to work with your supervisor. It is important to follow the agreed plan of action with your supervisor, including the milestones listed below leading up to submission date. It is important to stick to agreed deadlines.

Semester 3 (the summer period)**June – July**

Research, write, and receive feedback from your supervisor.

Mid-July: final advice from supervisor.

August

In ordinary circumstances, your supervisor will not be able to read chapters in August. This should be factored in when drawing up and agreeing upon your plan of action with your supervisor. This will enable you to make the final touches following your supervisor's feedback in July. Accordingly, it is essential that the bulk of the supervision occurs from February to July so that August is reserved for completion-writing time.

September

End of Semester 3: submission of dissertation by noon of the first Friday of September.

Title Page Template for MA Dissertations

Dissertation front page should include:

Title

(centre, bold text, font 18)

Name of student

(centre, bold text, font 12)

Name of tutor

(centre, normal text, font 12)

Requirement and degree¹

(centre, normal text, font 12)

Department, School, and Institution

(centre, normal text, font 12)

Month and year of submission

(centre, normal text, font 12)

¹ Text should be as follows:

MA Research: Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Theatre Studies

MA Taught: Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Theatre and Performance (C21 Studies and Perspectives)

**Dancing with Swords:
Investigating Fencing as a Tool
for Actor Training**

Joanna Borg

Tutored by Dr Joe Pace
Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Theatre and Performance (C21 Studies and Perspectives)

Department of Theatre Studies
School of Performing Arts
University of Malta

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