

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES

EVALUATING A DISSERTATION / THESIS AND PROPOSALS

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There are two phases in the evaluation of the dissertation: (a) the preparation of the proposal and (b) the examination of the actual content of the dissertation following its submission.

The Proposal

When evaluating the proposal, examiners should look at the following features:

- The Title: does the title of the dissertation adequately reflect the thrust and focus of the work?
 - The title must be concise and clear, a title in the form of a question must be avoided;
- The proposal must describe the aims and objectives of the work and why the research topic has been chosen;
- It must include a clear statement of the research question or topic which is being researched.
- The initial literature list provided: does it include the important and seminal works related to the topic being researched? Does it cover the theories and concepts which will be employed in the research/writing of the dissertation?
 - Has the student provided evidence that there is sufficient research material to carry out the research?
- The Research plan and methodology
- Has another thesis or dissertation on the same or a very close/related subject been concluded in the past? (It is the student's responsibility to check this. If important developments have taken place in a particular area, another thesis or dissertation in the same area can be undertaken.)

The Dissertation

The dissertation must be analyzed for the following main features:

Literature Review

The first chapter/s of the dissertation must include the following:

- Core literature review
- The aims/objectives of the thesis

In the first part of the dissertation, the writer must achieve the following:

- Identify relevant concepts and theories related to the subject of the dissertation, show how they are related to one another and point out any contrasts;
- Review the main published works – books and journal articles related to the subject of the dissertation and (especially at post-graduate level) also identify gaps in the literature, i.e. what is not adequately written about, the gap which the student will address;
- Show general trends in the literature – i.e. the direction in which it is developing; how the selected concepts/theories and issues which are relevant to the study have evolved or developed over time;

This chapter must also include a clear statement of the **objectives of the study**.

Methodology

The methodology must be based on:

- A detailed Research Plan and its justification;
- What hypothesis (if any), dependent and independent variables are going to be analyzed and how they are going to be analyzed;
- A strong justification of why and how this methodology will enable the writer to answer the main research question.

Subsequent Chapters

The subsequent chapters must include the analysis or discussion and the final one must include the conclusion which must present a precise summary of all the findings and the results. In the conclusion, writers can also make recommendations or show clearly which theories have been found to have explanatory potential and which not.

Template

The evaluation and marking of the dissertation should follow this template:

The Quality of the literature review	Literature review, quality of the literature identified, identification of concepts/theories and issues, where relevant; related to the subject, aims and objectives of the thesis.	25
Methodology	Appropriateness of the methods identified and originality in their contextualization <i>vis-à-vis</i> the topic of the dissertation.	15
Subsequent chapters – Analytical value of the work	The quality of the data and information obtained, extent of the sources quoted (books and Journals), whether the thesis is descriptive or analytical – level and depth of the discussion, quality of the explanations provided; logical and correct inferences; coherence.	20
Quality of the writing and Format	Use of English, grammar, correct use of language, sentence construction, clarity and lucidity, unity of the work and coherence, level of comprehension; Has the writer used a correct format, an accepted referencing system? Is the bibliography correctly laid out? What is the quality of punctuation, commas, etc...?	20
Conclusions and Findings	Is there a clear statement of the conclusions and findings? Do these relate to the objectives of the thesis as originally stated in chapter one? Is the research question answered? Has the writer indicated new developments in theory or suggested new evidence for further research? Are the results clearly stated? Has the writer managed to convince the reader of the importance and value of the dissertation's findings to European Studies?	20
		100