



L-Università ta' Malta
Centre for Labour Studies

Dissertation Guidelines

Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Honours) **CLS3116 Dissertation**

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1. Introduction

The dissertation is worth **20** credits (ECTS) and requires around **500** hours of work. The aim of the dissertation is to introduce students to academic research and academic report writing. The dissertation allows students to develop their ability to plan, carry out and write an independent research project.

The chosen theme must be directly related to the field of work and human resources and must be approved by the Board of Studies of the course. Students are encouraged to choose a theme that is both original and of value to the local work and human resources scenario.

Each student is expected to submit a separate dissertation.

Students should use the following study units; CLS1113 Quantitative Research Methods, and CLS1114 Qualitative Research Methods and CLS3119 Applied Quantitative Research Techniques / CLS3120 Applied Qualitative Research Techniques as reference. Students should also refer to research methods books, in particular: Bryman, A. (2015). *Social Research Methods*. UK: Oxford University Press. (Or other editions).

2. Dissertation Proposal

An introductory meeting with the students shall be held in which they will be given an overview of the dissertation process and will be instructed to start working on a dissertation proposal.

Each student shall submit a dissertation proposal by 5 October 2023, using the appropriate form supplied by the Centre for Labour Studies. The Board of Studies shall review each proposal and give feedback to the student.

3. Research Ethics Guidelines

The following section provides information on the current research ethics guidelines students are to follow. Students' ethics submissions are handled in conjunction with the FEMA Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). The following guidelines are from FEMA FREC's website, um.edu.mt/fema/students/frec

"The procedures on how ethical issues are reviewed in research are explained in the [University of Malta Research Ethics Review Procedures](#) found on the University Research Ethics Committee's (UREC) [website](#)."

"Researchers (also referred to as applicants) are to follow the guidelines as outlined in the University of Malta Research Code of Practice also found on UREC's website in the abovementioned link. One is also strongly advised to refer to the set of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) on UREC's website."

“The procedure to submit the research proposal is undertaken via an [online form](#), termed URECA, which needs to be filled in and submitted. It is important to note that the previous downloadable forms have been discontinued. The first step is to download the [full replica](#) of the new online form to familiarise oneself with its contents and requirements and to consult with the supervisor as necessary. The research ethics form should then be filled in online; the form itself provides information on the submission process.”

Once students have completed the online URECA process and have indicated whether they are submitting FOR RECORDS or FOR REVIEW, students must inform their supervisor to enter the URECA system, where they must confirm that the form reflects the contents of the research proposal which abides by the **University of Malta Research Code of Practice**. Until this confirmation, the submission will remain pending.

4. The Role of the Supervisor

A supervisor (and if required, a co-supervisor) shall be appointed for each student. The supervisor shall not be related to a student by consanguinity or by affinity to the third degree inclusive or have a dual relationship with the student. The supervisor shall normally be in possession of a Master’s or Doctorate degree.

The supervisor (or the supervisory team when a co-supervisor is appointed) shall be responsible for providing guidance to students under their care in the following areas:

- a) making sure that the study is feasible in terms of the content, research methodology and the time-frame allotted;
- b) assisting students, if required, to refine the written proposal for their dissertation (such proposed amendments need to be submitted for consideration to the Board of Studies);
- c) offering ideas and providing guidance and encouragement on the planning and progress of research (including time-frames) and submission of the dissertation;
- d) guiding students in acquiring and improving knowledge and skills relevant to the subject matter being investigated and appropriate generic skills (such as written communication and research management skills);
- e) ensuring that the students are aware of the manner in which research results are reported and that they understand the implications of plagiarism and other unbecoming academic practices;

Supervisors shall meet students regularly (physically or virtually) to review progress.

Supervisors are not responsible for proof-reading dissertations. Neither is it their responsibility to ensure that dissertations do not contain plagiarised parts (See Section 5 for further details on Plagiarism).

Supervisors should inform the Board of Studies if some major difficulty arises which might prejudice the students’ timely submission of the dissertation.

As part of the Board of Examiners (see Section 7), the supervisor shall participate in the discussion leading to the compilation of the official examination report, as well as agree on a final mark and grade for the dissertation. If there are any corrections to be made, the supervisor shall guide the student accordingly.

5. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the representation of another person's work, without the acknowledgement of the sources, as one's own, or the unacknowledged incorporation in a student's work of material derived from the work (published or otherwise) of another. This is unacceptable and such practice will incur a serious penalty. **For guidance on how to avoid plagiarism consult:**

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

6. Submission of Dissertation for Examination

Prior to submission of a Dissertation for examination, students must upload their Dissertation on VLE (Moodle). Information regarding Turnitin is available at <http://www.um.edu.mt/vle/pds/students>

Each student shall submit **three hard spiral bound** copies of the dissertation for correction by not later than **Thursday, 15 May 2025** to the **Administrative Staff** in (Room 204 / 209, FEMA Building).

When bringing over the hard copies students should bring one separate copy of the authenticity form (**not bound but separate**). The Authenticity Form can be downloaded from the following link:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/centres/cls/studentresources/DeclarationauthenticityformUG.pdf>

7. Examination of Dissertation

A Board of Examiners shall be responsible for determining the marks to be awarded for each dissertation. The Board of Examiners shall be composed of the Director of the CLS (or his/her delegate) as chair, the external examiner if one is appointed, and not less than two other examiners including the supervisor. If a visiting external examiner is appointed to assess or review dissertations, s/he may wish to interview specific students about their dissertation.

In assessing a dissertation, the Board of Examiners shall take into consideration criteria that include:

	Dissertation Element
1	Introduction - Max Marks 5
1.1	Is the research question/purpose clearly stated and well defined?
1.2	Is the motivation for the study stated clearly?
1.3	Is the study linked to the study of Work and Human Resources?
1.4	Has an overview of the dissertation structure been provided in this chapter?
2	Literature Review - Max Marks 25
2.1	Is the Literature Review comprehensive and current, and is it well linked to research question/purpose?
2.2	Is the Literature Review adequately themed and structured?
2.3	Does the Literature Review show understanding of the theory/conceptual framework adopted?
2.4	Does it demonstrate competence in understanding, evaluating and critiquing the material in the Literature Review?
2.5	Have sufficient scholarly sources been used in the Literature Review?
3	Methodology – Max Marks 15
3.1	Does the design align with the research question/purpose/hypothesis, and is it well articulated and justified? (Respondents' Sample / Research instrument and procedure)
3.2	Is the approach to data collection well aligned, articulated and justified?
3.3	Are the approaches to data analysis well aligned, articulated and justified?
3.4	Are ethical issues addressed in a full and mature manner?
4	Findings and Analysis – Max Marks 20*2
4.1	Is the amount and quality of data/verbatim quotes sufficient?
4.2	Are the findings well presented?
4.3	Are the findings well interpreted?
4.4	Does the analysis respond to the research question/purpose/hypothesis?
5	Discussion - Max Marks 20*2
5.1	Does the discussion provide perspective on the findings?
5.2	Does the discussion align with the key research question/purpose/hypothesis?
5.3	Are the theoretical implications discussed?
5.4	Has there been a rigorous regard to accuracy and thoroughness of both the presentation of data/material and claims linked to them?
6	Conclusion – Max Marks 5*2
6.1	Does the dissertation have a well-articulated conclusion, incorporating the major findings of the project and referring back to the research question/problem?
6.2	Does the dissertation reflect on its results and arguments in the context of relevant theory, practice, and /or methodology?
6.3	Is there critical discussion of key issues arising from the research, in terms of what was

	discovered, achieved, established, and argued?
6.4	Are the practical/policy recommendations relevant, feasible and grounded in the findings
6.5	Are future research possibilities discussed?
6.6	Is the conclusion a fair representation of the dissertation?
7	Presentation – Max Mark 10
7.1	Is the dissertation well-structured, orderly and flowing?
7.2	Is the style incisive, fluent, clear and concise?
7.3	Are the syntax, spelling and grammar good?
7.4	Is APA referencing used correctly and consistently?

8. Final Submission after Examination and Digitisation

After receiving feedback from the Board of Examiners, students shall make any requested changes and submit the final soft copy of the dissertation by email to the Administrative Staff of the Centre after the result of the dissertation is published. Students should follow the instruction in the 'ETD Guidelines' available from:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/etd/etdstudents/>

The 'read-only' copy of the dissertations will be forwarded to the UM Library.

For the soft copy of the dissertation which will be forwarded to the library after the correction process, students also need to fill in the authenticity form (without your details) and this should be placed after the title page as stated in the **Library ETD guidelines**.

The form can be downloaded from the following link:

[https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/directorates/registrar/policiesproceduresguidelinesandforms/forms/dissertationsubmissionall/Authenticityformwithoutstudentdetails\(Undergraduate\).pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/directorates/registrar/policiesproceduresguidelinesandforms/forms/dissertationsubmissionall/Authenticityformwithoutstudentdetails(Undergraduate).pdf)

If students require that their dissertation (or any part of it) is embargoed (i.e. not accessible for some years) they need to follow the procedure available from the following link:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/etd/faqs/>

9. Structure of the Dissertation

Dissertations are normally based on the following outline. However, the structure of each dissertation may have to be adapted according to the particular study that will be carried out. For example, dissertations based on qualitative methodologies may have results and discussion within the same chapter/s:

Title Page
Abstract
Acknowledgements
Table of Contents

List of Tables
List of Figures
Chapter1 Introduction
Chapter 2 Literature Review
Chapter 3 Methodology
Chapter 4 Results *
Chapter 5 Discussions*
Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations
References
Appendices

* When adopting the qualitative approach Chapter 4 and 5 can be amalgamated into one chapter: Findings, Analysis and Discussion which should be between 5,000 to 6,000 words

The following notes are meant to guide students in the writing of specific sections of the dissertation:

Title page

This should include: the title of the dissertation; the name of the author; the title of the Course, Centre for Labour Studies, and the month and year of completion of the dissertation. (See Appendix).

Abstract

The abstract should provide an overview of the study in all its aspects. It should be around 250-300 words long and should answer the following questions.

- What did this research set out to do and why?
- How did it seek to do it? (methodology)
- What were the general findings?
- What do these suggest?
- What conclusions were reached?
- What are the implications of these?

The abstract is normally written towards the end of the research process.

Acknowledgements

This section should be used to express thanks to those who assisted the student in his/her research.

Table of contents

This should include: the chapter headings; subheadings; and appendices. If applicable, there should also be on separate pages: a list of tables; a list of figures.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction should introduce the reader to the background of the study and the nature of the issue being considered. It should therefore set the context of the study, explaining why it was important to carry out this study, highlighting significant issues, problems and ideas. The aims / objectives and hypotheses (or research questions) should be clearly stated

in this chapter (Some researchers prefer to include these in the methodology chapter; this is also considered an acceptable practice). The introduction normally also includes a summary of the proceeding chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The student is expected to provide a critical review and analysis of the existing literature on the research topic being studied. The student is not expected to identify every book and article that has ever been written on the subject; however, the most influential articles of the chosen area should be highlighted. The majority of references should represent articles that: are published in relevant peer-reviewed journals; are attributed to primary sources; are clearly relevant to the specific area of study; and with the exception of historical work, should be current (published within the last ten years). In order to build an argument, students are encouraged to also utilise theories or opinions which conflict with their own. The APA system of referencing should be used throughout.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to indicate the methodology used to carry out the study so that the reader may evaluate the design, procedure and findings of the study. The outline must be clear enough so that any other researcher can replicate the study, a core element of scientific research. The following outlines the general structure of the Methodology chapter:

The design – What design did the study employ? What is the rationale for choice of method (why were other methodologies refuted?) If these have not already been included in the introduction, also specify the aims / objectives and hypotheses (or research questions) of the study.

The sample/informants – How was it chosen? Who participated? How many persons were involved? How were they selected?

N.B. If the study is qualitative, around 8 interviews must be carried out. If the study is quantitative, a minimum of around 100 participants must be involved.

The measures /instrument – Which measure/s were used? How and why were they chosen or developed?

The procedures –What steps were taken to carry out the empirical part of the research?

Data Analysis - How was the data analysed? (E.g. Thematic Analysis?; or use of inferential statistics etc?.

The ethical considerations – Did the participants encounter any risk?, Where there any data protection issues etc?

Chapter 4: Results (Quantitative)

The findings should be presented in an appropriate format, which varies according to the methodology used.

In the quantitative research approach, this chapter should only contain a description of the results and should not include its analysis and discussion. Where tables and figures are used, they need to be clear, concise and well-labelled. If statistical methods are used, they should be described with sufficient clarity to allow the reader to verify the reported results.

Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Discussion (Qualitative)

In the qualitative research approach, the **Findings, Analysis and Discussion** can be merged in the same chapter/s. Students must make use of verbatim quotes to sustain their claims, making sure they are appropriately analysed and discussed in relation to the Key Research Question and were applicable linked to the Literature Review.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations (Quantitative)

1. This chapter should draw together all the findings of the research and link them to the aims / objectives, and hypotheses as well as the literature discussed within the literature review. Have the aims/ objectives set at the beginning been met? If not, why not? Were the hypotheses confirmed or disconfirmed? Have the research question/s been answered?
2. What are the theoretical and practical implications arising from the findings? Students must be careful with their generalisations and interpretations (Tentative words are normally preferred). All recommendations should be based on evidence.
3. What were the limitations of the study?
4. Highlight suggestions for future research in this area.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations (Qualitative)

1. This chapter, which brings your study to a close, should clearly (but briefly) state how the research questions have been answered. Here you are expected to make broad statements and reflections that sum up the most important insights gained through your research in the previous chapter (Findings, Analysis and Discussion). Focus on the key findings which are most relevant to the aim of the study and the key research question/s.
2. Reflect on the theoretical implications arising from the findings. You must be careful with your interpretations and conclusions and ideally use tentative words (the study suggests or the study indicates etc)
3. Indicate what are the practical implications arising from your study and what policy recommendations can be made
4. Reflect and indicate what were the limitations of the study
5. Highlight suggestions for future research in this area.

References

Full details of; all books, journal articles and other sources referenced throughout the dissertation should be included in this section. Readers of the dissertation should be able to identify the exact source and refer to it directly. The APA referencing system must be utilised.

Appendices

The Appendices should include selective, supplementary material which is distracting when placed in the main body of text. Only material which is necessary for a full understanding of the study should be included. These may include important forms, questionnaires or interview schedules, tables and other information supportive of the study.

10. Word Limit and Word Count per Section

The length of the dissertation should be **18,000 words (+/- 10%)**. This word limit does not include the title page, abstract, acknowledgements, table of contents, lists of tables or figures, the final reference list or the appendices. Extensions of the word limit may only be granted by the Board of Studies in exceptional circumstances. Dissertations in excess of the word limit, unless approved by the Board of Studies may result in a deduction in the overall mark.

The length of the different sections of each dissertation may vary. However, the following is an **indicative word count**:

	Indicative word count
Abstract	250-300
Chapter 1: Introduction	750-2,000
Chapter 2: Literature review	4,500-5,200
Chapter 3: Methodology	2,000-2,500
Chapter 4: Results *	2,500-3,000
Chapter 5: Discussion *	2,500-3,000
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations	1,500- 2,000

* When adopting the qualitative approach Chapter 4 and 5 are amalgamated into one chapter: Findings, Analysis and Discussion which should be between 5,000 to 6,000 words

11. Style and Presentation

Page layout - International Standard Size A4 (29.7x 21cm) paper should be used and printed on one side only.

Pagination - The Title page is counted but not numbered. The Abstract, Acknowledgements, Dedication, Table of Contents etc must be in Roman numerals (Starting from: ii, iii, iv). The main text numbering (1,2,3,4, etc.) starts again from the Introduction chapter. Page numbers should appear at the bottom right.

Font - Use Arial or Times New Roman, font size 12 for the main text, font size 16 bold for Heading 1, left aligned; font size 14 bold for Heading 2, left aligned; and font size 13 in Italics for Heading 3, left aligned. Follow instructions in Section 12.

Numbering of headings, tables, figures and appendices - To avoid excessive nesting depth, not more than 3 levels of headings should be used, with chapter headings being at level 1 and numbered sequentially as 1, 2, 3 etc. Level 2 headings (subheadings) should be numbered as 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 etc. while level 3 headings should be numbered as 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 etc. Tables and Figures within the text should either be numbered first according to the chapter and then consecutively (e.g. Chapter 1: Table 1.1, Table 1.2, Table 1.3 and Figure 1.1, Figure 1.2. Chapter 2: Table 2.1, Table 2.2, and Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2 and so on), or numbered consecutively throughout the whole dissertation (e.g. Table 1, Table 2 and Figure 1, Figure 2 and so on). If more than one appendix is included, these should be numbered separately and consecutively as Appendix 1, Appendix 2 etc.

Spacing - 1.5 line spacing is to be used in the main text. Single spacing is to be used for table of contents, list of tables, list of figures, long quotes (longer than 40 words), tables, any footnotes, references (a blank line should be left between each reference), and appendices. The text should be justified to the left. Leave an extra space between paragraphs (Do not indent new paragraphs). Long quotes should be formatted as a separate single-line-spaced paragraph indented from the left margin by an additional 10-15mm.

Margins - Left-hand margin of 4 cm. Top, bottom and right-hand margin of 2.5cm. Footnote/s should appear at the bottom of the relevant page.

Spelling - English (UK).

References - The American Psychological Association (APA) - 7th Edition referencing system must be used consistently throughout the dissertation. Order the reference list alphabetically by author. Apply a hanging indent to each reference list entry. This means that the first line of each entry is left aligned, while the second and subsequent lines are indented. Reference list entries should have a hanging indent (the Publication Manual recommends 0.5" or 1.27cm—the default in Microsoft Word

12. Typing and proof reading

The dissertation is to be written in English. Good grammar, syntax and presentation are expected. The dissertation should be proofread. Tutors will NOT act as proof readers.

Prepare for the unexpected - Software might get corrupted and hard disks may fail.

Students should always make backup copies of their dissertation (for example, by sending such copies to themselves through email) and indicate the version clearly by date. Students are also recommended to keep hard copies of their work.

Appendix 1

Title of Dissertation

Name and Surname of Student

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
Degree of Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Honours)

Centre for Labour Studies
University of Malta

May 2025