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## **DISSERTATION GUIDELINES**

### **Title Page**

This should detail the University name, the Faculty name, the Award (e.g. Master of Dental Surgery, B.Sc. Dental XXXXX), the Candidate's name and surname, the dissertation title and the month/year of submission.

### **Abstract**

Every dissertation must have an abstract. An abstract provides a precise summary of the entire project in 300 words. The abstract is not included in the 10,000word count (See end of document).

The abstract should contain:

- The purpose of the study
- The research question
- The methods used
- The overall findings and conclusions
- Recommendations and implications for practice

### **Declaration/s**

Please refer to the latest guidelines available at:

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

Include the forms under

### **Submission of long essay/dissertation/thesis (for all students)**

### **Dedication**

This is optional. You might want to dedicate your work to someone special.

### **Acknowledgements**

This page is optional. However, there will definitely be individuals who have assisted you during the completion of your project, whom you might want to thank – such as your dissertation supervisor, any advisors, individuals who provided support along the way, individuals who may have assisted you with proof reading, or colleagues who have read your work and shared their opinions on your work. It's pure courtesy to acknowledge these individuals and this is the place to do this.

### **Table of Contents**

This should be detailed and accurate, covering all chapters, their respective sections, and the appendices. There should be separate lists for the tables and/or figures appearing throughout the dissertation.

The table of contents should one of the last items you check when finalising your thesis.

### **Abbreviations**

You might find that there are various words or phrases that you are using time and time again – and therefore it is sometimes easier to abbreviate them. If you use any abbreviations in the body of your dissertation, then you must create a list of the abbreviations used at the start of your dissertation.

### **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

Provides the background and setting needed to put the problem in proper context and justifies the need for the study.

### **Chapter 2 – Review of Literature**

- Presents the results of previous research related to your study topic, organized by the key variables in your study. A conceptual model showing the relationships among variables related to your research problem can also be included.
- For survey research or other quantitative study, Chapter 2 indicates the theory upon which the study is based. Qualitative studies usually build theory rather than apply or test theory. Thus, in these studies less attention is given to theory in Chapter 2.
- Contains facts, trends, and points of view (opinions) as drawn from the professional literature in relevant areas. The presentation of these key points should flow from general trends and concerns to the specific problem/challenge that you will address in your thesis research.

- Provides a logical lead-in to a clear statement of the problem, which is followed by the purpose of the study and the research aims/ objectives that you will pursue.

This chapter should conclude with the PICO question guiding this study (if applicable) and finish off with null hypothesis/ hypotheses.

- The aims/objectives of the study should be clearly and numerically linked to the null hypotheses

### **Chapter 3 –Methodology**

- Describes in detail the step-by-step procedures used in collecting and analyzing data.
- Possible sections of Chapter 3 include research design, subject selection, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, chapter summary and others.
- Several research methods may be followed, all of which have distinct characteristics.

The choice of methodology selected by the researcher is truly dependent upon the style of the research question. In other words, the researcher's selection of an appropriate research methodology is dependent on the research question itself and how best it is addressed.

Therefore, the methodology section is an important aspect of the thesis/dissertation itself. In this section the author clearly outlines how the data was collected and analysed.

#### **I. Materials**

There should be a clear description of the materials or subjects used for the study. Specific elements of the data collection instrument/s (questionnaires, medical histories, interviews, observations and equipment) should be identified and their intended plan of use outlined. The rationale for their selections should be provided.

This is very important to:

- 1) Validate the research outcomes, by allowing other research to reproduce or replicate the study (one of the tenets of science),
- 2) Specify how the ethical and/or data protection requirements of engaging human or animal subjects are being safeguarded (see below) and
- 3) Allow applicability of the research findings of your study to other future researchers and/or to evidence-based clinical practice approach.

#### **Recruitment of human subjects:**

The researcher should define how and why the subjects were recruited in great detail. Academic and/or other institutions will typically provide strict guidelines on the relevant information required and readers are advised to follow them rigorously.

## **II. Methods**

The methods section should describe the steps used to investigate the research problem and the justification for the application of specific actions or techniques used, thus permitting the reader to critically evaluate the study's overall validity and reliability. Consequently, this section should also be corroborated with evidence of previous research supporting the techniques used. The methodology may include quantitative and/ or qualitative approaches.

## **III. Statistical Analysis**

Author should provide statistical tests used in detail.

Include testing of normality of the data, any univariate descriptions, bivariate analyses, and if used multivariate analyses.

Present to the reader if parametric, or non parametric tests were used

Present the level of significance used throughout the study. This is usually set at a 0.05 level of significance.

## **Chapter 4 – Findings**

- Reports all results obtained, including appropriate statistics and descriptions of data.
- Includes facts only – what was found with explanation, but not interpretation or conjecture by the researcher.
- Is organized and written around objectives of the study (research questions or hypotheses).

## **Chapter 5 – Discussion of the findings**

The purpose of the discussion is to interpret and describe the significance of your findings in light of what was already known about the research problem being investigated, and to explain any new understanding or insights about the problem after you've taken the findings into consideration. The discussion will always connect to the introduction by way of the research questions or hypotheses you posed and the literature you reviewed, but it does not simply repeat or rearrange the introduction; the discussion should always explain how your study has moved the reader's understanding of the research problem forward from where you left them at the end of the introduction.

It is appropriate that earlier on in the discussion a critical review of the process used in the project (discussion of limitations of the process) is presented. Acknowledgment of study limitations is always viewed positively and avoids potential criticism from the examiners.

The discussion should include a section with the title Recommendations & Implications for Practice

- This section provides the space for the “next step” in this research process. Whilst students are not expected for the purposes of this study unit, to actually implement any of the recommendations, this chapter will propose various realistic recommendations for practice, education, policy development/change, management and/or research.
- The recommendations and the implications for practice need to emerge from the findings presented in this dissertation, whilst considering the local context. Furthermore, carrying out this dissertation without disseminating the findings would be a futile exercise. Therefore, part of this chapter also needs to address how the findings may be disseminated – again these need to be realistic and achievable.

## **Chapter 6 – Conclusion**

This is the final chapter in the dissertation and therefore this chapter has to concisely and succinctly give an overall summary of the whole research process adopted in this project (including the implications for practice).

- Includes most important results.
- Includes recommendations for further research.

## **Appendices**

- Includes copies of all correspondence, instrumentation, and other written communication used in carrying out the research.
- Make sure that they are in order, labelled and clearly identified.
- Should start off with approval to conduct the research from FREC/UREC

## **References**

- Includes complete bibliographic information for all references cited in the text (use accepted style manual, such as APA).

## **The style of writing:**

- Font Calibri Body and Light: size 12
- Justified formatting
- Line spacing of 1.5
- APA or Vancouver Referencing Style

- Word Count: **10,000** words **excluding** Title Page, Abstract, Declaration Forms, Dedications, Acknowledgements, Table of Contents and Abbreviations.
- Finalised **MSc thesis** should be bound in **Burgundy Red** cover with Writing in **Gold Colour**.

**Submitting your thesis to the Library:**

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