



ACA5066 DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

Contents

Introduction	1
Aims of the Dissertation.....	2
Learning Outcomes	2
Proposal	4
Important Dates	4
Proposal Form: ACA 5066 Dissertation - MA in AE (online, by research).....	6
Logbook: ACA 5066 Dissertation - MA in AE (online, by research)	9
Formatting your Dissertation.....	13
Examiner / Chairperson Report Template	15

Introduction

During the second semester of the programme of studies leading to the MA online in Adult Education, participants are to produce and submit a researched dissertation (individual work) of 30,000-35,000 words (including in-text references, quotations, tables, and figures – excluding references' list, footnotes, and any appendices) that discusses aspect/s related to the fields of adult continuing education.

The topic is chosen by the participant in conjunction with an approved supervisor.

The dissertation study-unit carries 80 ECTS.

The dissertation is examined by a Board of Examiners using the criteria described later in this document, and by three persons appointed by the Department of Arts, Open Communities & Adult Education. **There will be a final viva voce exam concerning this dissertation.**

The dissertation can be either theoretical, empirical or both. Any empirical study requires a theoretical framework. The empirical work can be quantitative or qualitative, though it can involve mixed methods.

Aims of the Dissertation

1. A practical exercise, at an advanced level, in developing research and writing skills, whilst contributing to relevant findings/perspectives on the area being researched. Original contributions are not a must at this level, but are not ruled out. The analytic putting together of different strands of already existing dispersed knowledge in a focused manner is acceptable at Master's level.
2. Examination of the nexus between theory and practice in the fields of adult and continuing education, training, and development.
3. Critical appraisal and application of a variety of research methodologies and methods.

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge & Understanding:

In the dissertation, there will be evidence that the student can:

1. Review concepts, theories, histories, and schools of thought that are relevant to the specific topic and adult education in general;
2. Explain the research methodology and methods applied to the particular research problem; and
3. Discuss various strengths and limitations associated with the employed methodology and methods.
4. Place different visions and ways of thinking within and beyond paradigms, besides historical and geographical contexts.
5. Chart/critically discuss knowledge from different standpoints.
6. Discover signposts to different adult education strategies and courses of action.

Skills:

In the dissertation, there will be evidence that the student can:

1. Formulate relevant and succinct research questions or research problem.
2. Plan a feasible, valid, and reliable research design.
3. Employ relevant research tools to gather and analyse data.
4. Write a researched dissertation that contributes to the study of adult education and/or training and/or development that is commensurate to the level of the programme of studies.

While carrying out research and producing the Dissertation the participant is responsible for seeking contact with the supervisor (and advisor, when applicable) and has the right to receive responses/feedback.

Exchanges should be as frequent as needed; but it is advised that intervals between exchanges do not exceed 6-8 weeks.

Any issues encountered with this, and other matters should be communicated via email to the course coordinator and/or the Head of Department, only after failure to obtain explanations and clarification from the supervisor.

Proposal

The topic and supervisor (and advisor, when applicable) need to be approved by the Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education.

For this to occur students are to submit the proposal form below by the communicated date (usually during Semester 2 of the year of studies preceding the final year of studies) by uploading the proposal on the VLE space provided in due course.

In the run-up towards the final date of the proposal submission, the Coordinator will organise a meeting to guide and support students with this task.

Important Dates

By:

22 February 2026	Identify supervisor and confirm the supervisor is available.
20 April 2026	Submit proposal using the dedicated VLE Turnitin area.
15 June 2026	You will receive feedback on the proposal. If updates are needed you will need to submit an updated version of the proposal before or up to 30 days later.
1 July 2026	The Board of Studies communicates feedback on the most recent version of the proposal submitted.
15 September 2026	Submit FREC application.
15 June 2027	Submit the dissertation using the dedicated VLE Turnitin area, and email it together with pertinent documents to the administrator.

Proposal Form: ACA 5066 Dissertation - MA in AE (online, by research)

DATE:

STUDENT NAME AND SURNAME:

STUDENT ID / STUDENT NUMBER:

STUDENT UM EMAIL:

DISSERTATION TITLE:

SUPERVISOR'S DETAILS

TITLE, NAME AND SURNAME:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

(DELETE AND FILL-IN AS RELEVANT): The supervisor is a **resident/casual/visiting (senior) lecturer / professor** at the **Department** _____ **of the Faculty** _____ **/ Name of Centre / Institute.**

Please paste below email showing acceptance from supervisor:

ADVISOR'S DETAILS (only if applicable): The advisor would complement the supervisor's contribution in supervising and reviewing the student's work, particularly when the topic being researched requires a very specific expertise (e.g., a specific type of learning difficulty or disability) which might not be one of the areas of expertise of the supervisor.

TITLE, NAME AND SURNAME:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

MOBILE / TEL. NO./S:

(DELETE AND FILL-IN AS RELEVANT): The advisor is a **resident/casual/visiting (senior) lecturer / professor** at the **Department** _____ **of the Faculty** _____ **/ Name of Centre / Institute.**

Please paste below email showing acceptance from advisor:

DISSERTATION TITLE: _____

BRIEF ABSTRACT (250 words outlining topic, aim/s, basic methodology / research design):

RESEARCH QUESTIONS (*type in 2-3 brief and focused RQs*):

TYPE OF STUDY (*briefly state in 1-2 lines, e.g., (participatory) action research, case study, needs analysis, etc.*):

DATA COLLECTION:

Specify: Quantitative and/or qualitative research method(s) (*briefly state in 1-2 lines*)?

Specify primary data collection method(s) (*if applicable briefly state in 2-3 lines, e.g., questionnaire, (semi-)structured interviews, focus groups, (participant) observation/s, internet-based research, documentary research, etc. + number of data collection instances that each participant will participate in, e.g., one-time or X number of times questionnaire and/or interview/s / observation/s, etc.*)

Specify number of participants and their salient characteristics (*if applicable briefly state in 1-2 lines, e.g., gender, age cohorts, roles / experiences / vulnerabilities etc.*)

Specify modality (*if applicable briefly state in 1-2 lines, e.g., face-to-face, online, hybrid, etc.*)

Specify recruitment / cooperating institutions / gatekeepers (*if applicable briefly state in 1-2 lines*)

Specify use of (un)published secondary data (if any) that you will analyse (*if applicable briefly state in 1-2 lines, e.g., datasets retrieved from Eurostat, NSO, etc. minutes of meetings or other unpublished documents such as writings submitted by students, etc.*)

IMPORTANT!

ALL STUDIES NEED TO BE REGISTERED USING THE URECA SYSTEM,

WHICH WILL GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING WHETHER ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM THE FACULTY'S RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE IS REQUIRED.

Read information available [here](#) and consult with the course coordinator.

URECA REGISTRATION NUMBER NEEDS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE EARLY PAGES OF THE DISSERTATION. THIS IS COMPULSORY FOR SUBMISSION.

Specify DATA COLLECTION **DOES/NOT (delete as relevant)** REQUIRE approval/s from **cooperating institution/s** (if yes, please specify, e.g., Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning & Employability, Lifelong Learning Centres, NGOs, etc.)

DATA ANALYSIS - specify which method/s will be used to analyse primary and/or secondary data, (2-3 lines e.g., bivariate/multivariate analysis of quantitative data and/or thematic/discourse/content analysis of qualitative data, etc.)

Other comments (if applicable specify in 1-3 lines, e.g., dual role, conflict of interest, etc.):

SIGNATURES:

STUDENT'S NAME AND SURNAME

SUPERVISOR'S NAME AND SURNAME

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE

DATE

DATE

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

The dissertation proposal is (indicate as relevant):
Approved / conditionally approved / not approved until improved

Feedback:

Signature:

Signed by (name and surname):

Date:

Logbook: ACA 5066 Dissertation - MA in AE (online, by research)

THE LOGBOOK HAS TO BE SUBMITTED AS AN APPENDIX OF THE MA DISSERTATION

It is the responsibility of the student to keep this Logbook up to date. The student is expected to comply with the supervisor's suggestions and recommendations as noted by the student in the Logbook and approved by the supervisor (and advisor, if applicable). With the supervisor's (and advisor's, if applicable) permission, the template proposed below can be modified to render it more fit for purpose.

The Faculty of Education reserves the right not to accept the Dissertation for examination if the Logbook is not properly documented. Email or other records of correspondence related to the dissertation between student and supervisor (and advisor, if applicable) can also be attached to the Logbook.

Logbook Section 1 Details of the Dissertation

Dissertation Title	
Student Name & Surname	
ID Card / Student Number	
TYPE OF DISSERTATION <i>(choose only one):</i> - Research only - Research + appended project deliverable - Project-based + report	
Date when Dissertation Proposal was approved by the Board (attach Proposal and approval by the Board)	
Supervisor Title Name Surname Department Faculty / Centre / Institute Email address	
Advisor (if applicable) Title Name Surname Department Faculty / Centre / Institute	

Email address	
(If applicable) List of amendments to the original proposal approved by the Board (insert date and attach copy of official approval by the Board)	

Logbook Section 2

Student Self-Reported Progress

This sheet needs to be filled by the student **at least once every month** from the day the student starts drafting the proposal to the day the student submits the Dissertation (point form is enough).

Date:
Progress made: <i>Examples:</i> <i>1. I read papers 5 papers on critical education;</i> <i>2. I drafted the participants' interview questions, etc.</i>
Issues of concern / to resolve: <i>Examples:</i> <i>1. How can I maximise response rate;</i> <i>2. Should I audio/video record interviews?, etc.</i>
Way forward to address concerns, including timeframes: <i>Examples:</i> <i>1. I scheduled an appointment to discuss these matters with the supervisor on DD/MM/YY;</i> <i>2. I sought the guidance of FREC and resolved not to video record interviews; etc.</i>

Logbook Section 3
Meeting / Exchange Log

This should be filled-in to document outcomes of every meeting / relevant exchange with your Supervisor and/or Advisor

Meeting number:	
Date:	
Themes / topics / issues discussed:	<i>Examples: sample size, time plan, submitting the required docs to FREC, etc.</i>

Recommendations and Agreed Action	Timeframe

Formatting your Dissertation

- (a) **Paper size:** International Standard Size A4 (29.7x 21cm).
- (b) **Print** on both sides of the page.
- (c) **Page Margins:** Use margins of at least 2.5cm (or 1 inch)
- (d) **Typing:** Times New Roman size 12. The font colour should be black throughout. It is suggested that text is aligned to the left. This will avoid extra spacing between words.
- (e) **Page Numbering:** The main text, including the Reference List and any appendices of the dissertation shall have Arabic numerals; the title page, dedication (if any), acknowledgements, table of contents, etc. preceding the main text, shall have Roman numerals. Page numbers should be centred at the bottom of the page.
- (f) **Layout of title page:** Title and subtitle (if any), followed by the name of the student, student ID and the date of submission. For example, 'A dissertation presented in the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta as part of the M.A online course in Adult Education, followed by month and year of submission.
- (g) **Abstract and Keywords:** The title page should be followed by an abstract of one paragraph of 200-250 words that outlines topic, research questions, methodology, main findings, and recommendations/implications of the study. This should be followed by 4-5 keywords to help readers find your dissertation.
- (h) **Supervisor endorsement:** The abstract should be followed by a page that states the supervisor is endorsing the submission of the dissertation, e.g.

The undersigned supervised (Name Surname of student, ID/Student number XXXXXX) and is hereby endorsing its submission.

_____ (signature)

(Title Name Surname of the Supervisor)

Date: _____

The above can be replaced with an email.

- (i) **FREC submission evidence:** URECA REGISTRATION NUMBER NEEDS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE EARLY PAGES OF THE DISSERTATION. THIS IS COMPULSORY FOR SUBMISSION.
- (j) **References (in-text and final reference list):** Students should follow the style APA 7th edition. Information and guidelines are available here: <https://libraryguides.vu.edu.au/apa-referencing/7GettingStarted>
- (k) **Headings:**

- a. First level headings – title of the chapter should be in bold with a font size of 16 and with an initial capital letter for any proper noun;
 - b. Second level headings (for instance Introduction) should be in bold with an initial capital letter for any proper noun;
 - c. Third level headings should be in bold italics with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns;
 - d. Fourth level headings should be in italics with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns.
- (l) **Word Limit:** 30,000-35,000 words including in-text references, quotations, tables, and figures – excluding references' list, footnotes, and any appendices.



L-Università
ta' Malta

DEPARTMENT OF
ARTS, COMMUNITIES
& ADULT EDUCATION

Faculty of Education

University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080, Malta

Tel: +356 2340 2352/3990
daocae.educ@um.edu.mt

www.um.edu.mt/educ

ACA 5066 DISSERTATION

Examiner / Chairperson Report Template

DATE:

STUDENT NAME AND SURNAME:

STUDENT ID / STUDENT NUMBER:

DISSERTATION TITLE:

Assessment Criteria:

BRIEFLY COMMENT ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE DISSERTATION MANIFESTS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE LEARNING OUTCOMES NOTED BELOW. WHEN RELEVANT PLEASE SUBSTANTIATE WITH 1-2 EXAMPLES, PAGE NUMBERS, ETC.

Knowledge & Understanding:

In the dissertation there is evidence that the student.....

1. Reviewed concepts, theories and schools of thought that are relevant to the specific topic:
2. Explained the research methodology and methods applied to the particular research problem:
3. Discussed various strengths and limitations associated with the employed methodology and methods:
4. Placed different visions and ways of thinking within and beyond paradigms, besides historical and geographical contexts:
5. Charted/critically discussed knowledge from different standpoints:
6. Discovered signposts to different adult education strategies and courses of action:
7. Attained other relevant knowledge and understanding learning outcomes (*optional*):

Skills:

In the dissertation there is evidence that the student.....

1. Formulated relevant and succinct research questions or research problem:
 2. Planned a feasible, valid and reliable research design:
 3. Employed relevant research tools to gather and analyse data:
 4. Wrote a researched dissertation that contributes to the study of adult and continuing education, training, and development that is commensurate to the level of the programme of studies:
-

5. Attained other relevant skills learning outcomes (optional):

To the best of the knowledge of the undersigned, there are / no (edit as appropriate) issues of plagiarism or collusion related to this Dissertation

(If in the affirmative, kindly elaborate below with examples, page numbers, etc.)

Other comments (optional):

(Include other comments that substantiate the mark and grade awarded)

IF APPLICABLE: List of changes that are considered to be essential and feasible:

(These will be considered for inclusion in the final Chairperson report)

Examiner's Report (only): Questions that can be asked during the viva:

MARK AND GRADE AWARDED:

TITLE NAME SURNAME

TITLE NAME SURNAME

TITLE NAME SURNAME

ROLE: EXAMINER / CHAIRPERSON

ROLE: EXAMINER / CHAIRPERSON

ROLE: EXAMINER / CHAIRPERSON

SIGNATURE

SIGNATURE

SIGNATURE

DATE

DATE

DA

For your reference, the UM's General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards, 2008 are available [here](#).
The MA in Adult Education (by Research) Course Bye-Laws are available [here](#).