

**GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE
DISSERTATIONS/LONG ESSAYS
2026 Version**

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FUNCTIONS OF FACULTY BOARD

1. Approval of Titles and Dissertation/Long Essay Proposals

When considering a Dissertation/Long Essay proposal for approval, the Faculty Board determines whether that particular area has already been allocated to the subject of a thesis, dissertation, long essay, research paper or term paper. This function is delegated to the Head of Department within whose area the research falls. The form for submission of titles and proposals (ANNEX A) is available at <https://www.um.edu.mt/laws/students/forms>

Where the area to be researched substantially overlaps with the subject of a written work which has already been approved or which is to be submitted by some other student, this should normally hinder the approval of the title unless the student makes a case and satisfies the Faculty Board that the approach to be adopted varies significantly from that adopted in the previously approved title.

No dissertation/long essay proposal is accepted which is identical in substance to a written work already submitted for a degree in this or any other University or to any other published material. Students are not, however, precluded from incorporating such previous work as may be necessary to the presentation and further understanding of their exposition, provided that the nature and extent of such incorporation are clearly indicated in the dissertation/long essay itself.

The Title and Proposal form (ANNEX A) should be accompanied by a Declaration of a member of the Academic Staff (ANNEX B for Undergraduate Courses) available at <https://www.um.edu.mt/laws/students/forms> that s/he has been consulted by the candidate and that s/he sees room for the writing of such a Dissertation/Long Essay.

The title and proposal form is to be submitted by the YR3 LL.B. (Hons) students or YR1 Higher Diploma of Legal Procurator students by the deadline instructed by the Faculty Office.

The Faculty Board is the governing body that approves dissertation/long essay titles and proposals and notification of approval is communicated forthwith to students in writing.

2. Appointment of Supervisor

The Faculty Board shall appoint a Supervisor for each student writing a dissertation/long essay.

3. Declaration of Authenticity and Copyright Release

Each student must fill in and sign a two Declarations of Authenticity and Copyright Release (ANNEX D and ANNEX E) whereby s/he declares that s/he has read the University of Malta's Guidelines on Plagiarism and that the Dissertation/Long Essay is his/her original work.

The form of the Declaration of Authenticity and Copyright Release (for Undergraduate Courses) must be submitted separately, both with the proposal and with the Dissertation/Long Essay and is available at <https://www.um.edu.mt/laws/students/forms>

Furthermore the Guidelines on Plagiarism and Collusion are available at https://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/436651/UniversityGuidelinesonPlagiarism.pdf

The University of Malta has its own intellectual policy on this matter and reference is being made to this policy which is available at <https://www.um.edu.mt/research/intellectualproperty/>

4. Library Guide for Digitized Dissertations

All Dissertations should be in the format set out in the Library Guide for Digitized Dissertations available at <http://www.um.edu.mt/library/dissertations>

5. Submission of Dissertations/Long Essays

Students submitting a Dissertation/Long Essay for examination are to ensure that their work:

- a) is of an advanced or original nature in the area of study;
- b) satisfies the requirements of presentation;
- c) fulfils the requirements of relevant regulations as regards format and length;
- and d) complies with these Guidelines.

Furthermore, a copy of the dissertation/long essay should be uploaded on VLE.

By the imposed deadline students are to submit the following:

- A spiral-bound copy printed back to back if required from the student, should it be required by the Board of Examiners;
- A softcopy of the dissertation/long essay on a Pen Drive, or submitted via email. The document should be in PDF format which should NOT be password protected;
- An original copy of the Declaration of Authenticity (for Undergraduate Courses) available at <https://www.um.edu.mt/laws/students/forms>

A receipt will be provided by the Faculty on submission.

6. Uploading of Dissertations/Long Essays on the Virtual Learning Environment – VLE (Moodle)

Plagiarism, at any stage of the preparation and finalisation of a Dissertation/Long Essay is prohibited. For this purpose, the Dissertation/Long Essay is passed through plagiarism software. Students may upload their draft and final version as many times as required in both containers, provided that uploading is carried out prior to the submission due date.

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

7. Board of Examiners

- Senate on Faculty Board's recommendation shall appoint a Board of Examiners for each Dissertation/Long Essay submitted.
- The Board of Examiners shall be composed as detailed on the Assessment Regulations, 2009 available at www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/24868/Assessment_Regulations.pdf

8. The Examination Process

No time extensions will be allowed and the submission deadline must be respected. Where a Dissertation/Long Essay is submitted after the due date or following a non-submission, a student shall receive a mark 0, grade F. The same applies to students who fail their Dissertation/Long Essay. However all students will be entitled to a final opportunity to submit their Dissertation/Long Essay under resit conditions.

B. REGULATIONS FOR THE PRESENTATION OF DISSERTATIONS/LONG ESSAYS

1. Paper Quality and Typographical Detail

1.1 Methods of Production

Dissertations/Long Essays shall be presented in a permanent and legible form in typescript or print and font style used should be Calibri 12. Typing should be of even quality, with clear black characters.

1.2 Layout

Margins on the right and left hand side shall be 3cm and the top and bottom margins shall be 2.5cm. Double or one-and-a-half spacing shall be used in typescript.

2. Pagination

2.1 Page Numbering

The page numbers for the first few pages (up until just before the first page of the

Introduction) should be in Roman numerals. Subsequent page numbers should be in Arabic numerals. Additionally, the page number should not be printed on the title page. In order to apply different number types to the same document, one must use **section breaks**.

2.2 Position of Page Numbers

Page numbers shall be located centrally at the bottom of the page.

3. Word Limit

The Dissertation (LAW4010) shall not be less than 10,000 words and not more than 12,000 words. No extension on the word limit may be granted, and as per Faculty Board decision, any text exceeding the maximum word limit of 12,000 words will not be read [at the Board's discretion] and be awarded a grade for material presented at that stage.

The Long Essay (LAW2003) must be approximately 10,000 words. No extension on the word limit may be granted, and therefore the text should be within the range of (+/- 10%) and any text exceeding the maximum word limit of 11,000 words will not be read [at the Board's discretion] and be awarded a grade for material presented at that stage.

The prescribed length refers to the whole Dissertation/Long Essay including the main text, quotations, footnotes, but excluding preliminaries and other functional parts, such as bibliography, tables, abstract and index. Annexes and appendices do not form part of the word limit.

4. Preliminaries

4.1 Title page

The title page shall give the following information in the order listed:

- The full title of the Dissertation/Long Essay and the sub-title if any;
- The full name of the author, followed, if desired, by any qualifications and distinctions;
- An indication that the Dissertation/Long Essay is submitted in partial fulfilment of the LL.B. Honours Degree or the Long Essay is submitted in partial fulfilment of the Higher Diploma of Legal Procurator;
- The designation "Faculty of Laws, University of Malta";
- The month and year of submission.

4.2 Annex E

The title page should be followed by ANNEX E for undergraduate courses (available via the following link: <https://www.um.edu.mt/laws/students/forms/>).

4.3 Abstract

Annex E should be followed by an abstract consisting of no more than 300 words. The abstract should be a concise summary of the work, containing the fundamental concepts, emergent findings and conclusions. Students must also include five keywords together with their abstract. Students are to note that the abstract should not be written in the first person and should not contain footnotes.

4.4 Table of Contents

The table of contents shall immediately follow the Abstract. It shall list in sequence, with page numbers, all relevant sections of the Dissertation/Long Essay, including the titles of sections and subsections, as appropriate; the table of cases; the table of statutes; the table of international instruments; the list of abbreviations, the bibliography and other functional parts of the whole Dissertation/Long Essay; and any appendices.

4.5 Tables of Statutes, Cases and International Instruments

The tables of statutes, cases, and international instruments, and any other tables, if required, shall follow the table of contents.

4.6 Acknowledgements

Any acknowledgements shall be on the page following the tables of statutes cases and international instruments.

4.7 Abbreviations

Abbreviations are to be, as far as possible, avoided and used only exceptionally as they do not contribute to the free flow of the writing and detract the reader from following better your work. Where however abbreviations are used a table shall be provided. For an abbreviation

not in common use, the term shall be given in full at the first instance followed by the abbreviation in brackets.

5. Text

5.1 Introduction

The introduction shall be followed by the first section of the Dissertation/Long Essay. The Introduction should be used to set out the Dissertation/Long Essay question and Dissertation/Long Essay sub questions as discussed in subsequent sections.

5.2 Sections

Dissertations/Long Essays shall be divided into an Introduction, a number of sections and a Conclusion. The system of headings shall be consistent and should provide a clear indication of changes in content, emphasis and other features which occur at each stage of the work. One of the sections shall deal with an overview of the literature whilst another section shall discuss the research methodology.

5.3 Conclusion

This should bring together all the issues of the research and link back to the aim and objectives of the study which were outlined in the Introduction. Any recommendations pertaining to legal reform should always be based on research evidence.

The Conclusion should be original. It may be used to identify areas for future research related to the topic of the Dissertation/Long Essay, propose changes to the law, contain a list of the main conclusions of the Dissertation/Long Essay and answer the Dissertation/Long Essay's question and sub questions. The Conclusion is the most important part of the Dissertation/Long Essay.

5.4 Headings

The headings recommended are: (1) Main headings, which should be used for sections and should be in full capitals; (2) Subsections consisting of associated paragraphs should be above the line of the text and should use initial capitals.

5.5 Note Numbering

Footnotes should be used and should be restricted to serving the following functions:

- to state a source
- to acknowledge a borrowing
- to refer the reader to another part of the Dissertation/Long Essay
- To develop an idea or expand a quotation where to do so in the text would disturb the flow of the argument or the balance of the writing.

Footnotes should always be used with restraint. If none of the above criteria are met, then an appendix is probably more suitable.

6. End Matter

6.1 Appendices

Appendices shall follow the main text. Appendices may consist of supporting material of considerable length or of lists, documents, commentaries, a copy of the questionnaires ideally in both English and Maltese and/or the list of questions ideally in both English and Maltese, or other evidence, which, if included in the main text, would interrupt its flow. The style of appendices shall be consistent with the style of the main text.

C. IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS TO STUDENTS FOR THE DISSERTATIONS/LONG ESSAYS

1. Oscola Referencing System

The latest version of the Oscola Referencing system should be used where applicable.

The Oscola text is available at:

<https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2026-03/OSCOLA%205.pdf>

2. Referencing Maltese Sources

Maltese sources, such as legislation, judgments, and parliamentary debates, should be cited following the *Oscola Guidelines adapted for Maltese Legal Sources*. This is available at: <https://www.ghsl.org/oscola-guidelines/>.

When compiling the Table of Cases, case law should be sub-divided as follows:

- Cases in the *Kollezzjoni ta' Decizjonijiet tal-Qrati Superjuri ta' Malta*
- Cases available on the Ministry of Justice website
- Cases available at the Archives of the Courts of Justice
- Other Sources for Case Law (e.g. Judge William Harding's book; Judge Joseph Filletti's book; Judge Oliver Gulia's book; Ghaqda Studenti tal-Ligi two volume book on Constitutional Law, Prof. Kevin Aquilina's book on Development Planning Legislation, etc.)

3. Hints to Writing Good Dissertations/Long Essays

- Avoid quoting one and the same source repeatedly throughout the Dissertation/Long Essay;
- Avoid paragraphs made up of one sentence or a few sentences;
- Cite the source of the information you provide through a footnote especially where you are referring to factual data such as statistics and figures;
- Ensure that adequate and proper use of footnotes is made throughout the whole Dissertation/Long Essay.

4. Translation of Quotations

Any English translation of verbatim quotes in Maltese (if applicable) are to be included as an APPENDIX.

5. Inter-disciplinary Content

In so far as content of a Dissertation/Long Essay is concerned, it might benefit the study to refer to non-legal materials and to write a Dissertation/Long Essay from an inter-disciplinary perspective. When a student intends to study a particular subject from both a legal and non-legal perspective, the following considerations have to be taken on board:

- the student must declare in his or her Dissertation/Long Essay proposal that s/he will be studying a particular subject from an interdisciplinary point of view identifying clearly the non-legal discipline/s; and
- although a Dissertation/Long Essay might be written from an interdisciplinary point of view, the predominant focus of the Dissertation/Long Essay should be legal with the non-legal discipline/s assisting in understanding better the legal implications of the subject under consideration. At no point should the non-legal discipline predominate over the legal subject of the Dissertation/Long Essay.

6. Methodology

It is recommended to students writing a Dissertation/Long Essay to write a section on literature review and another section on the research methodology describing the qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods used in the social sciences for the collection of

primary data, such as questionnaires, focus groups, statistics, in-depth interviews, observation, and any other method of research appropriate to answer the research question. It will benefit the student's work to adopt a rigorous scientific approach to the study of the law.

7. Ethical Implications

Researchers have a responsibility to take all steps possible to ensure that the social, psychological or physical well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by participation in their research study. Consequently, all researchers at the UM are now required to fill out the online Ethics and Data Protection Form after the Dissertation/Long Essay title and supervisor have been approved by Faculty Board and the student would have made contact with his/her supervisor. For further guidance and access to the form please refer to the following link:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/laws/students/facultyresearchethicscommittee/>