

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

GUIDELINES FOR POSTGRADUATE DISSERTATIONS

Faculty of Theology: Dissertation Guidelines

All students who are required to write and submit a dissertation as part of their programme of studies at the Faculty of Theology are to read this document carefully.

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1. Timelines and Deadlines

Dissertations at a post-graduate level are regulated by the University of Malta's [Postgraduate Harmonised Regulations](#).

The following courses are to abide by these deadlines:

Master of Arts in Theology and Master of Arts in Religious Studies:

- Dissertation proposal: 31st May of the 1st Year of studies.
- Dissertation: 30th April of the 3rd Year of studies.

Master of Art in Bioethics, Master of Arts in Business Ethics, Postgraduate Diploma in Pastoral Psychology, Master of Arts in Catholic School Leadership, Master of Arts in Christian Faith Formation, Master of Arts in Family Ministry, Master of Arts in Matrimonial Canon Law and Jurisprudence, Master of Arts in Spirituality, Master of Arts in Spiritual Companionship, Master of Arts in Youth Ministry

- Dissertation proposal: 31st January of the 2nd Year of studies.
- Dissertation: 31st May of the last academic Year of studies.

Master in Theology and Licentiate in Sacred Theology:

- Dissertation proposal: 14th February of the 1 Year of studies.
- Dissertation: 31st May of the last academic Year of studies.

Though it is highly recommended that such papers be submitted on time, one may need to ask for an extension. The relevant form can be found [here](#).

2. Preparing your dissertation proposal

2.1 Choosing a supervisor and starting your Dissertation Logbook.

At the beginning of your research, you are to choose a supervisor who shall provide guidance and advice on a regular basis during the period of study. If needs be, you can also opt to have a co-supervisor after consultation with your supervisor and approval by the Dissertations Committee.

It is your responsibility to have continuous and regular contact with your supervisor throughout the research and writing period and this must be recorded on the Dissertation [Log Book](#). The Dissertation Logbook must be handed in together with the dissertation upon submission.

You are to present the draft of your dissertation to your supervisor as complete and clear writing style as possible. You are to present the draft of your dissertation to your supervisor in a clear writing style and as complete as possible. Your draft should be thoroughly spell-checked and presented in a coherent form, and is to be presented in print form unless the supervisor directs otherwise. It is your responsibility to ensure that your supervisor has seen a complete copy of the final dissertation before its submission. You must therefore give the final draft to your supervisor at least three weeks before submission in order to allow sufficient time for suggesting improvements.

2.2 Writing your dissertation proposal

You are to submit a provisional title for your dissertation together with a detailed research proposal to the Faculty office where this would be stamped and the date of the submission countersigned by the Faculty officer or one of the secretaries. This would then be handed over to Faculty Board for approval. This should be submitted as specified in the dates **point (1) Timelines and Deadlines**. The Dissertation Proposal Form can be found [here](#). Before you start working on your proposal, make sure that a dissertation by a similar title has not been submitted in the past or is in the process of being written not only at the Faculty of Theology but also in other Faculties of related disciplines. While this in and of itself does not preclude you from continuing to research on your preferred topic, you are obliged to inform your supervisor about this if this were to be the case.

2.3 Ethical Standards

All research done at the University of Malta must be done in an ethically sound way. Students must familiarise themselves with the University of Malta's Research Code of Practice as well as the [Ethics Review Procedures](#). Once this is done, students must fill in an [on-line research ethics form](#). For more detailed information please read this [document](#).

2.4 Changing your dissertation title

You may apply to change your dissertation title not later than six months before the date of submission except in the case of a minor change which requires the recommendation of the Supervisor and the approval of the competent Head of Department and the Dean. This [form](#) should be used.

3. Writing your dissertation

3.1 Plagiarism

You are not to engage in [plagiarism](#) - defined as the unacknowledged use, as one's own, of work of another person, whether or not such work has been published. The University has very strict rules regarding plagiarism.

3.2 Length of dissertation

The length of the dissertation is specified by the following [guidelines](#).

3.3 Methodology

The referencing style to be used is the Chicago Manual of Style (17th ed.), either in the in-text citation format or the footnote format. It is recommended that empirical studies follow the in-text citation format. Online help can be found [here](#).

3.4 Layout

The dissertation must be produced on A4 80gsm paper, whose margins on the right and left hand side shall be 3cm and the top and bottom margins shall be 2.5cm.

3.5 Pagination

Page numbers should be centred at the bottom of the page. Roman numbers should be used on the first few pages until just before the Introduction, where Arabic numbers should be used.

3.6 Typography

The main text of your dissertation should be produced in Calibri/Times New Roman, 12 pt, 1.5/2 spacing, with paragraphs separated by a 6pt space after (not by pressing [enter]) and the whole dissertation text should be justified. The latter is not to be taken lightly because it will really be helpful when you are finalising your dissertation's layout.

The main text must be distinguished from the headings (24pt for font, 12pt for space after), subheadings (18pt for font, 12pt for space after) and sub-subheadings (16pt for font, 12pt for space after). It is best to do this using Styles (if using MS Word) since it will be really helpful in finalising formatting at the end of your writing and in creating a Table of Contents which automatically detects the pages on which the different sections start.

Quotations having less than 40 words are produced in the main text as normal text (not italics, not bold). They are to be enclosed in quotation marks and must be adequately referenced. Quotations having more than 40 words are produced in a separate paragraph, with an indentation of 1cm to the right and to the left, in 10pt font, single spacing, without enclosure in quotation marks. All quotations which are not in English should be translated in English in the main text, with the quote in the original language reproduced in a footnote.

3.7 Footnotes

Any notes in the main text should be produced as a footnote at the end of each page, not as an endnote at the end of a chapter. Footnotes should be produced in the same font of the main text, 10pt, single spacing. One may opt to choose a 3pt space between footnotes, and to choose hanging of 0.6cm. Notes should be used with restraint, and they should have a numerical continuous form beginning 1, 2, etc. A separate number series is to be inserted for each chapter so that the footnotes in each chapter shall begin from 1. At any particular part of your dissertation, there can be only one footnote, that is, when you would like to include two footnotes after a punctuation mark, their content should be merged into one.

3.8 What your dissertation should include

3.8.1 Title page

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

- The full title of your dissertation and the sub-title if any;
- Your full name, followed, if desired, by any qualifications and distinctions;

- An indication that the dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of a specified degree;
- The designation “Faculty of Theology, University of Malta”;
- The month and year of submission.

A Title Page template can be found [here](#).

3.8.2 Abstract

The title page should be followed by an abstract consisting of no more than 300 words. This should be a concise summary of your work, containing its fundamental concepts and conclusions. You must also include five keywords together with your abstract. Please note that abstracts must be written in the third person.

3.8.3 Dedication

Some candidates like to dedicate their work. To do so is entirely optional. Where a dedication is made, the dedication pages should follow the abstract.

3.8.4 Table of Contents

The Table of Contents shall immediately follow the Abstract. It shall list in sequence, with page numbers, all relevant subdivisions of your dissertation, including the titles of chapters, sections and subsections, as appropriate; any tables and figures; the bibliography; the list of abbreviations and other functional parts of your whole dissertation and any appendices. As explained previously, the best way to do this, if using MS Word, is through the use of Styles.

3.8.5 Acknowledgements

If you choose to write any acknowledgements, these shall be produced on the page following the Table of Contents.

3.8.6 Abbreviations

Abbreviations do not contribute to the free flow of your writing and hinder your reader from following better your work. **They should, therefore, be avoided if possible.** If you use abbreviations, however, you need to produce a Table. In the main text, then, the term shall be given in full at the first instance followed by the abbreviation in brackets.

3.8.7 Chapters and sections

You are to divide your dissertation into an Introduction, a number of chapters 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.

An introduction shall precede the first chapter of your dissertation. (This means that the Introduction is not Chapter 1). This should be used to set out the thesis question and sub-questions, the methodology to be used, any problems encountered in carrying out the research, defining key terminology, identifying gaps in existing literature and how you propose to address them, the limitations to your dissertations (what do you intend to leave

out and why), and the synopsis of the dissertations. This usually means that the future tense will be used in this section.

Your Conclusion should bring together all the issues of the research and link back to the aim and objectives which you outlined in the Introduction. It should contain a list of the main conclusions of your work, answering the original thesis question and sub-questions. It should include your recommendations based on the evidence of your study, as well as indicating and areas for future research related to the topic of your dissertation. This is the most important part of your dissertation and it should be totally original and substantial.

3.8.8 Bibliography

Your Bibliography should follow the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). Make sure that all material cited in the footnotes is present in the Bibliography, and note the difference when citing a source in the footnote and how it differs from its citation in the Bibliography.

3.8.9 Appendices

Any appendices shall be produced after your Bibliography. These may consist of supporting material of considerable length or of lists, documents, commentaries, or other evidence, which, if included in the main text, would interrupt its flow. The style of the appendices shall be consistent with the style of the main text.

4. Submitting your dissertation

Once you have finished writing your dissertation, you need to (1) Submit your dissertation on VLE via Turnitin; (2) contact your supervisor to verify your VLE Submission and its Plagiarism Report; (3) complete a Declaration of Authenticity and Research Code of Practice and Ethics Review Procedures Form (which can be found [here](#)); and (4) submit your dissertation to the Faculty Officer.

4.1 Submit your dissertation on VLE via Turnitin

Plagiarism, at any stage of the preparation and finalisation of a dissertation is prohibited. For this purpose, you have to upload your dissertation on VLE (Turnitin). You are permitted to upload your work first as a draft copy so that you can do any necessary changes before submitting your final version. When submitting your final copy on VLE. This soft copy will be accessed by your Supervisor and the Chairperson of the Examining Board.

If you are not able to upload your dissertation on VLE, kindly contact your supervisor to make sure that the links on VLE have been correctly set up.

4.2 Submit your dissertation to the Faculty Office

You need to submit your dissertation for examination by the stipulated deadline (refer to 1 above). This is done by presenting all the following to the Faculty Officer:

- **1 electronic copy** of your dissertation via e-mail to the Faculty Officer. This must be in one document in PDF format which should not be password protected or restricted in any way.

- The original copy of your **Logbook** signed by the supervisor (and co-supervisor if applicable);
- **1 hard copy of the submission note** signed by the supervisor [submission form](#). While you may opt to submit your dissertation without your supervisor's consent, you do so at your own risk.

5. Viva

Once you hand in your dissertation, you will be given a date for your *viva voce* examination. The Examination Board will consist of a Chair, two examiners, and an external examiner from another university. These individuals will read your work and determine a mark. Your supervisor may be present only during the VIVA. If he/she requests, they may make a brief comment, if necessary, only after the student leaves the room. The supervisor is then requested to leave the room in order for the board of examiners to deliberate on the student's performance. For further information with regard to the principles of procedure on the supervision of Master's dissertations please click [here](#).

The purpose of the viva is to discuss your work with the examiners. If there are aspects of your work which your examiners find unclear, the *viva voce* is also a chance to clarify these. The following procedure will be followed: first, you will be asked to give a presentation of around 10-15 minutes; then members of the Examination Board will ask you a number of questions to clarify your work and discuss related issues. The viva generally lasts around one hour and you are expected to bring a copy of your dissertation with you, which should be the same as that submitted to the examiners, including pagination.

Your examiners may request some changes to the dissertation once the viva is over. For further details regarding the examination of dissertations, kindly refer to the [postgraduate regulations](#).

6. Submitting the Final Copy of your Dissertation

By the 31st October, you are to submit the following to the Faculty Office:

- **1 hardbound copy of your finalised dissertation**, The Declaration of Authenticity should NOT be included in the hardbound copy (due to GDPR), but must be presented as a SEPERATE, SIGNED copy, when you present the hardbound copy. It should also include the unique form ID. The cover should be of the following colour: Dark Blue with gold print.

The dissertation shall be bound within boards and the binding shall be of a fixed kind in which pages are permanently secured. The boards shall have sufficient rigidity to support the weight of the work when standing upon a shelf.

The outside front board shall bear, in a gold print, the dissertation title, which shall be in at least 24pt (8mm) type. Your name and surname (e.g. Joseph Borg), the designation of the appropriate degree (for example, M.A. in Bioethics) and the year of submission.

The spine of the dissertation shall bear, in a gold print, the title, the initial of your name and your full surname (e.g. J. Borg), the designation of the appropriate degree (for example, M.A. in Bioethics) and the year of submission. This information shall normally

be printed along the spine in such a way as to be readable when the volume is lying flat with the front cover uppermost.

The dissertation shall be printed on 80gsm A4 size paper (Single-Sided). Any colour tables, graphs or figures in the original, must be produced in colour.

- The University of Malta also requires that you submit an electronic copy of your dissertation to the University Library through the Faculty Office. To this end, standards were developed by the [University of Malta Library](#). This electronic copy is to be submitted with the hardbound copies to the Faculty Office on a pen drive.