

Institute for Physical Education and Sport

B.Sc Dissertation Committee

B.Sc Dissertation Guidebook 2022

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1 Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines are to assist students and staff involved in the Dissertation study-unit, which is valued at 10 ECTS (i.e. 250 hours of work). Normally, students are expected to work on this study-unit from the first semester of the 2nd year of full-time study or from the second semester of the 3rd year of part-time study, till the last semester of their final year.

2 The Research Process

The dissertation is a process that requires self-discipline, initiative, creativity and commitment. It allows students to choose an area for in-depth study. Supervisors will guide the students throughout the process, but it is the student's responsibility to read academic literature, to research material, to collect data, to write up the report and to meet the deadlines.

The process of research generally includes the following:

- Choosing an area of interest, generally related to sport and/or physical activity;
- Sourcing, acknowledgement and critical appraisal of the relevant literature;
- Identification of the research question/s;
- Design of a research project that can address the question/s;
- Selection of the appropriate research methods;
- Due and sensitive consideration of ethical issues;
- Appropriate presentation of results;
- Discussion of the research and/or product; and
- Conclusions and recommendations.

3 The Roles of the Supervisor and the Student

For the sake of brevity, and unless explicitly indicated otherwise, in the following pages the term “student” refers to one or more students working together on the dissertation study-unit. The Supervisor shall guide and assist the student in all the phases of the dissertation. The Supervisor will tutor the student’s work, keep records of the student’s progress and form part of the dissertation examination board. It is the responsibility of students to seek advice and tutorship from their supervisor. The student is also expected to request appointments for tutorials with the Supervisor and to attend any meetings called by the Supervisor. The student is fully responsible for completing and presenting the dissertation by the set deadline and in the stipulated formats.

3.1 *Phase one: Proposal*

During this initial phase the Supervisor normally:

- Helps the student formulate and write the research proposal; and
- Ascertains that the research exercise is a feasible piece of work in terms of the content, the research methodology and the time-frame allotted.

N.B. Deadline for your proposal is issued by the B.Sc Dissertation Committee

3.2 *Phase two: Research and writing*

During this phase the Supervisor’s main responsibilities include advising on and guiding the student’s research and as such include:

- Participating in regular meetings and/or consultations with the student (though it is the student’s responsibility to seek advice, make appointments and meet deadlines);
- Planning with the student definite time-frames and deadlines for the presentation of the draft of part/s of the dissertation and of the final write up.
- Recommending areas in which students should search for and use academic literature in order to further enhance the research process and, where necessary, advising the student to attend other

courses, seminars, activities (both at university and/or elsewhere) which have a direct bearing on the work and which are essential for a proper and a wider understanding of the topic under research;

- Recommending to the student to request permission in writing from the B.Sc Dissertation Committee to effect any major/minor amendments in connection with the officially accepted proposal and title, and/or to request an extension in length/time related to the dissertation final write-up;
- Informing the B.Sc Dissertation Committee, as a matter of urgency, if a major difficulty occurs which might prejudice the student's presentation of the dissertation according to established procedures. On the part of the student, this includes problems of health, problems of shared responsibilities and workload - in cases where a dissertation is being written by more than one student -- and other unpredictable circumstances. Supervisors on prolonged leave of absence are to notify the B.Sc Dissertation Committee of arrangements which are being agreed with the student or seek assistance from the B.Sc Dissertation Committee; and
- Noting the student's progress in writing on the Institute for Physical Education Dissertation Progress Diary. In the case of dissertations involving more than one student, a Dissertation Progress Diary is to be completed for each student. This should be updated by the student/s and presented upon the supervisor's request.

3.3 Phase three: Examination

The Supervisor, as member of the Examination Board, will contribute to the final evaluation of the dissertation. S/he will:

- Be present during the examination of the dissertation (which will also include a chairperson and a member); and
- 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.

The Supervisor will return the examined dissertation to the student. If there are any corrections to be made, the Supervisor will guide the student accordingly. In such a case, the student will be responsible to complete such corrections by a stipulated deadline. The student is required to sign the Declaration of Completion of Corrections to B.Sc Dissertation form, confirming that the final copy of the dissertation submitted contains the corrections as agreed by the Examination Board/Supervisor.

The official Examination Report will be given to the student by an administrative officer of the B.Sc Dissertation Committee at an announced date or via mail. The student is then requested to submit a digital copy of the corrected dissertation to the Institute for Physical Education and Sport (IPES) by a stipulated deadline and in the required formats as issued by IPES administration.

4 Guidelines as to Data Collection and Final Version

For the purpose of an undergraduate dissertation, students may use any one or a combination of research methods (although the use of one research method is recommended). When more than one student and/or multiple methods are used, the sample sizes ought to be adjusted as appropriate. The following guidelines are being suggested for sample sizes (1 student dissertation):

- Interviews 4 - 8
- Focus Groups 2 - 4 sessions
- Case Studies 1 - 5
- Questionnaires/Standard Tests 50 - 300 (or as appropriate)
- Experimental Teaching 2 – 10 sessions

The planned research methodology and data collection methods need to be clearly stated in the student's research proposal. The proposal is to be submitted on the official B.Sc Dissertation Proposal Form of the Institute for Physical Education and Sport. It may be word processed or handwritten.

4.1 *The Final Product*

For the purpose of examination, students are required to submit electronically through VLE by the deadline stipulated by the B.Sc Dissertation Committee. Additionally, students may be requested to submit **THREE** loose (unbound) copies of the dissertation on the same stipulated deadline. The format of submission will be communicated to students by IPES administration office.

The final version submitted for examination should not exceed 12,000 words in case of individual students, and 16,000 words in the case of two students working on the same dissertation project together. Tables, Figures, the Reference List and Appendices are not included in the word count.

4.2 *Main subdivisions of a dissertation*

A dissertation is normally subdivided into the major sections outlined below; however, this may differ slightly according to the type of research methodology used and the preference of the author.

Title Page

The title page contains, from top to bottom and centred between the left and right margins:

- The title of the dissertation;
- The full name of the author or authors;
- The statement: A Dissertation Presented to the Institute for Physical Education and Sport in Part Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor in Science (Honours) in Sport and Physical Activity Lifestyles at the University of Malta;
- The month and year of presentation.

Abstract

The abstract page contains, from top to bottom:

- The word **ABSTRACT** in bold uppercase letters in the top centre;
- The full name of the author or authors;
- The title of the dissertation;

- The text of the abstract as a single paragraph of not more than 250 words in 1½ line spacing. The abstract should offer the briefest possible description of the dissertation and a concise summary of the main findings and conclusions;
- The degree title B.Sc (Hons) in Sport and Physical Activity;
- The month and year of the presentation of the dissertation;
- 3 to 6 keywords (in English) in bold uppercase letters.

Author's Declaration

The author's declaration is a signed declaration by the author or authors regarding the originality of the work.

Dedications and Acknowledgements

It is customary to at least acknowledge those who helped in the dissertation research, amongst them the Supervisor, and the participants.

Table of Contents

The Table of Contents must, as a minimum, include all chapter headings and subheadings (up to 3 levels) and Appendices. Where applicable, the Table of Contents should also include a List of Tables, a List of Figures, a List of Accompanying Material and a List of Abbreviations and Symbols.

Main Text

Although the presentation of the main text varies from one dissertation to another, a dissertation is typically organised around the following chapters:

- Introduction or Background to the Study;
- Literature Review;
- Design and Methodology;
- Analysis of Data;

- Discussion of Findings;
- Conclusions and Recommendations.

N.B. Although this B.Sc dissertation guidebook presents “Analysis of Data” and “Discussion of Findings” as two separate chapters, it is common practice (especially in qualitative research studies) to combine these two chapters into one chapter. This resides with the preference of supervisor and student, as long as whichever choice is taken, the choice does not have a negative impact upon the presentation and flow of the final submission.

References

All sources cited in the text must be listed in the References section and vice versa. References must be listed in alphabetical order by author’s surname. Works by the same author should be listed in chronological order. More information about formatting of references is given in the last section of this guidebook.

Appendices

Supporting material (e.g. coaching session plans, interview transcripts, computer programme listings, etc.) and material which is too long to include in the main text without breaking up continuity should be placed in one or more appendices.

4.3 Presentation

4.3.1 Pagination

The Title page, Abstract, Author’s Declaration, and Dedication and Acknowledgement pages are counted but should not be numbered. Numbering starts with the Table of Contents (usually page v) in lower case Roman numerals. The rest of the dissertation should be numbered in a single sequence in Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4 etc.) starting again with 1 on the first page of the main text. Illustrations, charts, diagrams and other graphics placed on a separate page within the text of the dissertation should be paginated as if they were pages of text.

4.3.2 Page layout

The text and, wherever possible, all the material of the dissertation, including illustrations, should be produced on A4-size paper and printed on one side only. In exceptional circumstances, the B.Sc Dissertation Committee may give permission for the use of an alternative format. If it is necessary to bind in material on a paper size larger than A4, it should be produced on paper that can be folded to fit within the dissertation.

The upper, lower and right-hand side margins should be at least 2.45cm wide, while the left margin should be 4cm wide to allow for binding. It is strongly recommended that the text is justified for printed hard copies.

All dissertations should be word processed. Uniformity and consistency throughout the Document is expected

4.3.3 Fonts and headings

- For *normal text* it is recommended that Arial point size 12 or Cambria point size 12 is used.
- The recommended font and alignment for *headings* differs according to level:
 - Heading 1 should be used for Chapter Titles. Heading 1 should be at least 16 pt., be Bold and be either aligned left or centred. Double spacing should be applied.
 - Heading 2 should be used for Sections in the Chapter. Heading 2 should be at least 14 pt., be Bold and left aligned. At least, 1.5 spacing should be applied.
 - Heading 3 should be used for Sub-Sections. Heading 3 should be at least 13 pt., be in Italics and left aligned. At least, 1.5 spacing should be applied.

4.3.4 Line spacing and paragraph formatting

One-and-a-half line spacing should be used throughout the dissertation text, with the following exceptions which should be single-line spaced:

- The Table of Contents;
- Long (blocked) quotations (typically longer than 40 words);
- Computer programme listings;
- Tables;
- Footnotes and endnotes; and

- References (although a blank line should be left between each reference).

It should be clear when a new paragraph is starting. Either indent the first line of each paragraph by 10-15mm, or leave extra space between paragraphs (one can use the paragraph formatting features of the word processor to do this automatically).

Lengthy quotations (exceeding 40 words) should be formatted as a separate single-line-spaced paragraph indented from the left margin by an additional 10-15mm and 20mm from the right margin.

4.3.5 Numbering and bulleting

Arabic numerals should normally be used for numbering all sequences within a dissertation, with the exception of page numbers in the front pages before the main text. 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.

If more than one appendix is included, these should be numbered separately and consecutively as Appendix 1, Appendix 2 etc.

Tables and Figures within the text should 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).

It is important that, for standardisation issues, not more than 2 types of bullets are used throughout the whole dissertation.

4.3.6 Referencing

The final dissertation handed in for examination purposes needs to follow the American Psychological Association (APA) style of referencing. Referencing needs to be accurate and consistent throughout the final document.