

Academic year: 2014/2015

VALIDATED MASTERS

DISSERTATION (60 Credits)

ASSESSMENT DETAILS

100% Coursework

RATIONALE

The dissertation provides students with the opportunity to apply the understanding, knowledge, analytical and conceptual tools and personal skills gained from the taught courses to an in-depth study of a specific strategic problem or situation for management. It consolidates the learning, knowledge and skills that have already taken place as well as developing the capability of the student to undertake and complete an academic dissertation. It can thus be seen as the culmination of the entire programme.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this module will be able to:

- negotiate and re-define, if necessary, the purpose and scope of a research project;
- set the problem within a strategic framework;
- undertake systematic search and review of relevant published theoretical and research-based literature relating to the research project;
- identify, critically evaluate and adopt research methods and intervention strategies that are appropriate and relevant to a specific task;
- establish the planning requirements of a project;
- schedule and prepare detailed plans;
- analyse data and relate those findings to the existing state of knowledge of the area studied;
- write a complete, well-structured and clearly argued academic dissertation dealing with the purpose and rationale of the study; choice of methodology and use an appropriate research design; the state of existing knowledge; the findings and ways in which they add to knowledge; and the implications of those conclusions.
- be a reflective practitioner.

SYLLABUS and LEARNING METHODS

The dissertation is undertaken primarily as an independent, self-managed programme of study, supported by supervision by a member of academic staff and guidance provided via the dedicated Blackboard site.

Each student will be allocated their supervisor following the submission of a draft research proposal (as part of the Management Research Methods module) to assist with the initial discussion of the feasibility of the proposed study. Supervisors will have the appropriate expertise in the subject as well as a good knowledge of the topic of the dissertation and of the research methods proposed.

The supervisor and student will reconsider the draft research proposal submitted, to ensure that the research area is set within a strategic framework and that it will enable the provision of recommendations that reflect the integration of entrepreneurial, operational and general management knowledge and skills. An acceptable dissertation could take the format of: action research; problem-solving consultancy; model building based upon original empirical data; in-depth industry analysis; and an issue of national/international importance impacting on management/management education. Qualitative and/or quantitative techniques or mixed methods will be employed.

The main form of tutor support will be **FIVE hours (normally) of face-to-face individual** supervision supplemented by an appropriate amount of e-mail support. The student will be provided with the opportunity for guidance at all key stages of the project, including: selection of topic; approach to the study; choice of methodology; literature review; design of fieldwork and presentation of findings and conclusions.

By the time that the work for the dissertation is started, the student is expected to have fully covered the syllabus for the BA 589. The student and their supervisor will consider, at the outset, and at appropriate stages during the work for the dissertation project, further study of, and training in, aspects of research that may be necessary. A dedicated Blackboard site will be used to provide for further support, where appropriate. This will also provide a forum for mutual help and support among the students themselves.

A student is expected to maintain contact with his/her tutor and to make regular contact/appointments. S/he should produce regular written work, word-processed but cannot expect tutors to assess the work before it is formally submitted.

A tutor will provide a student with the weeks they are available to be contacted during the summer period. They will oversee extracts submitted and make constructive comments. The student should ascertain from the supervisor the last opportunity for sending a draft version of the dissertation for comment. Normally, this will be *at least* 10 days before the deadline. Any feedback should be taken as indicative of areas for improvement; it is the student's responsibility to apply such guidance across the whole of the dissertation.

SUPERVISORY MEETINGS AND RESEARCH ETHICS

At an early meeting with your supervisor, you will need to discuss the face-to-face meetings arrangement and a number of ethical considerations relating to your research project. All forms shown in **Appendix** must be signed and bound in with your dissertation. **A sample access letter** and **Participant Agreement Form** are also included.

ASSESSMENT

Academic dissertation (100%)

This is a substantial piece of written work with a range of 10,000 to 12,000 words (excluding bibliography and a modest number of endnotes and essential appendices). The dissertation must provide a clear link to important and interesting business, strategic, managerial and economic applications. A range of approaches may be adopted, including the original analysis of existing secondary data but it is likely that most students will use a combination of published literature and primary research. The dissertation should be bound using comb binding and a dark blue cover.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Your dissertation will be assessed by at least two members of staff with relevant expertise in relation to your topic and with appropriate experience in assessing Masters level dissertations. Their academic judgement will be guided by a set of assessment descriptors, a copy of which is available on the relevant Moodle site. A sample of marked dissertations, together with assessors' comments based on the assessment descriptors, will be viewed by an External Examiner.

ASSESSMENT CATEGORIES

The following assessment categories will be used in the assessment of the dissertation with weightings shown in brackets:

- Introduction, Context, Research Objectives (10%)
- Literature Review (25%)
- Research Design and Methodology (15%)
- Results, Analysis and Evaluation of Findings (30%)
- Conclusions and Recommendations (10%)
- Presentation, Structure and Writing (10%)

ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Each of the assessment categories is elaborated below in the form of a checklist of questions. Please study the checklist of questions as you prepare relevant sections of your dissertation, and especially when you are editing the penultimate and final drafts of your dissertation.

INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT, RESEARCH OBJECTIVES (10%)

- Is the research topic or problem clearly stated and shown to be worth investigating?
- Has appropriate background information been provided with special terms and concepts defined?
- Are the research objectives (research questions or hypotheses) clear, relevant, coherent and achievable?
- Do objectives etc. go beyond mere description ie. Do they involve explanation, comparison, criticism or evaluation?

LITERATURE REVIEW (25%)

- Has a comprehensive range of RELEVANT literature been used to discuss relevant concepts, models and theories?
- Are the sources used up to date, and of sufficient academic weight?
- Does the dissertation give evidence of a critical attitude towards source material?

- Are the key themes and issues surrounding the research questions clearly drawn from the literature?
- Have sources been acknowledged and cited fairly and properly, in accordance with the Harvard format? Is the References listing at the end of the dissertation complete and in the Harvard format?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY (15%)

- Is there a clear rationale for the research design and methodology adopted?
- Are the research methods fully described and the advantages and disadvantages of chosen methods discussed?
- Are any constraints or limitations identified?
- Are the relevant research instruments (e.g. blank questionnaire, interview questions etc) included in the appendices? Are the research instruments well designed with all questions etc. relevant to research objectives?
- Are sampling methods described in detail? i.e. who the respondents are, how many there are and how they were selected?
- Are data analysis methods discussed?
- Is there evidence of care and accuracy in the data collection process? Are reliability and validity issues addressed?
- Has the methodology been critically evaluated in retrospect?

RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF FINDINGS (30%)

- Is all data presented relevant to aims and objectives?
- Is the analysis thorough and appropriate to the data collected? eg.

FOR QUESTIONNAIRES

- Do the appendices contain a data matrix, and details of statistical analysis undertaken? Is statistical analysis correctly performed and interpreted?

FOR INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUPS etc

- Do the appendices contain data collected and analysed such as interview transcripts? Has qualitative data been systematically analysed?

FOR DOCUMENT, ARCHIVE AND OTHER SECONDARY DATA

- Has the validity and reliability of the sources been addressed? Has quantitative or qualitative data been systematically analysed?

- Are the findings presented clearly and interestingly for the reader, with useful tables and charts embedded in the text and with the appendices being used appropriately for bulky and/or less interesting/essential data?
- Have the findings been discussed and evaluated?
- Have the finding of the primary research been compared and contrasted with findings, theories, models and concepts derived from the literature review?

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (10%)

- Have the research objectives (research questions) been reviewed and addressed?
- Do the conclusions and recommendations follow on from the findings? Are they well grounded in the evidence and arguments presented?
- Has the relevance of the conclusions for management been discussed?
- Are the conclusions and recommendations discussed in context and are they more widely applicable?

PRESENTATION, STRUCTURE AND WRITING (10%)

- Is the overall style and presentation of the dissertation in accordance with that specified in the Module Handbook i.e. Cover pages, title page, word count, spacing, chapter and section headings, pagination, appropriate font, font size and font style (bold, italics, etc)
- Is the title concise and appropriate?
- Is the abstract a concise (1 page) summary of the main aims, methodology, findings and conclusions?
- Are acknowledgements made as appropriate?
- Is the contents page clear, concise and logically numbered? Are appendices, tables and figures numbered and listed in the contents page?
- Are all appendices referred to in the text?
- Is the writing clear and in an appropriate academic style?
- Is the standard of written English acceptable? Has the dissertation been spelling and grammar checked?

Assessment Criteria

The following general assessment criteria will be used as guidelines for the assessment of all types of written assessed work including essays; reports; audits; critical reviews; research proposals; and the dissertation.

Mark	Description
80-100% Distinction	Superlative analysis, synthesis and evaluation of material. Imaginative and original approach to study. Complete understanding of all material dealt with. As good a piece of work as could be expected at this stage of development of a near publishable quality.
70-79% Distinction	Excellent analysis, synthesis and evaluation of material. Imaginative and original approach to study. Thorough understanding of all material dealt with.
60-69% Pass	Clear analysis, synthesis and evaluation of material. Imaginative approach to study. Good understanding of most material dealt with.
50-59% Pass	Sound analysis and evaluation of material. Appropriate approach to study. Good understanding of most material dealt with.
40-49% Fail	Weak analysis and evaluation of material. Some understanding of some of the material dealt with.
0-39% Fail	Rudimentary analysis and evaluation of material. Superficial understanding of most material dealt with.

FORMAT of THE DISSERTATION

The first (cover) page of the dissertation should be set out as follows:

<p style="text-align: center;">Title of Dissertation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">By</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A N Other (Student Number: 000000000)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A dissertation submitted for the Masters in Business Administration</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Business School University of Roehampton 2013</p>
--

The second page should contain the following statement and signed and dated:

DECLARATION FORM

The work I have submitted is my own effort. I certify that all the material in this Dissertation, which is not my own work, has been identified and acknowledged. No materials are included for which a degree has been previously conferred upon me.

Signed
A N Other

Date

Subsequent pages should include the following sections, each of which must start on a new page: (sections in brackets relate to the alternative sections for a secondary source dissertation)

The Abstract

This should be a summary of the content of the thesis and should not be longer than 300 words.

Contents page

This should be a listing of the contents of the thesis, giving page numbers for each section and chapter, and is best presented in tabulated form.

Acknowledgements

This is where you have the opportunity to thank the people and organisations who have assisted in your work;

Chapter 1

Introduction, organisational context and research objectives;

Chapter 2

Literature review;

Chapter 3

Research Methodology (account of sources, methods of analysis, theory to be applied);

Chapter 4

Findings, analysis and evaluation

Chapter 5

Conclusion and, if appropriate, recommendations.

References

Appendices

NB Appendix Ethics Discussion and Agreement must be included

The dissertation should be bound and have a dark blue cover.

A single font style and size should be used for main text throughout. The font size may be increased (slightly) for headings.

The preferred font is one of:

Calibri 11 or 12 point;

Arial 10 point;

Times New Roman 12 point.

Line spacing should be 1.5. All pages should be numbered consecutively. Each chapter must be started on a new page.

Submission:

A digital copy must be submitted and TWO HARD COPIES must be handed in to the Head of Studies by _____ **before 2pm.**

Please complete and attach a Late Work Submission yellow coversheet for all late work together with documentary evidence of mitigating circumstances.

Computer/printer failure will **not** be accepted as a reason for late submission.

Students must keep a copy of their final pieces of coursework. You are advised to keep any notes and records kept of data collected, for example completed questionnaires, tape recordings or interviews etc. University officials, including the External Examiner, may wish to see evidence of your work to verify authenticity.

INDICATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Core Text

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2009) *Research Methods for Business Students* (5th ed.), London: Pearson Education Ltd

Essential Texts

Bergman, M. (ed.) (2008) *Advances in Mixed Methods Research*, London: Sage Publication

Berma Brown, R. and Saunders, M. (2007) *Dealing with Statistics: what you need to know*, Maidenhead: Open University Press/ McGraw-Hill

Booth, W., Colomb, G. and Williams, J. (2008) *The Craft of Research* (3rd ed.), Chicago: Chicago University Press

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2007) *Business Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Creswell, J. and Plano Clark, V.. (2007) *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications

Fisher, C. (2007) *Researching and Writing a Dissertation for Business Students* (2nd ed.), Harlow, Essex: FT Prentice Hall.

Hart, C. (2001) *Doing a Literature Search: A Comprehensive Guide for the Social Sciences*, London: Sage

Marshall, Catherine and Rossman, Gretchen B. (2006) *Designing Qualitative Research* (4th ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications

Plano Clark, V. and Creswell, J.. (2008) *The Mixed Methods Reader*, Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications

Recommended Texts

Alfano, C. and O'Brien, A. (2008) *Envision Writing and Researching Arguments* (2nd ed.), New York: Pearson Longman

Bazeley, P. (2007) *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*, London: Sage Publication

Bolker, J. (1998) *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*, New York: Henry Holt and Company Inc:

Everitt, B. and Dunn, G. (1991) *Applied Multivariate Data Analysis*, New York: John Wiley and Sons

Faigley, L. and Selzer, J. (2009) *Good Reasons Researching and Writing Effective Arguments* (4th ed.), Pearson Longman: USA.

Fitzpatrick. J., Secrist, J. and Wright, D. (1998) *Secrets for A Successful Dissertation*, Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications

Hart, C. (1998) *Doing a literature review: releasing the social science research imagination*, London: Sage

Johnson, A. (2008) *A Short Guide to Action Research* (3rd ed.), Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Johnson, R. and Wichern, D. (2007) *Applied Multivariate Statistical Analysis* (6th ed.), Pearson International Edition, Pearson Education Inc: New Jersey.

Kinnear, P. and Gray, C. (2002) *SPSS for Windows Made Simple*, Hove: Psychology Press

- Leary, M. (2008) *Introduction to Behavioural Research Methods* (5th ed.), Pearson International Edition, Pearson Education Inc: USA.
- Lester, J. and Lester, J. Jr (2007) *Principles of Writing Research Papers* (2nd ed.), New York: Penguin Academics, Pearson Longman
- Lester, J. and Lester, J. Jr (2008) *The Essential Guide to Research Writing Across the Disciplines* (4th ed.), New York: Penguin Academics, Pearson Longman
- Mazzocchi, M. (2008) *Statistics for Marketing and Consumer Research*, London: Sage Publications
- Nadell, J., Langan, J. and Comodromos, E. (2009) *The Longman Writer- Rhetoric, Reader, Research Guide and Handbook* (7th ed.), New York: Pearson Longman
- Rosnow, R. and Rosenthal, R. (2008) *Beginning Behavioral Research A Conceptual Primer* (6th ed.) New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Salkind, N. (2009) *Exploring Research* (7th ed.), New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Schmidt, M.. and Hollensen, S. (2006) *Marketing Research: An International Approach*, FT Prentice Hall, Pearson Education Ltd: England.
- Snijders, T. and Bosker, R. (2004) *An Introduction to Basic and Advanced Multilevel Modeling*, Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications
- Yin, R. (2003) *Case Study Research: Design & Methods* (3rd ed.), London: Sage Publications

Digitised Text

Students will be expected to refer to all available secondary sources, online databases, electronic journals and subject resources available in the Library and Learning services as a source of ideas for exercises and projects. For more information, please go to this link:

<http://studentzone.roehampton.ac.uk/library/index.html>

Ethics discussion and agreement

I have discussed the ethical considerations associated with my proposed research with my supervisor. The following points were covered:

1. Rights of participants: what participation involves, right to withdraw
2. Confidentiality of findings: who has access to the findings, anonymity of participants/organisation.
3. Data protection: making it clear how the data will be gathered, stored and destroyed.
4. Institutional reputation: ensuring that the research is conducted in a professional manner, including all written communication.

If my research methods change in any way, I will re-discuss any ethical issues with my supervisor.

Name of Student:

Name of supervisor:

Signed (student)

Date

Signed (supervisor)

Date.....

To be submitted and bound with your completed work.

Example Letter of Access

[Note that this specifies interview methodology – it would need to be amended for other forms of data-gathering.]

Date

Dear Ms/Mr/Dr

I am undertaking a Dissertation as part of my Masters programme in [insert programme name] at the Business School at University of Roehampton My project is entitled [insert project title] and it has the aim of [insert key aims].

I am writing to ask if you could spare the time to be interviewed for the project. The interview would last approximately (insert time commitment).

I assure you that any information you give me will be treated with complete confidentiality, if you so wish. In addition, if you wish, the name of your institution and those of any individuals will be changed. The final report will be seen by two examiners from University of Roehampton and one from another university, but will not be publicised further. If you would find it useful, I am happy to provide you with a summary of the findings.

In order to get as much detail as possible, I would like to record the interview, but I am happy to take notes if you would prefer. Any transcripts and notes will be destroyed at the end of the project and will be kept securely until that time. I will offer you the opportunity to see the interview transcripts and to correct any details.

Unless I hear to the contrary, I will phone you in a few days' time to arrange a convenient time for the interview. My email address is [username@roehampton.ac.uk] and my phone number is [number].

Yours sincerely

[signature]

Students are required to discuss their letter of access with their supervisor before contacting any organisations.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT FORM

Title and brief description of the research project:

Name and contact details of researcher:

Name:
Address:
Email:
Telephone:

Statement of Agreement:

I agree to take part in this research and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information provided will be treated in confidence and that the Dissertation will be seen by two examiners from University of Roehampton and one from another university, but will not be publicised further.

I have been informed that I will have the opportunity to check the contents of my interview and any material attributed to my organisation before it is included my Dissertation.

I agree to the interview being recorded. I understand that the data will be kept securely and that it will be destroyed after the examination process is completed.

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

If you have any concerns about this research or any aspect of your participation in it please contact my supervisor:

Name:
Email:
Direct telephone number:

UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON
BUSINESS SCHOOL

MBA Dissertation
Agreed Meeting Schedule

This form should be completed before the start of the supervisory process. Supervisor and the student should retain a copy.

*Students are entitled to **FOUR hours (normally) of face-to-face individual** supervision supplemented by an appropriate amount of e-mail support.*

Student's Name:

Supervisor:

Proposed Dates of Meeting and Research Progress Monitoring:

1st Meeting Date: _____ **Estimated Duration:** _____

2nd Meeting Date: _____ **Estimated Duration:** _____

3rd Meeting Date: _____ **Estimated Duration:** _____

4th Meeting Date: _____ **Estimated Duration:** _____

5th Meeting Date: _____ **Estimated Duration:** _____

Agreed submission date of final draft: _____

Student's signature

Date:

Supervisor's signature:

Date:

UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

BUSINESS SCHOOL

*MBA Dissertation
Supervision Record*

*This form should be completed at **each** supervisory meeting. Supervisor and the student should retain a copy.*

Student's Name:

Supervisor:

Date of Meeting:

Time: From _____ to _____

Written work submitted or other purpose of meeting:

Main topics/issues discussed and action points agreed:

Time, date and location of next meeting:

Actions and agenda topics for next meeting:

Student's signature

Date:

Supervisor's signature:

Date: