

Research (Masters and Doctorate) Degrees Guide: Main Dissertation/Thesis

2022



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# Disclaimer

1. The main purpose of this document is to provide a general guide to graduate students at Ajman University on preparing their dissertations/theses. It sets the recommended structure, preliminary pages, style and layout, length, submission procedures, and dissertations/theses formalities.

1. This guideline should not contradict CAA and AU policies; if this happens, then policies should be followed.
2. This guideline should be read in collaboration with the [Graduate Studies Policies and Procedures.](https://www.ajman.ac.ae/upload/docs/AU_Graduate_Studies_Policies_and_Procedures1.pdf?v=1655117445)

# Suggested structure for an empirical dissertation/thesis

## Chapter 1: Introduction[[1]](#footnote-1)

The introduction should briefly outline the aims of the study and offer the reader an introduction to the substantive area. It should discuss the rationale for the study, explaining why it was selected, and why it is relevant and important to you. The introduction should forewarn the reader what he/she will be reading. It should therefore outline briefly what the dissertation is about and the ways in which the research was undertaken, and any key issues or concerns presented by the dissertation. It is best written last, although an early rough draft, which you share with your supervisor, can be a useful way of clarifying your thoughts and intentions and keeping you focused as your study progresses.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

The purpose of the literature review is to present for the reader a concise overview of literature relevant to your research questions. You should set out the key research themes and main arguments (relevant to your research questions). A description of what others have said is not enough. You should evaluate what they have said by asking yourself whether their research was done in one place, in a particular way, with particular subjects, and is relevant to a particular context. The coherent argument in your literature review will be demonstrated in the way you use the work of others to underpin your research questions and research methods.

The literature review also demonstrates a number of skills to its readers. It should show accuracy of reading and of reporting. It should show accuracy in citing references and in quoting material. It should demonstrate skills in using and commenting on cited materials in developing an argument. The chapter should demonstrate ability to synthesize a volume of material and to sift out key themes. The chapter should demonstrate an ability to evaluate differing sources. It should show ability to write a balanced review and not simply highlight sources that support a favored perspective.

It is highly advisable to find one or two review articles as the best way in getting an overview of an area of research. A review article, for a given topic, synthesizes the major trends, specifies gaps, and suggests areas for future research. The table below summarizes different review styles in different disciplines.[[2]](#footnote-2)

|  |
| --- |
| **Table 2****Examples of existing guidelines for conducting a literature review** |
| Authors | Discipline | Type of literature review | Type of literature review |
| Baumeister and Leary (1997) | Psychology | Narrative review | * Overviews reasons for conducting a review
* Discusses common mistakes for conducting a review
 |
| Tranfield et al. (2003) | Management | Systematic review | * Compares management and healthcare research
* Highlights the challenges of conducting a systematic review in management research
* Provides guidelines for conducting a systematic literature review in management research
 |
| Torraco (2005) | Human Resources | Integrative review | * Defines the integrative literature review
* Provides guidelines and examples for integrative literature reviews
* Discusses contributions of an integrative literature review
 |
| Liberati et al. (2009) | Medicine | Systematic review and meta-analysis | * Provides guidelines for conducting and reporting systematic reviews and meta-analysis
 |
| Wong et al. (2013) | Medicine | Semi-systematic review | * Provides guidelines for conducting a meta-narrative review
 |
| Davis et al. (2014) | Social Sciences | Systematic review and meta-analysis | * Synthesizes guidelines for systematic literature reviews
* Provides guidelines for conducting a systematic review and meta-analysis in social sciences
 |
| Palmatier et al. (2018) | Marketing | Review papers and systematic reviews | * Provides guidelines for publishing review papers in the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science
 |
| **Adopted from: Snyder (2019)** |

## Chapter 3: Research methods

This chapter describes what informed your research design and why. It should describe the development of your research tools and the role that piloting may have played. It should be reflective, in that it might comment on the limitations of the research as it was finally executed, or on any differences between your original plans and what was subsequently possible.

This chapter should cover the research paradigm, methodological approach, methods, techniques, sample selection and size, target populations, equipment, data collection, variables measurement (Dependent, independent, and control variables), and empirical model). It is important to explain why it is the most appropriate way to effectively answer the research question. Have you considered (and disregarded) any alternatives?

If relevant, you need to discuss the “ethical consideration” of your research, what you consider to be the key ethical implications of your work, and it should also explain how you will gain access to the research field, i.e., how you will find the information you need

In some other scientific fields (i.e., dentistry) this chapter maybe labeled as “Materials and methods’’

## Chapter 4: Results and discussion

This chapter, or chapters, allows you to describe the responses to your research instruments and then to analyze the significance of what you found. The chapter(s) will need careful structuring. You will have to decide how you are going to organize your findings to present them most clearly to your readers. You will need to take into account, for example, whether to work by theme, by constituency, by organization, or by geographical area. Whatever the organizing principles these need to be explained to the reader and the rationale for particular choices made clear.

Although you must describe your data clearly for your readers, it also needs to be presented and analyzed. This means comparing constituencies, exploring similarities and differences and trying to account for these. If you use interview material then you must use quotations to illustrate carefully made and criticised points. You should not simply present your reader with great chunks of quotes assuming that they will make a case for you. It means offering appropriate statistical analysis of the data where appropriate and moving beyond a simple rehearsal of percentages and diagrammatic presentations of data.

At this point (and perhaps in a separate chapter) you should compare your data against that offered by other researchers cited in your literature review, seeing where it supports or moves away from others’ work, and try to account for this. The strength of the links between this chapter and the literature review enhances the dissertation.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions

This is the place to pull together the key themes of the dissertation and draw out implications for practice or recommendations for further research in the area. It is not the place to introduce new themes. A reader should be able to read the conclusion and have a clear sense of what the dissertation has been about, what has been discussed within it, and what you have made of it.

## References

This is a list of all the books, articles, or web sites you have referred to in the dissertation. Quotations should be copied correctly. Make a note of all references as you read them rather than trying to go back through everything you have read at a later stage.

The references style should follow appropriate standards used globally (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago, Harvard). Using a reference manager is highly recommended (e.g., EndNote, Mendeley, Zotero).

## Appendices

Your supervisor will advise you about what material you should put in appendices. Normally, this is where you present sample research tools, examples of data, perhaps examples of coding and analysis, sample teaching materials etc., but each study will have its own appropriate selection.

# Preliminary pages

The five preliminary pages of dissertations/theses must be: **Title Page, Abstract, Acknowledgments, Final Submission Cover, Dedication, Author’s Declaration, Table of Contents**. These pages should be single-sided.

## i- Title page

At the top of the title page within the advised margins, give the title, and any sub-title of the dissertation, followed by the volume number, if more than one. The full name of the author should be in the centre of the page. At the bottom centre of the page should be the words “A dissertation/thesis submitted to Ajman University in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Master of in the College of…(College name)”. Under this text, the name of the College and the date that the dissertation was submitted should be provided. The word count (text only) should be shown on the title page. Please also remember to include your student number on this page.

## ii-Abstract

A summary of around 300 words, which sets out the problem investigated, how it was investigated, the major findings and conclusions. The abstract generally/commonly fits on to one side of an A4 page, should be placed immediately after the title page. This can be typed in single spacing in a font size between 10 and 12 inclusive.

## iii –Acknowledgments

Theseare at the discretion of the author.

## iv – Final Submission Cover

These are form AGS8A for Masters’ degrees and form AGS8B for Doctorate degrees. Appendix 2 (A and B) gives these two forms that are also available Graduate Studies at AU.

## v-Dedication

This is at the discretion of the author

## vi-Author's declaration

A signed declaration is required stating how far the work contained in the dissertation is the candidate's own work and how far it has been conducted in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others. An example is given below:

**Author’s Declaration**

**I declare that the work in this dissertation/thesis was carried out in accordance with the requirements of Ajman University and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, this work is my own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation/thesis, other than referenced material, are those of the author.**

Signed: Date:

The Author’s Declaration must be signed by hand by the student in both printed copies of the dissertation/thesis.

## vii – Table of contents, list of tables, list of figures, list of abbreviations, and illustrative material (list of symbols)

The table of contents must list in sequence, with page numbers: all chapters, sections and subsections; the list of references; the bibliography; list of abbreviations; and any appendices. The list of tables and illustrations must follow the table of contents, and should list with page numbers all the tables, figures, abbreviations, and any other illustrative materials (i.e., list of symbols), in the order in which they appear in the text.

# Style and layout requirements

The style and layout requirements of the thesis are as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| i.  | Font:  | 12-point font (Garamond or Arial are highly recommended).  |
| ii.  | Line spacing:  | Minimum 1.5 up to double line spacing.  |
| iii.  | Paper:  | Good quality A4 printed on one side only (paper should be 100 gsm weight and the thesis should be printed and not photocopied).  |
| iv.  | Left-hand margin:  | 40 mm (this is essential to allow for binding).  |
| v.  | Other margins:  | Recommended minimum 20 mm but may be more.  |
| vi.  | Pagination:  | Pages must be numbered.  |
| vii.  | Contents:  | A paginated list of contents must be included at the front.  |

# Length

The specified length shall be applied only if it does not contradict other approved policies/standards from CAA and/or AU. The recommended maximum length of the dissertation/thesis shall be as follows:

i. The length of a thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy shall generally be no greater than 80,000 words and preferably not exceeding a maximum of 100,000 words, unless otherwise specified in individual course regulations or justified given the common practice in the domain/the nature of the study.

ii. The length of a thesis submitted for the Professional Doctorate (DBA) shall generally be no greater than 50,000 words, unless otherwise specified in individual course regulations or justified given the common practice in the domain/the nature of the study.

iii. The length of a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Science shall generally be no greater than 40,000 words maximum,

unless otherwise specified in individual course regulations or justified given the common practice in the domain/the nature of the study.

iv. Additional material contained within the thesis, such as appendices or the bibliography, is excluded from the upper limits.

# Submission of the dissertation/thesis

## 5.1. First submission (before the oral examination/Viva)

Candidates are required to submit the following items to the Program Coordinator or Nominee:

1. A soft copy is going to be submitted online in a dedicated place on the Moodle; this copy is going to be extracted from the system and will be used as a formal version that will be examined by Examination Committee Members.
2. If any member of the examination committee indicated his preference to have hardcopy of dissertation/thesis, then a bound copy of the dissertation/thesis (these are normally temporarily bound prior to the oral examination).
3. Dissertation/Thesis Submission Form which certifies the work is an original work produced by the candidate

## 5.2. Submission after the oral examination/Viva (when the dissertation/thesis has been finalized)

5.5.1. Candidates are required to submit the following items to the Program Coordinator or Nominee:

i. Two permanently bound copies of the thesis with hard covers following the instructions given below regarding front cover and spine.

ii. One electronic/soft copy of the thesis that should be submitted to the Programe Coordinator/ Nominee by email or handed in to them using appropriate electronic media (please ensure your full name, thesis title and college name are written on the cover). This electronic/soft version will ultimately be available online unless restrictions apply.

iii. An Electronic Dissertation/Thesis Deposit Agreement Form granting the University the right to make the thesis available online.

5.5.2. Consistent with and in accordance to AU library’s requirements, the permanently bound copies of the dissertation/thesis must be perfect bound (fixed black binding for Ph.D and burgundy for Master in which the sheets are sewn) with cloth-covered boards in black and burgundy for Ph.D. and Master, respectively. Candidates will not be permitted to graduate until the permanently bound copies and final electronic/soft copy have been submitted.

***Front cover and spine***

The permanently bound thesis shall have the following information in gold lettering:

On the front cover:

i. the full name of the candidate

ii. the title of the dissertation/thesis.

iii. the name of the degree for which the thesis is submitted

iv. the year of submission

On the spine there must be the following information printed downwards so that it can be read when the book lays flat, face upwards:

v. the name of the candidate (surname or family name and initials)

vi. the name of the degree

vii. the year of submission

***Electronic/soft version of the dissertation/thesis***

The dissertation/thesis must be submitted as one or more Word files. Appendices will be accepted in alternative formats where appropriate.

# Dissertation/thesis formalities

## 6.1. Ethics approval/Ethics Form

All research involving human participants, animal participants and/or collecting surveys (questionnaires) requires university approval by applying to the AU Research Ethics Committee (REC). Consequently, the question of ethics approval should be discussed with your supervisor early on in the research process, and ALL students are required to fill out an ethics approval form. The approval letter must be included as part of the dissertation/thesis. In most cases, that will be all that is required, but when it is required, the full form can be bound into the back of the submitted dissertation/thesis but not included in the word count.

**Please note:** Do not include the Ethics Form when you submit the electronic copy of your dissertation/thesis to the Turnitin before the oral examination/Viva.

## 6.2. Plagiarism

You must appropriately reference the work of others. You must ensure that direct quotations from others’ work – from unpublished sources, such as other dissertations/theses, from the web and from books and journals, are acknowledged

### Submitting one draft to Turnitin

You are allowed to submit ONE draft of your dissertation/thesis to the Turnitin. Instructions are set out in the Dissertation/thesis area on Moodle. This will enable you to check the word length and also to detect the similarity index. **The deadline for submitting to the draft area will be 10 days before your submission for the viva (oral examination) unless a permission is given by the Program Coordinator.**

More information about Ajman University policy for plagiarism, please read AU’s Policies and Procedures Manual.

**Appendix 3** provides details on plagiarism report form.

# Appendices

|  |
| --- |
| Appendix1. Checklist for good dissertation/thesis  |
| **Introduction and objectives** * Is the topic clearly stated and defined with a clear purpose?
* Are the aims and objectives (or research questions) clear, relevant, and coherent?
* If a hypothesis is identified, is it a proper testable hypothesis?
* Are the aims and objectives achievable?
 |
| **Literature review*** Has a comprehensive range of relevant literature been used?
* Are the sources up to date and of sufficient academic weight?
* Does the dissertation give evidence of a critical attitude towards source material?
* Have the sources been acknowledged and referenced properly? Is the bibliography complete and in the Harvard style?
 |
| **Methodology** * Is there a clear rationale for methodology?
* Have the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methods been discussed?
* Is the research methodology described fully? Could it be replicated?
* Are relevant research instruments eg blank and completed questionnaires?
* Are the sampling methods described in detail?
* Are data analysis methods discussed egg content analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation, tests of significance?
 |
| **Empirical analysis and discussion** **General*** Is the analysis appropriate to the data collected?

**For questionnaire*** How clearly presented are the data? Are details of the statistical analyses provided? Does the chosen statistical analysis make the most of the data?

**For depth interviews*** Are the interview transcripts included in the appendices? Is there evidence that the data have been systematically analysed? Is there a summary of key points?
* Are the key themes and issues discussed?
* Are links drawn with both the research objectives and the literature review?
 |
| **Conclusion, limitations, and suggestions for future research*** Do the conclusions follow on from the findings?
* Are the conclusions well-grounded in the evidence?
* Are the recommendations plausible given the research findings?
 |
| **Overall structure and presentation*** Is the overall style and presentation in accordance with that specified in the Module Handbook e.g., word count, spacing, section headings, Harvard style of references, font size?
* Is the abstract a concise summary of the main aims, methodology, findings, and conclusions?
* Does the dissertation read as an academic piece of work?
 |

|  |
| --- |
| Appendix 2A. Final Submission Cover |
| C:\Users\ajac.mehdi\Desktop\New Ajman Logo.jpg

|  |
| --- |
| **Final Submission cover** |

1. **General Information**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **College**------------------------------ | **Department**------------------------------------- | **Program**------------------------ | **Academic Year**-------/-------- |

1. **Student’s Name and Thesis Title:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name:** |  |
| **Dissertation Title:** |  |
| **Date of final submission** |  |

**3.**

|  |
| --- |
| **A dissertation submitted to Ajman University in accordance with the requirements for award of the Doctor of [name of the degree] in the College of [name of the college]**  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Supervisor’s signature**:………………………………………. |
|   **Co-Supervisor’s signature**:………………………………………. |
| **Examiner’s signature**: ………………………………………. |
| **Examiner’s signature**: ………………………………………. |
| **Dean’s signature**: …………………………………………... |

 |

|  |
| --- |
| Appendix 2B. Final Submission Cover |
| C:\Users\ajac.mehdi\Desktop\New Ajman Logo.jpg

|  |
| --- |
| **Final Submission cover** |

1. **General Information**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **College**------------------------------ | **Department**------------------------------------- | **Program**------------------------ | **Academic Year**-------/-------- |

1. **Student’s Name and Thesis Title:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name:** |  |
| **Thesis Title:** |  |
| **Date of final submission** |  |

**3.**

|  |
| --- |
| **This thesis is submitted for the partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of MSc in (name of the degree) in the College of [name of the college]**  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Supervisor’s signature**:………………………………………. |
|   **Co-Supervisor’s signature**:………………………………………. |
| **Examiner’s signature**: ………………………………………. |
| **Examiner’s signature**: ………………………………………. |
| **Dean’s signature**: …………………………………………... |

 |
| Appendix 3. Plagiarism Report Form |
| **Dissertation/Thesis Plagiarism Report Form**

|  |
| --- |
| **Candidate details:** |
| **Full Name:** |  |
| **ID Number:** |  |
| **College:** |  |
| **Examined Degree:** |  |
| **Dissertation Title:** |  |
| **Supervisors’ details**  |
| **Principal Supervisor:** |  |
| **Co-supervisor:** |  |
| **Similarity percentage report**  |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Total similarity percentage**  |  |
| **Maximum similarity percentage from one individual source** |  |

 |  |

**Declaration by the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) or nominee** I examined the similarity report (total and maximum), and nothing has been deemed serious. I examined the similarity report (total and maximum), and some plagiarism-related concerns were identified (as detailed below). **Comment by the GPC**, if any…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..……………………………..……………………………..…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..……………………………..……………………………..…………………………….. |

1. **Appendix 1** specifies a checklist for good dissertation/thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. Journal of business research, 104, 333-339.](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296319304564) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)