

Department of English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies

The Honours Thesis

(English Language and Linguistics)

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A. General Format

1. *Length.* The target length of the Honours Thesis (HT) is 8,000 words for cohort 2021 onwards (12,000 words for earlier cohorts). This target excludes appendices, references, footnotes, quotations, data, tables and figures. Penalties will be imposed if this target is exceeded by more than 500 words for cohort 2021 onwards (1,000 words for earlier cohorts).
2. *Paper size.* When composing your HT as a Word document, select A4 size pages (210×297mm or 8.27×11.69").
3. *Margins.* Each page should have a margin of 35mm or 1.4" all round.
4. *Font.* Any easily legible font is acceptable; avoid unusual fonts. If in doubt, consult your supervisor.
5. *Spacing.* The HT should be double-spaced or have a 1½ spacing throughout, excepting quotations.
6. *Pagination.* Pages should be numbered with Arabic numerals beginning with the first page of Chapter 1 and running throughout the HT to the end. Lower case Roman numerals, beginning with the Signed Statement page, should be used to number the pages preceding the body of the HT. The title page is not numbered (but is considered page i).

B. Order of Parts

The body of HT is preceded by the following pages which provide essential information (optional elements are asterisked):

Title Page
Signed Statement
Dedication*

Acknowledgements*
Table of Contents
List of Tables and Figures*
Abbreviations*
Abstract
Preface*

1. *Title Page.* The title page of the HT should include, in the following order: (a) the title of the thesis, (b) the author's name in full, (c) the degree for which the thesis is submitted using the following inscription: 'An Honours Thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in English Language and Linguistics', (d) the department, faculty and university to which the thesis is submitted, and the city in which the university is located, and (v) the date of presentation.
2. *Signed Statement.* A signed statement should follow the title page bearing the following declaration:

This Honours Thesis represents my own work and due acknowledgement is given whenever information is derived from other sources. No part of this Honours Thesis has been or is being concurrently submitted for any other qualification at any other university.

Signed

(See also **C. Plagiarism**)

3. *Acknowledgements.* This page is for making acknowledgements that have a direct bearing on the HT and is not for indulging in routine gestures of politeness or sentimental attitudinising. In all things, the candidate should be guided by good taste and good sense.
4. *Table of Contents.* Labelled simply CONTENTS, this page should give, with the page number at which each division can be found, the following information: (a) the title of each chapter or main division, (b) the title of each important subdivision in each chapter, (c) the bibliography, and (d) the appendix or appendices, if the HT contains any.
5. *List of Tables and Figures.* This page should list all tables, figures, and illustrations in the HT, with their precisely descriptive titles and page numbers.
6. *Abbreviations.* This page should list any frequently used abbreviations used throughout the HT.
7. *Abstract.* A summary of not more than 300 words should precede the HT, which should include the main idea(s) or aim(s) of the HT, its central finding(s) and/or principle supporting argument(s), and their significance.
8. *Preface.* A preface should provide only preliminary remarks or essential information needed to read the HT. Candidates should not feel bound to include a Preface if they have nothing meaningful to say.

The body of the HT is followed by the following parts (the optional element is asterisked):

Bibliography
Appendix*

9. *Bibliography.* See **D10**.

10. *Appendix.* The appendix (if any) should be placed at the back of the HT. An appendix should not be seen as a convenient way to circumvent the regulation limiting the length of the HT and is to be included only after careful consultation with the supervisor. Students are advised to be judicious about what they include in the appendix. The appendix, or the various appendices if more than one is inserted, ***should not exceed half the length of the main body of the HT itself*** (in terms of word count or number of pages, the latter if the appendix comprises such material as advertisements or pictures etc), ***without prior permission in writing from the Head of the Department.***

Appendices in HTs for English Language and Linguistics are envisaged to be for the presentation of:

- ❖ questionnaires/survey forms or other instruments used in the elicitation of data;
- ❖ raw/primary data used in the analysis (e.g. transcripts of tape-recorded data, texts or song lyrics analysed; video or audio tape recordings of the data); or
- ❖ data in tabulated form.

Such material is placed in the appendices to provide convenient reference and context for the analysis and argumentation made in the text. Material to be included in the appendices should be that which, if placed within the main text, would disrupt the flow of argumentation there. Any information (e.g. relevant examples, statistics central to the claims of the HT) necessary for following the reasoning in the body of the HT should appear in the main text.

The divisions into which an HT falls are a matter of aesthetic sense and the nature of the subject. They need not always be chaperoned at each end by an 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion'. Within the spatial restrictions outlined above, students should regard the formal divisions of the HT as a matter of individual prerogative; that is, you should use your own judgement in consultation with your supervisor.

C. Plagiarism

The Department of English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies regards plagiarism as a serious offence and will enforce rules against it. Pursuant to this aim, each student is required to include in the HT a signed statement that it represents the student's own work and that all sources have been properly acknowledged (see **B2**).

You should observe the following principles (also refer to **D9, 10**):

1. All phrases taken from another text should be placed in quotation marks and their source given in parenthesis.
2. All ideas derived from another text (including through AI such as ChatGPT), even when paraphrased, should be acknowledged in parenthesis.
3. General indebtedness for background information and data should be acknowledged in the reference section.
4. If you consult the papers or notes of another student this fact should be acknowledged and the extent of indebtedness made clear.
5. Reference can also be made to personal communications, including lectures and other contacts. These should be acknowledged in parenthesis, as 'personal communication'.

Any student who violates these principles will be subject to punishment up to and including suspension from the Examinations. At the very least, an HT found to contain any significant amount of plagiarism will be given a failing grade.

D. Style Sheet

These notes on style are adapted from the LSA Style Sheet with some modification, *eg*, unlike LSA we are recommending the use of underlining or italicisation for book and journal titles. You may also like to refer to the LSA *Language* Style Sheet, found at <http://www.lsadc.org/language/langstyl.html>, or to any recently published book or journal.

1. Orthography

- a. Use quotation marks (inverted commas) consistently. One way is to use double quotation marks for all quoted matter, and single quotation marks for quotes within quotes, and glosses. The second member of a pair of quotation marks should precede any other adjacent mark of punctuation, unless the other mark is part of the quoted matter: The word means ‘cart’, not ‘horse’; He writes, ‘This is false.’ Do not use quotation marks for a word or phrase cited as a linguistic example. (See 3.)
- b. In the text, underlining or italicisation should be used sparingly. Its main use will be in the citation of linguistic forms. (See 3.) Italicisation is used, however, for foreign words used as part of an English sentence: *ad hoc*; *lingua franca*.
- c. Spelling should normally be British system, except in quotes, which must retain the original. The hyphen should be avoided except when confusion or mispronunciation would result from its absence, or when the next element begins with a capital.
- d. Use a comma after the expressions *eg* and *ie* only when a full sentence follows them.
- e. Do not separate the subject from the predicate with a comma, even if the subject is long: *eg* in ‘Whether this statement is true or accurate is not in question’, do not insert a comma after *accurate*. Where this causes problems, recast the sentence. When you insert parenthetic comments or information, use a pair of commas (or sometimes, round brackets or dashes): *eg* ‘Blake’s comments were, in the light of the present discussion, frivolous’.
- f. Avoid exclamation marks.
- g. If your HT is quantitative, do not write out your numbers in words, but use Arabic numerals throughout. In non-quantitative contexts you may want to write out smaller numbers (*eg* under 10). You should use the per cent sign (%) rather than writing it out.

2. Footnotes

- a. Footnotes should be avoided where possible. They should only be used for peripheral, but useful or interesting, information.
- b. Footnotes should be single spaced.

3. Cited Forms

- a. The main use of underlining or italicisation is in the citation of linguistic forms: *makan* ‘eat’; the word like. Do not underline or italicise numbered examples. (See 4.)
- b. Enclose transcriptions either within (phonetic) square brackets or within (phonemic) slashes: the sound [ə]; the word /met/. Do not italicise or underscore bracketed transcriptions.
- c. Use angle brackets for specific reference to graphemes: the letter <q>, and curly brackets for morphemes: the suffix {-able}.

- d. Forms in a language not written with the Latin alphabet must be transliterated or transcribed unless there is a cogent reason for citing them in the original characters. Use IPA symbols unless there is another standard system for the language. The Hanyu Pinyin transcription for Mandarin needs no explanation, unless you deviate from its standard (Beijing) form. If you are transcribing other varieties of Chinese, or Indian languages, you must give the source of your transcription system.
- e. After the first occurrence of non-English forms, provide a gloss in single quotation marks: Latin *ovis* ‘sheep’ is a noun; in Singapore Mandarin *san* ‘three’ and *shan* ‘mountain’ are often identical in pronunciation. No comma separates the gloss from the cited form. No comma precedes the gloss and no comma follows, unless necessary for other reasons: Latin *ovis* ‘sheep’, *canis* ‘dog’, and *equus* ‘horse’ are nouns. See 5 for other instructions on glosses.

4. *Numbered Examples, Rules and Formulas*

- a. Type each numbered item on a separate indented line with the number in parentheses; indent after the number; use lowercase letters to group sets of related items:

- (2) a. Down the hill rolled the pram.
- b. Out of the house strolled my mother’s best friend.

- b. In the text, refer to numbered items as 2, 2a, 2a,b, 2(a–c).

5. *Glosses and Translations of Examples*

Examples not in English must be translated or glossed as appropriate. Sometimes, both a translation and a word-for-word or morpheme-by-morpheme gloss are appropriate.

- a. Place the translation or gloss of an example sentence or phrase on a new line below the example:

- (26) La nouvelle constitution approuvée (par le congrès), le président renforça ses pouvoirs.
‘The new constitution approved (by congress), the president consolidated his power’.

- b. Align word-for-word or morpheme-by-morpheme glosses of example phrases or sentences with the beginning of each original word:

- (17) Omdat duidelijk is dat hie ziek is.
because clear is that he ill is

- c. Observe the following conventions in morpheme-by-morpheme glosses:

- i. Place a hyphen between morphs within words in the original, and a corresponding hyphen in the gloss:

- (41) fog-okfel próbál-ni olvas-ni
will-1sg try-inf read-inf

- ii. If one morph in the original corresponds to two or more elements in the gloss (cumulative exponence), separate the latter by a full stop, except for persons; there is no full stop at the end of a word:

(5) es-tis be-2PL.PRES.IND.ACT

iii. Gloss lexical roots in lowercase roman type.

Gloss persons as 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Gloss all other grammatical categories in SMALL CAPITALS.

iv. Abbreviate glosses for grammatical categories. List the abbreviations in a note.

6. *Abbreviations*

- a. Abbreviations ending in a small letter (etc.) have a following period; abbreviations ending in a capital (HT) have none; e.g. and i.e. should each have two full stops (e.g., i.e.) or none at all (*eg, ie*).
- b. Standard abbreviations may be used without explanation. Abbreviations used in your HT alone must be explained in the proper places.

7. *Headings*

- a. Chapters, reference list, and all other major divisions of the HT should have a centred title in capital letters, *eg*:

CHAPTER ONE
CONTENTS
REFERENCES
APPENDIX II

- b. The titles of chapters should be centred, also in capital letters, under the chapter number.
- c. Within chapters etc. individual sections may be titled, using title case underlined or bold script, or non-underlined (small) capitals, or any other suitably highlighted face.
- d. Subheadings should begin at the left margin.
- e. Continuous numbering of sections throughout the HT is also permissible. If you want to do this, consult your supervisor about the standard methods. You may also want to number examples continuously.

8. *Tables*

- a. Plan tables carefully so that they are not crowded. Leave ample space between columns, and do not use vertical and horizontal rules unless the table would be unclear without them.
- b. Column headings should be short. Longer headings can be replaced by numbers or capital letters which can be explained in a note attached to the table (see (d)).
- c. Tables should be numbered, and referred to by number.
- d. Each table should have a legend, preferably below it (though it may be also be above). The legend should consist of the table number, and a concise title, and may be followed by brief notes of explanation or comment.
- e. Axes, columns, segments etc. must be clearly labelled. Computer plotted figures may have to be adapted in order to fulfil normal labelling requirements.
- f. You should assume that your readers can interpret tables. It is not necessary to summarise a table in the text. You should merely draw attention to the salient points.

9. Citations within the text

- a. Within the text, give only a brief citation in parentheses consisting of the author's surname, the year of publication, and page number(s) where relevant, eg:

... there may be differences between users (Platt and Weber 1980: 113).

... whether linguistic theory should be concerned with 'an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech-community' (Chomsky 1965: 3).

- b. If the author's name is part of the text, then use this form:

Winford (1985) has drawn attention to ...

Platt (1977:84) identifies lectal switching ...

- c. If a cited publication has more than two authors, use the surname of the first author, followed by *et al.*
- d. Use initials only if necessary to distinguish two authors of the same surname.
- e. Page numbers here are only for the passage to which reference is made, not the whole paper.
- f. Brief citations should be given in the body of the text and not in footnotes.
- g. If you are quoting literary texts (*Jane Eyre*, Catherine Lim's 'The Taxi-Driver', 'The Listeners'), this method is not relevant. Check with your supervisor.
- h. Extended quotes (of more than one sentence) should be in a separate paragraph, indented on the left, about 0.5', and single spaced. The brief citation should follow, placed at the end of the line, in parenthesis, on a new line.
- i. Quotations should correspond exactly with the originals in wording, spelling, and interior punctuation. If you have in any way altered the quote you must indicate how by:
 - i. using three full stops ... to show that you have missed out a section. If the section missed is at the end of the sentence you must also have the sentence full stop....
 - ii. using square brackets for your comments, e.g. [my underlining]; [*sic*], or your paraphrases. These paraphrases should not violate the sense of the original. They may be needed to change the grammar of a quote so that it fits in with your matrix sentence. Use [*sic*] only where you think your reader might otherwise think you have made a typing or factual error: Mozarts [*sic*] piano concerto; Born in 1963 [*sic*], by 1870 he was already playing in public. Do not use it for sarcastic comments on something you do not agree with.

10. References

Full citation of the literature referred to should be given in a reference section at the end of the Honours Thesis, in single spacing.

- a. Arrange the entries alphabetically by surnames of authors, with each entry as a separate hanging indented paragraph.
- b. List multiple works by the same author in ascending chronological order.
- c. Use suffixed letters a, b, c, etc. to distinguish more than one item published by a single author in the same year.
- d. If more than one article is cited from one book, list the book as a separate entry under the editor's name, with cross references to the book in the entries for each article.

- e. Use the same form of name as in the original article/book. Do not replace given names with initials unless the person normally uses initials: Barker, M. A. R., but Lehisté, Ilse. Use a second (third, etc.) name or initial only if the author normally does so: Heath, Shirley Brice; Oehrle, Richard T.
- f. Capitals should be used only initially and for proper names.
- g. Each entry should contain the following elements in the order and punctuation given:

(first) author's surname, given name(s) or initial(s), (given name and surname of other authors). year of publication. Full title and subtitle of the work (underlined or italicised if it is a book or monograph, not if it is an article).

This is followed by:

For a journal article: Full name of the journal (underlined or italicised) and volume number. inclusive page numbers for the entire article. [There are standard abbreviations for most journals, which may be used, or the name of the journal can be given in full.]

For an article in a book: title of the book (underlined or italicised), ed. by full name(s) of editor(s), inclusive page numbers.

And finally, for books and monographs: the edition, volume or part number (if applicable). series title (if any). Place (city or town, not just country) of publication: Publisher.

- h. Pay particular attention to works which have run into more than one edition, and to articles which have been reprinted in a collection. These articles therefore have a different date from that of the collection in which they appear.
- i. Some examples follow:

- Dorian, Nancy C. (ed.) 1989. *Investigating obsolescence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hale, Kenneth, and Josie White Eagle. 1980. A preliminary metrical account of Winnebago accent. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 46. 117-32.
- Miner, Kenneth. 1990. *Winnebago accent: the rest of the data*. Lawrence: University of Kansas, ms.
- Perlmutter, David M. 1978. Impersonal passives and the unaccusative hypothesis. *Berkeley Linguistics Society* 4. 157-89.
- Poser, William. 1984. *The phonetics and phonology of tone and intonation in Japanese*. Cambridge, MA: MIT dissertation.
- Prince, Ellen. 1991. Relative clauses, resumptive pronouns, and kind-sentences. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Chicago.
- Rice, Keren. 1989. *A grammar of Slave*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Singler, John Victor. 1992. Review of Melanesian English and the Oceanic substrate, by Roger M. Keesing. *Language* 68. 176-82.
- Stockwell, Robert P. 1993. Obituary of Dwight L. Bolinger. *Language* 69. 99-112.
- Yip, Moira. 1991. Coronals, consonant clusters, and the coda condition. *The special status of coronals: internal and external evidence*, ed. by Carole Paradis and Jean-Francois Prunet, 61-78. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

‘The Formation of Latin Christendom: The Roman Church’, in *EuroDocs: Primary Historical Documents from Western Europe* [database online] (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1996 – [cited 10 April 1996]; available from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbooks.html#romchurch>.

Cliff Richard, letter to author, 19 May 1999.

- j. For the citation of internet sources and e-mail, try the following
(adapted from Guelph: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/csrc/writing/elecdoc.htm>):

(1) Citing an Entire Work

(a) CD-ROM and Commercial Online Databases

Oxford English Dictionary [Online]. (1994). Oxford University Press. Available: Dow Jones News Retrieval Service/ENCYC [27 May 2000].

Sternberg, M. L. A. (1994). *The American sign language dictionary on CD-ROM* (Windows version), [CD-ROM]. Available: HarperCollins [27 May 1998].

(b) Electronic Mail (E-mail)

(i) Discussion Lists

- if real-time message:

Author. (day month year). Subject of message. Name of Discussion List [Online]. Available E-mail: DISCUSSION LIST NAME@e-mail address [Access date].

Berkowitz, P. (25 May 1999). Sussy’s gravestone. *Mark Twain Forum* [Online]. Available E-mail: TWAIN-L@yorkvm1.bitnet [27 May 1999].

- if in list’s archive:

Author. (day month year). Subject of message. Name of Discussion List [Online]. Available E-mail: LISTSERV@e-mail address/Get [Access date].

Berkowitz, P. (25 May 1999). Sussy’s gravestone. *Mark Twain Forum* [Online]. Available E-mail: LISTSERV@yorkvm1.bitnet/Get twain-1 log9504 [20 February 2000].

(ii) Personal E-mail

Sender (sender’s E-mail address). (day month year). Subject of message. E-mail to recipient (recipient’s E-mail address).

Wong, T.J. (easyspeak@pacific.net.sg). (19 April 2000). Pronunciation of ‘protest’ in Singapore. E-mail to S. Jones (jones@uoguelph.ca).

(c) HTTP (Web Documents)

Author/editor. (Year). Title (edition), [Type of medium]. Available: URL [Access date].

Astill, M. (2000). *No Singlish* [Online]. Available: <http://www.uncle-mark.com/nosinglish.htm> [28 May 2000].

(2) Citing Part of a Work

Author/editor. (Year). Title. In Source (edition), [type of medium]. Available: identifier or path [Access date].

- Journal:

Achenbach, T. M. (1995). Diagnosis, assessment, and comorbidity in psychosocial treatment research: Psychosocial treatment research [Special issue]. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* [Online], 23(1), 45ff. Available: Mead Nexis/NEWS/ASAPII [1995, June 12].

- Section:

Aristotle. (1995). *Part I. In Poetics* (S.H. Butcher, Trans), [Original work written circa 350 BC], [Online]. Available: http://the-tech.mit.edu/Classics/Aristotle/poetics.txt.Part_1.html [13 June 1995].

11. Conclusion

There are other ways of making references, and doing punctuation, which are also standard. Any approved reference system used within the Arts and the Social Sciences is acceptable. If the nature of your work requires you to use techniques other than those outlined here, you should discuss the matter with your supervisor.

E. Procedures for Submission

1. The candidate should make sure that the HT does not exceed the stipulated length (see **A1**). Violation of this limit will incur penalty. An HT that, after due consideration, is found to violate this limit will have five marks deducted from the total for the first 500 words for cohort 2021 onwards (1,000 words for earlier cohorts) in excess and five marks for every subsequent 500 words.
2. You should submit your HT by email attachment to the email address (ellbox12@nus.edu.sg) **not later than 12 noon on the Monday of the 13th week of the semester the HT is registered (9 November 2026 for Semester 1, or 12 April 2027 for Semester 2)**, unless prior permission has been obtained from the Head of Department for late submission. Take note of these points:
 - ❖ You should submit two files – one in pdf format, and one in doc or docx format;
 - ❖ Please name the softcopy of your files in this format: ie. <full official name>-<HT EL>-<AY & Semester> (eg. Rachel Lee Mei-HT EL-2610 where 2610 refers to AY2026-27 Semester 1).
3. *Late submission of HT.* Any late submission without prior permission will be viewed seriously and will be subject to the following conditions and penalties, to be deducted from the final grade of the thesis:
 - ❖ Deduct 2 marks if it is submitted on the same day (one hour from the stipulated deadline).
 - ❖ Deduct 5 marks if it is on the next day.
 - ❖ Deduct 2 extra marks per day.
 - ❖ Disqualify if HT is late by more than a week without proper explanation and/or supporting documents.

The deduction scheme is summarised in the table below.

Submission	Penalty
Day 1 (submission deadline), after 12.00 noon	2 marks
Day 2	7 marks
Day 3	9 marks
Day 4	11 marks
Day 5	13 marks
Day 6	15 marks
Day 7	17 marks
Day 8 (one week)	19 marks
After day 8	disqualified

4. *Submission appeal.* If there are any extenuating circumstances concerning the late submission of your HT or otherwise affecting the final quality of your HT which you wish to draw the attention of the Department to, you may wish to stipulate these in the Honours Thesis Submission Appeal form (available at the General Office). The form must be submitted together with the HT, or within 24 hours of its submission. Medical reports should be attached where appropriate.

APPENDIX

How to Write your Undergraduate Dissertation

Adapted from Bryan Greetham's (2009) book of the same name. (Thanks to Sunita Abraham for this!)

Chapter 1: Examiners: what are they looking for?

The difference between essays and dissertations

The most obvious difference is size. Essays are usually 2,000–3,000 words, whereas undergraduate dissertations can be 8,000–12,000 words. But, along with its larger scope, a dissertation also affords the opportunity to work more independently, so that you can explore your own original ideas and do some genuine thinking. It's easy to slip into the comfortable, undemanding role of merely recycling received opinions, especially when teachers decide to teach students *what* to think rather than *how* to think. As a result, when you're asked to express yourself, you express not your ideas but what you think your teachers think you ought to think.

Hallmarks of genuine thinking

- ✓ You're not just recycling others' ideas. You're using your ideas, building on ideas and methods that you've encountered in published research, extending, modifying and/or refining these.
- ✓ You're guided by the evidence whichever way it points. You don't just decide what you believe to be the case, and then search around for the evidence to support what you already believe.
- ✓ You're thinking about your thinking – you're aware of the process of thought. You understand and can justify the methods used to gather and evaluate evidence so as reach defensible conclusions.
- ✓ You decide the focus, direction and organisation of your work.

Your dissertation may be the first time that you've been asked to do some genuine thinking. Writing a dissertation gives you the opportunity not only to choose the topic and questions you want to investigate, but also to develop your abilities to interpret data, weigh up empirical evidence, and come to your own measured judgement.

What are examiners looking for?

Evidence that you can do ALL of the following:

- ✓ Identify a problem that raises particularly interesting issues worth researching.
- ✓ Analyse the problem, by asking significant questions capable of sustaining in-depth investigation.
- ✓ Explore the literature in a systematic way to show that your research builds on prior research. In effect, you're showing that you can educate yourself about the topic.
- ✓ Design a research strategy that uses the most appropriate research methodology to answer your research question(s).
- ✓ Devise the most effective data-collection tools (eg questionnaires, interviews, observation, textual analysis) to gather evidence needed to answer your research question.
- ✓ Interpret the evidence that you've gathered, imaginatively and critically.
- ✓ Draw sound conclusions on the basis of the material that you've analysed.
- ✓ Write the dissertation, presenting your findings clearly and in accordance with established academic practices/conventions.

The purpose of dissertations

To communicate the results of your original research, while demonstrating that you've chosen the most appropriate research methods and used them skilfully.

Originality in undergraduate dissertations

Your dissertation should show that you have come to new and interesting conclusions – that you've broken new ground. Your dissertation might not have the originality of a PhD thesis, but it should advance, even if in a small way, our knowledge of ideas, issues and methodology in your chosen field. You should not just be recycling the received opinions of those regarded as authorities in your area. There are at least four ways in which your work can be original:

- ✓ The issue you choose to investigate
- ✓ The way you approach it
- ✓ The group or material you focus on
- ✓ The particular data you collect

For example,

- ✓ You might apply an existing theory to a new area, or test other people's findings and ideas for yourself, using different participants, respondents or texts.
- ✓ Your research might build on existing studies to follow up new leads or to refine and qualify the findings of earlier studies.
- ✓ The research instruments you design might yield new, surprising evidence.
- ✓ You might devise activities for participants to complete, which produce evidence of behaviour from a perspective not seen before.

Beyond originality, examiners are looking to see how well you have developed a range of ABILITIES:

- ✓ *Understanding*: Show a clear grasp of the issues involved

- ✓ *Analysis*: Reveal the implications of the concepts used to define the problem and the possible causes that might explain the problem
- ✓ *Creativity*: Devise questions and the means of answering them
- ✓ *Problem-solving*: Recognise problems and their possible solutions
- ✓ *Pattern recognition*: Identify similarities/convergences and differences/divergences
- ✓ *Criticism*: Critically assess evidence and arguments
- ✓ *Inferencing*: Come to conclusions based on relevant consistent arguments and reliable evidence
- ✓ *Organisation*: Manage and sustain a research project
- ✓ *Writing*: Convey complex ideas clearly, develop arguments consistently, and present findings in clear, well-planned written work

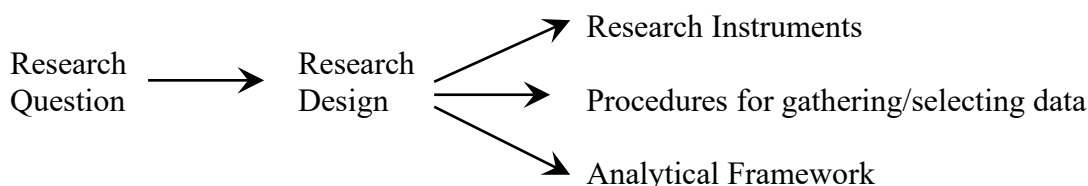
Chapter 2: Working with your Supervisor

- ✓ Check the formal requirements early (*eg* deadlines for submitting dissertation title and dissertation, penalties for late submission, length and presentation format of dissertation) rather than store up problems for later.
- ✓ Check the arrangements for supervisions and how your supervisor likes to work. Let your supervisor know the way you generally work best so you can find a mutually acceptable arrangement.
- ✓ Organise regular supervision meetings and prepare work for each session.
- ✓ Keep in mind the three principles below for managing your relationship with your supervisor
 - (1) *Agree on deadlines*: a well-organised schedule of tasks-to-be-completed gives you an early-warning system so both of you know in good time if an unforeseen problem is slowing you down or you're going off course.
 - (2) *Prepare for each meeting*: submit copies of sections/chapters well in advance, so that your supervisor has enough time to read and comment on them. Supervisors can only work with what you submit to them.
 - (3) *Make the best use of feedback*:
 - a. Take notes during meetings and set time afterwards to write up the ideas discussed and to follow up leads provided by your supervisor.
 - b. Write up reminders of things you want to raise at your next meeting.
 - c. Don't let ideas go cold – record the ideas that come out of the meeting as soon as you can because once forgotten, they are very difficult to recapture.

Chapter 3: What activities will suit you best?

- ✓ Work backwards

Your research question drives your research, bringing into play the type of research design/methodology that you will use. BEFORE you decide on a research strategy, think about those things that you're interested in and those activities that you like to do and are good at. Work backwards from these activities! Frame your research question to ensure that in order to answer it, you will have to use the research methods that involve the activities that you identified above.



Chapter 5: What interests you most?

How do I find the right topic?

For most students, this is the most confusing and difficult aspect of doing a dissertation. Your topic must be

- ✓ **original** and **interesting** enough to strike the examiners as worth researching and be interesting enough to maintain your own motivation over the long haul, as you work independently with no one around pushing you.
- ✓ **broad** enough to connect with the background theory.
- ✓ **narrow** enough to research in depth in the available time and word-limit.

Narrowing down topics

Work through the eight exercises below, asking yourselves a series of questions. You'll probably end up with some very general ideas of what you might like to investigate, which you can then explore systematically and in more depth to develop the best idea into a workable research question.

Previous courses	What intriguing, unresolved issues remain that you didn't have time to explore? What theories or explanations could you test? Is there a unique or perceptive analysis that you could follow up from the course readings?
New data	Are there new data in published reports that suggest trends and interpretations that you could use in a case study? Are there data that might have been overlooked that you could focus on?
Current developments in your field	Has a recent book or article sparked controversy in your area of interest?
A case study to replicate on a different group	Are there existing studies in your field that you could adapt or replicate with a different group?
Personal experience	What experience do you have of some of the issues discussed in the research literature of your field?
Previous dissertations	What have previous Honours students done in the last five years?
Topics current in the media	Have there been reports in the media pertinent to your area of interest?
Personal interests – the sorts of things that interest you when you're not studying.	What sorts of issues preoccupy your thoughts and discussions? What do you like reading outside university work? Does your local community face a problem that you could investigate? When you go on holiday, what interests you most? Are there local or national figures whose work has always interested you? Is there a development in your neighbourhood about which you have strong opinions? List the books, paintings, music and films that you most like.