**Dissertation Proposal**

**Aims**

This is an individual piece of work that forms a key part of the assessment for the module Dissertation. Based on the information provided, an academic staff member will evaluate the potential for you to undertake your dissertation on the topic outlined below. The dissertation module is worth 60 credits and for students taking this proposal counts 5% of the overall mark. It is a requirement for you to be awarded your degree that you pass the proposal with a mark of 50% or above. Please note the following:

1. The proposal aims to inform you and academic staff of your plans for your dissertation.
2. The proposal will help the module convenor identify a supervisor for your dissertation.
3. The proposal will help you to achieve one of the learning outcomes for the module, that is to plan, develop and deliver a proposed plan of substantive, independent research.

All sections of the proposal need to be completed. If any are left blank then a mark of zero will be awarded for that section.

**Marks breakdown**

Section

1. **Proposed Title of Dissertation**
2. **Literature Review 40 marks**
3. **Research Questions 10 marks**
4. **Proposed Methodology and Data 30 marks**
5. **Project Timetable 10 marks**
6. **Project Risk Register 10 marks**
7. **Ethical Issues**
8. **Health & Safety Issues**
9. **List of References**

**100 (total marks)**

Anonymity is preserved during the marking of the proposal. The module convenor will need to tag student names to their proposals when identifying appropriate supervisors after the proposal submission and evaluation phase.

Please refer to the notes at the end of this document for more information about each section of the proposal template.

1. **Proposed Title of Dissertation**

Please note that this is a working title. You are not committed to retaining this as the title of your submitted dissertation.

**\*\*\*No marks are allocated to this section**

1. **Literature Review**

Please provide an overall aim for your research. Please also provide a literature review that justifies your research, describing previous and underpinning research that has previously been carried out. Please feel free to use figures, appropriately referenced and with captions, in this section to help convey the previous research. **This section should not exceed 1500 words**. A list of references used should be enclosed at the end (see Section 9). A statement regarding the overall aim of the dissertation should be made in this section.

**\*\*\*Total marks for section: 40 - see note 1**

1. **Research Questions**

Please provide a bulleted list of the research questions/specific objectives that you will address in your research.

**\*\*\*Total marks for section: 10 - see note 2**

1. **Proposed Methodology and Data**

Please provide a description of your proposed methodology/methods that you intend to adopt to answer the research questions. Make reference to the literature as appropriate (ensuring that all citations appear in your list of references).

In this section, you should also define your intended study area, if appropriate. This should be based on an assessment of locations where you are able to answer your research questions. A high quality map of your study area might be useful here.

A risk factor in any piece of research is the availability of data. Please identify your data sources and evaluate the availability of data. If you are collecting data (primary data), make sure you think about what equipment you need, where the equipment is stored and whether any training is required. You may wish to note any risks associated with data in Section 6 below.

Please keep in mind that you may have several research questions/objectives. Each of these may require a different methodology and/or data set to help you to answer them. Please make sure you are explicit in identifying the data sets/methods that you will adopt to address all components of the thesis.

This section will **not exceed 1000 words in length** and may include tables and figures (the words in the table will not count towards the work limit) – with captions.

**\*\*\*Total marks for section: 30 - see note 3**

1. **Project Timetable**

This should not exceed one page and should cover the period from present to – 2 October 2023 (the date of submission). The resolution of the timetable should not be any longer than a two week period. We will discuss effective timetabling and discuss some of the tools that are available to support our planning (e.g. GANTT charts) in the module.

**\*\*\*Total marks for section: 10 - see note 4**

1. **Project Risk Register**

A well-considered and ‘live’ risk register will help you to overcome a number of potential difficulties. A risk-register will help you to de-stress the dissertation process by enabling you to foresee potential issues and work around them or through them with confidence. The risk register facilitates an active discussion point between student and supervisor. Academic risks should be included in the register as well as potential limitations and pinch points in all important components. Please use the table below to outline some of your proposed project risks. In your control, you need to consider the function of the likelihood and the impact. For example, if the impact is high and the likelihood high, then should you be doing that task or activity? You should include the counter measures that you will employ to mitigate against these risks. Some example risks are show below but these are not exhaustive. In your dissertation, critical risks are availability of literature, data, methods, programming language support, software, any part-time work etc. The risk register will help academic staff who will eventually go on to supervise your project to determine its viability. The academic staff member who will mark this will have to establish that the project is viable in the time frame. You must use this risk register to appraise in an open and transparent way that the risks of delivering the project (and we encourage risk taking – it is part of the story about what makes work distinctive) and present the control measures that will make the research viable. You may also want to colour code your risks (from green, yellow, red) and note if they change whilst you are delivering your project.

If the academic who marks this proposal deems that whilst the ideas you have expressed are excellent and the research questions are well written, if they believe that the project may not be viable for various reasons related to the risk register (or absence of information in the risk register), then they may fail the proposal and ask you to re-submit.

| **Risk** | **Likelihood** | **Impact** | **Control measures** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Data set not available | Low | High | What can you do to establish alternatives?  *(Any delay to the availability of data will have knock-ons. Mitigation includes identification of a second source of data)* |
| Computer software unavailable | Low | Medium | What can you do to establish alternatives?  (*Any delay to the availability of/access to software will have knock-ons. Mitigation includes identification of alternatives if possible).* |
| Staff become unavailable | Low | Low | What if your supervisor is unavailable?  *(Again good planning can mitigate this, but alternatives might need to be considered).* |

**\*\*\*Total marks for section: 10 - see note 5**

1. **Ethical Issues**

Please consider any ethical issues that may be raised by your proposed research plan. Based on the session provided in the module on research ethics, please identify any issues that might be relevant to your proposed plan of research. This section is not graded and will provide the basis for a discussion with your allocated supervisor. If you are unsure as to whether there may be ethical issues, please note your concerns here for follow-up. If you believe there are no ethical issues, then you need to state that. You do not need to undertake a full ethics evaluation before submitting your proposal – but clearly you need to be thinking about the issues that may arise.

**\*\*\*No marks are allocated to this section**

1. **Health & Safety Issues**

Please consider any health and safety issues that may be raised by your proposed research plan. When you are working on your research dissertation, your health, safety and general well-being are one of our primary concerns. If your research topic is likely to result in risks to health and safety that are above the everyday then you need to go through a process of documenting and evaluating those risks. Any research undertaken physically outside of the UK requires this evaluation.

Please identify any health and safety issues that might be relevant to your proposed plan of research. This section is not graded and will provide the basis for a discussion with your allocated supervisor. If you are unsure as to whether there may be issues, please note your concerns here for follow-up. If you believe there are no health and safety issues, then you need to state that. You will not be allowed to start any dissertation work until an approval process has effectively been signed off. We are required to sign off that there are NO health and safety risks. You do not need to undertake a full health and safety risk assessment before submitting your proposal – but clearly you need to be thinking about the issues that may arise.

We will discuss health and safety issues in one of the teaching sessions.

**\*\*\*No marks are allocated to this section**

1. **List of References**

Please provide a full list of references that you have cited in your proposal. Please ensure that they have been cited and referenced in full. Any absent citations, poor formatting or lazy copy/pasting will be taken into account when awarding the mark for Section 2 (Literature Review). Please see your personal tutor or the module convenor if you need support.

**\*\*\*No marks are allocated to this section**

*PTO for notes*

**Notes**

**Note 1: Literature Review**

*This section should describe the background to the research topic, provide a critical review of the relevant literature (previous work in this domain) and should point towards research gaps that you intend to address in the thesis. Make sure you demonstrate your understanding of the topic area, have summarised a body of research and expressed an implicit rationale for the need for develop this topic of research (the aim).*

**Note 2: Research Questions**

*The research questions/objectives should ideally ‘drop out’ from the literature review. These should be plainly stated and SMART; achievable in the time frame for undertaking the research, quantifiable and realistic. Academic staff will evaluate how well you have been able to distil past research into a set of solid research questions and achievable objectives.*

**Note 3: Proposed Methodology and Data**

*This section should describe the data and methods that will be used as part of this study. The student should show their understanding of how the data analysis will allows the research aims / questions will be answered. The data should exist, it should be available to the study within the proposed timeframe, indications of communications between data holders and students should be included, and a realistic appraisal of contingency data should be considered.*

**Note 4: Project Timetable**

*This should show a realistic plan of work. The schedule that will be adopted to address each research question should be stated. The resolution of the timetable should be two weeks. Sufficient time for writing up should be clearly identified. Any planned periods of absence (that should be discussed with your tutor/office in advance) should also be indicated. It is expected that the full period available to you will be planned for in the timetable.*

**Note 5: Project Risk Register**

*A live project risk register that is frequently evaluated and updated helps you to deliver your dissertation. A risk register is an assessment of all of the possible risks (anything that might stop you from answering the research questions, with the methods and data that you have identified), their likelihood, the strength of their impact and any possible mitigation strategies. Obviously not every eventuality can be considered, but general risks to the successful completion of the project should be identified and considered. The risk register should be discussed at every supervisory meeting once the project is underway. As mentioned above, the proposal may fail because of viability issues in relation to the information presented (or not presented) in the risk register. Therefore, please pay attention to this section.*