



School of Law

BSc Criminology and Sociology



"Well, a pop-up doctoral dissertation is certainly an original idea..."

Final Year Dissertation Guide

2014/15

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Disclaimer

This document was published in September 2014 and was correct at that time. The Department* reserves the right to modify any statement if necessary, make variations to the content or methods of delivery if such actions are reasonably considered to be necessary by the College. Every effort will be made to keep disruption to a minimum, and to give as much notice as possible.

* Please note, the term 'Department' is used to refer to both 'Departments' and 'Schools'. Students on joint or combined degree programmes will need to use two departmental handbooks.

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Introduction

In the third year of your degree course you are required to write a dissertation of 12,000 words in length. This dissertation is **equivalent to one full Course Unit** and is therefore a **quarter** of your final years work.

The dissertation is an opportunity for you to examine, in depth, an area of interest to you. It is one of the most important pieces of work you will do as an undergraduate. It shows the extent that you are an independent learner and scholar.

You will be allocated a member of staff as your supervisor. The role of the supervisor is to help and guide you with your dissertation. However, the choice of dissertation topic, the research methodology and the actual work are up to *you*.

The dissertation is assessed on the basis of the quality of scholarship it demonstrates. Markers will look for your knowledge of the subject matter, evidence of independent thought and the clarity with which you present your ideas.

This document contains information regarding the dissertation aims, structure, presentation, submission requirements and penalties. It should be read in conjunction with your departmental student handbook and College Academic regulations:

<http://www.rhul.ac.uk/criminologyandsociology/informationforcurrentstudents/home.aspx>

<http://www.rhul.ac.uk/forstudents/studying/academicregulations/home.aspx>

1. Course Aims and Learning Outcomes

The **aims** of the dissertation are:

1. To enable students to demonstrate their skills as independent learners;
2. To give students the opportunity to research a topic in an area of Sociology or Criminology in detail to a higher level;
3. To provide an opportunity to submit a substantial piece of written work.

The **learning outcomes** of the dissertation are:

Having successfully completed the dissertation a student will have:

1. Shown that they are an independent learner;
2. Researched a topic to a higher level;
3. Submitted a substantial piece of written work;
4. Shown that they can critically reflect on established literature;
5. Shown indications of original thought.

2. Supervision

The role of the supervisor is to help guide you through the key stages of the dissertation. This includes advice about the suitability of a topic; about appropriate reading; the structure and organisation of the dissertation and the way in which it should be presented.

You should meet with your supervisor regularly. A maximum of **six substantial meetings** of up to one hour in length should take place throughout the academic year, in order to plan your work, discuss your progress and resolve any difficulties that you may be encountering. It is your responsibility to contact your supervisor to arrange meetings. Please keep a log (provided at the end of this handbook) to record each meeting, the outcome of meetings and plans for future actions. Please remember your supervisor is a busy academic and you need to contact your supervisor in plenty of time to arrange a meeting to discuss your dissertation. You are also welcome to see your supervisor during his/her office hours and/or make contact through email, but for brief queries only – substantial meetings should take place during your scheduled appointments.

Supervisors can read and provide feedback on two chapters of a draft dissertation provided they are received before **Wednesday 4th March**

2015 (week 24 of the spring term). It is required that you construct a detailed plan of your dissertation (including your objectives and a detailed timeline with associated deadlines) and discuss this with your supervisor at the earliest opportunity. It is also advisable to show your supervisor your bibliography. **It is vitally important to keep your supervisor informed of your progress and any issues as they arise.**

3. Dissertation Workshop

Two dissertation workshops will be offered to third year students. The first workshop will be held early in the autumn term and will allow students to discuss amongst other things expectations of supervision, selecting a title, planning, ethics, selecting appropriate methods, differences between a literature review and empirical investigation and referencing. The second workshop held in spring term will include a discussion of difficulties which may have been encountered, including the experience of data gathering, timing and writing a longer piece of work. Students are required to attend both workshops.

Compulsory dissertation workshops have been arranged for;

Autumn Term: Monday 20th October 2014, 11.00-12.00pm

Spring Term: Monday 9th February 2015, 11.00-12.00pm

4. Research Ethics

Students undertaking empirical work involving data collection directly from research participants (observations, interviews, questionnaires, group discussions, recordings, videos, etc) must receive ethical clearance before proceeding with their research. It is the joint responsibility of the student and the supervisor to ensure that such clearance has been obtained. The first step in this process is completion of the College's Extended Ethical Approval Form (https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/geography/documents/pdf/current_students/ethicsformcomplex.pdf). These forms provide the basis for a decision to proceed to any or all of the following: departmental ethical review; review by Royal Holloway Ethics Committee; review by a Local or Multiregional Research Ethics Committee (LREC or MREC). You are advised to commence application for ethical approval as early as possible to avoid delays to your research.

5. Dissertation Length

Dissertations must be 12,000 words in length, including footnotes, citations, and tables, but excluding appendices and bibliography. Part of the exercise of the dissertation is to produce a piece of good quality work of a specific length. Penalties will be applied to dissertations that do not adhere to this word length ([see Section 12](#)).

6. Managing Your Time

Writing a good dissertation takes a considerable amount of time. You will produce a number of drafts leading up to the final version. It is recommended that a draft of the dissertation should be completed by the start of the second term of third year. It is **essential** that you substantially complete the dissertation by **half-way** through the second term in order to allow sufficient time for typing, checking for errors, last-minute problems, etc. You must recognise that by this stage there will not be time for any substantive content changes.

7. Dissertation Structure

The structure of the dissertation relates to the specific kind of dissertation you are doing. The information below is intended as a starting point and a general guide. Having read this information, it is recommended that you construct a plan specific to your dissertation and discuss this with your supervisor.

The Front Page

This should be similar to the one for essays, ([refer to Section 10](#)) for guidance on presentation and requirements.

An Abstract

Summarise your dissertation here in 300 words or less. Try to provide an accurate idea of what the key issues, themes and debates are that you are considering, the ways in which you have considered them and any core findings that have emerged through your enquiry.

Contents Page

A clear, neatly laid out list of the contents signals a well-organised product. Take time to ensure that each chapter is listed along with sub-headings where relevant.

The Chapters in a Research-Based Dissertation

Usually you will want to include (as a minimum) the following:

Introduction

The introduction will give the reader a beginning account of what you have chosen to examine and why you have chosen to do so. It also states how you intend to proceed, and what the rest of the chapters basically contain.

Literature Review

As for an essay, but with greater depth and breadth, you will tell the reader what the key issues are that you are addressing, and why it is from your point of view that they are addressed in the way that they are here. You will map out what is known, what is emerging, and any areas that remain unknown or under explored in relation to the issues you have identified. You will need to demonstrate your ability to compare, analyse and/ or critically synthesise the current literature. Don't just list all the different studies and their findings in your area of interest. Let the reader know which ones are important to your research and how you can use the knowledge gained from past research to help you with your study. Because of the relatively short word length for a BSc dissertation, try and be precise about your focus. Shine your light brightly on a small area of your interest, rather than attempting to cast a more diffuse light over a bigger area. Summarise the chapter by identifying the key issues, and by briefly pointing to how they connect to the next chapter.

Methodology

Here you are making a credible case for the methods you will employ to examine the issues that emerged during the literature review. Begin the chapter with a statement of what kind of research design you will be using and then follow this up with an explanation for choosing this design. Then go on to do the same for the methods, including the reasons for discarding other methodological approaches in favour of the one(s) you chose. Describe your sample of respondents and their contexts. Give an account of any ethical issues you encountered and how you responded to these. Say how your research design helped or obstructed the process of gathering data, and any ways in which expected and unexpected things happened during the enquiry. Similarly, give an account of how you analysed the data, and any ways in which you think this was fruitful or limited (ending on a positive note).

Results

Begin by summarising the results briefly, so that it creates a foundation for what you are about to lay out in more detail. Then you can begin to systematically compare and contrast your local findings with the key issues identified in the literature review. You may find it helpful to structure the results using the key issues as sub-headings.

Data Analysis

When collecting data, data analysis is a separate section. In this section you explain your findings. Say what your results confirmed, and how they differed from the literature. Synthesise and evaluate, adding your own balanced views, and drawing the chapter down to a comprehensive set of statements that make a bridge between the literature and your own findings.

Conclusion

Say what your findings are and why you think they are of significance. Give an honest appraisal of the strengths and limitations of the methods of enquiry, once again trying to end on a positive note. Always try to let the reader know that you are aware that your research has some limitations, but that it also adds to the existing body of knowledge in whatever field you decide to research. And finally, state where you or other researchers should go from here. Point the way.

The Chapters in a Literature-Based Dissertation

For a literature review-based dissertation you should include an abstract, contents page and introduction as above. You should explain the process of conducting the searches for your literature review, providing a brief description of databases searched, key words used and an account of the searches generated and how you proceeded to organise and analyse this material. This account could be placed towards the end of your introduction or as a separate methodology section, depending on what works best for your particular dissertation. The main sections of your dissertation need to be organised in a logical manner, for example this may be chronologically or thematically. You should discuss with your supervisor the most appropriate structure for your particular dissertation. As above, your dissertation should conclude by summarising the significance of your findings and pointing the way for other scholars.

Finally: A full and accurate **bibliography** that lists all the sources cited in the dissertation must be provided. Some dissertations also include appendices, but this is not compulsory.

8. Referencing

You must use **the Harvard referencing** system. Further guidance is available here:

<http://www.rhul.ac.uk/criminologyandsociology/informationforcurrentstudents/home.aspx>

9. Plagiarism

All College regulation relating to plagiarism, including self-plagiarism applies to the dissertation. See the Student Handbook for further information.

<http://www.rhul.ac.uk/criminologyandsociology/informationforcurrentstudents/home.aspx>

10. Presentation

Dissertations **MUST**:

- a) Be typed with double spacing and margins of at least 1 inch on either side, and have page numbers;
- b) Use Arial or Times New Roman font in size 12.
- c) Be bound in some form i.e. a spiral/comb binder or similar but not in a folder;
- d) Include the submission form which can be collected from the departmental office. These should be at the front of the document;
- e) Have:
 - The Programme title
 - Your candidate number (**do not** display your name anywhere on the document)
 - The course code for the dissertation CR3011
 - The title of the dissertation
 - The name of the dissertation supervisor
 - The exact word length
- f) Contain adequate and proper references and bibliography ([see referencing above](#)).

11. Submitting Your Dissertation

You are required to submit your dissertation electronically through Turnitin on Moodle and provide two hard copies to the Departmental Office before the 12:00 midday deadline as stated in your Student Handbook. Remember that there will be a large number of students submitting on this day and you will need to allow plenty of time for printing, binding and completing cover sheets etc.

12. Assessment Criteria for Dissertations

Mark achieved %	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
85 + High First Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate deep understanding of its general subject area, and will show significant originality in the construction of its main research aims and questions. • demonstrate substantial original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research. • demonstrate high levels of ability in the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques and contain a reflexive or critical commentary on its research design and methodology. • have a coherent structure, and may show significant innovation in its organisational form. • show overwhelming evidence of in-depth reading, demonstrating excellent critical synthesis of secondary materials, and strong integration between its original research and wider theoretical issues. • be professionally presented, with referencing and bibliography of standard of publishable journal article in subject area • have an incisive and fluent style, with no or very minor errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar. <p>A high first class dissertation should be publishable as a journal paper with editing and minor revision.</p>

<p>70-84 First Class</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate deep understanding of its general subject area and may show some originality in the construction of its main research aims and questions. • demonstrate substantial original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research. • demonstrate high levels of ability in the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques and contain a reflexive or critical commentary on its research design and methodology. • have a coherent structure and may show some innovation in its organisational form. • show significant evidence of in-depth reading, demonstrating excellent critical synthesis of secondary materials, and good integration between its original research and wider theoretical issues. • be excellently presented, with referencing and bibliography of standard of publishable journal article in subject area. • have an incisive and fluent style, with no significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar. <p>A first class dissertation should demonstrate professional standards of research design and management, and give confidence that the student could undertake professional work in a similar research context.</p>
<p>60-69 Upper Second Class</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate clear understanding of its general subject area, and provide a clear statement of research aims and questions. • demonstrate significant original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research. • demonstrate generally effective levels of ability in the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques and contain a commentary on its research design and methodology. • have a coherent structure. • show clear evidence of in-depth reading, demonstrating synthesis of secondary materials, and awareness of connections between its original research and wider theoretical issues. • be well-presented, with detailed referencing in an acceptable style and a properly formatted bibliography. • have a fluent style, with few errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

<p>50-59 Lower Second Class</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a basic understanding of its general subject area, and provide a simple statement of research aims and questions. • demonstrate original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research. • demonstrate familiarity with the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques, but may show some significant errors in the process of analysis or interpretation. It will also contain a basic account of the methods used. • have an adequate structure. • show some evidence of further reading of secondary materials, but often in the form of a general literature review rather than a synthesis of material directly relevant to the research aims. • be adequately presented, with some referencing of sources and a short bibliography • have a straightforward style, and may include some errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.
<p>43-49 Third Class</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a limited understanding of its general subject area. Its formulation of its research aims or question is likely to be simplistic, vague or confused. • demonstrate a limited amount of original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research. • demonstrate very general familiarity with the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques, but will show significant errors in the process of analysis or interpretation. It may also contain a basic account of the methods used, but this is likely to be simplistic, vague or confused • have a simple structure. • show very limited evidence of further reading of secondary materials. • have significant weaknesses in presentation, with little or no referencing of sources and an inadequate or absent bibliography • have a simple style, with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.
<p>40-42 Low Third Class</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a very limited understanding of its general subject area. Its formulation of its research aims or question is likely to be simplistic, vague or confused. • demonstrate a very limited amount of original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research. • demonstrate a bare familiarity with the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques, but will show substantial errors in the process of analysis or interpretation. It may also contain a basic account of the methods used, but this is likely to be simplistic, vague or confused. • have a sketchy structure. • show no evidence of further reading of secondary materials. • be poorly presented, with little or no referencing of sources and an inadequate or absent bibliography • have a sketchy style, with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

31-39 Marginal Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate no understanding of its general subject area. • have no clear research aims or questions. • be unable to demonstrate that original fieldwork or some other independent research has taken place. • show significant error and confusion over the appropriate analysis of quantitative or qualitative information; where some analytical work is attempted it is likely to be incomplete and erroneous. It will contain no serious discussion of methods used. • have an inadequate structure. • show no evidence of further reading of secondary materials. be poorly presented, with no referencing of sources and an inadequate or absent bibliography • have an inadequate style, with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.
1-30 Clear Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate no understanding of its general subject area. • have no clear research aims or questions. • be unable to demonstrate that original fieldwork or some other independent research has taken place. • contain no serious analytical work. It will contain no serious discussion of methods used. • have an inadequate structure, and may be fragmentary, incoherent or incomplete. • show no evidence of further reading of secondary materials. • be poorly presented, with no referencing of sources and an inadequate or absent bibliography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have an inadequate style, with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.
0 Zero	This mark is usually reserved for cases where there is no serious attempt to complete the dissertation (as defined in College Regulations). It may also be used for exam offences such as unsanctioned late submission or plagiarism, in line with departmental and College procedures.

13. Honours Classification

Class	Overall Average
1 st	70-100%
2i	60-69.99%
2ii	50-59.99%
3 rd	40-49.99%
Non-honours degree	35-39.99%

14. Penalties

Penalties for late submission

The following is the College policy and applies to all students on taught programmes of study including the dissertation:

All coursework should be submitted by the specified deadline. Please ensure that you are aware of the deadlines set by your department. Work that is submitted after the deadline will be penalised as follows:

- For work submitted up to 24 hours late, the mark will be reduced by ten percentage marks* subject to a minimum mark of a minimum pass;
- For work submitted more than 24 hours late, the maximum mark will be zero.

*eg: a mark of 65% awarded would be reduced to 55%

If you have had extenuating circumstances which have affected your ability to submit work by the deadline, these should be submitted in writing, accompanied by any relevant documentary evidence, to your department(s). As with all extenuating circumstances it is the discretion of the examiners whether to accept these as a reason for having not submitted work on time.

Penalties for over-length work

In line with college regulations, penalties will be applied for over-length work. For dissertations which exceed the word limit by at least 10% and by less than 20%, the mark will be reduced by ten percentage marks. For dissertations which exceed the word limit by 20% or more, the maximum mark will be zero.

15. Extensions

For medical or other similar reasons, extensions can only be considered and granted by the Faculty Administrator, Sandra Walton (Sandra.walton@rhul.ac.uk). **Supervisors cannot grant extensions.** If you need to apply for an extension, complete an extension form and enclose original copies of medical certificates and other written evidence to support your request, submitting these **before** the submission deadline.

Please do not assume an extension has been granted just because you have requested one. You must wait for confirmation from the Faculty Administrator who will advise you of your new submission date. The Faculty Administrator will seek the approval of the Exam Chair and notify your Personal Advisor.

Note that computer failure cannot be accepted as a reason for late submission. In particular, if you do not back up your work onto your college Y drive, disk or memory stick and the College server fails or your computer fails or is stolen, the Department will be sympathetic but will not accept this as a reason for a late submission. You must leave

enough time to submit your work electronically to Moodle, print your work and complete any cover sheets before handing it in. You should make allowances for the fact that the web can sometimes be slow and that personal or College computers and printers sometimes perform erratically. When an extension has been granted, work submitted after a deadline will be marked and assessed in the normal way.

16. Further Information

If you have a question about your dissertation you should speak to your dissertation supervisor.

The dissertation co-ordinator, Professor Ravinder Barn (r.barn@rhul.ac.uk) can be contacted if further advice is needed regarding the information contained in this document.

Useful websites with information about researching and writing a dissertation include:

<http://www.socscidiss.bham.ac.uk/>

http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/studyskills/assessment_evaluation/dissertations/definition.html

<http://www.rhul.ac.uk/forstudents/studying/studyresources/home.aspx>

There are a several books in the library that aim to guide students through the dissertation process. These include:

Greetham, B. (2009) *How to Write Your Undergraduate Dissertation*, Basingstoks: Palgrave.

Kirkton, B. (2011) *Brilliant Dissertation: What You Need To Know and How To Do It*, Harlow: Pearson.

17. Final words

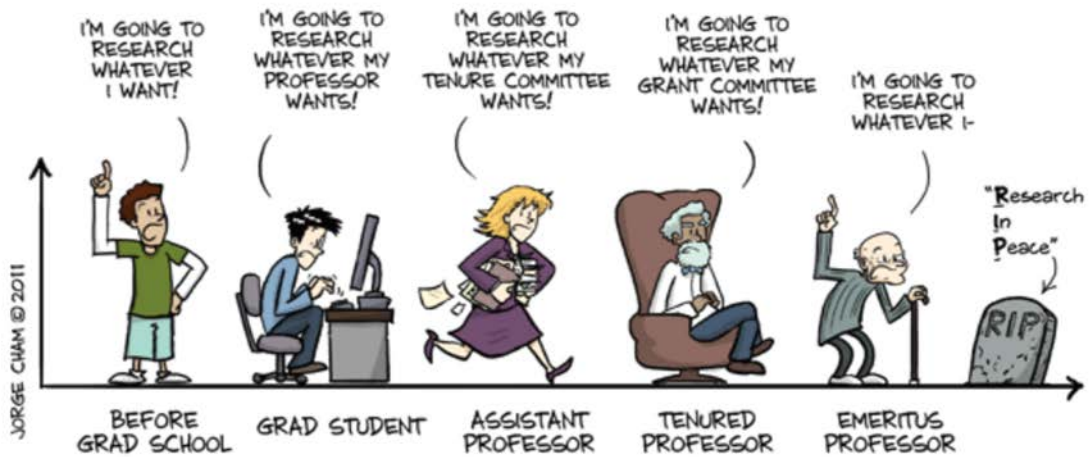
Please enjoy your dissertation and make sure it is something that you can be proud of for years to come. This is a substantial piece of work, giving you the opportunity to demonstrate the considerable skills and expertise that you have accumulated throughout your undergraduate studies. It is by no means an easy undertaking, but it is also a unique opportunity to make your own contribution to knowledge – a challenge that should not be taken lightly! Enjoy and good luck.

18. Supervision Log

Date	Items for Review (make notes on what you want to discuss)	Actions from Review Meeting (record your next steps)	Supervisor Comments/Signature

Date	Items for Review (make notes on what you want to discuss)	Actions from Review Meeting (record your next steps)	Supervisor Comments/Signature


THE EVOLUTION OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM



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