

Dissertation guidelines & regulations

In addition to their coursework, all Natural Science, TSM Pattern B and C and all Political Science and Geography students continuing with Geography by itself in Senior Sophister year undertake a substantial research project (usually field based) for a dissertation which they submit during their Senior Sophister year module **GGU44930 Geography Dissertation**.

Topics for dissertation study are allocated from a list in the JS Advanced Research Methods class. Each student is allocated a supervisor from among the staff who provides guidance and advice.

Dissertations are assessed on the basis of their possessing an appropriate literature review, the establishment of clear geography focussed research aims, the methods and techniques employed, the quantity and nature of effort and originality involved, together with the quality of the content and presentation of the work. For further information on the assessment criteria for dissertations, please see the Undergraduate Handbook.

Dissertation Regulations

1. The length of the dissertation should be 10,000 words excluding appendices, references, photographs and tables. If you believe there are good reasons why you need to produce a dissertation in excess of the suggested length, **you must consult your supervisor** who, if in agreement, will seek permission from the Dissertation Coordinator.
2. You may submit 1 or 2 draft chapters of your dissertation to your supervisor to obtain some feedback on the quality of your work. **You must hand in this material before the end of Week 1, Semester 2. Please make the arrangements for this directly with your supervisor. DEADLINE FOR 2021/22: FRIDAY 21st JANUARY 2022**
3. You must complete the Supervisory Meeting Records Form (available on Blackboard) and submit a signed copy of this **with your dissertation** on the deadline below.
4. The deadline for handing in your dissertation is **12.00 (noon) on Monday of Week 9, Semester 2. DEADLINE for 2021/22: MONDAY 14th MARCH 2022.**

For dissertations that are submitted after the deadline, without permission having been granted by the Head of Department, **five per cent will be deducted from the mark awarded for the dissertation for each working day or part thereof that the dissertation is received late.**

- **Formatting details:** Text should be 12 pt type, Times New Roman or Arial, 1.5 or double spacing, all margins >20 mm. Paginate the dissertation. A Table of Contents and a List of Tables/Figures/Plates must be included at the beginning of the dissertation. Number all figures, tables and plates according to the number of the chapter in which it falls, e.g. Table 2.3, Figure 4.5.
- **Submission requirements:**
 - (i) **Printed copy:** Print one copy of the dissertation on **A4 white paper (one side only)**, Dissertations are handed in to the Geography office **unbound**. Details of the cost of binding will be circulated during Semester 2.
 - (ii) **Digital copy:** A **WORD** copy of your dissertation must be submitted via Blackboard, in the folder entitled 'Dissertation submission portal'.

Dissertation Guidelines Part 1

PREPARATION FOR AND CARRYING OUT THE RESEARCH

The dissertation is an opportunity for you to carry out some independent research on a geographical topic that interests you.

What you will have to do

- Choose an appropriate research topic/study area
- Locate and read the relevant literature
- Develop a dissertation proposal and plan
- Decide what methods you will use in your research
- Collect the appropriate data/information
- Process, analyse and interpret the data/information
- Draw conclusions from your research
- Present your work as a well-written dissertation including both text, graphics and references (see Guidelines for Dissertations Part 2)

Choosing a topic

- Look at previous years' dissertations in the Freeman Library
- Think what courses, parts of courses or field work have particularly interested you (human/physical/environmental/ lab based/field based/statistical etc.)
- Choose from a list of topics provided in the Advanced Research Methods class (an attempt is made to give students their preferred choices but this is not always possible due to certain topics being over-subscribed).
- Discuss your topic and ideas with your supervisor.
- Consider the practical aspects of possible research topics to avoid problems e.g.:
Will I be able to get the data/information I need? For example, does the Department possess the equipment required?
Am I likely to require special permission or training to carry out the fieldwork?
Can I complete the work in the time available?
Might there be financial, transportational or other problems?

The Procedure in your Junior Sophister year

1. The Dissertation Proposal

- The procedure for the development of this is outlined in the Advanced Research Methods class.
- Once the proposal has been developed it must be read and signed off on before being submitted for assessment as part of the class.
- You should remain in contact with your supervisor for the duration of your research.

2. Written Submission

- Your dissertation proposal should include:
- Aims (e.g. research questions/problems you intend to address, hypotheses you wish to test)
- Mention of previous work that has been undertaken and published concerning your topic

- What data you intend to collect and why and how (with information as to the availability and completeness of the data, whether the data are from primary or secondary sources)
 - What data analysis techniques you intend to use (to get the most useful and relevant information from your data)
 - a comprehensive critical review of the literature relevant to your dissertation topic
 - a reasonably detailed (and feasible) timetable for your research from initiation to handing in the dissertation in your Senior Sophister year.
- The length of this submission must be a minimum of 2500 words.

3. Afterwards

- The submission will be marked and contribute to your grade for the Advanced Research Methods class.
- You should do your utmost to complete the data collection/fieldwork part of your dissertation prior to the beginning of the first semester in your Senior Sophister year.

4. Reading

In addition to the specialist books and papers related to your dissertation topic you may find some of the books listed below useful whilst planning and executing your dissertation, irrespective of your topic. Additional references will be provided as part of the Advanced Research Methods class.

Bell, J. (1992) *Doing your research project* Open University Press

Goudie, A. et al 1990 *Geomorphological Techniques* Routledge

Graham, E, (1997) Philosophies underling human geography research. In, Flowerdew, R. and Martin, D. *Methods in Human Geography - a guide for students doing a research project*. Longman, p6-30

Gregory, K. J. (2000). *The changing nature of Physical Geography*. Arnold,

Jones, A. (2000) *Practical skills in environmental science*.

Kitchin, R. and Tate, N.J. (2000) *Conducting Research into Human Geography*

Lindsay, J.M. (1997) *Techniques in Human Geography* Routledge Prentice Hall. Especially Chapter 2 London.

Parsons, T. and Knight, P.G. (1995) *How to do your dissertation in Geography and related disciplines* Especially chapter 4 - What to do it on?
Prentice-Hall, London

Viles, H.A. (1992) Laboratory Work (in) Rogers, A. et al *A student's Companion to Geography* Blackwell, p179-86

Viles, H.A. (1992) Physical Geography fieldwork. (in) Rogers, A. et al *A student's Companion to Geography* Blackwell, p187-195

There are copies of most of these books in the Reserve Collection in the Freeman Library.

Dissertation Guidelines Part 2

WRITE-UP AND PRESENTATION

What is the Dissertation?

A piece of independent, individual research work which investigates a particular topic/problem of interest to you. You are required to review the literature relevant to your subject; to collect, process and analyse relevant data and to interpret the data and draw conclusions.

Value of the dissertation

Because of the carrying forward to the final degree of an element of the Geography mark gained for the Junior Sophister year, the dissertation contributes 26.6 per cent of the final degree mark in Geography for Science for other Geography students. Keep in mind these values when you are assigning time to courses and to the dissertation in your Senior Sophister year. Your dissertation will be marked independently by two members of staff and possibly an external examiner also.

The structure and format of the Dissertation

Length:

10,000 words excluding appendices, references, photographs and tables.

If you believe there are good reasons why you need to produce a dissertation in excess of the suggested length, consult your supervisor who, if in agreement, will seek permission from Dissertation Coordinator.

Contents:

The contents of a dissertation (in order) might be:

- Title page
- Abstract (concise 1-page summary of the whole dissertation)
- Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents - use a logical system of subdivision of the text e.g.: Chapter 2 Literature review
 - 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.2 Sources
 - 2.3 The literature of urban renewal
 - 2.3.1 Qualitative approaches
 - 2.3.2 Quantitative approaches
 - etc. etc.....
- List of tables
- List of figures
- List of plates
- The body of the dissertation - typically consisting of chapter on:
 - Introduction
 - Literature review
 - Methodology
 - Results
 - Analysis of results/Discussion
 - Conclusions
- References
- Appendices (if required)

References:

- Ensure that you make reference in the text to the source of any material that is not your original work i.e. by citing references. For quotations cite the page number(s).
- In the text the references should give the author's surname and the date of the publication e.g. Smith (2002) or (Smith, 2002).
- If a reference has several authors you may prefer to give the reference as Smith et al. (2002) with the full list of co-authors in the References section in the dissertation.
- Check that all the references you cite in the text appear in the reference section and vice-versa.
- Use a consistent format for references. For example:

For books:

Beven, K. (2001) *Rainfall-Runoff Modelling, the Primer*. Wiley, Chichester, 360pp

For a chapter or section of a book

Daly, D. and Warren, W.P. (1998) Mapping Groundwater Vulnerability: the Irish Perspective. Chapter 16 in: *Groundwater Pollution, Aquifer Recharge and Vulnerability* ed. Robins, N.S. Geological Soc. Special Publication No. 130, p105-156

For an article in a periodical

Beven, K. and Wood, E.F. (1983) Catchment Geomorphology and the Dynamics of Runoff Contributing Areas. *Journal of Hydrology* Vol. 65, p.139-158.

- You must also reference the source for any figure, table or other illustrative material you use that is not your own work.
- For further information on how to correctly cite references (including electronic sources of information) see: https://www.tcd.ie/Geography/freeman-library/FAQ_referencing.php.