

MODULE 10: Dissertation

Stage	1						
Semester	3						
Module Title	Dissertation						
Module Number/Reference	10						
Module Status (Mandatory/Elective)	Mandatory						
Module ECTS credit	30						
Module NFQ level (only if applicable)	9						
Pre-requisite Module Titles	None						
Co-requisite Module Titles	None						
Is this a capstone module? (Yes or No)	Yes						
List of Module Teaching Personnel	Dr. Jane Carrigan and panel of supervisors						
Contact Hours				Non-contact Hours			Total Effort (Hours)
Lecture	Practical	Tutorial	Seminar	Assignment	Placement	Independent work	
72						528	600
Allocation of Marks (Within the Module)							
	Continuous Assessment	Project	Practical	Final Examination	Total		
Percentage contribution		100			100		

Intended Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the module, learners will be able to:

1. Identify and fully exploit available and emerging research resources in the conduct of their investigation to support and direct their research methodology or techniques.
2. Rigorously apply appropriate research, design and implementation methodologies to the development of media content, practices, processes and/or techniques.
3. Complete significant research into specialist topics and present findings, insights, hypotheses reflecting a mastery of the concepts and techniques involved.
4. Research information using a variety of sources.
5. Investigate current research developments to identify suitable areas for further research.
6. Draw on their reflective insights and skills developed on the taught stages of the programme to produce a significant piece of research and / or develop an application of professional / institutional relevance.
7. Critique leading contemporary research and/or media content displaying an ability to reason consistently at an abstract level.

8. Integrate complex procedures and techniques to exacting professional standards.
9. Write coherently and present information in a professional manner to the required academic level.
10. Exhibit the awareness necessary to become skilled reflective academic and/or media practitioners.

Module Objectives

In order to be awarded an MA the learner must complete an original and comprehensive dissertation that relates to public relations. This dissertation is expected to further extend a learner's analysis of particular aspects in one or more of the related taught modules on the postgraduate programme stages. Learners are expected to draw heavily on the underpinning research methods module.

Progression within the programme:

Learners successfully completing required mandatory and elective modules not including the dissertation module will have qualified for the award of Postgraduate Diploma. Learners successfully completing these modules may progress to undertake the Dissertation module and on successful completion of that module will be entitled to the award of MA.

Module Aims

This module aims to facilitate the production of a dissertation. As a consequence learners will:

- Produce a dissertation in writing that poses and answers a specified question or questions relating to public relations, media policy, and/or structures, and that is constructed utilising appropriate methodologies.

Or

Produce a dissertation by practice (e.g. developing a public relations strategy for a NGO or responding to a tender that meets a specified brief), that explores a specified topic or topics, and that is constructed utilising appropriate techniques.

- Demonstrate a commitment towards professionalism and self-evaluation in all aspects of their work and, in particular, an enthusiasm for continued reading and study within their chosen media specialisation.

Module Curriculum

Dissertation Classes:

Dissertation support classes are held in the second semester and cover the following topics:

- Regulations and Dates: Overview of Guidelines
- Setting up a Gantt chart

- Assessing your strengths and weaknesses
- The importance of developing a productive routine
- How to Research Effectively
- Previous Learner Experiences
- Developing a Research Proposal: Final Tips and Checklist. Setting Goals & Targets
- Maintaining Motivation and Keeping the Momentum Going
- Working with a Supervisor: The Learner Supervisor Relationship
- Supervisors Allocated. How to deal with feedback constructively

Project Proposal

Each learner must complete a dissertation proposal for validation by the MA programme board. Proposals should state clearly what is intended to be developed and offer a review of current research in the area. A dissertation proposal should be more than just a documented idea. Learners must demonstrate that they have carried out some outline research on their proposal and have considered the appropriateness, technical complexity, feasibility and scope of their proposed dissertation.

Once the proposal is approved, the learner may commence their research or project work.

In developing their dissertation proposal, it is expected that the learners draw directly on the material and techniques presented and advanced in the related research module delivered in semester one of the programme. In particular, the earlier taught module provides learners with:

- A range of research methods appropriate to understanding media institutions or practices and guidance in how best to undertake different types of dissertation.
- Project planning and management skills related to the gathering, analysis and professional presentation of research findings.
- The ability to correctly identify, select and apply research methodologies and techniques appropriate to the dissertation under investigation.
- Additional opportunities to develop their personal development skills of communication, both written and oral.

Dissertation Supervision

Written Dissertation

When the programme board has approved proposals, each learner is assigned a dissertation supervisor by the Dissertation Co-ordinator. Each supervisor is responsible for giving guidance and direction for the duration of the dissertation process and until the dissertation is submitted. Attendance and action points arising

from the meetings are recorded with work targets and schedules agreed upon and signed off by both parties.

Dissertation by Practice

When the programme board has approved proposals, each dissertation by practice learner is assigned a supervisor by the Dissertation Co-ordinator.

Reading lists and other learning materials

Supervisors are in a position to advise on specific material relevant to individual projects however the following books have been written on the subject of writing a thesis:

Recommended reading

Bell, J. 2010, *Doing your own research project*, Open University Press, Buckingham
Denscombe, M. 2007, *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects*, Open University Press, Maidenhead
Glatthorn, Allan A. and Joyner, Randy L. 2002, *Writing the winning thesis or dissertation: a step-by-step guide*, Corwin Press, California
Murray, R. 2006, *How to Write a thesis*, Open University Press, Berkshire

Module Learning Environment

Learners are also supported with resources to offer structure and guidance and, in the case of dissertation by practice, technical support. Learners have access to Moodle, the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Module Teaching and Learning Strategy

This module is supported with structured web-based resources. Specifically, the module is delivered using:

- Support Classes
- Individual Meetings with Supervisors
- Technical support

Module Assessment Strategy

Written Dissertation: Assessment and Structure

Assessment of Dissertation and Final Presentation

The assessment is based on the final written document / submitted dissertation and a presentation. For a dissertation the word count is expected to be between 18,000-20,000 words.

The final written document is awarded 70% of the marks and the presentation is awarded 30% of the overall marks (see format below).

In May a second reader (other than the supervisor) is also assigned to each learner. The role of the second reader is to mark the thesis and presentation independently of the first reader. Second readers do not meet learners formally. Both first and second reader must agree on the final mark. In the event of a significant disagreement a third reader (Head of Faculty/Deputy Head of Faculty) is appointed to decide on the final mark.

The Dissertation Presentation Format is detailed below:

Presentation	15-20 minutes max.
Question and Answer Session	10 minutes
Grading time for Staff	5 minutes
Set-up time for next learner	5 minutes

Dissertation by Practice: Assessment and structure

Assessment of Dissertation and Final Presentation

For a dissertation by practice the learner is expected to produce a Public Relations strategy plus a written report consisting of between 8,000 and 10,000 words.

For Dissertation by Practice the practical work produced is awarded 50%, the written report which documents the research is awarded 30% and the presentation is awarded 20% of the overall marks.

A second reader is appointed to each dissertation project submitted. The role of the second reader is to mark the practical and written report and presentation independently of the first reader. The first and second reader are both in attendance for the presentation and both first and second reader must agree on the final mark. In the event of a significant disagreement a third reader (Head of Faculty/Deputy Head of Faculty) is appointed to decide on the final mark.

The Dissertation by Practice Presentation Format is detailed below:

Presentation and Demonstration of your application – learners can show all or an excerpt of their work.	25 -30 minutes max.
Question and Answer Session	10 minutes
Grading time for Staff	5 minutes
Set-up time for next learner	5 minutes

A copy of the current dissertation guidelines is available in Annex 2. Annex 3 contains the protocols the Faculty has adopted to support Dissertation Supervision.