

Masters Pathway

**MODULE CODE HLT 7059**

**Research Dissertation**

**MODULE GUIDE**

2020/2021

Semester 2

|  |
| --- |
| Level HE7 |

** **

Contents

[1. Overview 3](#_Toc31279031)

[2. Learning and Teaching Strategy 3](#_Toc31279032)

[3. Graduate Attributes 3](#_Toc31279033)

[4. Module Communications 4](#_Toc31279034)

[5. Module Description 4](#_Toc31279035)

[6. Learning Outcomes and Assessment 5](#_Toc31279036)

[7. Assessment Deadlines 5](#_Toc31279037)

[8. Assignment feedback 5](#_Toc31279038)

[9. Module Calendar 6](#_Toc31279039)

[10. Formative Assessment 6](#_Toc31279040)

[11. Indicative Reading: 7](#_Toc31279041)

[12. Guidelines for the Preparation and Submission of Assignments: 8](#_Toc31279042)

[13. Procedures for Examinations 9](#_Toc31279043)

[14. Academic Misconduct 9](#_Toc31279044)

[16. General Assessment Criteria Level HE7 11](#_Toc31279045)

[17. Assessments 13](#_Toc31279046)

# Overview

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Module Tutor** | **Sue First** |
| **Email** | **SRF1@bolton.ac.uk** |
| **Availability and contact method(s)** | Scheduled drop in hours available for online support – and tutorial method (Zoom meeting, Teams call etc) |
| **Weblink to Moodle Class** | **?????** |
| **Weblink to Module Specification** | **https://modules.bolton.ac.uk/Modules/HLT7059** |

# 

# 2. Learning and Teaching Strategy

The emphasis of this module is to enable you to direct and manage your own independent learning experience. Your chosen area for investigation will be matched, as far as is possible with the interest, expertise and existing research projects of your supervisor. Topics will be identified during the earlier part of the course through formal discussions in on line tutorials between you, the module tutor and a supervisor who has suitable research interests.

This Module will require you to self-direct and manage your own independent learning experience. The area for investigation will be matched, as far as is possible with the interest, expertise and existing research projects of the supervisor. Topics will be identified during the earlier part of the course. Topics will be chosen that give the opportunity for research that advances the boundaries of the your knowledge but which also give you a realistic opportunity of completion. Upon arrangement your dissertation supervisor will advise on the following processes: 1. Clarifying the terms of the project 2. Establishing a timetable for the project and dates for subsequent student/supervisor meetings 3. Identified learning opportunities 4. Study design, methodology, ethical approval (where necessary) and analytical strategy & methods appropriate to the study Supervisory support will form a key part of the teaching method, but ultimately, most of the learning will be student initiated. Supervisor meetings will continue periodically through the Project. A maximum amount of contact time you can expect is 12 hours with the supervisor. Each meeting will be logged and a summary of the outcomes should be signed by both parties using the appropriate proforma.

# Graduate Attributes

Graduate attributes are the personal qualities and skills which the University of Bolton community values, and which a student is expected develop during their time at the University. Graduate attributes act as a point of reference for a student’s personal development and support the articulation of employability and transferable skills.

In total there are 10 graduate attributes. This module seeks to support the development of:

Problem solving

Effective communication

# 4. Module Communications

The Module Tutor’s contact details are provided at the top of this page. You must check your **University of Bolton email address** and the **Moodle** area dedicated to this module regularly as many module communications are channelled through these media.

Your Module Tutor will normally aim to respond to your email messages within **2 full working days** of receipt; however responses will be longer in holiday periods.

# 

# 5. Module Description

This module provides an opportunity for you to undertake a substantial piece of independent inquiry in one area of Health and Social Care. The intention is to allow a thorough analysis and synthesis of theory and practice in order to generate new understandings and new knowledge in relation to health and social care. This piece of work will require either the empirical collection of data or a library based dissertation

**Delivery ;**There will be 6 hours of remote or face to face lectures, 12 hours of remote or face to face tutorials and 582 hours of guided independent study

**Module Outline:** This module gives you the opportunity to undertake a substantial independent inquiry in one area of Health and Social Care. The intention is to allow a thorough analysis and synthesis of theory and practice in order to generate new understandings and new knowledge in relation to health and social care. 

This piece of work will be either:

**[a] An empirical Dissertation** – this is a piece of empirical research conducted on a topic or issue of relevance to health care

This type of dissertation involves carrying out a piece of original research on a small scale. It entails planning a small research study, collecting and analysing primary data and presenting the results in a systematic way.

OR

**[b].** **A Library Based Dissertation**

This is a literature-based long essay providing an analysis of a specific research question of relevance to health care. A library based dissertation is probably best distinguished from an empirical study by regarding it as a piece of scholarship in which the work of others is put under close scrutiny, rather than the gathering of new, primary data directly from observation or measurement. The data of a library-based study is the work of others. However, it is potentially very valuable and important work, especially if you wish to conduct an in-depth study of an area and review the implications for your own professional concerns.

There is no preference as to which type of dissertation you write.

**Indicative Content:**

* Developing your dissertation proposal
* Aligning your proposal to professional and organisational requirements, for example ethical approval
* Modification and developments to aspects of your research strategy
* Management and analysis of empirical and text based data
* Managing the writing and final production of your dissertation

# 6. Learning Outcomes and Assessment

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Learning Outcomes** | **Assessment** |
| LO1. Locate a relevant body of knowledge and critically discuss contemporary literature in order to construct a research question with appropriate aims and objectives. | Assessment 1 |
| LO2. Undertake a critical, analytical and evaluative review of appropriate literature from a wide range of relevant sources | Assessment 1 |
| LO3. Critically examine a range of data collection methods , exploring limitations in order to propose and justify an appropriate methodological approach to address the aims and objectives of a research study | Assessment 1 |
| LO4. Plan and implement a structured research project, demonstrating effective data collection methods and data analysis, whilst conforming with ethical and research governance requirements. | Assessment 1 |
| LO5. Critically analyse and interpret data, elucidating coherent findings and conclusions which respond to the research question , whilst synthesising recommendations for practice which recognise the limitations of your own study | Assessment 1 |

# 7. Assessment Deadlines

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assessment item** | | **Due Date** | **Weight** |
| 1 | **15, 000 word Research Dissertation** | 7th December  2021 | 100% |

# 8. Assignment feedback

Feedback on items of assessment can be formal (such as on a signed feedback form) or informal (such as advice from a tutor in a tutorial). Feedback is therefore not just your grade or the comments written on your feedback form, it is advice you get from your tutor and sometimes your peers about how your work is progressing, how well you have done, what further actions you might take.

We recognise the value of prompt feedback on work submitted. Other than in exceptional circumstances (such as might be caused by staff illness), **you can expect your assignment and examination work to be marked and feedback provided not more than** **15 working days**from the deadline date. However, please note that that such feedback will be provisional and unconfirmed until the Assessment Board has met and may therefore be subject to change.

Please take time you read or listen to your assessment feedback. This can be very useful in determining your strengths and key areas for development, and can therefore help you improve on future grades.

# 9. Module Calendar

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Session** | **Date/Week Commencing** | **Theory Topic** |
| **Session 1**  **WED 27TH Jan 2021 5- 7pm**  **ON CAMPUS** | Orientation to module and focus for study | **Module briefing \ workshop**  Introductory talk and briefing on Handbook.  Working on framing your topic \ question.  Choosing empirical study or text based approach.  Signposting to resources /study skills/ library resources  Bring current thinking on topic / problem / question |
| **Session 2**  **Wed 3rd February 2021 5-7pm** | Guidelines for presenting your dissertation | Discussion about the expectations of what your final piece of work, a 15,000 word dissertation, should look like. |
| **Topic selection** |  | **Submit topic \ question and approach (Library based or empirical approach) to module coordinator** |
|  |  | Module coordinator reviews and refers topics to supervisors .Supervisor allocation agreed |
| **Session 3**  **Wed 10th February 2021 5- 7 pm** |  | Discussion about the expectations and the teaching via the supervision process for this module. Discussion about the provision of feedback and your supervisory meetings, to review your progress and support you through the research process.  Module Evaluation |
|  | **Remainder of the module**  Undertaking your project and writing up of your study | **Work with your supervisor** to:  1. Clarify the terms of the project  2. Establish a timetable for the project and dates for subsequent student/supervisor meetings  3. Identify learning opportunities  4.Propose study design, methodology, ethical approval (where necessary) and analytical strategy & methods appropriate to the study  5. Meet regularly and send regular drafts of your work |

NB: Please note that this module calendar may be subject to change.

# 10. Formative Assessment

You will have the opportunity to undertake work relevant to the assignment, including assignment plans, during the module to the module group and tutor. This will provide opportunities for feedback and critical reflection to support the delivery of your summative assignment.

Formative assessment will include class based Feedback on your search, Feedback on your organisation of information and feedback on your writing in progress.

Formative assessment is an important aspect of your learning and throughout the module you will get group feedback through learning sessions, individual tutor discussion and on any formative work required. Its purpose is to inform your development and feed into your personal learning plans (whether formal or informal). It can be used to identify any areas where any additional attention is required and to develop strategies to get beyond any challenges to your learning. Whilst it does not contribute to the overall formal assessment for the module it feeds forward into supporting your success.

# 11. Indicative Reading:

**Essential Reading:**

Aveyard, H. (2014) *Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care.* (3rd Ed.) Berkshire: Open University Press.

Bell, J. (2014) *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science.* (6th Ed.) Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Open University Press,

**Recommended Reading:**

Berry, R. (2004) *The Research Project: How to Write it.* (5th Ed.) London: Routledge

Brophy, S. Snooks, H., Griffiths, L. (2008) *Small Scale Evaluation in Health –A Practical Guide.* London: Sage

Coughlan, M., Cronin, P.,Ryan, F., (2013) Doing a literature review in nursing, health and social care London : Sage

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., Jackson, P.R. (2012) Management Research. (4th Ed.)London: Sage

Field, A. (2013) Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics: and sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll 4th edition.Los Angeles : Sage

Fink, A. (2014) *Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From Paper to the* Internet (4th Ed.) London: Sage

Gibbs, R.G. (2008) *Qualitative Data Analysis.* London: Sage

Green,J., Thorogood, N. (2014) *Qualitative Methods for Health Research.* (3rd Ed.)London: Sage

Greenhalgh, T. (2014) *How to read a paper: the basics of evidence-based medicine.(5th Ed )* Malden, Mass. BMJ Books/Blackwell,

Holloway, I. Wheeler, S. (2010) *Qualitative Research in Nursing* and healthcare (3rd Ed.) Wiley-Blackwell:.Chichester

Moule, P; Hek, G., **(**2011**)** *Making sense of research: an introduction for health and social care practitioners*4th ed.London : Sage

Robson, C. (2011) *Real world research: a resource for users of social research methods in applied settings;* (3rd Ed). Chichester : Wiley

Rudestam K E*.,* Newton, R.R. (2014) *Surviving Your Dissertation. A Comprehensive Guide To Content And Process*. (4th Ed.). London: Sage

Sim, J. Wright, C. (2002) Research In Healthcare; Concepts, Designs And Methods. Cheltenham. Nelson Thornes.

Walliman N. S.R. (2011) Your research project: designing and planning your work. (3rd Ed.) London: Sage

Recommended Web Links:

<http://www.casp-uk.net/>

<http://www.sign.ac.uk/methodology/checklists.html>

<http://www.rdforum.nhs.uk>

# 12. Guidelines for the Preparation and Submission of Assignments:

1. Written assessments should be word-processed in Arial or Calibri Light font size 12. There should be double-spacing and each page should be numbered.
2. There should be a title page identifying the programme name, module title, assessment title, your student number, your marking tutor and the date of submission.
3. You should include a word-count at the end of the assessment This word count shall not include references cited in the text, rubric associated with tables, figures, diagrams or appendices and reference lists at the end of the assessment but will include any direct quotations.

Where a word limit is specified, the following penalty systems applies:

* Up to 10% over the specified word length = no penalty
* 10 – 20% over the specified indicative word length = 5 marks subtracted (but if the assessment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assessment).
* More than 20% over the indicative word length = if the assessment would normally gain a pass mark or more, then the final mark will capped at the pass mark for the assessment.

1. All written work should be referenced using the standard University of Bolton referencing style– see: <https://www.bolton.ac.uk/library/Study-Skills/Referencing/Home.aspx>
2. Unless otherwise notified by your Module Tutor, electronic copies of assignments should be saved as word documents and uploaded into Turnitin via the Moodle class area. If you experience problems in uploading your work, then you must send an electronic copy of your assessment to your Module Tutor via email BEFORE the due date/time. **For this module two full paper copies, including appendices etc. must also be submitted, besides the electronic submission.**
3. Please note that when you submit your work to Moodle, it will automatically be checked for matches against other electronic information. The individual percentage text matches may be used as evidence in an academic misconduct investigation (see Section 13).
4. Late work will be subject to the penalties:
   * Up to 7 calendar days late = 10 marks subtracted but if the assignment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assignment.
   * More than 7 calendar days late **=** This will be counted as non-submission and no marks will be recorded.
   * Late submission of assessments on refer and those which are graded Pass/Fail only, is not permitted. Students may request an extension to the original published deadline date as described below
5. **In the case of exceptional and unforeseen circumstances, an extension of up to 14 days after the assessment deadline may be granted.** This must be agreed by your Programme Leader, following a discussion the Module Tutor. You should complete an Extension Request Form available from your Tutor and attach documentary evidence of your circumstances, prior to the published submission deadline.

Extensions over 14 calendar days should be requested using the Mitigating Circumstances procedure, with the exception of extensions for individual projects which, at the discretion of the Programme Leader, may be longer than 14 days.

**Requests for extensions which take a submission date past the end of the module (normally week 15) must be made using the Mitigating Circumstances procedures.**

Some students with registered disabilities will be eligible for revised submission deadlines. Revised submission deadlines do not require the completion extension request paperwork.

Please note that the failure of data storage systems is not considered to be a valid reason for an extension. It is therefore important that you keep multiple copies of your work on different storage devices before submitting it.

# 13. Procedures for Examinations

NOT APPLICABLE TO THIS MODULE

# 14. Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct may be defined as any attempt by a student to gain an unfair advantage in any assessment. This includes plagiarism, collusion, commissioning (contract cheating) amongst other offences. In order to avoid these types of academic misconduct, you should ensure that all your work is your own and that sources are attributed using the correct referencing techniques. You can also check originality through *Turnitin.*

Please note that penalties apply if academic misconduct is proven. See the following link for further details:

https://www.bolton.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/student-policies/

**Fitness to Practice: Confidentiality**

The University applies its Fitness to Practice Procedure to all students following programmes of study accredited by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies which require the University to make a ‘fitness to practice’ or equivalent declaration or where a student subject to professional code of conduct is undertaking a relevant programme of continuing professional development. The procedure can be found at:

**Confidentiality**

You must always protect the identity of patients, clients, colleagues and their relatives in all assignments. Wherever possible you should also make efforts to anonymise organisations, colleagues and individuals. However, the work based context of this module means that this is not always possible, but please ensure that any individuals are not recognisable within any of your assignments. Please note that Service Users have the right to refuse student care, and intervention should only occur through informed consent.

**15.Specific Assessment Criteria:**

(Please note that the General Assessment Criteria will also apply. Please see section 16)

**Distinction (70% and above)**

A cohesive, comprehensive and critical synthesis of the literature will be provided. Relationships between concepts will be expertly elicited. An excellent evaluation will be set out and theory expertly linked to findings. Reflections will be succinct and insightful. Areas and strategies will be expertly summarised and comprehensively justified.

Extensive research demonstrating use of a wide range of contemporary and seminal sources will be evident. Referencing and English will be excellent.

**Merit (60% -69%)**

A clear and critical synthesis the literature will be provided. Relationships between concepts will be well elicited. A good evaluation will be set out and theory linked well to findings. Areas and strategies will be well summarised and justified.

Research demonstrating use of a wide range of relevant research sources will be evident. Referencing and English will be good.

**Pass (50%-59%)**

A critical analysis of the literature will be presented. Relationships between concepts will be clearly drawn out. An evaluation will be set out set out with theory linked to findings. Areas and strategies will be clearly summarised and justified.

Research demonstrating use of a range of relevant research sources will be evident. Referencing and English will be satisfactory.

**Fail (Below 50%):** Students who do not meet the requirements of the Pass criteria will not successfully complete the assessment activity.

# 16. General Assessment Criteria Level HE7

**General Assessment Guidelines Level HE7**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **%** | **Relevance** | **Knowledge** | **Argument/Analysis** | **Structure** | **Presentation** | **Written English** | **Research/Referencing** |
| **DISTINCTION** | Exceptional Quality | 85-100% | Directly relevant to title/brief.  Expertly addresses the assumptions of the title and/or the requirements of the brief. | Demonstrates an exceptional knowledge of theory and practice for this level.  Insightfully interprets appropriate concepts and theoretical models.  Demonstrates originality in conceptual understanding. | Presents an exceptional critique of key research material resulting in clear, original and illuminating conclusions.  Demonstrates distinctive, insightful and creative solutions to complex problems.  Produces exceptional work that makes a contribution to the development of knowledge and understanding in the subject area. | Coherently articulated and logically structured.  An appropriate format is used. | Exceptional presentational style & layout, appropriate to the type of assignment.  Effective inclusion of figures, tables, plates (FTP). | Exceptionally well written answer with standard spelling and grammar.  Style is clear, resourceful and academic. | Sources accurately cited in the text.  An extensive range of contemporary and relevant references cited in the reference list in the correct style. |
| Excellent Quality | 70-84% | Directly relevant to title/brief.  Expertly addresses the assumptions of the title and/or the requirements of the brief. | Demonstrates an excellent knowledge of theory and practice for this level.  Expertly interprets appropriate concepts and theoretical models.  Demonstrates originality in conceptual understanding. | Presents an excellent critique of key research material resulting in clear, original and illuminating conclusions.  Demonstrates insightful and creative thinking solutions to complex problems.  Produces excellent work that makes a contribution to the development of knowledge and understanding in the subject area. | Coherently articulated and logically structured.  An appropriate format is used. | Excellent presentational style & layout, appropriate to the type of assignment.  Effective inclusion of figures, tables, plates (FTP). | Excellently written answer with standard spelling and grammar.  Style is clear, resourceful and academic. | Sources accurately cited in the text.  A wide range of contemporary and relevant references cited in the reference list in the correct style. |
| **MERIT** | Good Quality | 60-69% | Directly relevant to title/brief.  Addresses the assumptions of the title and/or the requirements of the brief well. | Demonstrates a sound knowledge of theory and practice for this level.  Comprehensively interprets appropriate concepts and theoretical models.  Demonstrates originality in conceptual understanding | Presents a cohesive critique of key research material resulting in clear and original conclusions.  Demonstrates creative solutions to complex problems.  Produces superior work that makes a contribution to the development of knowledge and understanding in the subject area | For the most part coherently articulated and logically constructed.  An appropriate format is used. | Very good presentational style & layout, appropriate to the type of assignment.  Effective inclusion of FTP. | Well written with standard spelling and grammar. Style is clear and academic. | Sources accurately cited in the text.  A range of contemporary and relevant references cited in the reference list in the correct style. |
| **PASS** | Satisfactory Quality | 50-59% | Generally addresses the assumptions of the title and/or the requirements of the brief.    Minor irrelevance in places. | Demonstrates an adequate knowledge of theory and practice for this level. Some minor omissions.  Satisfactorily interprets some appropriate concepts and theoretical models.  Demonstrates some originality in conceptual understanding. | Presents some critique of key research material resulting in original conclusions. Loss of focus in places.  Demonstrates some creativity in solving complex problems.  Produces satisfactory work that makes some contribution to the development of knowledge and understanding in the subject area. | Adequate attempt at articulation and logical structure.  An acceptable format is used. | The presentational style & layout is largely correct for the type of assignment.  Inclusion of FTP but lacks selectivity. | Competently written with minor lapses in spelling and grammar.  Style is legible and mainly academic. | Key contemporary and relevant academic sources are drawn upon.  Most sources are accurately cited in the text and reference list/bibliography.  Minor weaknesses evident. |
| **FAIL** | Borderline Fail | 45-49% | Some implications of issues explored.  Some irrelevant and/or superficial arguments. | Some omissions evident in knowledge of theory and practice at this level.  Insufficient understanding of appropriate concepts and theoretical models.  Demonstrates some conceptual understanding in places. | A limited amount of critique of key research material with description in places. Lacks creativity. Some original conclusions. | Limited attempt at articulation and problems with structure.  Some formatting errors. | Some weaknesses in the presentational style & layout.  Some inappropriate use of FTP. | Intermittent lapses in grammar and spelling.    Style hinders clarity in places and is not academic throughout. | Limited number of contemporary and relevant sources cited. Weaknesses in referencing technique. |
| Fail | 30-44% | Significant degree of irrelevance to the title and/or brief.  Issues are addressed at a superficial level and in unchallenging terms. | Demonstrates weaknesses in knowledge of theory and practice for this level.  Limited understanding and application of concepts. | A basic argument is presented, but too descriptive or narrative in style.  Limited originality and creativity.  Conclusions are not clearly stated. | Poorly structured. Lack of articulation.  Format deficient. | For the type of assignment the presentational style &/or layout is lacking.  FTP ignored in text or not used where clearly needed. | Deficiencies in spelling and grammar make reading difficult in places.  Simplistic or repetitious style impairs clarity. | Inappropriate sources and poor referencing technique. |
| <30% | Relevance to the title and/or brief is intermittent or missing.  The topic is reduced to its vaguest and least challenging terms. | Demonstrates a lack of basic knowledge of either theory or practice for this level, with little evidence of conceptual understanding. | Severely limited arguments. Descriptive or narrative in style with no evidence of critique and originality or creativity.  Conclusions are sparse. | Unstructured.  Lack of articulation.  Format deficient. | For the type of assignment the presentational style &/or layout is lacking.  FTP as above. | Poorly written with numerous deficiencies in grammar, spelling, expression and style. | An absence of academic sources and poor referencing technique. |

17. Assessments

|  |
| --- |
| **Assessment Number 1:** Dissertation  **Assessment Title:** Student specific title  **Assessment Length**: 15,000 words  **Submission Deadline:** 7th December 2021 |

**Learning Outcomes:**

|  |
| --- |
| LO1. Locate a relevant body of knowledge and critically discuss contemporary literature in order to construct a research question with appropriate aims and objectives. |
| LO2. Undertake a critical, analytical and evaluative review of appropriate literature from a wide range of relevant sources |
| LO3. Critically examine a range of data collection methods , exploring limitations in order to propose and justify an appropriate methodological approach to address the aims and objectives of a research study |
| LO4. Plan and implement a structured research project, demonstrating effective data collection methods and data analysis, whilst conforming with ethical and research governance requirements. |
| LO5. Critically analyse and interpret data, elucidating coherent findings and conclusions which respond to the research question , whilst synthesising recommendations for practice which recognise the limitations of your own study |

**Assignment 1 Brief:**

This brief includes the following

[a] Choosing your topic

[b] Dissertation Proposal Form

[c] You and your supervisor

[d] Ethical approval

[e] Guidelines for producing your dissertation

**[a] Choosing your topic**

**When do I start the process?**

You should start thinking about a possible choice of topic as early as possible and you could start by re-visiting your research module lecture notes and bibliographies. You must discuss a dissertation topic with a potential supervisor and have it approved by your organisation if it is an empirical study. We want to ensure that the topic that you have chosen can be completed within the period of time available (approx. 9 months) and that you have not chosen a topic which is too broad, or unfocused, or for which there is a problem in obtaining materials. If relevant, you also need to ensure you will be able to find study participants.

**How do I go about choosing my topic?**

The topic that you propose needs to be an area where you can show evidence of originality: either new ground covered or novelty of approach, or both. Alternatively, it could be a critical assessment of the current state of knowledge.

The topic must not be the same as coursework that you have submitted for other modules taken on your programme, although it may be a development from a piece of coursework. You may wish to propose a topic connected with your place of work, although this must be done with the knowledge and consent of your employer. Above all, the subject should be one that is relevant to your own professional interests.

There are a number of ways in which you can define your dissertation topic:

* following up on a topic or issue raised in your taught classes, or arising out of the literature you have consulted
* developing an aspect of your coursework which warrants further investigation
* Developing work undertaken on your practical placement(s)
* focusing on an area in which you would like to seek employment, in order to acquire greater understanding
* discussion with tutors, fellow students and professionals.

You may find it helpful to look at the titles of dissertations produced by students in previous years found in the library. Your choice of topic will be subject to the agreement of your organisation and potential supervisor, and you are advised not to begin work on the dissertation until the topic has been agreed. We reserve the right to reject or amend your proposal, subject to discussion with you. In any case, the proposal should be seen as a working document which may change as your work progresses. Do not be tempted by choosing something you *think* will be ‘easy.’

**The title of your topic**

The title should be as informative as possible. It is only a guide at this stage, and you will be able to modify it at a later stage if you wish, in consultation with your supervisor.

**The proposed dissertation topic**

You will be asked to submit an outline proposal for your dissertation topic (please complete appendix 1) to your Module lead (Sue First) by

**Monday 24th of February 2021, 5pm at the latest**.

The proposal should be 300 - 500 words in length and should include:

The outline should identify a *specific* topic to be investigated and not just a general field. This summary of the proposed dissertation should include:-

* A provisional title for the dissertation
* A statement of which areas of professional concern you will address covering the main points you think you will be addressing in the dissertation proper
* An explanation of your choice of topic (why you feel it is a useful or important subject)
* If based on a practical project, a short description of the practical work to be undertaken. Where, when and how data will be collected or accessed.
* Any relevant references

Like the title, this is only a provisional statement of intent at this stage. Whatever you write here does not commit you irrevocably. The purpose of this preliminary stage is twofold. It is to get you thinking about your dissertation project proper; and it is to help us ensure all students are assigned a suitable supervisor.

It is VITAL that you stick to the **deadline** to enable early allocation of your supervisor and a prompt start to your research.

**[b] Dissertation Proposal Form-**

CHOICE OF TOPIC

EXPLANATION FOR CHOICE OF TOPIC, (WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?)

AREAS/ QUESTIONS OF CONCERN THAT TOPIC WILL ADDRESS

SHORT DESCRIPTION HOW THE PROJECT WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IF EMPERICAL STUDY (EG APPROACH TAKEN, WITH WHOM, OVER WHAT TIME PERIOD AND WHERE)

ANY RELEVANT REFERENCES (MAX 3)

**[c] You and your supervisor**

**When and how do I go about meeting my supervisor?**

Your supervisor will be confirmed at the third taught session of the module. You should immediately contact your supervisor to set up a meeting as soon as possible via email or phone. *It is vital that you should start a discussion on your topic and it is your responsibility to set this in motion, not your supervisor’s.*

It is important that there is effective communication between student and supervisor, both initially, in the definition of the topic and the method of approach, and subsequently, in the provision of continuing guidance and the monitoring of progress. Your supervisor is a key person in ensuring your successful completion of your dissertation, so please maintain regular contact.

The key issues to discuss are:

* The nature of the topic: should you limit or extend it
* Further reading you need to do
* Other issues which you need to be considering

**When do I next see my supervisor?**

After having clarified the topic and methodology, students are expected to see their supervisors on **at least three** occasions before the date of submission. The onus is on the student to make this contact, and if necessary it may be electronic rather than in person, provided both parties agree to such an arrangement. , *it is your responsibility to set up these meetings*. Please make sure that you do not delay as we view this stage of the process as perhaps the most critical to your success. In most cases you will decide, with your supervisor’s help, on the overall remit and structure of your dissertation. You need to be able to discuss this at length, exchanging views in the light of your reading and thinking.

**Do I need to prepare anything for these meetings?**

This will be decided between you and your supervisor what preparatory work you need to do. In general terms, much of these meetings may involve ‘brainstorming’. This, however, cannot happen in a vacuum; you must prepare for the meeting carefully. It is probably a good idea to email your supervisor an outline proposal (and key questions, if you have any) by attachment prior to the meeting. You cannot expect your supervisor to read through an outline plan for the first time at this meeting. Not only will this waste your time as the supervisor reads the plan, but it is most unlikely that your supervisor will be able to respond adequately to such a first sight reading. Either way, given that you have a limited span of time, you will waste it. You need to give your supervisor as much material as you can so that an informed discussion can take place.

**How does the supervision process work?**

The precise form that supervisions take (e.g. general discussion, feedback on a draft submitted by you) is a matter to be agreed between you and your supervisor. After you have been allocated an individual supervisor, the organisation of supervision including the frequency and content are through negotiation. Supervisory support will form a key part of the teaching method, but ultimately, most of the learning will be student initiated. Supervisor meetings will continue periodically up until Dec 2021, when you will submit your work. A typical amount of total contact time over the year, that you can expect, is 12 hours in total, with your supervisor. Each meeting will be logged and a summary of the outcomes should be signed by both parties using the appropriate proforma.

.

Your supervisor will initially advise on the following processes:

* Clarify the terms of the project
* Establish a timetable for the project and dates for subsequent student/supervisor meetings
* Identify learning opportunities
* Provide guidance about the study design, methodology, ethical approval (where necessary) and analytical strategy and methods appropriate to the study
* Provide feedback on drafts

**Feedback on drafts**

It is advisable for all students to submit **at least one** draft of each chapter of written material for comment by their supervisor, well in advance of the submission date. It is important not to leave all the writing up to the end. Writing and obtaining feedback on a draft chapter will greatly assist with the compilation of the final dissertation. Your supervisor will not normally read any given draft section of your dissertation more than once, and cannot be expected to proof-read or ghost-write the final version (for which you alone carry responsibility).Nevertheless your supervisor should be supportive and helpful, and provide feedback and suggestions on the direction of your work.

If the appointment is to discuss a draft, send the draft several working days before the appointment. Obviously, the longer the draft, the more time needed before the appointment. Expect this process to take even longer during “peak periods” (e.g. near the submission deadline). In particular:

* Please do not expect the reading of your draft to be given automatic priority over other essential teaching, research and administrative work that your supervisor has to undertake.
* Please do not expect your draft to be read “overnight” or “over the weekend”.
* Make sure both you and your supervisor are aware of any periods when supervision cannot take place (e.g. because of vacations, conference attendance or other periods away from college). Take these into account when scheduling work on the dissertation.

**Before handing in a draft**

* Has the draft been read through carefully?
* Has the draft been spell checked?
* Is the draft written in plain, concise and grammatically correct English?
* Are all the pages and sections numbered? (This is essential for written feedback.)
* Is the draft double-spaced? (Again, this is essential for written feedback.)
* Is the draft reasonably easy to read and understand? Is there an indication of where it will be placed in, or in what way it will contribute to, the overall dissertation?
* If the draft includes previously submitted material, is there a clear indication of which bits are new?

**NB Supervisors cannot read and comment on all of your work before submission of the dissertation. Supervisors will read and comment on plans and excerpts from work in progress.**

**Supervision responsibilities**

Student

The dissertation is an independent piece of work for which you are responsible. As a student you need to agree to have a responsibility to:-

* Initiate and maintain regular contact with your Supervisor
* Keep an agreed schedule of meetings
* Keep an accurate record of recommendations, suggestions and advice offered by the set/supervisor
* Provide up to date progress reports
* Maintain the progress of your work as agreed within the time-scales
* Inform your supervisor of any difficulties you may be having in keeping to these time-scales, in order for remedial action to be taken
* Submit any written material for comment within the agreed time
* Adopt safe working practices, and adhere to any ethical, intellectual property or data collection issues that may arise during the life of the project
* Be familiar with the University, organisational policies and procedures

Your Supervisor has a responsibility to:

* Monitor your progress, and attempt to identify any difficulties that arise. If the standard of your progress is inadequate or below that which is generally expected it will be brought to your attention in writing and copied to the module coordinator. The supervisor will discuss with you what if any action should be taken to improve the position.
* Advise on the feasibility and suitability of the topic, and issues of project design and execution
* Comment on the content, presentation and organisation of any work submitted by you in a positive and constructive way, and return it within an agreed time-scale.
* Keep a record of all formal meetings with you
* To mark final submission in a fair manner in accordance with documented criteria
* Arrange for second marking in the dissertation

If for any reason you have concerns regarding your supervision and have already discussed this with Supervisor and the issue is still not resolved then please contact the Module Lead.

**[d] Ethical approval**

**Who should apply for Ethical Approval?**

All students on this module are expected to discuss and write about, the ethical implications of their research and consider the ethical issues, even if you are undertaking a literature based study, and all students MUST complete an RE1 form.

**How to apply for University Ethical Approval**

Go to the Research Ethics Framework link on the University webpages

Download and complete the Form RE1 research ethics form, to apply for Ethical Approval

Discuss and sign a hard copy of the completed application form with your supervisor. Their approval and signature is also required.

Your supervisor will then send your RE1 form to the Dissertation module lead

Leave adequate time (e.g. 2 weeks) for the form to be processed, including possibly being returned to you for improvements and resubmission

Once it has been approved and signed off by the Academic Group Co-ordinator and returned to you, you may begin recruiting and collecting data from your participants.

For any empirical investigation, that recruits human participants, students and supervisors should consider and address any ethical implications that may pertain to the project. It is a requirement that dissertations that are based on data directly gathered from human participants should include a statement to demonstrate that the research has been conducted in accordance with appropriate ethical principles. In the case of empirical studies, ethical approval is required from BOTH the university (RE1) and your employer if being undertaken in the workplace. All students planning to undertake a research project involving human participants (e.g. questionnaires, interviews etc.) must obtain ethical approval **BEFORE STARTING** data collection from the university and from your employer.

**How to apply for Employer Ethical Approval**

Contact your manager or quality / research governance lead, with an outline of your study, asking for written approval to carry out your study in the workplace.

WARNING: DO NOT collect data BEFORE the date that your application is approved!

**General Guidance on Ethical Issues and Procedures for Research:**

Guidance can be found on the university website via the student portal at:-

The National Research Ethics Service also provides comprehensive guidance to NHS organisations and researchers .

**[e] Guidelines for producing your dissertation**

Do not under estimate the amount of time and organisation that will be required at this stage. You are strongly advised to use a reference management system whilst undertaking your project.

Referencing must follow an acknowledged University of Bolton style i.e. Harvard (for guidelines refer to Cite me I’m Yours, David Rudd).

Your dissertation should demonstrate a succinct writing style, clarity of thought and a depth of analysis and critical enquiry expected of a Master’s degree.

**The indicative word limit is 15,000 words, (excluding title page, appendices, references and bibliography).**

**Title Page**

Should include the following:

* Accurate and descriptive title
* Statement – Project submitted as partial fulfilment of the M.Sc. Professional Development - (Insert route title: e.g. Public Health Practice)
* University name
* Student number only (no name)
* Month and Year of submission

**Contents page**

Immediately follows the title page and list in correct sequence the chapters, sub-divisions, reference list, bibliography list (if used) and appendices

**List of tables / figures**

This list should present the order of supporting material with page numbers

**Acknowledgements**

It is customary, but voluntary to acknowledge people or organisations through a personal statement

**Glossary**

If you have used abbreviations please provide a key

**Abstract**

This is a 250 – 500 word summary of the entire project and is an important part of the final report. It may determine whether the report is read by others, and gives the reader a framework on which to orientate the subsequent details of the report. The abstract should convey the reason for the investigation, the overall methodological approach and the main findings of the study along with the key recommendations. It is normally written in the past tense.

**Main Body**

The main body should be divided into sections/chapters. Each section/chapter should have short introductory and concluding paragraphs that signpost the reader to the relevance of the section/chapter.

A typical format for a dissertation based on empirical research is

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chapter | Comments |
| 1 | **Introduction 1,000 words**  Your introduction should clarify what is being investigated and why it is important. Justification needs to be provided, along with the rationale for rejecting alternatives. Having defined the problem or issue it is important to place it in context by providing an overview of the organisational setting or environment. Finally, if a specific organisation is being investigated then the importance of the investigation to the organisation needs to be explained.  At this early stage it is essential to establish a clear direction for your investigation so that you know your purpose and can begin to structure your work around it. Although the title of your dissertation may change, a working title often helps to maintain a focus for your ideas and thoughts. In addition to the research question you need to outline the objectives; that is the statements of what you aim to achieve during the investigation.  **Aims and Objectives**  Once the subject area is identified and a degree of reading accomplished it should be possible to formulate a research question that will guide you throughout. A broad aim can be identified next, followed by clear and unambiguous objectives. Objectives should be narrowly defined and, given the available time, realistic. It is also important to incorporate master’s level descriptors into objectives, for example ‘critically appraise’, ‘synthesise’ and ‘evaluate’. |
| 2 | **Literature Review**   1. State the search strategy you have used to identify the appropriate literature. 2. Make use of primary research articles to provide an up to date account of what is known about the chosen topic area. 3. Make reference to international/national/local policies which relate to the topic area. 4. Highlight the gaps in the existing evidence base on the chosen topic. 5. Establish the rationale for conducting the proposed piece of research.   You are expected to be competent in accessing literature both electronically and through library searches. Of particular importance for the Masters dissertation is to access recent journal articles and information that directly relates to your research question and objectives. You should cover your subject in breadth and depth. Whatever the subject, it is important to present the work under linked themes, considering a number of authors and concepts in an integrated way. The purpose of the critical literature review is to ascertain what already exists in your chosen area. You need to demonstrate an understanding of relationships but, more importantly, demonstrate where your study fits in with existing literature.  Begin your lit review with a search strategy, how did you find the literature e.g. on line databases, which ones, number of hits(use a table), search terms used, inclusion and exclusion criteria e.g. written in English, after a certain year  **Search Strategy (500 words)**  The Search Strategy appears at the beginning of the Literature Review. The purpose of setting out the Search Strategy for a literature review is: to inform the reader of:   * the databases and information sources that have been searched * the years searched * the search terms used   This will enable others to follow the processes you have used and replicate them at a later date.  **Preparing a Search Strategy:**  1. Tell the reader which databases have been searched to obtain the primary research articles you are citing in the review. Give the dates and the origin of the material – i.e. UK only, English speaking countries only etc. State the *keywords* you have used to access the articles.  2. Follow this by giving information about other sources, for example: Policy Documents, Department of Health/NHS documents  3. If you have performed a hand-search of journals, give details and date range  4. Use a table to show the number of hits for each database and search term/s to show how you have refined your search down to the articles of relevance that you will be discussing and state how many items of literature you have chosen for the review.  5. Finally you should have identified a number of themes in the literature so state what those themes are.  **Reviewing the Literature (4, 500 words)**  This involves extensive reading around the subject area, to establish a thorough understanding of relevant work that has been undertaken. The approach needs to be critical and it is at this stage that you may become more knowledgeable about your topic area than your peers, or even your supervisor if the investigation is very specific. A key emphasis should be on analysing the material and not merely making a record. Concepts should be grouped into themes, under appropriate sub-headings, with writer’s views being contrasted and compared within these.  In conjunction with the literature review there is often a need to research other organisations and gather secondary data relating to how other organisations, or sectors are tackling the problem, or dealing with the issue.  Accurate recording of sources is important, and you will need to produce a full and accurate reference list .At the very start devise an effective method for accurately recording sources – it can be electronic, manual, or a mixture of both. |
|  |
| 3 | **Methodology 2,500 words**  This section incorporates two parts - the philosophical perspective and the data collection methods or tools that are used. The focus must be on the justification of the philosophical approach and the rationale behind the methods being used. You need to relate it to your subject area and justify the choice in terms of the topic being investigated supported by references from the research literature. Your Research methods should relate to the techniques you use for data collection and analysis. It is equally important to justify the methods adopted and explain your rationale for rejecting alternative methods.  The various approaches must be appropriate for the type of data being gathered and justified in full. Again, the rationale must relate directly to specific issues within your research design and subject area. It is also important to justify the analytical methods employed, explaining why others were rejected.  You need to comment on the terms of reliability and validity, again in relation to your subject area and topic. Finally, if statistical methods are used these equally need justification.  Include:-   1. The method you will be using to collect the data and the rationale for the chosen method. This will include quantitative or qualitative or mixed methods etc. supported by references from research literature 2. The proposed Sampling procedures, i.e. who would be the participants in the study, how many participants, why those people, supported by references from the research literature 3. The tools you will using, for example a questionnaire with the list of questions or semi-structured interview schedule, supported by references from the research literature. Explain how the questions you are asking will collect the right data to give you the answers to your original research question. Discuss what you have done to ensure the rigour of your research e.g. validity reliability or credibility, generalisablity, member checking 4. The Procedures you would have to follow. This is a detailed account of what you would propose doing and how you would do it.eg recruitment , how (by email/ letter), consent, where will you hold the interview , how long will it be , will you record this 5. Ethical considerations. In this section you would detail the ethical issues you would need to consider before and during conducting your suggested piece of research. |
| 4 | **Data Results and Analysis 2,000 words**  In some dissertation it is appropriate to combine the results and the analysis. If they remain separate then the results, including descriptive data of the sample, are presented using tables , graphs and labelled figure 1, 2 with a title and with narrative highlighting the  key points. You need to present your results of the questionnaire or interview results question by question emphasising majority, minority average etc. or recurring themes in interviews and give direct quotes from the data of participants feedback |
| 5 | **Discussion 3,500 words**  Discussion, is a key element of a dissertation as it represents you original thinking in drawing together the literature and your findings. The format the discussion takes can vary according to the research design and subject area; however, this is an area for analytical thought and seeing links and connections between various elements of the investigation. A challenging aspect of any investigation is dividing material so that several key areas are used to develop a logical and convincing argument, rather than presenting an amorphous mass of material.  There needs to be a coherent grouping of areas, which relate to the concepts identified in the literature review. It is vitally important that concepts, models, theories etc. from YOUR literature review are discussed to place the analysis of your data into context. There may be a large volume of information, but your task is to identify and analyse the key trends and factors so that they form the core of the investigation.  Simply collecting large amounts of data and presenting it without analysis would not constitute Masters level work. Arguments must be supported by a synthesis of study data and literature. The focus essentially remains with your original research question, aim and objectives, although wider issues that flow from unexpected findings might equally be incorporated. It is important to structure the arguments under sub-headed themes, rather treat data in a linear manner. Equally, it is not always necessary to discuss all results. It is important for you to identify elements that are key and which align more closely with the research objectives you stated at the beginning of your dissertation. |
| 6 | **Conclusions & Recommendations 1,000 words**  Conclusions must be drawn logically from the analysis of your data and your discussion. It is important to restate the research question as it is this that provides a focus for the key issues in the conclusion. Equally, you need to produce evidence that your research objectives have been achieved. In drawing the various strands together the onus is on the writer to produce a cohesive summary of the investigation. Key points need to be identified and illustrated so that the reader knows exactly that which has been discovered, rather than having to pick out the key points for him or herself. An awareness of limitations surrounding the study also needs to be expounded, along with suggestions for future research. A series of recommendations should flow logically from the conclusions and be justified, ideally in relation to the literature and best practice.  DO NOT introduce new material into the conclusion – it is a synthesis of what has gone before. Similarly, recommendations must flow from the conclusions and be supported by arguments contained in the dissertation. |
| 7 | **References :-** EXPECTED TO BE 150 OR MORE  It is common to just present a reference list, when a Harvard style system is being used, - if in doubt please consult with the online address below  http://www.bolton.ac.uk/bissto/Finding-Information/Referencing/Harvard-Referencing.aspx  Reference list - contains only sources that have been cited in the main text.  Bibliography;-You may include a separate bibliography list which - contains sources that you found useful in undertaking the dissertation, but which are not directly cited in the main text. |
| 8 | **Appendices**  Contains supportive material that would otherwise clutter the main text. e.g. RE1 approval, organisational letter of approval, interview schedule, blank questionnaire |
| 9 | **Grammar**  Writing should be in the third person e.g. the data /literature suggests. The methodology chapter should be in the present tense and the data results /analysis should be in the past tense.  The discussion could use future tense in places such as recommendations for practice. |

A typical format for a library based dissertation is

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chapter | Comments |
| **1** | **Introduction 1,000 words**  Library based studies must have research questions as carefully developed as any other kind of study.  **Aims and objectives**  As above |
| **2** | **Methodology 1,000 words**  This section incorporates two parts - the philosophical perspective and the approach to analysing the literature (which is your data) or tools that are used. The focus must be on the justification of the philosophical approach and the rationale behind the why the literature based approach is being used. You need to relate it to your subject area and justify the choice with supported references from the research literature. It is equally important to justify and explain your rationale for rejecting alternative / empirical methods with a critical evaluation of your ‘methodology’, including your philosophical perspective, for examining the literature.  Your approach to your literature based study such as ‘systematic’ or ‘narrative’ or ‘chronological’, discourse analysis must be justified with a rationale  The focus must be on the justification of your philosophical approach and the rationale behind your method for examining the literature supported with references from the research literature. It is equally important to justify the approach you have chosen and explain your rationale for rejecting alternative methods. You may also choose to include tools that you have used to critically appraise the literature such as CASP (http://www.casp-uk.net/).  Include:-   1. The method you will be using to collect your data ( i.e. the literature) and the questions you are asking that will give you the answers to your original research question., supported by references from research literature 2. The proposed Sampling procedures, i.e. inclusion and exclusion criteria for the articles you have decided to include and analyse, supported by references from the research literature 3. The tools you will using, for example CASP to analyse the literature, supported by references from the research literature. Discuss the research rigour of the literature e.g. validity reliability or credibility, generalisablity, member checking 4. A detailed account of how you would propose to analyse the literature and come to conclusions e.g. theme analysis 5. Ethical considerations. In this section you would detail the ethical issues you would need to consider before and during conducting research and why these do not apply to a literature based study |
| **3** | **Search Strategy 1,000 words**  As for an empirical study, but in much greater detail |
| **4** | **Literature Review 8,000 words**  As above  This will be more extensive than in an empirical study; and you will include greater detail. It is not the simple describing of work that has been carried out in an area, although this will be part of the task. Library based studies must have research questions as carefully developed as any other kind of study. The work can then be placed in a defined context and a carefully considered critical judgment of the work can be made as to its value, quality and contribution to theory and practical application. You also have to consider the research methods used by original researchers and evaluate these.  You may want to tabulate authors and themes found in the literature to provide a clearer picture for the reader.  You will also wish to make judgments about the validity of the results in the context of your own professional practice. |
| **5** | **Discussion 3,000 words**  As above |
| **6** | **Conclusions & Recommendations 1,000 words**  As above |
| **7** | **References**  EXPECTED TO BE 400 OR MORE  It is common to just present a reference list, when a Harvard style system is being used, - if in doubt please consult with the online address below http://www.bolton.ac.uk/bissto/Finding-Information/Referencing/Harvard-Referencing.aspx  Reference list - contains only sources that have been cited in the main text.  Bibliography;-You may include a separate bibliography list which - contains sources that you found useful in undertaking the dissertation, but which are not directly cited in the main text. |
| **8** | **Appendices**  Contains supportive material that would otherwise clutter the main text. e.g. CASP tool, tables of literature searches |
|  | **Grammar**  Writing should be in the third person e.g. the literature suggests. The methodology chapter should be in the present tense  The discussion could use future tense in places such as recommendations for practice. |

.