

## MBA Dissertation General Information

This document might be considered a form of FAQ. However the questions are not always given, only the answers. The list is compiled from responses I have given to individual students, where I feel the answer may be beneficial to all. There is no particular sequence or order other than being grouped in general areas. New additions in the current issue of the document are shown in [blue text](#).

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### Process / Supervision

Q: Just starting out? - the following might help

A: My contact details are at the end of this document, email tends to be best (and cheapest :- ) method. My role is reactive and yours proactive, so progress depends very much on you.

As soon as you have an idea of the theme/scope of your work (or the problem/opportunity to be addressed) I suggest you construct a rough outline of the structure of the dissertation. Best bet is to create a word document, start the construction - build a table of contents and send me a copy. This also gives you a working document and if you use outlining or document map in Word, will assist you in organising your work so that the grand scheme of things can be framed and the theme developed.

You need to identify or construct an academic framework in your secondary research relating to this theme - eg what has happened before. In your primary research you then create new or develop upon current knowledge and contrast it with what you found previously, to arrive at a set of conclusions or preferably recommendations.

Q: What are the most difficult aspects of completing a dissertation?

A: The key difficulties are:

- Selecting the subject
- Constructing the outline
- Identifying the theme and the scope
- Deciding aims and objectives
- Determining source of primary data

Q: Can I change the title of my dissertation?

A: The proposed title you use day 1 may be very different to the final submission so it is really of little importance. I feel that the essential ingredient is to find a thread that you are interested and develop this into a theme that can run through the whole work.

Q: What form should I send documents in?

A: I use Word 2000; however I am happy with most document types - If files are large I would appreciate you ZIP them. My email service frowns at files over 2Mb.

It helps enormously if the file name includes your name (eg John McCutcheon Dissertation.doc)

Please feel free to provide/send me your work at any time for review / comment / guidance. After I have your outline we can use an iterative process for this. If I have an electronic copy I tend to scribble over it electronically using the following key: Blue is my general comments, green for work I think you should review/replace/rephrase and red for stuff that seems superfluous or does not add any value to the work - all a bit like being at primary school. Remember also that if you keep sending me stuff, I will keep reviewing it, until somewhere along the line you or I call a halt.

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### Structure

Q: What should the overall structure be like?

A: You should check out the document "A Dissertation Guide.doc" first and look at the student handbook. The basics however are:

- Set the scene
- Introduce the document including scope and structure
- Discuss the methodology
- Determine method / content
- Create the structure

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- Perform secondary research (also known as literature review) to build an academic framework
- Perform primary research (new stuff that you generate)
- Discuss Findings and Analyse - Compare these with secondary research
- Make recommendations and conclusions
- Review the work and close

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### Introduction / Background

Q: ???  
A: xxx

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### Literature Review / Secondary Research

Q: How much coverage and depth / word count to spend on each author in literature review  
A: Coverage and depth of treatment is usually per topic rather than per author - I think it is inadvisable to utilise a lot of work from the same source as it does little to demonstrate the wider understanding of a subject.

Q: What is the acceptable / expected number of references for a good dissertation  
A: It depends very much on your topic of course. As a very rough guide I would have a min of 1-2 references per page in the literature review / secondary research area. Overall it is obviously quality rather than quantity that counts - dissertation students however tend to have many entries in their bibliography - usually > 30 (3+ pages)

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### Research Methods / Methodology

Q: ???  
A: You should briefly note in the research area the various methodologies you considered (questionnaire, interview, case study), the pro's and cons of each and then the research route you chose to follow and why? It would be good here to refer to some theory on research design.

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### Primary Research

Q: What does 'Primary Research' actually mean?  
A: Primary Research means performing a research activity (questionnaire, case study etc) that generates new, first-hand (hence 'primary') data and information.

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### Results and Findings

Q: ???  
A: xxx

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### Recommendations and Conclusions

Q: ???  
A: xxx

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### Presentation

Q: Should I have separate references and bibliography sections?  
A: I combine them in my guide, based mainly on the fact that all sources listed are referenced somewhere in the work - otherwise why are you listing them, what purpose do they have. If you

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have not referred to them is it not that they were of insufficient interest to be included! However if you wish to have them separate that is fine.

Q: ???

A: You need to clearly indicate what are quotations and references and distinguish these from your own work. I recommend that they are italicised and bounded by quotation marks if they are to stand out; lots of my students use double indents. It is very subjective but I also think the work looks better if it is fully justified.

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