

## Dissertation guidelines from different departments

The following extracts are from dissertation guidelines provided by different subject areas:

Dissertations provide an opportunity for you to investigate, in some depth, a topic of your own choosing... You will be asked to prepare an outline proposal covering the topic, the method and the key sources. We can then suggest further sources of ideas, theories, empirical data and advice.

Projects normally involve original laboratory, field-based or survey research on a topic proposed by your supervisor, although students can make their own suggestions. Projects may also involve surveys or analyses of existing datasets, be based on library-based research, or involve elements of web design.

Students are not expected merely to recapitulate other people's ideas, producing no more than a series of references to their own or other's experiences. There should be some attempt at reflection, analysis, synthesis, interpretation and evaluation. It should demonstrate the quality of the candidate's thinking, their ability to plan and engage in sustained systematic enquiry, to reflect analytically, summarise, synthesise and evaluate and to organise and present their thinking clearly.

The dissertation is an independent piece of work and is to be regarded as an exercise in geographical observation, information collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation.

A dissertation is not a simple descriptive account of an area of study. The success of the dissertation depends upon finding a good question; only if you have such a problem / question / issue to consider can you expect to develop a coherently argued piece of work.

The dissertation is intended to be a state of the art or historical review or an investigation into general working practices. It will include some or all of the following elements: introduction (background, aims and objectives), literature review, observations, data collected by interview or questionnaires etc, discussion in relation to specific objectives, conclusions, recommendations for further work, references and bibliography.