SCHOOL OF SLAVONIC & EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

SSEES MA/MRes DISSERTATION PREPARATION PROGRAMME (SEESGS40)
Purpose:

The purpose of this booklet is to provide essential information that will help you with researching, organising, writing and submitting your MA dissertation: the most important work during your MA/MRes programme.

This booklet contains essential information regarding:

- MA/MRes Dissertation Preparation module (SEESGS40),
- Timetable of key dates in the process of producing your MA dissertation
- Guidance on style including references, bibliography and general points (Style Guidelines for the Presentation of Dissertations and Assessed Essays (for MA, MRes, and IMESS students)

SSEES MA/MRes DISSERTATION PREPARATION PROGRAMME

The SSEES MA/MRes Dissertation Preparation module (SEESGS40) is compulsory for all students on a one-year (or two-year part-time) MA programme at SEEES and must be registered together with other course choices on Portico.

IMESS students and MRes students are also strongly encouraged and expected to attend the 2 library sessions and the 2 discipline specific dissertation meetings outlined below. Separate introductory information sessions on dissertation preparation will be held for IMESS and MRes students.

Aims and objectives of the dissertation

The aims of the Dissertation are:

- To provide an opportunity to pursue independent research on a subject of your choice
- To provide experience in identifying a clearly focused research question and developing a thesis around it, over an extended period.
- To enable you to test your skills in producing a substantial piece of written work of potentially publishable quality (high level of analysis, judgment and clarity of expression);
• To develop and showcase your academic development achieved during the MA programme;
• To contribute one third of the assessment for the MA degree (more for the MRes degree);
• To prepare you for MPhil, PhD or any research project you might do in your future career.

The objectives of the Dissertation are:

• To choose an original topic for your research and to identify a relevant and appropriate research question within that topic;
• To search for and understand existing literature on the subject (including classic works, up-to-date publications, periodical and internet sources);
• To demonstrate knowledge of secondary sources on the chosen subject as well as your ability to assess critically other authors’ views and to structure your own argument;
• To take into account, as appropriate, relevant historical background and theoretical frameworks;
• To develop your organizational, analytical and stylistic skills;
• To work towards making an independent contribution on a particular subject

Objectives of the Dissertation Preparation Module

The Dissertation Preparation module is designed to support and help you to fulfil the above aims and objectives to the highest standard. It will review and update your library and information management skills (essential for undertaking good research) and provide you with a detailed, subject specific dissertation briefing, as well as introduce you to ethical considerations within original research. As well as providing general guidance on the dissertation process, it will also clarify what you can expect by way of dissertation supervision.

Summary of the Dissertation Preparation Module

During this module you will receive specialist tuition in obtaining and managing sources and resources for research from a senior SSEES librarian and discipline specific guidance from highly qualified and experienced academic staff appointed as Programme Coordinators. During the course you will also be allocated a Dissertation Supervisor relevant to the area in which you wish to undertake your research. The supervisor will provide you with further qualified advice and guidance during the early stages of planning and designing your work.

NB – MRes students should note that supervision for MRes dissertations follows a different format from the supervision of MA dissertations.
MA/MRes Dissertation Schedule and Deadlines

Term 1

- Attend the introductory meeting and the two Library Sessions, as detailed below (SSESGS40).
- Discuss your potential topic and ideas with your Personal Tutor during her/his office hours during Term 1.
- After discussion with your personal tutor, complete the MA/MRes Dissertation Provisional Proposal questionnaire (available on the SEESGS40 Moodle page), providing a draft title and reasoned description of your proposed topic. The description of your project should be a minimum of 100 words, maximum of 200 words.

- MRes (one-year), submit electronically Dissertation Provisional Proposal Form via Moodle by the deadline of Thursday, 14 December 2017, 11:59pm
- MA – submit electronically Dissertation Provisional Proposal Form via Moodle by the deadline of Thursday, 14 December 2017, 11:59pm

Term 2

- Attend two Discipline Specific Sessions in Term 2, as detailed below
- Arrange one meeting with your allocated Dissertation Supervisor (the list of allocated Dissertation Supervisors will be published on Moodle early in Term 2).

- MRes (two-year), submit electronically MA Dissertation Provisional Proposal Form via Moodle by the deadline of Thursday, 22 February 2018, 11:59 pm
- IMESS - submit electronically MA Dissertation Provisional Proposal Form via Moodle by the deadline of Thursday, 22 February 2018, 11:59 pm

Term 3

- Arrange up to a maximum of two meetings with your allocated Dissertation Supervisor.
- You may submit up to 4000 (max.) words summary of your dissertation by 1 July 2017 (last day of Term 3) for comments by your Dissertation Supervisor

- Submit electronically your dissertation by the deadline of Thursday, 6 September 2018, 11:59pm.
Timetabled sessions

The module comprises FIVE timetabled sessions, involving ONE general introductory session (full group, for ALL MA students; this session is **NOT** for MRes or IMESS students), TWO library sessions (full group, for ALL students), and TWO programme specific meetings (smaller groups, divided by programme).

All sessions are scheduled to take place on Wednesday at 14.00.

**FOR VENUES, PLEASE CHECK TIMETABLE**

**Initial Introductory Meeting**
Week 12: 14.00, Wednesday 15 November 2017

**1st Library Dissertation Session: Finding resources**
Week 13: 14.00, Wednesday 22 November 2017

**2nd Library Dissertation Session: Managing resources**
Week 14: 14.00, Wednesday 29 November 2017

**1st Discipline Specific Dissertation Meeting**
Week 21: 14.00, Wednesday 17 January 2017
- Economics and Business
- History
- Politics and Sociology
- Literature and Culture

**2nd Discipline Specific Dissertation Meeting**
Week 26: 14.00, Wednesday 21 February 2017
- Economics and Business
- History
- Politics and Sociology
- Literature and Culture

*MA students should attend the session relevant to the discipline in which they are writing their dissertation (e.g. a Russian Studies MA student writing a dissertation on Politics should go to the Politics session)*
**IMESS and MRes** students should attend the session most relevant to the discipline track they are following, while noting that they will have their own tailored dissertation preparation briefings.

**Who to contact?**
The person with overall responsibility for this module and for the allocation of MA dissertation supervisors is Professor Eric Gordy, the MA Graduate Tutor. However, in the first instance, students should address their questions either to their **Personal Tutor**, or to their **Programme Administrator**:

- Sasha Aleksic for Economics and Business; room 341
- Ben Chatterley for Languages and Culture; room 341
- Eleanor Hammersley for Politics and Sociology and History; room 341
- Deepak for **IMESS and MRes** students; room 341

**SSEES MA DISSERTATION GUIDELINES**

The following section contains information on the dissertation process (including supervision, submission, penalties etc.), as well as on the format required for final submission.

**The Topic of the Dissertation**

It is essential for you to begin planning for the dissertation **BEFORE** the end of the first term, in order to locate appropriate literature, data and other documentary materials and in order to hold an informed discussion of your proposed topic with your Personal Tutor.

You will be taught by some of the staff working in your area in the first term, but you might not necessarily come into contact with all of them immediately. So you should consult the staff research profiles on the SSEES website in order to identify any member of the academic staff whom you might wish to consult in her/his office hours for additional advice.
**Supervision (one year MA)**

(Note: IMESS and MRes students will receive separate information on supervision arrangements)

Provided that you submit your proposal form by the deadline at the end of term 1, your supervisor will be allocated to you early in term 2. Due to demand we may not be able to place you with your favoured supervisor, but we will always do our very best to provide you with the one most appropriate to your area of study or topic.

Your dissertation has to be the result of independent effort. Your supervisor can provide general feedback (NOT detailed commentary on style and argument) on a draft of no more than 4000 words if submitted by 1 July 2018. *(The number of words might be different for Economics)*

**The 1 July deadline will be strictly observed.**

Students writing economics dissertations should provide a draft of their dissertation introduction, which should be in near final form by this date. Feedback will be provided within three weeks, either in person or by phone, Skype or email.

Advice may also include consultation in respect of research questions, design, research methods, the plan, structure and focus, and bibliography. Supervision will consist of a maximum of three meetings, so please ensure that you are well prepared for the meetings and use this time wisely. *It is your responsibility to email your supervisor and arrange these meetings, which should take place during term-time over the second and third terms.*

Students should not have expectations of unrestricted email access to academic staff during the long vacation. Staff availability at that time will depend on their commitments to research activity.

Finally, make sure you familiarise yourself in good time – before you start writing – with the relevant guidance on style, referencing and presentation as described in the ‘MA Style Guidelines for the Presentation of Dissertations and Assessed Essays’, available on the Moodle page for SEESGS40.

**Length of the Dissertation**

The length of the dissertation is:

- 10,000-12,000 words for MA dissertations
• 16,000-20,000 words for MRes dissertations

(any word count within these ranges is permissible (i.e. for an MA dissertation, 12,001 words is deemed to be over-length; for an MRes dissertation, 20,001 words is deemed to be over-length). While the lower number of 10,000 (16,000) is only a guidance - work that is under-length is unlikely to have adequately addressed the research question(s) set out in the dissertation.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Included in word count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main text of essay</td>
<td>Bibliography/list of references</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illustrative material such as tables and charts, either in the main part of the essay or in an appendix</td>
<td>Title of essay</td>
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<td>Footnotes, endnotes and citations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appendices containing information about a dissertation’s methodology, e.g. list of interviewees, interview schedule</td>
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<td>Abstract, translations of quotations (where required)</td>
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Transcripts of interviews do not need to be attached to dissertations, but they should be available for inspection if the marker requires them.

EXCEPTION: Students writing dissertations (typically in Economics and Business topics) which involve econometric analysis may include additional tables or graphs in an appendix with descriptive statistics, variable definitions, extra regression tables etc. These additional materials in the appendix will NOT count towards the word count. The main tables and graphs that are central to the argument being made in the dissertation should be included in the main body of the dissertation and WILL contribute to the word count.

Format of the Dissertation

MA Dissertations must follow the format detailed in the MA Style Guidelines. For guidance on style including references, bibliography and general points, please consult the ‘MA Style Guidelines for the Presentation of Dissertations and Assessed Essays’, available on the Moodle page for SEESGS40.
Please ensure that:

- your title-page is formatted so as to include:
  - your student number and candidate number
  - your title (preferably a one-liner) and subtitle
  - a declaration of the length of the dissertation (including all notes and appendices, but excluding the bibliography)
  - a declaration of authorship
- an abstract (250-300 words)
- a table of contents with page numbers (including subheadings) is included
- all quotations, footnotes and references are organized in the format detailed in the MA Style Guidelines
- your bibliography is presented in alphabetical order and in the format detailed in the MA Style Guidelines

Submission of the Dissertation

Please ensure that you submit TWO electronic copies via the SEESGS40 Moodle page by 6 September 2018, 11:59pm.

Meeting the submission deadline

Please note that the deadline for dissertations will be rigorously enforced and that the Penalties for Late submission (outlined below) will be applicable. It is therefore strongly suggested that you leave ample time to submit your work and that you make all adequate preparations to submit your work on, or before, the deadline where possible.

Please also be reminded that routine computer problems such as viruses, disk corruption, printer problems or printer queues, and short term network problems are *not* acceptable grounds for lateness or extension. You are expected to take proper precautions and make back-up copies of your data.

*IMPORTANT*: It is likely that certain SSEES resources, such as the SSEES Library Cluster Room will be in heavy demand at this time. Please therefore ensure that you are prepared to make appropriate use of other similar computer workrooms around UCL. A full list of public workrooms at UCL is available at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/isd/students/workrooms/locations.

Penalties for Late Submission of Coursework

UCL Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes: Postgraduate Students (Masters and MRes Programmes) for 2017/8, 3.11
Where coursework is not submitted by a published deadline, the following penalties will apply:

a) The marks for coursework received up to two working days after the published date and time will incur a 10 percentage point deduction in marks (but no lower than the pass mark).

b) The marks for coursework received more than two working days and up to five working days after the published date and time will receive no more than the pass mark (40% for UG modules, 50% for PGT modules).

c) Work submitted more than five working days after the published date and time but before the second week of the third term will receive a mark of zero but will be considered complete.

d) Programme/module teams must clearly communicate to students whether and when coursework solutions will be published. Submissions will not be accepted or marked after the specified publication date. Students failing to meet this deadline will be required to resubmit the failed component(s).

e) In the case of coursework that is submitted over- or under-length and is also late, the greater of any penalties will apply.

Penalties for Over-length Coursework, including Research Projects, Dissertations and Final Reports

UCL Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes: Postgraduate Students (Masters and MRes Programmes) for 2017/18, 3.12:

Length of the Dissertation

For MA dissertations - the length of the dissertation is: 10,000-12,000 words (including all notes and appendices, but excluding the bibliography).

For MRes dissertations – the length of the dissertation is: 16,000-20,000 words (including all notes and appendices, but excluding the bibliography).

Any word count within these ranges is permissible (i.e. for an MA dissertation, 12,001 words is deemed to be over-length; for an MRes dissertation, 20,001 words is deemed to be over-length).

While the lower number of 10,000 (16,000) is only a guidance, work that is under-length is unlikely to have adequately addressed the research question(s) set out in the dissertation.
EXCEPTION:
Students writing dissertations (typically in Economics and Business topics) which involve econometric analysis may include additional tables or graphs in an appendix with descriptive statistics, variable definitions, extra regression tables etc. These additional materials in the appendix will NOT count towards the word count. The main tables and graphs that are central to the argument being made in the dissertation should be included in the main body of the dissertation and WILL contribute to the word count.

**Extenuating Circumstances and extensions**
If you have had any medical or other significant problems which may have affected your preparation or performance in this assessment or any other examination, or piece of assessed coursework, you may apply to have these extenuating circumstances taken into account. To tell us about the circumstances, and to apply for an extension if needed, you use the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure.

Guidelines on the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure, and the link to the form, can be found in the SSEES Student Handbook – [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/node/6135](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/node/6135).

Extensions may be granted in exceptional, unexpected, short term circumstances (and only when supported by relevant evidence).

Students with long term, chronic conditions need to register with Student Disability Office ([http://www.ucl.ac.uk/disability](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/disability))

When applying for an extension please ensure that you complete the form fully and provide appropriate medical or other written evidence in English, or accompanied by an independent translation.

The form should be emailed to ssees-extenuating-circumstances@ucl.ac.uk.

It is not possible to consider claims for extenuating circumstances after the Examination Board has sat.

The Extenuating Circumstances regulations are designed to cover unexpected emergencies; they are not always the best way to help students who might have a longer-term medical or mental health condition or a disability. Although there may be times when it is necessary for such students to use the EC regulations, students should make sure they are aware of, and take advantage of, all the other support mechanisms provided by UCL. For more information see: [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/node/6135](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/node/6135)

**Consequences of Failure**
If the first attempt at the Dissertation receives an agreed mark of less than 50, this is a fail. All students who fail are given the opportunity for a second attempt. The second attempt submission deadline will be Thursday 11 January 2019.