

**BMA415 Dissertation A &
BMA416 Dissertation B**

Semesters 1 & 2, 2008

This unit will be offered in:

Hobart and Launceston

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Introduction

The dissertation is the central part of the Honours year of study, and is likely to be the most demanding part of the year's work. It is also likely to be the most rewarding, as it brings students to the cutting edge of the discipline and enables them to begin to contribute to the expansion and refinement of knowledge in their chosen career field.

The dissertation will involve an individual piece of research in a selected area of Management – general Management, Human Resources, Marketing, Tourism, Entrepreneurship, International business – in which information concerning an approved research topic is gathered, organised, analysed and discussed in a critical and evaluative manner. The research project requires advanced knowledge of research methodology.

The dissertation will explain the nature of your research. It will report on your critical review of the relevant literature(s), explain and justify your research design and methodology, and report on your research findings and their implications. The dissertation is expected to make an original contribution to the relevant discipline. It must contain no material that has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University of Tasmania or any other tertiary institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the dissertation.

The two units, BMA415 and BMA416, combine to constitute your entire dissertation project.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate a sound understanding of the research process and research methodology in Management
- Demonstrate a sound understanding of theory and research in the area of Management relevant to the topic of the dissertation completed
- Design and conduct a research project in Management
- Produce a written report on a research project in Management
- Demonstrate skills in effective oral communication of your research proposal and findings

Generic Graduate Attributes

The University has defined a set of generic graduate attributes (GGAs) that can be expected of all graduates (see <http://www.utas.edu.au/tl/policies/index.htm>). By undertaking this unit you should make progress in attaining the following attributes:

Knowledge

- To develop a detailed understanding of theory and research in a specific area of Management as is relevant to the topic of the dissertation
- To acquire knowledge in research methodology and interpretation
- To use a wide range of academic skills (research, analysis, synthesis, and so forth)
- To develop the ability to analyse and critically appraise key concepts, arguments and research findings within the literature relevant to the discipline area of the dissertation
- To learn both independently and cooperatively
- To apply learning to new and unexpected situations

Communication Skills

- To communicate effectively by using well-reasoned arguments in a logical and coherent manner
- To demonstrate numerical and graphic communication skills
- To develop oral presentation skills through the process of developing and delivering seminars on the topic of the dissertation

Problem Solving Skills

- To conceptualise problems and formulate a range of solutions
- To find, acquire, evaluate, manage and use relevant information
- To identify critical issues in the discipline of Management as is relevant to the topic of the dissertation

Global Perspective

- To demonstrate an awareness of the local and global context of the research project as is relevant to the topic of the dissertation

Social Responsibility

- To act ethically, with integrity and social responsibility, in the conduct of the research project
- To acknowledge the social and ethical implications of the research project

Prerequisite

Completion of BCom (BBus from 2007), BTourism, or equivalent, and approved entry into the Management Honours program.

Resources

There are a variety of resources that are provided, and that can be accessed, to assist with the production of the dissertation. The School of Management endeavours to provide office space, computing facilities, and photocopying within reasonable limits.

School Publications

Students must obtain the *School of Management Referencing Style* electronic publication which is available from the School of Management website:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/management/student.htm>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. It is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own, for example:

- using an author's words without putting them in quotation marks and citing the source;
- using an author's ideas without proper acknowledgment and citation; or
- copying another student's work.

If you have any doubts about how to refer to the work of others in your assignments, please consult your lecturer or tutor for relevant referencing guidelines, and the academic integrity resources on the web at <http://www.utas.edu.au/tl/supporting/academicintegrity/index.html>.

The intentional copying of someone else's work as one's own is a serious offence punishable by penalties that may range from a fine or deduction/cancellation of marks and, in the most serious of cases, to exclusion from a unit, a course or the University. Details of penalties that can be imposed are available in the Ordinance of Student Discipline—Part 3 Academic Misconduct, see <http://www.utas.edu.au/universitycouncil/legislation/ord9.pdf>

The University reserves the right to submit (or to require you to submit) assignments to online plagiarism detection software, and might then retain a copy of the assignment on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking.

Library Resources

The library offers a variety of electronic and physical resources that will be necessary for completing the dissertation. These include journals and books that are kept in the library, as well as journals in electronic format which can be accessed through databases such as “Proquest”.

As an Honours student, access is given to extended borrowing privileges. This includes being able to access the library’s **document delivery service** to obtain references that are not contained in the library or on its databases. All such requests must be approved by your supervisor. Students are encouraged to visit the document delivery website and follow the registration procedures contained therein:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/library/info/dd/index.html>

The library’s subject guide for Management can also be found at the following address:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/library/info/subj/management.html>

Selection of a Topic

Students should begin this process as early as possible. Students may begin preliminary work on their project as soon as convenient, subject to the availability of a suitable supervisor. Staff members will give advice on the choice of suitable topics, and their areas of interest are listed on the School of Management website (<http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/business/mgmt/>), or on the WARP website where their research output at the University of Tasmania is catalogued (<http://www.research.utas.edu.au/warp/index.htm>).

There are limitations to the freedom of choice of topics by students, as outlined below.

An Honours research project in Management is a study in which information related to Management, Business, Human Resources, Marketing, Tourism or Entrepreneurship is gathered, organised, analysed and discussed in a critical and evaluative manner. The project must be original in nature, and may deal with primary or secondary data, either in qualitative or quantitative form such as may be obtained by survey, interview, case study, and so forth. In selecting a topic, there are several points that should be kept in mind:

- The topic chosen should be important either for theoretical and/or practical reasons. The research should be creative and aim to contribute something to knowledge in the area chosen.
- The design of the research should be sound. It should be possible to draw conclusions about the research question under examination, and to generalise the results to some extent beyond the sample used. Hence the sample(s) used should be selected to be appropriate in size and composition.
- The measures used to collect data should be reliable and valid, and should clearly operationalise the relevant theory or concepts examined in the literature.
- The topic should be such that the research project can be easily completed within the time frame available. The topic must also be practicable in terms of resource use. Some resources for printing, equipment, consumables or other requirements are available, but these are strictly limited.
- The topic must be in an area that a staff member in the School of Management is willing and able to supervise. Note that not all staff members in the School are available to supervise projects in any given year. In exceptional circumstances, a supervisor from outside the School may be selected, but an internal supervisor must have official supervision responsibility.

Given that the dissertation must be completed within the period available from the start of semester 1 to the end of semester 2 (i.e. approximately 36 weeks), students are strongly advised not to undertake projects that are likely to involve long delays. For example:

- Studies that have potential ethical problems that are likely to take some time to resolve (for example, a requirement for ethical clearance from an outside organisation).
- Studies that employ particular types of participant groups that are likely to be difficult to access.
- Studies that require the development of particular software programs for analysis.
- Studies that are too grandiose in scale.

If students wish to embark on such projects, the student and/or supervisor must guarantee that these issues are already under control and that contingency plans have been made in the event of delays. For example, you and your supervisor could decide on a date by which data collection would cease, even if that means you end up with a smaller sample size than originally planned. More ambitious projects might be suitable for further study, for example, as a PhD.

The final topic that is chosen will be detailed in the submission of a research proposal for assessment in BMA401 Research Methods in Management. This proposal must be endorsed by your supervisor/s prior to submission. Feedback on your proposal will be provided to you by the lecturer-in-charge of BMA401. Following receipt of this feedback you must discuss your proposal with the Honours Coordinator who will sign off on it for submission to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (see below). Data collection cannot begin until you have received written approval of the project and ethics clearance. Ethics approval should be sought by the **middle of May at the latest**. If you wish to start data collection earlier, you must submit your proposal earlier.

Supervision

Your supervisor performs the role of mentor. In this capacity s/he will advise you on the tasks, processes and standards expected of you in the Honours program and, more specifically, will help you to formulate and refine your research proposal, to define your research question(s) and objectives, and to provide advice and guidance in respect of your literature review, research design and methodology, the analysis and interpretation of your findings, and the preparation of your dissertation. It is essential that you plan to meet with your supervisor at regular and frequent intervals in order to apprise them of your progress, to exchange ideas, to ensure that your work is well focussed and that your work schedule is maintained, and to gain the benefit of regular feedback. Normally the selection of supervisor emerges from discussions between the student, the Honours Coordinator, and the relevant member of staff. Ultimately, however, the supervisor's appointment must be a matter of mutual consent and must be approved by the Head of School.

Your supervisor is there to help you. They will make sure that you have formulated a viable research question, will provide advice on research design and data analysis, will help with problems in analysis and will read a limited number of drafts before you submit your dissertation. **Your supervisor will not do your data analysis for you.**

The amount of supervision required varies considerably by different projects and individuals. **It is your responsibility to consult with your supervisor regularly.** Supervisors have a responsibility to be available for a reasonable time, but keep in mind that supervisors have other commitments. You should establish a timetable that will be suitable for both of you. As a rough guide, you should try to meet with your supervisor once a week, even if the meeting lasts only five minutes. This way, supervisors will be able to monitor your progress and prevent any major difficulties from arising.

The **Honours Coordinator** is also someone who can act as a quasi-supervisor, so you should plan to keep in regular contact with them. If problems appear to be developing, it is best to deal with them as early as possible. If you cannot deal with a problem directly, please approach the Honours Coordinator.

It is important that you and your supervisor discuss expectations of the supervision process. When meeting with your supervisor for the first time, it would be helpful to clarify the following issues:

- What expectations do the supervisor and student have regarding the supervision process (e.g. how often would consultation occur)?

- Does the supervisor have particular requirements (e.g. students will be expected to work as part of a team; students will need to learn certain procedures before embarking on data collection; students will need to be on campus for certain periods of time)?
- Are there any factors that could lead to possible delays in the initiation or conduct of the study (e.g. ethical clearance needed from outside sources; a population that may be difficult to access)? Again, it is strongly advised that you avoid projects that are likely to involve lengthy delays.
- Will either the supervisor or the student be unavailable at any time during the year (e.g. due to work commitments, attendance at conferences, holidays, etc.)?
- What role will you play in the project? For example, has the staff member already designed the study and you are just coming in at the point of data collection or will you be involved in designing the project from the outset? If the project is already underway, how easy will it be for you to take “ownership” of it? And, if this is the case, to what extent is it suitable for an Honours project that is meant to demonstrate your own mastery of the research process? If you will be involved in designing the study, how will you obtain appropriate materials such as questionnaires?

Other issues will be clarified as the supervision continues during the year; however, it is worthwhile asking the above questions at the beginning. Most supervisor-student relationships work out very well. When problems do arise, it is often the result of differing expectations. If these can be clarified early, it should ensure that the process runs smoothly and is enjoyable for all concerned. Some specific responsibilities of supervisors and students are listed below.

Supervisor Responsibilities

- To make clear at the beginning of the project what effort will be required by the student, and what risk factors are inherent in the project in terms of delays in obtaining ethical clearance, data collection, or access to materials.
- To negotiate goals and deadlines for particular parts of the project with the student (e.g. drafts of different sections, development of materials, data collection). These goals and deadlines should ideally be put in writing. These goals and deadlines will provide a reference point for the student and supervisor when completing the required progress reports.
- To make themselves available to consult with students at regular intervals. As well as face-to-face consultation, supervision will include all other tasks involved in supervising the project (e.g. time spent reading drafts and time spent replying to phone messages and emails).
- To assist the student in the preparation of the research proposal and ethics application, and to ensure that the student does not inadvertently commit an ethical breach in recruitment or data collection.
- To give advice on the design, execution, analysis and writing up of the project to the best of their ability. Please note that students are expected to conduct their own analyses (with advice when necessary). Substantial assistance with analyses will only be provided if the required procedure is not one covered in BMA401 or BMA417.
- To read a limited number of drafts of each section of the thesis within a reasonable time, and to provide students with relevant feedback concerning these sections (provided that these drafts are submitted early enough).
- To advise the student in advance of any periods during the year when he/she will be unavailable for consultation (e.g. due to attendance at conferences, holidays, work commitments, etc.). If the supervisor is unexpectedly absent for a prolonged period (e.g. due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances), s/he should attempt to make alternative supervision arrangements for the student.

Student Responsibilities

- To arrange meetings with the supervisor at regular intervals.
- To clarify the various aspects of the project with the supervisor, and to take initiative at relevant stages of the project. The student should clarify his/her role in the early meetings with the supervisor. As the student becomes more familiar with the topic/project, it is likely that the supervisor-student relationship will “shift” somewhat so that the student takes more and more of the responsibility.
- To keep a written copy of any goals or activities set by the supervisor, and to complete assigned work by the due dates.
- To submit drafts of various sections of the thesis to the supervisor at mutually agreed deadlines so that the supervisor will have sufficient time in which to read the drafts and make comments. **Please note that students should carefully proof their drafts before submitting them to the supervisor.** While supervisors will provide feedback and advice, it is not their job to proofread the material. Please also note that supervisor availability to read drafts is contingent on the submission dates of these drafts. While supervisors are fairly flexible in this regard, they may not be able to read drafts that are submitted too close to due dates.
- To advise the supervisor in advance of any periods during the year when s/he will be unavailable (e.g. holidays, work commitments, etc.).
- To advise the supervisor as soon as possible if s/he encounters any problems that may hinder his/her progress (e.g. prolonged illness, bereavement, etc.). If the problems are severe, the supervisor may need to discuss options with the Honours Coordinator (with the student’s permission).
- While the supervisor will take care to give sound advice regarding each aspect of the project, **the student must take responsibility for the final version of the dissertation that is submitted for marking.** Obviously, the markers can only evaluate the final written product and cannot award marks for inferred effort or intention. Therefore, students should take extreme care in the proofing of the final draft. As a rough guide, each section of the dissertation should be proof-read two or three times after it is finished being written. Please note that just because the supervisor has given feedback on the dissertation, it does not necessarily mean that s/he approves of the dissertation. Again, **the onus is on the student to ensure that the final version of the dissertation is of a satisfactory standard.**
- While the supervisor will endeavour to provide advice, feedback and guidance to ensure that the best possible grade is given to the dissertation, the final standard of the piece is the student’s responsibility. **It is not the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure a certain grade is achieved.**
- Students should also attend all workshops, classes and seminars throughout the year, and actively contribute to the discussions.

Students are also advised to familiarise themselves with the Code of Conduct in Supervision contained in the University’s *Research Higher Degrees Handbook*.

Common Problems

Experience has identified the following as potential problems that may make progress on the dissertation more difficult:

- Lack of care in choice of research topic.
- Errors in forecasting the availability of organisation(s) for case study or survey/questionnaire subjects.

- Inertia and delay in launching the project so that the early months are not as productive as they should be.
- Insufficient contact with fellow students, and other members of staff.
- Insufficient attendance at workshops, classes and seminars throughout the year.
- Insufficient productive contact between students and supervisors.
- Incompatibility between students and supervisors.
- Lack of understanding of what is expected of a student and what is to be expected of a supervisor.
- Lack of care in writing drafts such that the supervisor is required to correct grammatical details versus attending to more substantive issues.

As stated above, if any problems develop, it is best to deal with them as early as possible. If you cannot deal with a problem directly, please approach the Honours Coordinator.

Ethics Application

Students are required to submit an ethics application if their proposed research topic involves or impacts upon human subjects in any way. The ethics application should be developed in association with your supervisor and is required to be signed off by your supervisor and the Honours Coordinator before being submitted to the relevant ethics committee.

The relevant ethics committees for Honours in Management are the Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee, and the Northern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. Applications and other relevant information sheets are available at:

<http://www.research.utas.edu.au/rdo/ethics/human.htm>.

Please ensure that your proposal fits with all of the guidelines and sample documents provided by the ethics committee. A list of Ethics Committee meeting dates and recommended submission times is also at the same website. However, in most cases, Honours research falls under the “**minimal impact**” category, and so can be approved by the Chair of the Ethics Committee without having to go to a full meeting.

As stated above, data collection cannot begin until you have received written approval of the project and ethics clearance. It is recommended that you aim to submit your ethics application by the **middle of May**. If you wish to start data collection earlier, you must submit your ethics application and research proposal earlier. Once approval has been given by the Honours Coordinator and the Ethics Committee to proceed, students should begin work on data collection as soon as possible.

Research Presentations

You will be required to deliver two presentations in the course of the year about the research you are conducting for your Honours dissertation. The first presentation will normally be in May, and the second in September. All members of the School of Management, and guests, are invited to attend, so this means that the audience will likely include academic staff members, research higher degree students (e.g. PhD students) and your fellow Honours students. As well as providing you with an opportunity to gain feedback on your research, the seminars are designed to develop your skills in communicating your research to others in an interesting and accessible manner. These skills are vital for business professions, and are a critical aspect of academic life.

Both presentations will be limited to 15 minutes for the presentation, and 5 minutes will be allowed for questions from the audience. Your presentations will allow academic staff and other students to make suggestions as to pitfalls or possible improvement in your research, and to suggest alternative interpretations of your data. Presentations will also bring staff up to date on your research.

Candidates are required to submit a short synopsis of their presentation one week prior to the scheduled date of the seminar. The synopsis should be no longer than 250 words, and should provide a summary of what will be covered in the presentation. Synopses will be circulated to all School staff, research higher degree students, and fellow Honours students prior to the seminar. Your presentations will be assessed by a panel of staff members nominated by the Honours Co-ordinator and will contribute to 10% of your dissertation mark (5% for the proposal and 5% for the presentation of results).

The requirements for the two seminars are described below.

Seminar 1: Background and Research Plan

The first seminar focuses on your research plan. Candidates are expected to outline the background to their project and their plan for conducting the research. Your presentation should address the following:

- What is your topic?
- Why you chose your topic?
- What are the key issues in the literature?
- Why is this topic a good area for study?
- What is your research question(s)?
- What methods will you use to answer the research question(s)?
- How do these methods answer the research question(s)?

Seminar 2: Research Findings and Conclusions

The second seminar is scheduled to take place after you have collected and analysed your data. The seminar focuses on the results of your analyses and the conclusions you can draw from your data. Your presentation should address the following:

- Brief overview of your topic, research question(s), methods
- What data analysis techniques did you use?
- What have you found?
- Why have you analysed the data in your chosen way?
- How do the results relate to your research question(s)?
- What conclusions can you draw?

Writing the Dissertation

General Comments and Initial Submission Requirements

The final report of the research project must be submitted to the **Honours Coordinator by 2.00pm on Friday 24 October 2008**. This is an absolute deadline; students should ensure that they work to this date and time.

Since there are two full semesters in which to complete the dissertation project, there is sufficient flexibility to allow for short-term illnesses, personal issues, workload issues, or other interruptions that typically occur in the usual course of any given year. Therefore, **extensions are usually not given for the Honours dissertation**. When planning your project, you should build in some “buffer time” during the year to allow for problems that may occur.

Students are required to submit three (3) copies loosely bound for examination purposes as well as an electronic copy. Copies of the dissertation can be made, and loose (spiral) binding done, in the School of Management Offices. Alternatively, you may wish to use Uniprint or some other printer. If so, be sure to leave enough time for copying and binding as October is a busy time of year for the printers. It is recommended that you contact the printers well in advance for advice on their printing schedules.

The report must be typed, double spaced on one side of the paper only, using good quality (Bond) white A4 paper, and with wide margins of 2.5 cm on the top, bottom, and right margins. The left margin should be 3.5 cm to allow for binding. The typeface should be clear and readable. It should conform to the to the School of Management style guide, which is based upon that used by the Academy of Management. **Consistency of style is essential in the presentation and failure to do so will result in marks being lost.**

Copies of previous dissertations are available for your perusal from the Honours Coordinator. Supervisors may also be willing to lend copies of past dissertations. Please note, however, that you are only seeing the submitted versions of other students’ work and do not have the benefit of reading their markers’ reports. Therefore, if you see discrepancies in style, format, or content compared with the instructions you have been given, follow the guidelines given here.

The length of the dissertation will normally be between 12,000 and 15,000 words. The word count includes such items as headings, in-text references and quotes. It **does not** include the abstract, the reference list at the end of the dissertation, nor any appendices.

Page Numbering and Front Folio

Number the pages (including blanks, if any) up to but not including the first page of the actual text (referred to technically as the “front matter folio”) in small Roman numerals at the bottom of the page in the middle, but do not actually print a number on the title page. Number thereafter in Arabic at the top right of the page. Number the pages of references and any appendices straight on from the text.

In the front folio, include a separate page for each of the following:

(i) **Title Page**

Contains: Title (and sub-title, if any); author’s name (and their degrees); an entry reading: “Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Business (Honours) / Bachelor of Tourism (Honours) (*delete where appropriate*) School of Management, University of Tasmania”; and the month and year of submission.

(ii) **Certification**

An entry reading: “I certify that this dissertation contains no material that has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University of Tasmania or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the dissertation, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the dissertation”. This page must be signed and dated by the student.

(iii) Acknowledgements

Any assistance provided in the completion of the dissertation should be noted and individuals duly thanked. Your supervisor would always be acknowledged here.

(iv) Abstract

An abstract of approximately 200 words that summarises the research question(s) and major hypotheses, methodology, results and conclusions. Although it appears first in the dissertation, you should actually write it last. Please check that your abstract accurately reflects the content of your dissertation. Since the abstract is written last, some students tend to write it at the last minute. However, you should take the same care with your abstract as you would with the other sections of your dissertation. Remember that it is usually the first thing that your markers will read, so it is important to create a good impression.

(v) Contents

Show contents in the most informative fashion possible. Show chapter (section or division or part) numbers and titles and the initial page numbers. Show sub-sections with title if these seem to be helpful. The contents page, if properly prepared, gives the reader (or markers) a comprehensive view of the structure of the report and facilitates subsequent reading. Indicate the titles and initial page numbers of the Appendices, if any.

A contents list of tables and figures may follow on a separate page. This list should be included only when the presentation leans heavily on tables to which the reader may need to refer. This would probably occur when there are more than, say, 10 tables, or when tables act as reference tabulations such as for norms or population characteristics.

The Main Body of the Dissertation

The format of the main part of the dissertation will usually follow the standard form of Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion sections. These may be divided into separate Chapters. You may adapt this structure according to the form of research carried out (e.g. case study versus survey). Results and Discussion chapters, for example, are often combined and a Conclusions chapter added. Discuss any issues regarding structure with your supervisor. More detail on each of these sections of the dissertation follows:

(i) Introduction

This is a brief overview of the dissertation that should be approximately 4-6 pages in length. The aim is to introduce the main purpose of the dissertation. As such, it should canvass the background to the topic; the main theoretical or practical issues that have informed the choice of topic, that is, the research opportunity; the main research question(s), and the organisation of the dissertation. In essence, this chapter introduces the “argument” of the dissertation: why the research project is being conducted. It sets the scene for the rest of the dissertation. Remember that your supervisor is not one of the markers. You should write in such a way that an academic who has not been involved in your study can easily understand what you're doing and why.

(ii) Literature Review

This should provide a comprehensive and relevant review of existing literature in the discipline area and establish a basis for the research question(s) and any hypotheses or research propositions. It should include a synthesis of relevant material; a critique of the strengths and weaknesses of certain literatures, including methodological weaknesses; development of conceptually and empirically defensible argument(s) leading to the (re-) presentation of the research question(s), and the presentation of any hypotheses or research propositions.

The literature would normally be about 20 pages (typed and double-spaced). It doesn't take long to use up that many words once you get into your topic. Avoid the pitfall of trying to explain everything. For example, if you're looking at organisational learning, you couldn't possibly review this literature in that many words. Just focus on the salient points for your dissertation. You may begin with general information (e.g. theories and studies relevant to your field), but then narrow it down to the particular variables and issues of interest in your study. Strike a balance between too much and too little detail. For example, you may like to discuss some studies that you have read in detail, and then briefly mention others. You also need to take a critical approach rather than just describing the material. Are there theoretical inconsistencies in the literature? Are there methodological flaws in previous research? Are there controversial issues in the area? Do you need to argue why you have taken a certain approach?

The literature review should end with a clear (re-) statement of the research question(s). There may also be one or more hypotheses or research propositions. This will depend on the actual research project that you are conducting. Some projects may be more exploratory in nature. If you cannot make a specific prediction due to a lack of research in the area, you could make a tentative proposition on the basis of logic or simply state that some aspects are exploratory.

The markers want to see that you know what you are talking about. Have you adequately conceptualised the main issues and variables? Have you reviewed the key articles in the area? Have you included sufficient recent journal articles (as well as older material)? Secondary citations should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. Have you taken a critical approach rather than just describing? Is the review well written (clear, easy to follow, correct grammar, no spelling mistakes or typos)? Is the review well organised (with adequate use of appropriate sub-headings, linking sentences, and summary statements throughout)? Is there a clear link between the literature review and the research questions(s) and hypotheses? This last point is one of the main pitfalls in many reviews. Markers will certainly be looking to see whether any hypotheses you state follow logically from the argument you have developed in your literature review. If you do not have any theoretical, empirical, or logical reasons for predicting a certain outcome, leave it as an exploratory question.

(iii) **Research Methodology**

This chapter should provide a clear description of the design and method used in the research project; the participants/sample/case organisation(s) (how many and how selected), instruments used, procedures for data collection, justification of techniques as is appropriate, and specific information about the validity and reliability of any questionnaires or scales used.

This chapter may be broken into subsections, for example, participants, materials or instruments, procedure, and data analysis. This will need to be adapted according to the nature of the research being conducted. If, for example, you are using a case study approach, you will need a section explaining the selection of the case and how the analysis of the case will be approached, triangulation and so forth. If you are using secondary data, you will need a section explaining its selection and source. Your supervisor will be able to advise you as to the most appropriate structure for your dissertation. Some general comments follow regarding the most commonly found sub-sections.

In the **participants** section, include all relevant detail about your participants. Age, gender, or type of participants would generally be included. Other information may be of relevance depending on the nature of your study. If you are, for example, comparing different community groups and then drawing conclusions about how these groups differ, it would usually be appropriate to note how well these were matched on key variables. You should be aware of any difficulties in your sample that would limit your ability to generalise your findings (these limitations would need to be addressed in the discussion chapter). You should note how participants were recruited and whether any incentives were offered for participation. If the actual recruitment process was complicated, or there were set criteria for participant selection, you might want to give more detail in the procedure section. If you are conducting a questionnaire study, you should also note the response rate (i.e. the percentage of questionnaires that were returned). Therefore, keep good records as you collect your data.

In the **materials or instruments** section you generally explain the form in which the data is collected. This might involve, for example, a questionnaire or survey, interview format, or focus group questions. If you used questionnaires, you would usually describe them (e.g. number of items, type of rating scale, perhaps a sample item from each subscale, potential score ranges and what is indicated by high scores). You would also include reliability and validity data, and note whether any

items had been reverse-scored. You would normally include non-copyright questionnaires in the Appendices. For the dissertation, you would usually put a bit more detail here than you would in a journal article. The main question you should ask yourself is: "Would someone who is not familiar with my study understand what was involved by reading my measures and procedures sections?" If the answer is "no", you need more detail. On the other hand, don't go overboard and explain every tiny detail (e.g. you don't need to say that pens were used to fill out questionnaires!).

In the **procedure** section you explain the actual process that was used to collect data. This may not be necessary in some types of studies, for example those using secondary data, as this would be covered in a sub-section dedicated to this topic. Interview-based studies might have had this issue addressed in the participants section. If you conducted a questionnaire study, the procedure would probably be quite straightforward. Note any particular instructions that were given and how you went about collecting data. Also be sure to mention any debriefing that was done. Also, note how participants could receive feedback about the results of the study (this question should have been addressed on your ethics form). If you used other methods apart from questionnaires, describe the procedure in enough detail so that someone else would be able to replicate your study. If you had any other written materials (e.g. set instructions for participants, scenarios, consent forms, letters of introduction, etc), these should be included in the Appendices.

In the **data analysis** section you explain procedures or techniques that were used to analyse the data collected, as is appropriate to the research question(s). This is not as common, as some material on data analysis may be included in the results chapter. If you have used a specific analysis technique that you or your supervisor feels requires special explanation, then include a dedicated sub-section here, for example, the use of NUD*IST for qualitative data. You may include here information on data screening, where you briefly outline any checks that were done for missing values, outliers, mortality, etc. While this is an important topic and needs to be included, it can also be a complex process and your supervisor will advise you regarding the actual extent of data screening you need to undertake. Again, the aim is to provide enough explanation that someone who is not familiar with your study would understand what was involved, and be able to replicate what you have done.

(iv) **Results**

This chapter should provide a clear description and presentation of the findings of your research. This should be done concisely with relevant tables and/or figures. The structure of the results chapter will of course depend on the type of study you have done. Depending on the type of study, it may be appropriate to include some descriptive statistics, if relevant (e.g. means, SDs, ranges of key variables). This may be especially helpful in questionnaire studies where a reader may wish to see how your data are similar or different to previous studies. Check with your supervisor to see whether this is relevant for your study. If you don't wish to include descriptive statistics here, you could include them in an Appendix.

When presenting the results, do not over-do the data. Stick to the main analyses that relate to your research question(s) and research propositions. If you have other analyses that are exploratory and have yielded some useful results, these can also be included. However, always ask yourself whether it relates to the overall aims and contributes to the dissertation. If the markers have to plough through 30 pages of results in which the student has done every imaginable analysis on every piece of data, it's easy to lose track and does not aid in getting a high mark. Further analyses that are not essential to your aims and hypotheses, but are of general interest, could always be included in Appendices. If you have done anything a little out of the ordinary in your results section, be sure to include the rationale. For example, if your participants-to-variables ratio is a little small for a multiple regression, be sure to include a comment such as, "In view of the relatively small participants-to-variables ratio, results of the following multiple regressions should be viewed with caution". Then in your discussion section, pick up on that limitation and suggest improvements.

If you are not sure how to present particular analyses or tables, go through the articles you reviewed in your literature review, and pull out the ones that use similar analyses to the ones you'll be using. You can then use these as a guide. Alternatively, your supervisor can guide you.

Generally, you do not interpret the results in this section, though again, this might vary depending upon the final structure that is adopted for the dissertation. Explanations and interpretations are usually left until the discussion chapter, as are any statements about confirmation of research propositions or hypotheses.

(v) **Discussion**

This chapter should provide a brief summary of the main findings and an assessment of the results in terms of the research question(s) and research propositions or hypotheses. Results should be integrated with literature canvassed in the literature review. There should be a clear discussion of the implications (both theoretical and practical) of the findings, and a discussion of how the findings contribute to the discipline area. Implications and suggestions for future research or workplace practice should be offered. There should also be discussion of the limitations of the research project, in terms of methodology, sample or data analysis. There should also be a conclusion that draws the dissertation together. To explain these points in more detail, you should consider:

- a) Statement/s of support, non-support or partial support for your research propositions or hypotheses. If you had posed exploratory questions, results pertaining to these could also be noted. Don't include any results here that you have not already noted in the results section. There is no need to repeat actual means or statistics here that have already been reported in the results section. Just summarise the main points.
- b) Tie your results back to the literature reviewed in your introduction. Are your findings consistent or inconsistent with previous work? In general, you would not include any new literature here that has not already been cited in the literature review.
- c) Provide explanations of, or interpretations for, your findings. These may tie in with theory, or could be made on logical grounds. Remember that it is often difficult to make definitive cause and effect statements; be sure to consider any alternative explanations of your data if relevant.
- d) Discuss limitations or shortcomings of the study. Hopefully there won't be any flaws that invalidate the whole study. However, given restrictions of time, resources, convenience samples etc, there may be some shortcomings that limit the generalisability of your results. Don't list every minor thing, but be aware of the limitations of your work. In general, markers don't mind if there are limitations (within reason) as long as the student is aware of these and can suggest improvements for future research. If an obvious problem is not mentioned, the marker will assume you are unaware of the limitations of your work.
- e) Discuss possible applications and/or implications of the findings, both theoretical and practical. While this may be more relevant to some research projects than others, all projects hopefully have some wider significance.
- f) Discuss suggestions for future research. This would include (1) suggesting ways in which the limitations noted earlier could be overcome in future research, and (2) suggesting ways in which this area of research could be extended further.
- g) Have a final conclusion of the dissertation that briefly restates your major finding(s) and/or contributions and ties the dissertation together.

You should not leave the writing of the discussion until it is too late. It's not uncommon for students to complete three or four drafts of their introduction and literature review prior to submission, but to then try to write their discussion in the last few days before the thesis is due. This is a waste of the effort put into the first part of the dissertation.

Overall, it takes longer to complete all the finishing touches (e.g. contents page, appendices, references, proofreading etc) than students usually think. It also often takes longer to print out the copies and organise for soft-binding than often expected. So do not leave it to the last minute. Most supervisors are happy to read drafts of different sections, but this depends on when these drafts arrive. It will save you and your supervisor a lot of stress if you can try to complete drafts as early as possible. Also, take great care in proofreading the final version. If your dissertation is full of spelling and grammatical mistakes and style errors, it can create a bad impression and detract from the overall impression of the work. Since you are extremely familiar with your work, it is easy to miss little mistakes when you are reading. One trick that can help you detect errors is to place a ruler under each line as you read it. This has the effect of slowing down your reading, and you are therefore more likely to spot typos. Also check that each copy of your thesis is collated properly before submitting. **Remember that the onus is on you to present an accurate thesis.** The markers can only evaluate what they see, not what you intended them to see.

References and Appendices

The references are listed, beginning on a separate page prior to any appendices, and continue in page numbering from the main body of the dissertation. Ensure that all references conform to the School of Management style; any errors will detract from the overall presentation of the dissertation and may lose you valuable marks. **It is your responsibility to ensure that the correct format is followed.**

Appendices should include information that supplements the dissertation. For example, information about organisations studied, questionnaires used, interview format, set instructions for participants, scenarios, consent forms, letters of introduction, information sheets for participants, etc. Any results or findings that are additional to the main aim of the research can also be included.

Final Submission Requirements

Upon completion of the examination process, and prior to final grading, you may be required to make alterations or amendments to the dissertation. When these have been completed you are required to lodge three (3) hardbound copies to the School – one for the Head of School, one for your supervisor, and one for the Library. Contact Uniprint regarding arrangements for hard-binding of the dissertation. **These final copies must be received in order for you to graduate.**

The cover and/or spine of the hardbound copies will have the following details:

- Thesis title (a shortened version of the title may be used for the spine if necessary)
- Name (First, Middle Initial, Last Name eg. Jane N. Williams)
- Qualifications – BBus(Hons) or BTourism(Hons)
- Year – 2008

Copies of your data files and consent forms must be given to the School for archiving.

Assessment

The dissertation will be assessed by two (2) examiners appointed by the Head of School in consultation with the Honours Coordinator and your supervisor. One or both of these examiners may be external to the School of Management. Once marking has been done, the two markers will meet with the Honours Coordinator, and a final mark for the dissertation agreed upon. In cases of disagreement between the two examiners, a third may be appointed to arbitrate. If this is the case, the mark of the third examiner is binding. Although your supervisor does not examine the dissertation, s/he will often be consulted before a final grade is given.

The report will be assessed as it is presented, not in terms of any hypothetical intention of the author. Thus, it is the student's responsibility to allow plenty of time for the proper typing of the report, and for the correction of the typescript. Students are strongly advised to submit drafts of the dissertation to their supervisor for comment within sufficient before the final submission date. Be sure to allow time for this to be read and corrections made (e.g. two to three weeks).

The dissertation contributes 50% of your total Honours year assessment and it will be assessed with reference to the following standards:

- Your demonstrated comprehension of the chosen disciplinary area of interest;
- Your ability to formulate research questions and propose a methodology suitable to address those questions;
- Your ability to assemble, review and make a well-integrated use of relevant literature;
- Your method(s) of data collection and analysis;
- Your interpretation and discussion of results and their implications, and conclusions drawn from the study;

- Originality of thought;
- Strength of argument;
- The literary standard of the dissertation and its manner of presentation; and
- The overall standard of scholarship, and changes that may need to be made to the dissertation prior to it being hardbound for public access.

In essence, this means that the examiners will be looking at four issues: (1) Command of the problem/issue(s); (2) Research competence; (3) Quality of the dissertation, and (4) Contribution to the field.

Honours Grades

The awardable grades for Honours are:

HF	Honours First Class	80-100%
HU	Honours Second Class (Upper Division)	75-79%
HL	Honours Second Class (Lower Division)	70-74%
HT	Honours Third Class	60-69%

A mark below 60% is deemed not to be eligible for an Honours degree.

The final Honours award is determined by the School's Honours Coordinator and based on the recommendations of the examiners. This also means that the final award is contingent upon the examiners' assessment of the dissertation. In other words, it is the dissertation that will be of most importance in determining your final Honours grade. Therefore, **you are unlikely to secure any given Honours grade unless the dissertation itself qualifies for this grade in its own right.**

Descriptions of Dissertations at the Various Grades

Standard of a First Class Honours Dissertation

Excellent command of the problem. A high level of research competency. Any flaws are minor. Quality of the writing and presentation is impressive. Contribution to the field is significant through innovation and extension of previous findings. Failure to achieve statistical significance does not preclude the award of first class honours. Work at this level could be expected to be publishable in a reputable journal with a minimal amount of editing or as part of a larger research program.

Standard of a Upper Second Class Honours Dissertation

Good command of the problem. May have some flaws or omissions but the rationale and conclusions are sound. Sound research competency. Any significant problems are appropriately addressed in the discussion. Quality of writing and presentation is good. Contribution to the field is identifiable but less substantial than for First Class Honours although this does not preclude eventual publication with additional work.

Standard of a Lower Second Class Honours Dissertation

A reasonable command of the problem, but there are one or more significant problems in the treatment of the literature, conceptualisation of the problem or interpretation of the findings. Quality of the research is generally fair to good, but there are one or more significant problems in the design and execution of the study (not adequately addressed in the discussion), or in the data or case analysis, or presentation of the results. Quality of writing is fair, but there are significant flaws in the detail or reporting or presentation. Findings lack management significance and are negated by the flaws in the conceptualisation, execution or reporting of the study, but the report would still be of value to another student picking up the topic.

Standard of a Third Class Honours Dissertation

The study reveals some knowledge of the relevant literature, though there are serious misunderstandings or other major deficiencies. The study may involve a reasonable project but there are serious flaws in the design, execution or analysis. The quality of writing and presentation is less than expected at this level. The report is of doubtful value.

Publication of Research

Many Honours projects will contain publishable work, though of course a manuscript presented for publication usually has to be shortened and carefully edited. Students who are interested should consult their supervisor after the release of grades with a view to preparing jointly such a manuscript. This will be easier if completed before further studies or jobs are begun. Please ensure that you keep copies of all data files and output files in case you need to run further analyses prior to publication.

Summary of Key Dates and Recommended Timeframes for 2008

The following are some dates to keep in mind for the production of your dissertation:

- Completion of research proposal 17 April
- Ethics approval early-mid May
- Completion of literature review end of May
- Completion of research design and methodology end of June
- Research fieldwork June-July
- Data entry and analysis July-August
- Final write-up of findings August-October
- Submission of dissertation Friday 24 October