

TECHNICAL NOTES ON DISSERTATION WRITING

INTRODUCTION

A dissertation is a written work that must be produced in the language of the degree programme attended. It is the individual work of the student, and its writing requires adherence to the instructions and deadlines agreed upon with the supervisor(s).

Dissertations fall into one of the following categories:

- Literature review;
- Empirical research: observational study;
- Empirical research: experimental study;
- Empirical research: qualitative study;
- Empirical research: mixed methods study;
- Research methodology: e.g. tools development, methods discussion.

STRUCTURE OF A DISSERTATION

Students are asked to structure their dissertation according to the following guidelines:

- Title: It must be descriptive of the topic of the work. In research papers, it describes the study design and the target population. It also includes at least one of the keywords identified and described in the abstract;
- Table of Contents: It highlights the internal organization of the work. In its initial phase, it works as a structure of the work to be done;
- Abstract: Maximum length 500 words. It must be structured according to the IMRAD method, i.e., a pithy description of the Introduction and objectives of the work, Materials and Methods, the most important Results, Analysis and Discussion, and the Conclusions. The main keywords are also listed;
- Preface: It is optional and provides a very brief description of the fundamental elements for understanding the motivations underlying the work, thus orienting the reader through the entire text;
- Introduction: Maximum length 5 pages. It contains the rationale, context, and international relevance of the study to be developed;
- Structure of the Research: Organized into chapters, paragraphs, and sub-paragraphs, the research must consider:

- Objective: A clear description of the purpose of the work. Focusing on the objective is essential to verify the coherence and rigour of the adopted methodology, and the effectiveness of the material used. The objective must be specific, relevant, observable, and achievable;
 - Materials and Methods: Description of the methodology adopted and the tools used to achieve the expected results;
 - Results: Clear and concise description of the expected results, relevant to the objective of the dissertation;
 - Discussion: It describes the results obtained considering the relevant literature. What do the obtained results add to the current knowledge of the subject? Strengths and limitations of the project must be described.
- Conclusions: the concluding pages must contain the gist of the entire work. They must provide real conclusions, not a summary/repetition of the results. Identify the implications/recommendations for practice/research/training/administration, as appropriate, taking into account the limits of the study;
 - Bibliography: it allows identification of the sources from which information comes from. The bibliography is important because it enables to understand to what level studies in a particular field have progressed and is indispensable for readers interested in examining in depth the topics covered;
 - Annexes: they must be included only if they are deemed useful for the understanding or deepening of aspects of the dissertation which, if placed in the text, would make it too heavy, distracting the reader from the main topic. In theses, this section should include at least the data collection tools used (measurement scales, data collection modules, questionnaires).

TYPOGRAPHICAL CONVENTIONS

Dissertations, produced in A4 format, must be at least 40 pages long and must not exceed 80 pages (10,000-20,000 words). The student must produce at least one paper copy to be shown to the Examination Board on the day of the defence. At the end of the exam, all copies are given back. These may also be printed double-sided. The binding may be made of leather or cloth or other materials, with the title page signed by the supervisor and the candidate.

Cover page: (download Annexe 3 in Word format):

The following information must be indicated:

- University name and logo (download Annexe 5 in PNG format)
- Department: Departmental Faculty of Medicine and Surgery (Palatino Linotype, size 14, uppercase)
- Degree Programme in (Palatino Linotype, size 14, lowercase)
- Dissertation title (Palatino Linotype, size 22, lowercase)
- Student's first and last name on the left (Palatino Linotype, size 12, lowercase)

- Supervisor's first and last name on the right (Palatino Linotype, size 12, lowercase)
- Co-supervisor's first and last name on the right (Palatino Linotype, size 12, lowercase)
- Academic Year (Palatino Linotype, size 14, lowercase)

Title page: (download Annexe 4 in Word format)

The title page in A4 format represents the first page of the dissertation and contains the following information:

- University name and logo (download Attachment 5 in PNG format)
- Department: Departmental Faculty of Medicine and Surgery (Palatino Linotype, size 14, uppercase)
- Degree Programme in (Palatino Linotype, size 14, lowercase)
- Dissertation title (Palatino Linotype, size 22, lowercase)
- Student's first and last name on the left (Palatino Linotype, size 12, lowercase)
- Student's ID number on the left (Palatino Linotype, size 12, lowercase)
- Supervisor's first and last name on the right (Palatino Linotype, size 12, lowercase)
- Co-supervisor's first and last name on the right (Palatino Linotype, size 12, lowercase)
- Academic Year (Palatino Linotype, size 14, lowercase)

Font

Palatino Linotype

Font size: 16 points for Chapter Title. Bold style. Centred

Font size: 14 points for Paragraph Title. Bold style. Aligned to the left

Font size: 12 points for Subparagraph Title. Bold and Italic style. Aligned to the left

Font size: 12 points for text. Normal style

Margins:

Top: 2.0 cm

Bottom: 2.0 cm

Outer: 2.0 cm

Inner: 2.5 cm (accounting for binding space)

Page Layout:

1.5 line spacing. Pages must be numbered, and the numbers must be inserted at the bottom of the page aligned to the right. The text must be "justified".

Images, Tables, and Graphs

The insertion of images, tables, and graphs is allowed only if they are relevant to and explicitly explain the topic being discussed. Within the text, reference is made to the image, table, or graph with an indication (Image 1, Figure 1, Table 1, Graph 1) or, if there is more than one image, table, or graph, these must be progressively numbered and accompanied by an explanatory caption (Figure 1, Figure 2, Table 1, Table 2, etc.). At the beginning of the dissertation, a corresponding index of images, tables, or graphs must be added between the Table of Contents and the Introduction.

Footnotes

Footnotes generally contain essential bibliographic references, brief observations, or clarifications necessary for understanding the whole work. The numbering of footnotes must be automatic and progressive, so it is recommended to use a word processing program to manage this function.

The font size for the notes should be 10 points. Students are reminded that every contribution inserted in the text must be referenced in a note, and the source must be subsequently added to the bibliography.

Bibliography

Citations in the text must be inserted according to the Vancouver style and they refer to the Bibliography at the end of the dissertation.

The bibliography is extremely important because:

- it allows to understand where we are at in terms of the studies carried out within the field under investigation;
- it provides an indication of the type of work that has been carried out;
- it is essential for the reader interested in deepening the topics covered.

While writing your dissertation you will consult several books, although not all of them will be read from cover to cover. The bibliography must contain the list of all the works mentioned (References not present in the text of the dissertation should not be included in the bibliography).

Works that have not actually been consulted should not be cited, even if they appear in the bibliographies of other authors. All materials must be personally revised.

Sources which can be included in a bibliography are:

- books, articles published in journals, articles published in collections, working papers or unpublished articles, articles taken from newspapers or weeklies, articles from digital-only journals.

The bibliography must follow the Vancouver style guidelines.

Chapters, paragraphs, and sub-paragraphs

Each chapter must begin with a brief introduction (5 to 10 lines) containing the objective of the chapter itself and its content. Each chapter must be organized into paragraphs and sub-paragraphs. Chapters, paragraphs and sub-paragraphs must be properly numbered.

For example:

1. (Chapter 1)

1.1 (Paragraph 1 of Chapter 1)

1.2 (Paragraph 2 of Chapter 2)

1.2.1 (Sub-paragraph 1 of Paragraph 2 of Chapter 1)

Anti-Plagiarism Software

Students should be aware that copying dissertations, even partially, constitutes an offense. The University has provided specific anti-plagiarism software aimed at verifying the authenticity of dissertations, detecting whether a text or part of it has been copied from the internet or from another text available online. If plagiarism is detected, students will be required to make the necessary modifications or write the dissertation anew. This measure could also be applied if plagiarism is discovered at dissertation defences. If this happens, students are asked to take the exam in the next session.