**iMSc/MSc/MRes Dissertation Assessment Guidance and Criteria**

**Dissertation structure and content descriptors**

The overall wordcount for the dissertation is **12,000 words**. Please take note of the wordcount policy and penalties before final submission.

The table below provides an overview of the expected structure of your dissertation and the marks allocated to each section. Please read the content descriptors carefully and remember that your marks for the dissertation will be awarded using the level 7 academic standards.

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| **Section/Component** | **Description and criteria** |
| **Abstract**  **(10)** | All students are expected to produce a 500 (+/- 25) word abstract that summarises the dissertation.  This should summarise the dissertation and consist of an introduction; aims and objectives; methods; findings; and conclusion / discussion.  A high score will demonstrate: a) an ability to write succinctly; and b) careful identification of the most important points to include in the abstract. |
| **Background to Issue, Rationale and Objectives**  **(25)** | All dissertations should build on a body of existing knowledge and literature. Students should be able to demonstrate that they have read around the topic of their dissertation; and have a good understanding of the subject / topic of their dissertation. They should demonstrate a good understanding of the existing literature, noting key authors and existing relevant debates.  The student should then be able to describe the rationale or purpose of their research as it relates to the existing literature, or to an existing policy, problem or programme. In other words, the student should be able to relate his/her dissertation to an existing body of literature or discussion/debate.  The purpose and rationale of the research may be framed explicitly as a research aim; and/or a research question or hypothesis.  A high score will demonstrate good knowledge; and evidence that the student has read around the subject / topic, and drawn on the teaching they have received in the iMSc/MSc/MRes course.  A high score will also require a logical explanation for why the student has chosen the topic of his / her dissertation, and why and how their research will help answer a research question, or test a hypothesis, or address a problem.  The aims and objectives of the dissertation should be clearly described, with reference to the background / rationale; and the research aim.  The difference between the research aim(s) and the research objectives should be understood and demonstrated by the student. [The aim relates to the purpose for doing the research, while the objectives describe the components of the research activity]  A good score will demonstrate: a) an appropriate relationship between the background and rationale, and the research objectives; b) clarity about how the research will answer the research question, or test the research hypothesis; or address the problem defined by the dissertation; and c) provide the basis for creating a valid methodology. |
| **Methodology and Methods**  **(20)** | The dissertation should provide a general description of the overall methodological approach and *type* of research that forms the basis of the dissertation.  It should also provide a clear and detailed description of the methods used and how they were applied; including ethical considerations, data collection tools and instruments (which should be appended to dissertation) and data management procedures. The methods section should also give an account of the methods which will be used to analyse the data.  A good score will provide a detailed description of the methods of data collection and analysis, and demonstrate their relevance to meeting the projects aims and objectives.  A good score for a quantitative study or a literature review would indicate that enough detail and clarity is provided such that another researcher would produce the same findings should s/he follow the same methodology. Replication may not be feasible for certain forms of qualitative research. |
| **Findings and Results**  **(20)** | The dissertation should include a clear and well organised presentation of findings and / or data. For example, in the case of a systematic review of literature, this would include the results of the literature search. Data should be presented in a way that relates to the research purpose / question / hypothesis. For many dissertations, this would involve the use of an appropriate descriptive or conceptual framework related to the subject that would help present the findings in an organised manner.  A high score would reflect clearly presented data and demonstrate a high level of interpretive skill. This would include a discussion of both positive and negative findings; and a description of the limitations of data and findings.  A high score would also require clearly and correctly labelled tables, graphs and figures. |
| **Analysis, Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations (20)** | The dissertation should include a section that demonstrates an analysis of the data / findings. This should be done in a way that links to the research purpose / question / hypothesis. There should be demonstration of the use of an appropriate analytical framework or approach.  The dissertation should also form a conclusion related to the original research purpose / question / hypothesis. The dissertation may also provide recommendations which are: a) based on the dissertation findings and results; and b) clearly targeted to an appropriate audience.  A high score would present a deep level of analysis, making good use of the chosen analytic approach.  A high score would also demonstrate original and independent thinking, including a discussion of the strength or validity of any conclusion or finding, having taken into account both the methodological limitations of the dissertation, as well as the existing literature on the subject / topic.  If recommendations are given, a high score would provide recommendations that are not obvious. |
| **Accuracy**  **(5)** | There must be a correct and consistent use of Harvard or Vancouver referencing system  Quality of writing in terms of spelling, grammar, punctuation; language |

**Marking bonuses and penalties**

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| **Marking bonus or penalty** | **Guidance** | **Penalty or bonus** |
| **Ambition and difficulty** | Dissertation projects that demonstrate unusual ambition; innovation; collection and use of primary data; or difficulty, may have marks adjusted upwards provided both markers are in agreement. | Marks may be adjusted upwards by 5-10% |
| **Plagiarism** | Cases of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct (including inappropriate use of generative AI) will be dealt with according to the QMUL [Academic Misconduct Policy](https://www.qmul.ac.uk/governance-and-legal-services/student-appeals/academic-misconduct/). | The penalties can range from a formal reprimand and a fail, to suspension or expulsion. |
| **Late submission** | Late submissions are automatically flagged in the submission portal. | Five marks will be deducted for each 24 hour period or part thereof after the submission date and time, including weekends and bank holidays.  An assignment submitted more than 120 hours late shall be awarded a mark of zero. |
| **Word count** | Word count *will* apply to:   * Tables that are made up of text * Headings and sub-headings * Footnotes and in-text references * Abstracts     Word count *will not* apply to:   * Coversheets * Front matter (glossary, table of contents, acknowledgments) * Reference lists and bibliography * Numerical data * Labels of graphs and figures | * 5-<10% over word limit = 5 marks deducted * 10-<15% over word limit = 10 marks deducted * 15%-<20% over word limit = 15 marks deducted * 20% and above over word limit = Automatic fail (score of 0) and re-sit capped at pass mark |
| **Non-submission** |  | Students who do not submit their dissertation and do not have Extenuating Circumstances in place will fail their dissertation. They will have one opportunity to re-sit their dissertation capped at the pass mark (40 for iBSc, 50 for iMSc/MSc/MRes). |

**Dissertation feedback sheet**

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| **Student Name** |  |
| **Student ID** |  |

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| **Criteria** | **Abstract** | **Background to Issue, Rationale and Objectives** | **Methodology and Methods** | **Findings / Results** | **Analysis, Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations** | **Accuracy** | **TOTAL MARK** |
| **Marks available** | **(10)** | **(25)** | **(20)** | **(20)** | **(20)** | **(5)** | **(100)** |
| **Agreed Mark** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Please provide comments and student feedback below**

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| **Abstract** |
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| **Background to Issue, Rationale and Objectives** |
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| **Methodology and Methods** |
|  |
| **Findings / Results** |
|  |
| **Analysis, Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations** |
|  |
| **Accuracy** |
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| **General feedback** |
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