

Dissertation Courses

Faculty of Education

Study Guide

for LIN9012 & LIN9013 Dissertation (Honours)

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Table of contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Steps in the development of a proposal	1
Research information	2
Guidelines for the preparation of a dissertation	2
Appendix 1: Supervisor responsibilities and student roles	7
Responsibilities and roles	9
Appendix 2: Referencing	11
Referencing guide	11
Appendix 3: Library services	13
Appendix 4: Supervisors and topics available	19

Introduction

The dissertation has been divided into two parts: LIN9012 and LIN9013, so that it eases the burden of fees and provides you with achievable stages. In LIN9012, you are required to prepare your research proposal, have it accepted, and then begin data collection. When enrolled in LIN9013, you are expected to analyse the data and write a dissertation. Once the dissertation is submitted, it will be forwarded to examiners.

You should regard the conduct of research and the writing of the dissertation as an apprenticeship into conducting educational research. It is therefore important that you work closely with your supervisor so that he or she can guide you, especially, at the early stages when you try to develop your questions and instruments and collect data.

You are about to embark on what should be an exciting and challenging experience of your program. We hope that your experience in the dissertation courses stimulates you to even greater heights in your personal and professional development.

Steps in the development of a proposal

1. Discuss with your supervisor, the general area in which you wish to research. The supervisor will suggest some readings in the area which will start you off on your literature review.
2. Conduct a thorough literature review.
3. Narrow your research topic – regular discussions with your supervisor is advisable.
4. Develop your research proposal. The proposal should have the following sections:
 - (a) rationale for the research
 - (b) a brief literature review
 - (c) statement of the research problem
 - (d) description of the proposed research design and methodology. The methodology should include a subsection that deals with the way(s) data will be analysed.
 - (e) Proposed timeline.
5. You will be required to present a seminar on your proposal and to defend your proposed methodology for your study. As a result of this seminar, it is possible that changes may need to be made to your proposal. If you are off-campus, this seminar will be held over the telephone.
6. If your proposal deals with human subject, you will need to get an Ethical Clearance by completing a form that is available at the following URL <[http://www.usq.edu.au/research/Ethics/Guidelines for Preparing the Ethics Application.doc](http://www.usq.edu.au/research/Ethics/Guidelines%20for%20Preparing%20the%20Ethics%20Application.doc)>. Alternatively, go to the USQ webpage and click on Research, then click on Office of Research and Higher Degrees. Look under Human Ethics.

Research information

Guidelines for the preparation of a dissertation

The following guidelines are intended to assist students who are preparing to write their master's dissertation.

Preparation and submission of a dissertation

1. The dissertation should be typewritten.
2. Full page photographs should be properly bound into the dissertation. Smaller photographs must be firmly fixed to the page and a margin at least 40 mm wide should be left on the binding edge.
3. At the time of submission for examination a dissertation should be bound in temporary form. The temporary binding must be strong enough to prevent damage to the dissertation during the ordinary course of postage and handling.
4. Number of copies required at time of submission for examination: 3 copies.
5. THREE copies to be submitted after examination is complete and the dissertation has been bound. The Examiner will ensure that a copy is sent to the Library.

Language

Dissertations should be written in English unless otherwise approved.

Style

It is important that a technical dissertation be written in good language and in acceptable style. This means:

- accuracy and clarity
- precision and conciseness
- a high standard of spelling, grammar and punctuation
- a good choice of language
- sound paragraph and sentence construction
- elimination of redundant or ambiguous words, phrases and passages
- a thorough revision before final typing
- correction of all typing errors.

In short, the dissertation should be clear, concise, correct and complete.

The dissertation should normally be written in the third person with use of the first person reserved for occasions when ambiguity may arise from use of the third person.

Length

The dissertation should be about 25 000 words long. This excludes the list of references.

Since a dissertation is partly intended to evaluate the capacity of candidates to present a report on their research in a clear and succinct manner, an excessively lengthy dissertation could be counter productive.

Format

The dissertation should be typed or printed on single-sided international A4 paper (297 mm × 210 mm) of good quality bond (at least 73 GSM) with either 1½ or 2 line spacing. The height of the print size in the final copy shall be not less than six (6) printer's points.

To permit proper binding and trimming, each A4 page should have a clear left hand margin of at least 40 mm, a top, bottom and right hand margin of at least 25 mm.

Figures, diagrams, maps and computer print outs should conform to all of the above requirements as far as practicable; but in all cases, it is essential that information be neither lost in photocopying (e.g. if characters are too small or too faint) nor lost in binding and trimming.

The contents of the bound dissertation should normally be in the following order:

- initial pages
- the initial pages may be numbered using roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, etc.)
- main text (including figures as appropriate)
- pages are numbered in sequence 1, 2, 3, 4 ...
- references
- bibliography (if appropriate)
- appendices.

Initial pages

The order of these pages will normally be as follows:

1. First page

This page will be blank as it forms part of the binding process.

2. Title page

This page should set out the full title (preferably in large lettering), the award for which the dissertation is submitted, Master of Applied Linguistics (Hons), the full name and academic qualifications of the candidate and the year of submission.

3. Abstract

An abstract is essentially a concise statement of the major conclusions of the academic work. A brief mention, usually restricted to a sentence or two, of the objectives and methodology is usually given to set these conclusions in context; and similarly any other significant aspects of the work will be mentioned. An abstract therefore, would not normally exceed about 300 words.

4. Certification page

This is a statement headed ‘Certification of Dissertation’ to the effect that the work contained in the dissertation is the bonafide work of the candidate, that the work has not been previously submitted for an award, and that, to the best of the candidate’s knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgment and reference is made in the dissertation to that work. The signature and date is placed beneath the statement.

In the lower part of this page the supervisor appends their signature by way of endorsement that the declaration has been completed.

5. Acknowledgments

It is essential that the candidate acknowledge assistance received whilst undertaking the project and preparing the dissertation. The candidate should consider carefully all forms of assistance received – academic, technical, secretarial, administrative and personal (e.g. family) as appropriate.

6. Table of contents and notation

The purpose of a table of contents is to provide a clear and comprehensive index to the material presented.

It should include:

- chapter headings (numbered 1, 2, etc. and underlined)
- headings within chapters (numbered 1. 1, 1.2, etc.)
- further subheadings as appropriate (similarly ‘nested’ and numbered 1.1.2.1, etc.)
- the heading ‘References’ and its appropriate page number
- the heading ‘Bibliography’ and its page number

- the heading ‘List of Figures’ and its page number
- the heading ‘List of Tables’ and its page number
- the heading ‘List of Plans’ and its page number (if appropriate)
- appendices; each numbered or lettered (A, B, C) in order and with its heading.

Finalisation of the table of contents can only take place when the whole body of the main text has been typed.

The ‘list of figures’, ‘list of tables’ and ‘list of plans’ (if used) shall follow in subsequent pages.

Plans, diagrams, tables, photographs

Small diagrams and tables and photographs should be incorporated into the text and numbered. Assembly of the dissertation is sometimes made easier if figures and tables are presented in separate pages which are then interleaved with the text before pagination. Occasionally, some dissertations involve the preparation and presentation of material in large tables or plans of A4 or greater size. Where this occurs, all such diagrams, tables or plans should be placed after the main body of the dissertation and bound in such a manner that they are able to be opened out and read even when the rest of the dissertation is closed. This requires provision of a left hand margin of between 215 and 220mm.

Appendices

Page numbering may be carried through to the appendices or separate pagination such as A1, A2, A3 used if more convenient as frequently appendices are prepared in advance of the final draft of the text.

Plagiarism, copying and cheating

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of published and unpublished material written by an author other than the student. Plagiarism involves the use of another author’s statements or ideas without giving proper reference to the origin of those statements or ideas. It may entail the misuse of another student’s work, but more frequently it is the misuse of other published authors’ works. Plagiarism is seen to be a form of conscious cheating by a student claiming the ideas and/or words of another person and students who plagiarise will be asked to show cause why their enrolment should not be terminated in that course.

Copying and cheating involve the unethical use of the material of another person or persons for the student’s own purpose.

Ethical clearance

It is important to remember that before students conduct research in a school, they are obliged to obtain permission from the school authority, whether it be the Department of Education, the Catholic Education Office, or in the case of independent schools, the school council or governing body. This may vary from school to school.

If students are seeking to conduct research in an education setting, they should enquire about the appropriate clearance procedures before commencing research. If the research involves human experimentation, students will be required to apply for an ethics clearance from the

University of Southern Queensland Research Ethics Committee. Students should contact the supervisor of their research for guidance in these matters.

Criteria for assessing dissertation

Examiners of dissertations will be asked to judge the dissertation on the following.

The extent to which the candidate has demonstrated:

- originality
- critical insight
- the capacity to carry out independent research
- the extent of the contribution to knowledge made by the dissertation, and in particular it's contribution to the understanding of the subject with which it deals
- the suitability of the dissertation for publication.

References and bibliographies

Any dissertation must indicate its relation to other literature in the field and this is usually accomplished by means of citation (referencing) and bibliographies.

References deal with the identification of material in the work which is not the author's own making. Bibliographies identify all sources, quoted or unquoted, relevant to the material.

Referencing of documentation is also a formal mechanism for giving appropriate acknowledgment of the work of others within the main text. Proper documentation enables an author to avoid any suspicion of plagiarism to refer to the source or authority for statements made in be found.

For the purpose of the dissertation, students are required to use the American Psychological Association (APA) style.

Illustrative examples of the APA referencing system, which is the standard for bibliographic referencing in our applied linguistic courses, are provided in the 'Referencing' section of this study guide. (See Appendix 2)

Appendix 1: Supervisor responsibilities and student roles

Responsibilities and roles

Supervisor responsibilities

The role performed by the supervisor will vary according to the nature of the project, the stage reached at a particular time, and the knowledge and skills of the supervisor. In most cases, however, the role will entail:

- aid and guidance to the student in the development of a final proposal and its presentation to the course team leader
- assistance in the establishment of project timelines
- assistance in the location of relevant reference material
- assistance, if necessary, in obtaining access to schools through the Course Coordinator and the Dean, Faculty of Education
- advice in clarifying and resolving problems as the project progresses
- availability for regular contact to establish on-going communication during the project;
- provision of detailed criticism and guidance on the written work generated during the period of the study
- assistance with the establishment of a work schedule and regular flow of evaluative comments on progress
- provision to the course team leader of copies of progress reports and feedback reports to students
- information to the course team leader at any time if the student's progress is considered unsatisfactory
- certification that the procedures outlined in the proposal have been followed and that the project is proceeding in accordance with the approved proposal
- advice to the student on the most appropriate format for the project report
- support and encouragement during the project.

The supervisor is not expected to edit drafts of the project submitted by the student. However, detailed information about where modifications are deemed desirable should be provided.

Role of the student

The role of the student encompasses all of the following:

- to prepare an initial proposal in accordance with an established format and timeline
- to revise the proposal after discussion with the person appointed to act as supervisor
- to forward the final proposal through the supervisor to the course team leader
- to maintain regular contact with the supervisor, according to the timelines established at the beginning of the semester, in order to discuss the development and progress of the study
- to submit progress reports where required

- to ensure that the proposal and other materials are submitted to your supervisor on or before established due dates
- to advise the supervisor in writing if the agreed schedule cannot be adhered to
- to carry out his/her study independently and with a high level of self-motivation and initiative.

Appendix 2: Referencing

Referencing guide

Please refer to the USQ Library web site for referencing guides in the APA style. Go to <http://www.usq.edu.au/library/> and click on 'Referencing Guides' under the 'Information About ...' heading. This provides details on the referencing of print and electronic publications.

Guide to referencing using the APA style
http://www.usq.edu.au/library/infoabout/ref_guides/apastyle/

Appendix 3: Library services

Note: Check the *Distance education student guide* for other information about library services.

USQ Library

<<http://www.usq.edu.au/library/>>

Online tutorials at USQ

<<http://www.usq.edu.au/library/help/classes/online.htm>>

Guide to Searching the Virtua Web Gateway (Library Catalogue)

Browse option

(Use this option if you know the title of a book, the author's name or the subject)

1. Click on down arrow in **Search Field** box to select search type eg. Title
2. Type a word or words (search terms) into **Word** box.
3. Hit **Enter** key, or click on **Search** button.
4. Click on title, author or subject required.
5. Then click on *yellow* arrow to left of title to see location and availability of item.
6. Click on **Full** tab to find hyperlinked subject headings.

Tips

- For an **Author** search, type author's last name (followed by first initial if you know it).
- For a **Title** search, type the title of the item **leaving out** *the, a, an* when they are at the beginning of the title.
- For a **Subject** search, type in the subject you require (eg. Finance - this will take you to an alphabetic list of subject headings beginning with the word Finance) *N.B. If there is no match for the subject you enter, try the **Keyword** search option below.*

Keyword search option

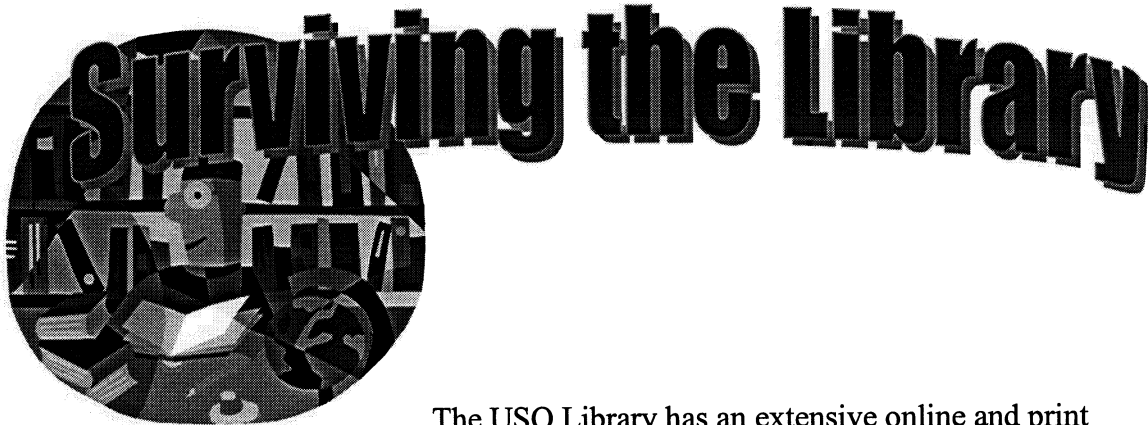
(Use this option if you are unsure of the exact title, subject or author's name)

1. Click on down arrow in **Search Field** box to select search type eg. Author
2. Type a word or words (search terms) into first **Word** box eg. smith.
3. Click a connecting word **AND, OR** or **NOT** to combine your search term with another search term.
4. Click on down arrow in second **Search Field** box to select search type eg. **All**.
5. Type a word or words (search terms) into second **Word** box eg. history computers.
6. Hit **Enter** key, or click on **Search** button.
7. Click on *yellow* arrow to left of title to see location and availability of item.

Tips

- Select **All** in the **Search Field** box to find your search term in any field in the catalogue.
- Use **AND** to *narrow* your search. The catalogue will find only those items that contain both the first **AND** the second search terms eg. ocean **AND** pollution.
- Use **OR** to *broaden* your search. The catalogue will find all items that contain either the first search term **OR** the second search term **OR** both eg. ocean **OR** pollution.
- Use **NOT** to *restrict* your search. The catalogue will find all items that contain the first search term, but **NOT** the second eg. pollution **NOT** sewage.

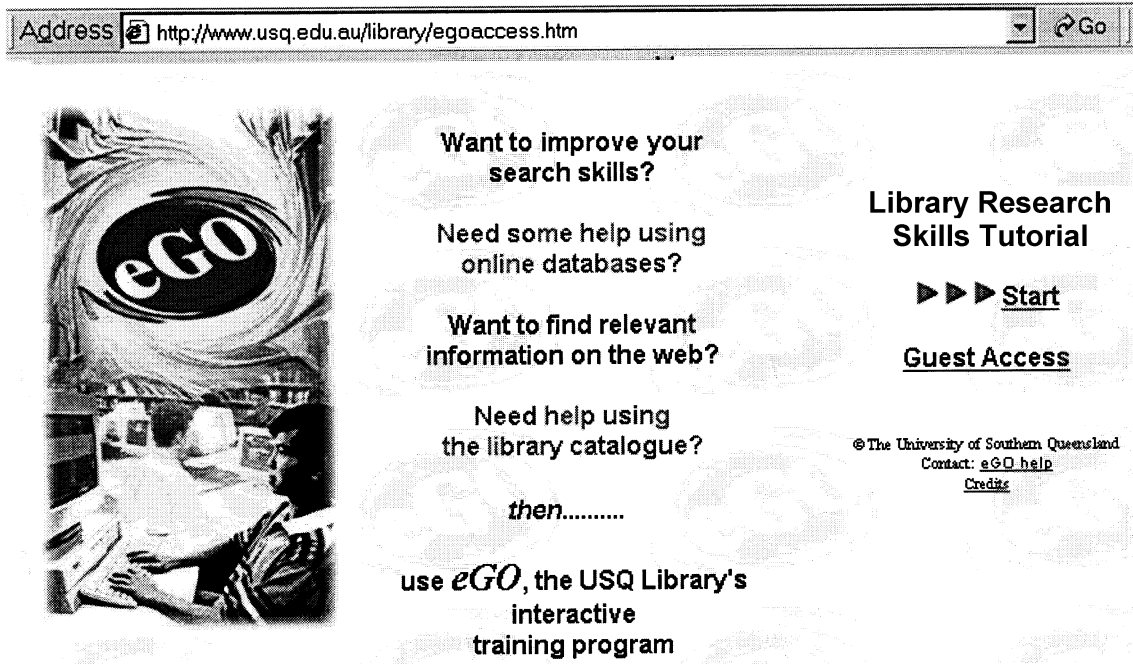
Ask the Library staff at the Information Desk if you need help.



The USQ Library has an extensive online and print collection available to our students. You can use the resources in person and via our web site. Check us out at <http://www.usq.edu.au/library> The collection includes books, journals, videos and CDs in addition to electronic resources such as journal databases, enclopaedias, statistical sources, standards and books.

The library will play an important part in your life as a student. We have a help desk on the top floor of the library and welcome any queries for assistance and direction. The Library catalogue terminals are situated around the stairwell on the third level. Here you will also find computers for internet, email and word processing.

To help students get started in doing their own searching for resources, the library will be holding tours and classes at the beginning of each semester and the times and venue for these will be posted in the library foyer on the ground floor. We also have an Interactive Information Literacy program **eGO**
See below :-



Address <http://www.usq.edu.au/library/egoaccess.htm> Go

eGO

Want to improve your search skills?

Need some help using online databases?

Want to find relevant information on the web?

Need help using the library catalogue?

then.....

use **eGO**, the USQ Library's interactive training program

Library Research Skills Tutorial

▶▶▶ [Start](#)

[Guest Access](#)

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Contact: [eGO help](#)
[Credits](#)

If you are a post graduate student check out the **PostGrad Toolbox** at :-
http://www.usq.edu.au/library/PG_Toolbox/index.htm This is a research skill information site. It provides advice and information on the skills and resources which make the whole process of researching information easier.

Appendix 4: Supervisors and topics available

Name & E-mail Address	Telephone (61–7)	Topic
Dr Jeong-Bae Son <sonjb@usq.edu.au>	4631 2235	Computer-assisted language learning, Internet-based language instruction, computer-mediated communication, language teacher education, second language reading
Dr Ann Dashwood <dashwood@usq.edu.au>	4631 1806	Discourse analysis, methodology in second languages teaching, productive pedagogies in context, transnational pedagogy in second language teachinglogy
Dr Aniko Hatoss <hatoss@usq.edu.au>	4631 1680	Sociolinguistics, language maintenance and shift, language awareness and attitudes, bilingualism and biculturalism
Dr Shirley O'Neill <oneills@usq.edu.au>	4631 2604	Language testing, cross-cultural communication in early childhood

