

MA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DISSERTATION HANDBOOK

2019-2020



Dissertation in Sustainable Development, SPS (SSPS10015)

For geography pathway students: Geography Dissertation in
Sustainable Development (GEGR10111)

Dissertation Convenor: Dr Sarah Parry

Dissertation Handbook for the MA in Sustainable Development

This Handbook is designed to help and guide you through all the stages of your dissertation, from first ideas to the day you submit. The dissertation is the largest and longest piece of work that you will undertake for your degree, and the one which carries the most marks. It is in many ways the accumulation of everything you have learnt so far on the degree, your interests, experience and expertise. The dissertation is also often the piece of work that students enjoy most; you have the freedom and flexibility to study in depth a topic that you choose, in a way which interests you, and to decide your own focus for that study. Throughout the process, you will be supported by your dissertation supervisor, and the Dissertation Convenor. We hope that you find the dissertation an interesting, rewarding, and fulfilling piece of work. Good luck!

This Handbook contains important information about the processes of undertaking a dissertation, guidance on content, on working with your supervisor, and on submission. Please read and it and keep it for reference throughout your dissertation preparation and research. If you have any questions about your dissertation, please refer them to:

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Section 1: Introduction to the Dissertation in Sustainable Development and key information

The Dissertation in Sustainable Development is an extended piece of independent, in-depth scholarship on a sustainable development topic with a clear political, international, sociological, anthropological, or geographical dimension. The topic is largely of your own choosing, but must be approved by both the Dissertation Convenor and your supervisor. The work should engage critically and analytically with the literature in the chosen field, and you will be expected to refine and extend your understanding of relevant concepts and theories introduced in the courses completed in years 1 to 3 of the degree. You are also expected to demonstrate competence in using a range of primary and secondary sources, and appropriate referencing and bibliographic skills.

The intended learning outcomes are:

- Students will learn to undertake sustained, independent work, drawing on one or more of the disciplinary pathways (politics and international relations, sociology, social anthropology, geography);
- Students will refine their abilities to engage critically and analytically with the significant literature in their chosen field of specialist interest;
- Students will employ relevant knowledge, concepts, theories and analytical approaches from their chosen field to formulate an extended argument;
- Students will exercise and consolidate their time- and task-management, presentational, and self-motivational skills in the conduct, presentation, and time- and task-planning of their research scheduling;
- Students will demonstrate attention to the relevant data analysis, referencing, and bibliographic conventions.

1.1 Key information

The Dissertation is a significant piece of work, counts for 40 credits. This reflects the volume of work that is required for a dissertation, the thought, planning and preparation that is necessary, and the length of time taken to research, write and complete it.

ALL students must write a dissertation on a sustainable development topic. This is very important, as is emphasised by the External Examiner for the Sustainable Development degree.

For Sociology, Social Anthropology and Geography pathway students follow the regulations and guidance contained in **this** Handbook (in terms of requirements for the content and style of the dissertation, word count, and submission deadline). Additionally, all students will be given a copy of the dissertation guidance for their pathway subject area.

PIR pathway students will follow the regulations and guidance for the PIR Dissertation (in terms of requirements for the content and style of the dissertation, word count, and submission deadline). Students on the Politics and International Relations pathways should refer to the guidance in the PIR Dissertation Handbook, available here:
http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/subject_and_programme_specific_information/pir/honours/course_handbooks_-_years_3_and_4

1.2 Word limit

The Dissertation must be no longer than **12,000 words**. This is an exact figure. There is no ‘10%+/-’ allowance/grace. The word limit **includes** footnotes and diagrams – ie everything in the main body of your dissertation. It **excludes** the title page, table of contents, abstract, acknowledgments, bibliography, and any appendices – ie everything before and after the main body of the text. An accurate word count must be included on the title page of your dissertation. You will be penalised if you exceed the word limit (see 5.4 below).

Students on the Politics and International Relations pathways follow the PIR Dissertation guidance on word count.

1.3 Deadlines

Thesis submission

The deadline for submission of your Dissertation in 2019-2020 (for students entering Senior Honours in September 2019) is **12 noon, Thursday 2nd April 2020**.

The deadline for submission of students on the Politics and International Relations pathways is **Thursday 23rd April 2020** 12 noon.

Section 2: Research methods training, submitting your research proposal, and ethics

As you start to develop your ideas, you will write them into a research proposal. It is also vital that you consider the ethical implications of your research plans. This section also details the compulsory and optional research methods training courses which will help to prepare you for your dissertation.

2.1 Research Methods courses

There are research methods courses for students on different pathways in the degree. Please refer to Appendix 1 of the MA Sustainable Development Honours Handbook for more details.

Social Anthropology Year 3 students: Students on the Social Anthropology pathway take the compulsory course ‘Imagining Anthropological Research’ (IAR) in third year. Students on a Junior Year Abroad sign up for this course virtually as all SD Social Anthropology pathway students, whether in Edinburgh or on Junior Year Abroad, are registered with the LEARN page for the course. *Please note: the mark for your proposal will NOT form 10% of the final dissertation mark.*

Sociology: Students on the Sociology pathway take one or both of ‘Designing and Doing Social Research’, and ‘Doing Survey Research’ in first and second semester of third year. Many students take both courses. Students on the Sociology pathway are also invited to take part in the project preparation sessions and to register with the Sociology Project LEARN page (SD Sociology pathway students on the Junior Year Abroad are also registered with the LEARN page). See the LEARN page for more information.

Politics and International Relations: Students on the Politics and IR pathways take ‘Research Design in Politics and IR’ in Semester 1 of third year, and many take ‘Approaches to Politics and International Relations’ in Semester 2 of the third year. They are also able to take one or both of ‘Designing and Doing Social Research’, and ‘Doing Survey Research’ in first and second semester of third year if they wish.

In addition 3rd year students on the Politics and IR pathways are registered with the PIR Dissertation LEARN page (this is also valid for Junior Year Abroad students), and are invited to a briefing session and Dissertation workshops in semester 2.

Geography: Students on the Geography pathway take either Quantitative Methods in Geography (10 credits) OR Qualitative Methods in Geography (10 credits); plus Research Design in Geography (10 credits).

Research Design in Geography entails submitting a research proposal for the dissertation as a marked assignment for that course (see below).

2.2 Research proposal

All students must have completed and submitted a compulsory ‘Research Proposal’ during year 3. The proposal contains an outline of the dissertation research which will be undertaken, and it ensures that you begin to think through the range of issues that are involved in carrying out dissertation research. It is also used as a basis to allocate supervisors. Further details were in last years’ dissertation handbook.

If relevant, for students planning to undertake fieldwork abroad it should also contain:

- Country or countries to be visited (the more specific about exact cities or regions the better).
- Existing links or contacts with the field area (if you are seeking an NGO placement or support from ERASMUS/SOCRATES this is the place to mention it).
- Language or languages you will need for fieldwork and your existing level of proficiency.
- A copy of the latest Foreign Office ‘Advice for Travellers’ relevant to your destination; this can be downloaded from the internet (<http://www.fco.gov.uk/>); advice can also be obtained by telephoning 0870 606 0290 and explaining where you are planning to travel.
- An outline budget for your project with an indication of what financial support you expect to obtain.
- Account of practical arrangements needed and practical arrangements made (visas and flights, contacts with organizations and interested academics, etc.).

You are responsible for all travel arrangements and should seek the Foreign Office advice for travellers as appropriate. If you plan to carry out field research abroad during the coming weeks, you must organise yourself very quickly. Do not wait any longer to investigate contacts and so on.

The School of Social and Political Science and the School of GeoSciences do not take responsibility for the well-being and safety of students conducting fieldwork in the UK or elsewhere. Before you undertake fieldwork you must read the University Safety Code for Fieldwork. It is assumed that students will conduct themselves in a mature, responsible and prudent manner, and be alert to the demands that may be made upon them in unfamiliar circumstances. It is the responsibility of the student to make careful assessment of the risks, and to mitigate those risks.

2.3 Ethics

Great importance is attached to addressing the ethical implications of all research activities carried out.

An Ethics Assessment Form is a vital document for the following reasons:

1. it is a formal part of the University's commitment to the promotion of research that respects the dignity and preserves the well-being of human research participants, other subjects and researchers;
2. it is used to determine if your research has taken sufficient account of ethical issues and can proceed as planned or if it needs revision; and
3. it is used as a basis for assessing if your research needs a more detailed ethics appraisal (the Full Ethics Review; your supervisor will let you know if this next step is necessary).

The design of your research should, from the very outset, work to ensure that human subjects involved (and, for example, the environment) are shown respect and have their well-being preserved.

Attention to the ethical and legal implications of research for researchers, research subjects, sponsors and collaborators is an intrinsic part of good research practice. **All dissertations require ethics approval.** The first step in this process is completing the *Ethics Assessment Form*, which you submit with your dissertation project plan. This Form guides you through a consideration of the following key principles in relation to your research.

For students taking the Dissertation in Sustainable Development, SPS (SSPS10015), the formal ethics policy and set of procedures have been devised can be found at:
<http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/research/ethics> The Ethics Assessment form is an online form which you complete and submit via this page, and it is sent to the Dissertation Convenor (you put Sarah Parry's name on the form as the relevant person).

For students on the geography pathway, and therefore taking the Geography Dissertation in Sustainable Development (GEGR10111), Guidance on ethics in research is available on the School of Geosciences web page:
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences/intranet/working-in-school/other-important-information/ethicsinresearch%20>
(the Ethics Assessment form is available to download from this page).

In some cases, students may need or decide to change their plans with regard to their research methods, the people they intend to research, or indeed may change their project topic completely. If you want to do this you must inform your supervisor as a new ethical evaluation may be necessary. You must have received ethical clearance before you commence your research.

Research which is more likely to require a full ethics assessment includes:

- Work with children, young people or vulnerable adults (see Disclosure Scotland below).
- Medically-related research.
- The discussion or investigation of illegal activities.
- Projects where those you are researching will not be aware that they are being researched, or may not be fully aware of the objectives of the research.

- The distribution of questionnaires to undergraduates. If you intend to survey a range of students across the university, then this may require the permission of the Secretary of the University.

Disclosure Scotland:

Students and staff whose research may involve regular contact with children and vulnerable adults may be legally required to join the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme organized by Disclosure Scotland. Talk to both your supervisor and any organization you are planning to work with about this in the first instance. Information is also available on the Disclosure Scotland website: <http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/>

You may be charged a fee for joining the scheme; if so, you should provide some evidence of this to Sue Renton, Sustainable Development SSO, who will refund you.

Although no problems have arisen to date, fieldwork for your project may involve personal risk. Use the departmental address, not your home address, and exercise caution and common-sense in arranging meetings with interviewees. If you have any worries, consult your supervisor, or the Dissertation Convenor.

Section 3: Supervision

All of you have now been assigned a supervisor in your chosen pathway.

This is usually one of a small group of staff within your pathway who have relevant interests and are familiar with the degree. All supervisors are experienced researchers and are accustomed to advising students on the many aspects of the preparation of a dissertation, whatever the topic.

All students apart from PIR pathways were allocated their supervisor before the summer between Junior and Senior Honours (and usually well before this). Students on the PIR pathways will meet with their supervisor just after the start of semester one of Senior Honours.

The initiative in contacting the supervisor lies with the student. Important changes in the direction of the dissertation should be discussed with the student's individual supervisor. If a change of supervisor seems necessary, this should be discussed with the Dissertation Convenor.

Your supervisor will be your 'first port of call' when seeking advice about your dissertation, and they are capable of working through technical and structural issues, regardless of the topic.

Supervisors' responsibilities:

Supervisors can be expected to comment upon dissertation outlines, chapter plans and timetables, and to provide feedback on draft chapters. They have the responsibility to meet with you at the times agreed, and to respond appropriately and promptly (making

constructive suggestions at the planning stage, reading and commenting on the material that you submit).

Supervisors are **not** expected to direct your work: a dissertation is intended to demonstrate a student's ability to **work independently**. Supervisors have other commitments, and time must be allowed for them to read and provide feedback on your work.

Feedback on written drafts of the dissertation can be particularly valuable, and again you are entitled to expect this from your supervisor. But equally, it is **your responsibility to give your supervisor adequate time to do this**. Some supervisors prefer to see work in progress; others, more polished drafts. **The responsibility rests with the student to discuss this with their supervisor.**

Supervisors in the different pathways will have differing expectations about the volume of work that they will read (for example, the usual maximum that a Politics and International Relations supervisor will read is two chapters, and always less than half the dissertation). **It is the student's responsibility to discuss and agree with their supervisor how much of the dissertation they will read, and when.** Please note that supervisors will provide feedback only on the main text of your project – they cannot be expected to proof your bibliography, check that you have inserted page numbers and followed the instructions contained in this Handbook about how to present your material.

Students' responsibilities:

After you have been allocated a supervisor, you need to find out when your supervisor is available and how soon before a meeting they require written submissions, how much of your dissertation they will read, and how soon they expect to be able to respond (if not specified, assume 5 working days), as a rule, to you.

It is up to you to make arrangements to meet your supervisor - they will not chase you for progress reports or draft chapters.

Do not expect your supervisor to guide you through the preparation of the dissertation in the last few weeks before the submission deadline. It is up to **you** to get started in good time and to keep in touch with your supervisor throughout the fourteen months from the submission of a provisional research proposal to the final submission of a dissertation.

Use your supervisor wisely and make sure that you are clear about what you want to get out of the meeting. Are you trying to develop your understanding of a concept or theory, trying to make sense of some of your data, wondering how this fits into a larger context? In many cases it will be useful to submit a written draft of some aspect of your work prior to the meeting, for example, e.g. small sample of data you are trying to make sense of or drafts of sections.

It is your responsibility to make sure that you see your supervisor at regular intervals. For the supervisory relationship to work well it is important to keep these appointments, to

keep your supervisor informed about your progress and to hand in material by agreed times. If supervision issues arise that you cannot resolve with your supervisor, contact your Personal Tutor and Dissertation Convenor (Sarah Parry) immediately so that they can be sorted out in a timely fashion.

It is important for students to know that their supervisors can only guide them in the research and preparation of their dissertations, and particularly during the writing up stage. Ultimately, the success of the dissertation depends on the amount of intellectual effort and time students are prepared to commit. Students and staff are both advised to carefully examine the *SSPS Common Dissertation Marking Descriptors* (see page 34) and the *dissertation mark sheets* (see page 45) particularly in the final stages of the dissertation preparation, so as to ensure that they are aware of the marking criteria and that expectations remain realistic.

Other points to bear in mind about the supervisory relationship:

- Staff will not normally be available to provide supervision or written feedback during the Christmas and Easter Vacations.
- Students should keep a log of meetings with supervisors, including dates of meetings and summaries of discussions.
- When sending a chapter to your supervisor, please name your chapter files something like ‘surname_draft_chapter_5.doc’ rather than ‘my-chapter.doc’ or ‘dissertation_draft.doc’
- The point of sending a supervisor a draft chapter is for them to suggest ways for you to improve it. There is no point in submitting a draft to them unless you make time to implement their suggested improvements.
- Remember that your supervisor has many other commitments as well. You should leave enough time to submit work, get it back from your supervisor, and be able to act upon the suggestions s/he has made.

Section 4: Marking and assessment

4.1 Marking

Your dissertation will be marked internally by two members of staff in SPS (or one in GeoSciences and one in SPS for geography pathway dissertations). Each marker evaluates the dissertation independently; they both assign a grade to the dissertation and prepare a short report that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the work. After the marking has been completed by both members of staff, the marks awarded are compared and the markers discuss their evaluations with one another. In most cases, any differences in marks are small and can be resolved easily, in which case, the agreed mark is used in the classification of your degree. Occasionally, differences are not so easily resolved, in which case a third marker may be asked to give an opinion.

The Sustainable Development External Examiner may request the opportunity to read any dissertation. Dissertation grades are provisional until the Exam Board has met in June.

Independent double-marking is an important guarantee of consistency in assessment. In addition, all markers are asked to work to a common framework of criteria (see below).

4.2 Assessment criteria

The full marking criteria for marking dissertations in SPS is given below (the marksheets we use). We strongly recommend that you read these: they are the criteria against which your dissertation will be marked.

***Exam Number:**

*** Title:**

***Word Count:**

***Are you happy for your project to be made available electronically (without your identity being revealed) to future students in the School of Social and Political Science?**

Yes / No

(*indicates fields to be completed by the student)

Marker:

MARK:

(Please note, the mark reflects the overall quality of the item. It is provisional and **DOES NOT** include any lateness or word count penalties which may have been incurred)

NOTES TO MARKERS: This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment for the degree of MA in Sustainable Development. Students are supervised from within subject areas (PIR, Social Anthropology, Sociology) but the guidelines differ to a small extent. The maximum word count for the Sociology and Social Anthropology pathways is 12,000; for PIR it is 10,000. This is an absolute maximum, there is no '-/+ 10%', and it includes everything in the main body of the dissertation (ie not the acknowledgments, abstract, contents page; and not the reference list and appendices, but it does include all footnotes and all information presented in the text in whatever form). There is no compulsory research diary. The topic has to be relevant for sustainable development.

Key criteria

The SPS Marking Criteria for Dissertations follow; what is given below are key aspects of a dissertation which markers will be assessing (NOTE the tickboxes are meant to be indicative of quality and used as a guide to markers and students to highlight areas of strengths and weakness; they do not translate directly into a grade/mark equivalent):

Aspect of performance	+		Avg		-
Focuses on a clear topic and research questions					

Relevant literature adequately reviewed and successful integration of the ideas and arguments of other authors					
Research methods appropriate and adequately discussed (<i>if appropriate; this may not be relevant for some dissertations</i>)					
Appropriate and sufficient data for the research questions to be satisfactorily explored					
Analysis well developed and presented; relevant concepts used in analysing the data					
Clear structure of argument, with material clearly organised, and overall a logical and coherent line of reasoning					
Conclusions appropriate to research questions and findings					
Presentation good (well written, clear, fluent and appropriate as an academic piece of work, and properly proof-read)					

OVERALL EVALUATION:

Criteria for Grading Dissertations

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/honours/assessment_and_regs/marketing_descriptors

4.3 Freedom of Information & Dissertations

The School of Social and Political Science's policy is to retain copies of dissertations. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 requires the University to make available to any enquirer information held by the University, unless one of the legislation's narrowly defined exemptions applies. Exemptions include:

- Information provided in confidence (e.g., situations where individuals were interviewed in confidence and are quoted in the dissertation).

- Substantial prejudice to commercial interests.
- Research in progress (most likely to apply where dissertations include information about research findings that have not yet been published but where an intention exists to publish them).

4.4 Penalties

Penalties that can be applied to your work and how to avoid them.

There are **two** types of penalties that can be applied to your course work. Students must read the full description on each of these at:

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/current_students/teaching_and_learning/assessment_and_regulations/coursework_penalties

Make sure you are aware of each of these penalties and know how to avoid them. Students are responsible for taking the time to read guidance and for ensuring their coursework submissions comply with guidance.

4.5 Prizes

There is a prize awarded to the Best Dissertation in Sustainable Development. This prize is decided at the Senior Honours Exam Board in June, and presented to the winner at the Graduation reception.

There is also a University wide prize for the best dissertation (at undergraduate and MSc level) on a sustainability or social responsibility topic, starting in 2015/6. Full details of the prizes are available at: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/about/sustainability/themes/research-teaching/dissertation-prizes> Two previous Sustainable Development students have won this prize.

If you have any questions about any of the information in this Handbook, please contact the Dissertation Convenor. Most students really enjoy their dissertations and relish the opportunity to study in depth something which is of particular interest to them. Good luck!

Appendix 1: Developing your ideas, searching for literature, and writing research questions

Dissertation Planning

One of the most difficult aspects of writing a dissertation can be getting started. We invite you to decide what to study, how to study it, and when to do what. Many students find all this considerably harder than writing to short deadlines on essay titles issued by teaching staff. So, give yourself plenty of time during the first semester of Junior Honours and over the Christmas holiday of your Junior Honours year to think about the

field to which you want to devote a considerable amount of energy over the next fourteen months. ***The importance of early planning cannot be over-stated!***

Your choice of topic should be based on your own interests, what subjects staff can supervise, and what is feasible in terms of the literature, time and resources available. Your project must have a clear focus and definable boundaries. It is much better to focus on a narrow topic (appropriately situated within a broader sustainable development context) than on one that is too broad-ranging. You will be expected to draw upon the existing literature, but you cannot only do that: a dissertation is not just another long essay. The project has to involve primary research. This may mean collecting your own data from the ‘real world’. Re-analysing data that someone else has collected also counts as primary research, and can have practical advantages (given that data collection for the project must be manageable in terms of time and cost), but this does mean getting hold of the original data and performing your own analysis (see below). Library-based work is also appropriate. For example, using historical primary sources or census statistics, or investigations of the work of theorists (using their own writings, not just secondary literature about them) are also forms of primary research.

What follows is some very useful advice, given in the Politics and International Relations Handbook, which is applicable for all Sustainable Development dissertations students.

Choosing a topic

Your dissertation has to be on a sustainable development topic. This is one of the criteria on which you are going to be marked. Other than that, the choice is left up to you. This means you have a great deal of scope. It is important to pick a topic that is of interest to you, that is feasible to study, and upon which you can write something novel and of value. You may choose to take a particular topic or issue in which you have an interest, or a campaign with which you have been involved; it may be an event that triggers your curiosity, a policy change or a story you hear about in the news. It may be something that you have previously studied during your degree, which might be a particular issue, example, case study, or theoretical perspective. If you need special skills or training (e.g. in analysing quantitative data), you should consider this when choosing your topic, and whether you will need to take particular research methods courses. It may be that you base your dissertation on a gap year or a summer placement, but talk to your supervisor about this before you leave.

A guide that some students have found useful is Karen Smith et al, *Doing your undergraduate social sciences dissertation*, which is available as an e-book and in hard copy. There is also a very good on-line resource about researching and writing undergraduate dissertations in the social sciences available at:

<http://www.socscidiss.bham.ac.uk>

Other similar guides include:

- Murray R (2002), *How to write a thesis* (Buckingham: Open University Press)
- Oliver P (2004), *Writing your thesis* (London: Sage)

Silbergh, D (2001), *Doing Dissertations in Politics: a student guide* (London: Routledge).

Searching for Literature

Reading previous research on your topic area of interest is very helpful when trying to focus your ideas and determine your research question(s). Finding out what has been done in the past gives you ideas for what you might be able to do in your research, what you can apply from past studies, what new elements you might be able to add. It can also help to identify any false starts or ideas that perhaps won't be useful to you. Reviewing literature is important because it helps you narrow down your topic and formulate your research question. It will also become a chapter of your dissertation because it is important to show how what you have done relates to the existing literature.

To identify what has been done on your topic, you need to search for the research and information on it. There are many ways of doing this:

Course reading lists: Look at the reading lists for courses you have already done that relate to your topic. They should guide you to materials that your instructor thinks are good quality.

Bibliographies: Books and articles that you have read for coursework will make reference to other books that relate to the topic. Use the references in endnotes or bibliographies to lead you to relevant works.

Shelfmarks and Search terms: if you find one book that you already know is relevant, this will lead you to the relevant shelfmark where you will find books on a related topic. The word cloud on searcher will also help you find related search terms.

Journals: Identify and search within the relevant journals that relate to your topic. You can do this through the e-journals page on the library website by typing in keywords in which you are interested.

Staff: Ask your supervisor/lecturer to recommend authors or readings. Depending on your topic, they may or may not be able to do this, and supervisors are **not** expected to provide your reading list for you.

Masters and PhD dissertations: Can be searched on-line through two databases

<http://www.theses.com> (UK Universities) & <http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/gateway> (North American Universities). They can be ordered as ILLs.

Databases and gateways: The library has a new 'interface' called 'searcher' which helps you search lots of databases at once, or you can browse the alphabetical listing under 'databases'. Some useful databases include:

Google Scholar: Will help you find recent journal articles but it is not as comprehensive as a database like Articlefirst or Web of Science. Nor does it link you to our catalogue.

ASSIA: An international abstracting and indexing tool for health and social science professionals. It provides abstracts from around 650 UK, US and international journals.

Firstsearch/ Articlefirst: An extremely useful database. You can search under subject or keyword. It will show you many options. Some will be available on-line, some will be in the Edinburgh University library, others will not. Another Firstsearch database is Worldcat, which lists most books published; you can search it in the same way, and using the same searches as Articlefirst.

Web of Science (<http://wok.mimas.ac.uk/>): The social sciences citation index is likely to be most useful for politics dissertations. You can search on-line for articles published in thousands of journals since 1956. Like Articlefirst, it will give you thousands of returns; you may want to narrow down your search to just focus on the past 5 years, or similar.

Social science gateways are often a very useful way to access relevant material. See, for example, <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/subject/socsci>

For students writing a dissertation on development-related topics

The Governance resource centre at Birmingham, <http://www.grc-exchange.org/> You can search the site, or look at particular themes. They have also compiled very useful subject lists of materials on various themes from public expenditure management to water and sanitation. The British Library for Development Studies at IDS also has a searchable on-line index – accessible from Searcher – and many on-line documents at <http://blds.ids.ac.uk/blds-collection> Both these services will send documents to you for a fee – but check, you may find that the library has a subscription, or that it is cheaper to get on Inter-Library Loan. So, for example if you search under NGOs, you would find an abstract of Moore, M. and Stewart, S. 2000, 'Corporate Governance for NGOs?', in D. Eade, ed. Development, NGOs, and Civil Society, Oxfam, Oxford, pp. 80-90 which you can also find in our library.

Inter-library loans (ILLs): if a book or article is not available in either the University Library or the National Library of Scotland, you can ask your supervisor to write a letter of support to take to the library. This should entitle you to request an inter-library loan. Each request will cost you £4, which is subsidized by the University. More information is available on <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/services/ill1.shtml> It is helpful if you know that your book or article is available from a UK university. Check COPAC <http://copac.ac.uk/> for the major UK universities or the British Library catalogue. Photocopies of articles or books held at the British Library usually take 1-2 weeks to arrive at most. ILLs can also come from abroad, but this may take longer.

Reviewing the literature

You may find it helpful to prepare an annotated bibliography – which just means making notes on what you've read – to help you clarify your thoughts before you write the literature review (which is often the first chapter you write).

The first stage in the research is to conduct a thorough review of the **relevant** literature, within the boundaries of the research question as set out in your outline. A review of the

literature will be the foundation of all dissertations. Most of you will begin with a chapter on the existing literature, research and arguments that are relevant to your topic (though this will be more central to some dissertations than to others). Whether your dissertation is theoretical or empirical, you still need to have – and demonstrate that you have – knowledge of existing literature. Literature reviewing is an ongoing process; you will go back to it when trying to address research questions and understand the data or findings, or elucidate your thoughts. But it is usually expected that you spend a significant amount of time at the beginning familiarising yourself with the literature relevant to your field.

The literature review serves a number of inter-related functions:

- It helps you refine the research question(s) set out in the outline, and to build upon it.
- It allows you to develop an in-depth understanding of the subject area in which you are working, and to learn from existing research in this field. This in turn should give you food for thought that informs your own thinking and your own research.
- It provides guidance in addressing some of the research questions set out in your outline – it won’t always be necessary to conduct empirical research from scratch if previous research has answered some of these questions for you. Remember there is a limit to what you can do by way of empirical research anyway (time, resources, expertise).
- It helps you gain an understanding about the theoretical and analytical debates that are prominent within current work on your topic. You are expected to **engage** in these debates.
- It will help you make sense of your data and findings when you gather them.
- It adds scholarly weight to your dissertation. We are looking to see that you have a good understanding of existing literature, that you can see where your work fits in the academic field. We want not only to see that you’ve read books, articles and reports, but that you’ve thought about them, given consideration to them, addressed the merit of existing work, maybe even challenged them as a result of your own research.

As well as summarising the views and conclusions expressed by established academics, you are expected to be analytical, to weigh up different arguments and points of view, and to critique existing work.

Three years of University essay writing has already given you most of the skills you need to undertake this task. The difference now is that whereas in essay writing you are usually addressing a set question and using a set reading list in so doing, with the dissertation you set your own question and build your own reading list. There are a number of cautionary points of which you should take note:

- Always retain focus – this is why it is important to have a good research outline that you have discussed with your supervisor. There is no point in aimlessly reading and reading around the general area and hoping this will bring focus to your research.
- Don’t waste time on irrelevant material – if half way through a book, you aren’t getting much use out of it, ditch it! Don’t feel you have to get to the end of a book if it

isn't really relevant. Likewise, resist the temptation to use a book just because you read it. We are always looking to see that you have demonstrated the relevance of the material you have read, i.e. how it relates to the specific topic you are addressing.

- Use academic sources and specialist texts. Textbooks may be useful to direct you to the specialist texts, and familiarise you with the key debates, but in themselves, they are not very useful sources – they are too general for this level. Non-academic online sources can be useful, especially if examining an ongoing issue where the academic textbooks may be behind events, but the internet is never going to be good enough by itself. You **must** embed your research and your written work in the context of the existing **academic** literature and debates.
- Don't try to read everything! Part of the challenge of the literature review is selecting the relevant material. You are not expected to have read every book or journal article that relates to your topic. You are expected to have read the key ones, and to demonstrate how what you've read relates to your work.

Checklist of dos and don'ts when reviewing literature

Do...

Identify and discuss the relevant/key studies on the topic.

Include as much up-to-date material as possible.

Check the details, eg how names are spelled.

Try and reflect on your reading and interpretation - consider your own perspective and make it clear/defend it.

Critically evaluate and analyse the material: don't simply describe and report what is there.

Use extracts, illustrations and examples to support your analyses and argument.

Manage the information – adopt a system to ensure your notes and references are well-organised.

Make your review worth reading by making yourself clear, systematic and coherent: explain why the topic is interesting.

Be as precise as necessary but as simple as possible in your choice of language.

Don't...

Don't discuss only old materials – find the latest, updated work where you can.

Don't use concepts to impress without defining them – this is not impressive!

Don't accept any position at face value – question the basis of knowledge claims.

Don't only produce a description of the content of what you read.

Don't provide only a list of items you have read in the literature review chapter– a list is not a review. (You will need to provide a reference list at the end of the dissertation.)

Don't drown in information by not staying in control of the material you are gathering.

Don't use long words for the sake of it – it is more important to be clear and concise.

Don't use jargon or discriminatory language.

Don't misspell names or get publication details wrong.

Making notes/interactive reading:

The following guidance has been derived from Dey, I. (1993) *Qualitative Data Analysis*. (London: Routledge); Harrison, L. (2001) *Political research: an introduction* (London: Routledge); and, Hart, C. (1998) *Doing a Literature Review* (London: Sage). It provides some tips on reading and note taking.

- Focused and accurate note taking is an important part of the dissertations process.
- Skim read for relevance: in what ways is the book/article useful? (For example, arguments/events/concepts/evidence/definitions/questions/ways of thinking.) How does it relate to your research questions?
- Note its structure/ topic/ general reasoning/ data and bibliographical references.
- Survey the different parts of the book. Use the Contents and the Introduction to identify key chapters. Skim read the introduction and conclusions to chapters to work out the gist. Skim read the introduction to book and conclusions in order to identify the main arguments/ logic for book/ approach. How does it relate to your research questions?
- Read key chapters carefully and make detailed notes. It is important that you put things in your own words (see the Plagiarism Guidance in the MA Sustainable Development Handbook). Making notes which answer these questions will help you put things in your own words:
 - What are the essential points of the account / discussion/ argument?
 - How does this relate to your own interest/ ideas/ questions?
 - How does it relate to other discussions you have read: does it reinforce or challenge previous explanations or analyses? What are your reactions to the arguments and evidence presented?
 - Remember to critique (critically assess) relevant studies - don't just report them
 - What is your summary and analysis of the work going to be useful for? For example, will it help in constructing a narrative account (Who? What? Why? When? Where? And the ever useful SO WHAT?) or as part of mapping debates in the area? Or as part of your framework for analysis?
 - Do the work of assessing the meaning, relevance and significance of each work as you go along. You won't get the meaning through osmosis, or through writing out chunks and putting it under your pillow... The process of active reading involves:
 - Absorbing information
 - Reflecting upon it
 - Relating various bits of the argument/ information/ analysis to other parts
 - Assimilation - relating to previous knowledge
 - Retention and recall - storing in a meaningful and accessible way
 - Communication - for use in producing an account
 - Make a full note of the details of the book or article at the time - rather than try to retrieve them later when you are trying to compile your bibliography.
 - When making notes, remember clarity is the key: mark clearly what is in own words and what is direct quotes. It is advisable to avoid directly copying whole chunks. Before copying a section, ask yourself what work particular quotes might do for your argument. Perhaps mark these in a different coloured pen to avoid any confusion later.

- Record author, title of book or article, publication details (for a book, place of publication, publisher, date; for a journal, journal title, volume and/or part number, date, page numbers for start and finish of article), and page number(s) of quote or argument summarised (see Citations guidance below).

Identifying Your Research Question(s)

Dissertations need to be coherent. The central research question or argument is what links together your various chapters. The different sections and chapters of the dissertation will all relate to one another, because they help you explore and explain a specific research problem. So it is vital that you identify and then focus on the central question at the heart of your dissertation, and the related sub-questions that derive from it: what's your point? What's the point of your dissertation?

At this stage, it is important that you are clear about the specific nature of the problem you are going to research. The literature review should help you do this. Having a clear research question, or set of inter-related questions, helps to guide your research and reading. In other words, what questions will you have in your head when conducting your research? To what end is your research serving? What are you looking for?

The ‘what’s your point?’ question is a really useful question to ask yourself throughout the process of research and writing your dissertation. This can also be asked as ‘So?’ or ‘So what?’ Such a question helps to determine the relevance of the research, the relevance of the information being gathered, and the relevance of the paragraphs you will eventually be writing. If you ask this, and see no relevance, then forget it because it probably isn’t relevant!

- Define the problem. What is the central hypothesis or question under consideration? This is a key contrast with essays, where the question is set for you. Here you have had to do it yourself, within a broad area of interest. So, you should provide a **statement of the problem** – this may include a hypothesis (that A is related to or causes B) to be tested, and/or a central question to be addressed.
- What is purpose/aim of the research? Is it to examine a policy, evaluate or develop a theory, analyse the significance or consequences of an event, or what?
- Why have you chosen this problem for consideration? What has prompted the research? (A change or event? A change in policy or political development? A gap in the literature you have identified?). What is it that makes this an interesting area of study, and an important question to be examined? Try to be precise. It's not enough just to say you were curious about something – you need to explain why in a way that will lead others to agree that it's a worthwhile issue to explore.
- What theoretical approaches help you understand or explain your material? How does it relate to bigger theoretical arguments within political science? Is there an over-arching theoretical framework against which your work can be situated?
- What are the sub-questions – the research questions – this has generated? A hypothesis or statement of the problem will have generated a series of research questions to test your hypothesis or examine the problem. Write down the 2 or 3 that are guiding the research that you will be embarking on this term. Remember here

that you have to ensure that you have considered alternatives to your explanation. You may also need to look at the controlling variables, e.g. for a topic on women in parliament it is not enough to look only at the women, but you would also need to look at men.

Questions to be asked:

- Do your research questions relate to each other? How?
- Do they relate to the central hypothesis or problem under study?
- How you will go about examining these questions in your research?
- How does the examination of these questions relate to the statement of the problem?

Appendix 2: Researching, analysing, and writing your dissertation

Advice for carrying out your dissertation research

A dissertation is worth 40 credits and is equivalent to two semester-length courses. You should therefore be putting as much time into it as you do for two whole courses.

- On any topic, there are huge numbers of books you could be reading. While it is important to read extensively (and about both topic, and methods), in line with this being equivalent to a year-long course, you don't have to read everything. You need to be self-disciplined and know when to stop. You are aiming to answer your research question, not discover all there is to know about your broad research subject.
- Draw up a list of tasks that you have to do, and draw up a realistic timetable in which to fulfil these tasks.
- Draft a timetable according to the chapter outline. But be realistic. There is no point in setting goals that you will never attain. Setting goals that you never attain can also be very demoralising.
- You should also build in time for slippage. It may take longer to do a particular piece of work than you planned. You also need to make sure that you leave enough time for writing-up at the end. It is inevitable that things will go wrong – for even the best planned students, interviewees refuse at the last minute, an event does not take place, the documents that you needed are unavailable. You need to build in plenty of time to take account of such contingencies, and be able to deal with them.
- There is no right way to go about this, but our advice would be to write as you go along, rather than to leave it all until the end. Writing helps you think, as well as the other way around. By writing, you formulate your thoughts and refine your ideas. This should all be part of the research process.
- You should leave yourself at least four weeks at the end to edit your final draft. Editing is as important as writing.

Analysing your data

"However exciting may be their experiences while gathering data, there comes a time when the data must be analysed. Often researchers are perplexed by this necessary task... they are often troubled by (some of) the following questions. How can I make sense out of all this material? How can I have a theoretical interpretation while still grounding it in the empirical reality reflected by my materials? How can I make sure that my data and interpretations are valid and reliable? How do I break through the inevitable biases, prejudices and stereotypical perspectives that I bring with me to the analytic situation? How do I pull all of my analysis together to create a concise theoretical formulation of the area under study?

Strauss A., and J. Corbin, 1990, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage), p 7

These questions are answered by adopted a thorough approach to data analysis.

Making sense of it all: data analysis

- Use a system of coding to categorise your material into chapters and sub-themes within chapters, to facilitate the analytic process. In doing this, ensure that your analytical categories are consistent with the aims and objectives of the dissertation.
- Set aside sufficient time for the data analysis process and for drafting and redrafting chapters.
- Keep questioning yourself and your material to identify how it addresses your research questions, and how the material inter-relates.
- Be prepared to make a critical and balanced judgment of the material.
- Treat data critically and remain focused. Avoid going off at tangents that detract from the purpose of your study.
- Avoid making exaggerated claims to 'proof', or drawing conclusions which your material does not support.

Structure and Argument

We have stressed the need to be clear about the purpose and point of your dissertation. It is important when you go into the writing stage that you have a clear idea of what the dissertation is about. What is the purpose of the dissertation, what is the problem under examination, what is the central contention or argument you are developing, and what central questions does your dissertation raise and address? Having a clear idea of precisely what it is you're examining is essential.

Students will often feel a very natural and human desire to demonstrate the full extent of their labours, to prove how much they've read and how much work they've done. One of key skills in dissertation writing is in selecting only the material which is relevant. That means being prepared to leave out material which doesn't fit – which may be superfluous or unacceptable in some way. So, think of it as a journey - avoid temptation to meander down wee side roads that may be interesting but take you off the main track. Leave out what's irrelevant to the central problem being addressed. Also, you should write the dissertation in the past tense – you have already collected the data and know what you have found by the time you finish writing. So you know what your conclusions are. Keep them in mind when writing, and keep focused on explaining how you got there.

Writing

Finally, you need to pull together your argument and evidence into the chapters which will make up your dissertation.

Writing, reading and revising all take place throughout the year, but at some point you will 'start' to write your first chapter. Many people start with a literature review. This helps you identify the relevant literature and identify your research question. Other people find it more helpful to start writing a methodology chapter, which includes details

of your research topic and what you have done, and then write the literature review when they are more confident about the topic.

You should discuss and agree with your supervisor which is best for you. In the end, your dissertation must show that you are familiar with the literature, whether or not you start by writing a literature review or not. The important thing is to start writing, and have draft chapters under way before the end of Semester 1 of Senior Honours.

A dissertation is different from an essay because you may receive feed-back on your chapters that will help you revise them. You should also read your own drafts critically and think about how you can make them clearer, more effective, and better.

- Editing is as important as writing – and there is a lot of scope using ‘cut and paste’ to move things around, make amendments to structure, etc. Leave plenty of time to get it right.
- Leave yourself a few days for a break. Put your draft chapters away in a drawer and then come back and read them as though they were someone else’s. It is very difficult to criticise your own work (people can be too harsh and too kind to themselves). Try to be an impartial critic.
- Students often say ‘I can’t cut it down to 12 000 words’. Remember, you are being assessed on your ability to write concisely and effectively on your topic. Dissertations should not include extraneous text, unnecessarily wordy sentences, or show evidence of inadequate editing. It is very often the case that you can cut out words throughout, rather than having to cut a whole section. Make sure that everything you are saying is absolutely necessary; and that if it is, that you are saying it in the most precise and concise way possible.

Dissertation chapters

This is the order of chapters, and an outline of some of the content we would expect to see in them – of course, it will vary for different topics, and you should always follow the advice given to you by the supervisor in your pathway, but this is intended to be a guide (PIR students should follow the guidance in the PIR Dissertation Handbook):

Introduction

Sets out broad topic - but moves very quickly on to focus on your specific research

Sets out importance of that research

Specific hypothesis or research question/s: make these very obvious in the text and very clear!

Literature Review

What has been done on the research topic

- ideally structured by themes, sub-topics

What about this research is relevant to your particular research questions

What gap(s) there are in the literature

How your research addresses these gaps

Methodology

What you did – and how it answered your research questions (make this bit clear, need to see the connection between hypothesis/ research question and what you did!)

What methods you decided to use, and why

(possibly briefly mentioning methods that you did not use if relevant)

Include references from the research methods literature

How you designed your methods

- eg how you decided what questions to ask, in what order, how you phrased the questions, how many questions you included and why

How you carried out the data collection

- eg sample location and size, how you got consent from people to be interviewed or to be part of your research
- any reflections upon the process
- any successes, and challenges – and how you dealt with these challenges

Response rate

Dates and times – and any other details – it may seem dull but it is important to include the details of when you carried out your research (so include time, day, length of interview or time in the field etc, location, etc – briefly state these details)

Discussion of how you analysed your data

Reflections on the process – what challenges you faced, how you adapted to them, how you developed your methods as you went on in light of your progress, what you learnt, how the experience of data collection went, and anything relevant about your own role – eg were you very immersed in the setting or case study, and what impact did that have?

Analysis

Can be structured around the same sub-headings as the Literature Review

Can include reference to the literature (or refer back to the Literature Review)

Should include data, a discussion of those data, comparison between different data

Needs to have a balance of data, and analysis

- need data (eg a quote from an interview, a graph) to support and justify your analysis
- need to include analysis, cannot just let your reader do the work – so don't just include lots of graphs without saying anything about them

Conclusions: This chapter sums up your analysis chapter

Summarising and bringing together your results and analysis, emphasising your key points

Comparisons, and the overall picture from your analysis

What do your data and analysis tell us?

Can reference back to the literature again, and emphasise the contribution that your work makes (it will be making a contribution, either agreeing or disagreeing with previous findings – no one else will have done exactly the same work as you, in the same location, at the same time – so you will be doing unique and interesting work!)

Discussion: this chapter sums up your whole dissertation

What is the significance of your work? What does it tell us that we didn't know at the start of the research?

How does this answer your research questions? (It's a good idea to explicitly spell out that you have answered your research question that you set out at the beginning; or if you haven't, how you adapted your research and so on – but referring back to it is useful.)

What contribution does your research make – to the academic literature, policy context, political context related to this topic?

Are there any recommendations?

What further research might be useful?

Layout and format of the Dissertation

While some individual variation is acceptable, your dissertation should be laid out in accordance with the following general principles. Please note dissertations are marked anonymously, so please ensure that your examination number is the only source of identification anywhere in the dissertation. You should use at least one-and-a-half line spacing, leave ample margins, and all pages must be numbered.

Title Page: This should contain the title of the dissertation with your examination number underneath. Do not put your name on the title page (or anywhere else). Near the bottom of the page there should be the following statement:

'A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of M.A. in Sustainable Development'

with the year of submission below. There should also be a statement of the number of words (the word count excludes the title page, table of contents, abstract, acknowledgments, bibliography and appendices).

Abstract: The abstract is a short statement summarising the contents of the dissertation. It is intended to brief potential readers about the work in its entirety. It is likely to be used by future students and by other researchers. It should take the form of a short factual statement identifying the topic of your study, the approach adopted and the findings. Students are reminded of the importance of writing a clear and representative abstract, as this is the first text that a reader comes across in any piece of writing, and therefore provides the larger analytical context and purpose against which the subsequent writing is judged.

Acknowledgments: if you need to thank any organization or individuals who contributed to your research. It is customary to thank your supervisor and any other staff members who have helped you.

Table of Contents: A piece of work of this size is split into sections or chapters with titles to indicate the content, and should include page numbers.

List of Tables or illustrations: if necessary, and should correspond to the table number and give the page number of the table.

List of Abbreviations: if necessary.

Then the main body of dissertation: arranged in chapters, with each chapter beginning on a new page, and with all pages numbered. It is likely that these chapters will be Introduction; Literature Review; Methodology; Analysis; Conclusions; Discussion (see list and discussion in previous section). While this list gives an indication of the likely content, you do not (for example) have to call your literature review chapter ‘Literature Review’, and it can sometimes be more illuminating if you choose a (sub)title which reflects the themes you discuss.

References: You should include a full reference list with all publication information. All quotations should have full references, and all references should be included in the bibliography. Please refer to the MA Sustainable Development Handbook for details of how to reference correctly.

Appendices: if required. Appendices may be used where original material is relevant to the dissertation but cannot appropriately be incorporated within the text. Everything that is vital to the argument of the dissertation should be included in the text. The appendices are not to be used as a way to sneak in extra information because you are over the word count (see discussion below about how to cut down on words). Appendices would contain (each in a separate appendix) any supplementary information that it is useful for your markers to see; for example, if you used a questionnaire or interview guide, you could include a copy of it here. It is not necessary for you to include all your data in your appendices; for example, you would include a copy of a questionnaire, not every completed response. Appendices may not therefore be used as a device for extending the main text, or extending the word limit.

Checklist before you submit:

(Adapted from Silbergh, D, 2001, Doing Dissertations in Politics (London: Routledge), p178.)

- Does my writing demonstrate that I have understood the key concepts and complexities pertaining to the topic?
- Does it demonstrate awareness of the relevant literature?
- Have I critically assessed (and not merely reported) the relevant issues and opinions arising from the literature?
- Does my dissertation demonstrate that I have chosen and used appropriate research methods, and have these methods been adequately explained and discussed?
- Does my dissertation demonstrate that I have collected, analysed and assessed data, which are relevant to the topic under investigation?
- Does my writing demonstrate that I have brought a critical and balanced point of view to bear upon the evidence gathered and presented?

- Does my writing demonstrate that I have drawn conclusions based upon a balanced discussion of the evidence?
- Are the conclusions consistent with the aims and objectives set out in the introduction?
- Are all the references used in the text accurately and fully listed at the end?
- Have I included all the sections as listed above?
- Have I proof read/asked someone else to proof read?
- Have I remained within the word limit?

Appendix 3: General Information

Students with Disabilities

The School welcomes students with disabilities (including those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia) and is working to make all its courses as accessible as possible. If you have a disability special needs which means that you may require adjustments to be made to ensure access to lectures, tutorials or exams, or any other aspect of your studies, you can discuss these with your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor who will advise on the appropriate procedures.

You can also contact the Student Disability Service, based on the third floor of the University's Main Library. You can find their details as well as information on all of the support they can offer at: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service>

Learning Resources for Undergraduates

The Study Development Team at the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) provides resources and workshops aimed at helping all students to enhance their learning skills and develop effective study techniques. Resources and workshops cover a range of topics, such as managing your own learning, reading, note-making, essay and report writing, exam preparation and exam techniques.

The study development resources are housed on 'LearnBetter' (undergraduate), part of Learn, the University's virtual learning environment. Follow the link from the IAD Study Development web page to enrol: www.ed.ac.uk/iad/undergraduates

Workshops are interactive: they will give you the chance to take part in activities, have discussions, exchange strategies, share ideas and ask questions. They are 90 minutes long and held on Wednesday afternoons at 1.30pm or 3.30pm. The schedule is available from the IAD Undergraduate web page (see above).

Workshops are open to all undergraduates but you need to book in advance, using the MyEd booking system. Each workshop opens for booking two weeks before the date of the workshop itself. If you book and then cannot attend, please cancel in advance through MyEd so that another student can have your place. (To be fair to all students, anyone who persistently books on workshops and fails to attend may be barred from signing up for future events).

Study Development Advisors are also available for an individual consultation if you have specific questions about your own approach to studying, working more effectively, strategies for improving your learning and your academic work. Please note, however, that Study Development Advisors are not subject specialists so they cannot comment on the content of your work. They also do not check or proof read students' work.

Students can book a study skills consultation at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/undergraduate/services/quick-consultations>

Academic English support can also be accessed at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching>

Discussing Sensitive Topics

The discipline of Social Anthropology addresses a number of topics that some might find sensitive or, in some cases, distressing. You should read this Course Guide carefully and if there are any topics that you may feel distressed by you should seek advice from the course convenor and/or your Personal Tutor.

For more general issues you may consider seeking the advice of the Student Counselling Service: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling>

Attendance Monitoring

In accordance with the University general degree regulations you are expected to attend all teaching and assessment events associated with all courses that you are enrolled on. The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences undertakes routine monitoring of attendance at tutorials and seminars for all students enrolled on courses delivered by Schools within our College. We undertake monitoring of attendance and engagement to enable us to identify where individual students may be experiencing difficulties and to ensure that timely and appropriate intervention can be delivered to provide support and guidance. We also undertake monitoring for sponsored students specifically to meet our obligations to the UKVI. If you miss one or more of your tutorials and/or seminars you may be contacted by your local Student Support Team and be asked to provide an explanation for your absence.

All data is gathered and stored in line with the University policies and guidance on data handling and you can view the privacy statement at:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-systems/use-of-data/policies-and-regulations/privacy-statement>

External Examiner

The External Examiner for the Sustainable Development programme is Dr Bronislaw Szerszynski, Lancaster University.

Appendix 4: Coursework Submission and Penalties

Penalties that can be applied to your work and how to avoid them

Below is a list of penalties that can be applied to your course work and these are listed below. Students **must** read the full description on each of these at:

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/current_students/teaching_and_learning/assessment_and_regulations/coursework_penalties

Make sure you are aware of each of these penalties and know how to avoid them.

Students are responsible for taking the time to read guidance and for ensuring their coursework submissions comply with guidance.

ELMA: Submission and Return of Coursework

Coursework is submitted online using our electronic submission system, ELMA. You will not be required to submit a paper copy of your work.

Marked coursework, grades and feedback will be returned to you via ELMA. You will not receive a paper copy of your marked course work or feedback.

For details of how to submit your course work to ELMA, please see our webpages [here](#).

Please note that all submissions to ELMA should be formatted as a Word document (doc or.docx.). If you are permitted or required to submit in a different format, this will be detailed in your course handbook.

Any submission that is not in word format will be converted by the Undergraduate Teaching Office into Word where possible. By submitting in any format other than word, you are accepting this process and the possibility that errors may occur during conversion. The UTO will do everything possible to ensure the integrity of any document converted but to avoid issue, please submit in Word format as requested.

Extensions

If you have good reason for not meeting a coursework deadline, you may request an extension. Before you request an extension, make sure you have read all the guidance on our [webpages](#) and take note of the key points below. You will also be able to access the online extension request form through our [webpages](#).

- Extensions are granted for 7 calendar days.
- If you miss the deadline for requesting an extension for a valid reason, you should submit your coursework as soon as you are able, and apply for Special Circumstances to disregard penalties for late submission. You should also contact your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor and make them aware of your situation.
- If you have a valid reason and require an extension of more than 7 calendar days, you should submit your coursework as soon as you are able, and apply for Special

Circumstances to disregard penalties for late submission. You should also contact your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor and make them aware of your situation.

- If you have a Learning Profile from the Disability Service allowing you potential for flexibility over deadlines, you must still make an extension request for this to be taken into account.

Plagiarism Guidance for Students: Avoiding Plagiarism

Material you submit for assessment, such as your essays, must be your own work. You can, and should, draw upon published work, ideas from lectures and class discussions, and (if appropriate) even upon discussions with other students, but you must always make clear that you are doing so. **Passing off anyone else's work** (including another student's work or material from the Web or a published author) **as your own is plagiarism** and will be punished severely.

When you upload your work to ELMA you will be asked to check a box to confirm the work is your own. All submissions will be run through 'Turnitin', our plagiarism detection software. Turnitin compares every essay against a constantly-updated database, which highlights all plagiarised work. Assessed work that contains plagiarised material will be awarded a mark of zero, and serious cases of plagiarism will also be reported to the College Academic Misconduct officer. In either case, the actions taken will be noted permanently on the student's record. **For further details on plagiarism see the Academic Services' website:**

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/taught-students/student-conduct/academic-misconduct>

Data Protection Guidance for Students

In most circumstances, students are responsible for ensuring that their work with information about living, identifiable individuals complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. The document, *Personal Data Processed by Students*, provides an explanation of why this is the case. It can be found, with advice on data protection compliance and ethical best practice in the handling of information about living, identifiable individuals, on the Records Management section of the University website at:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/guidance/data-protection/dpforstudents>