PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY:

The full set of school regulations and procedures is contained in the Undergraduate Student Handbook which is available online at your MyAberdeen Organisation page. Students are expected to familiarise themselves not only with the contents of this leaflet but also with the contents of the Handbook. Therefore, ignorance of the contents of the Handbook will not excuse the breach of any School regulation or procedure.

You must familiarise yourself with this important information at the earliest opportunity.

COURSE CO-ORDINATOR

Dr. Stephan Torre

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Discipline Administration:

Miss Lisa Roberts

50-52 College Bounds

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TIMETABLE

FIRST HALF-SESSION: Introductory Session – Attend for Week 2 only
Thursday 24 September, 3pm – 5pm MacRobert, MR252

SECOND HALF-SESSION: Informal Writing Workshop – Attend for Week 2 and Week 5 only
Tuesday, 26 January, 9am-11am Zoology, ZB18
Tuesday, 16 February, 9am-11am Zoology, ZB18

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The dissertation is a required component of the Honours Degree in Philosophy. It is an extended essay (of no more than 10,000 words) that is the result of a sustained research project carried out under the supervision of a member of staff. Within certain limits, students are given the opportunity to pick their topic and supervisor themselves. In what follows, you can find a detailed account of what will be required of you over the course of the year as well as a description of what your final draft should look like.

INTENDED aims and LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To **ANALYSE** and evaluate the work of scholars who have written on your chosen philosophical topic
- To reach your own conclusions on the basis of this analysis and evaluation
- To write up the results of your research in a clear and coherent manner
DISserTATION PROGRAMme

Over the course of the year, there will be a series of meetings that you ought to attend. Some of these are mandatory; others are recommended. Here is a rough overview of the schedule and procedure to be followed.

There will a mandatory organizational meeting held in the second week of the term (see above for date, time, and location). In this meeting, the Co-ordinator (Dr. Torre) will go over this document and answer any additional questions that students have. After this meeting, you will need to identify and make contact with members of staff who you think might be able to supervise your proposed project.

HOW DO I FIND A TOPIC AND A SUPERVISOR?

Choose a topic that is manageable; don’t be overly ambitious. Similarly, don’t choose a topic just because it sounds exciting. 10,000 words may seem a lot, but you’ll soon realise that it’s not (most journal articles are less than this!). So, try to focus on something specific where there’s an established body of secondary material available.

Once you’ve come up with some initial ideas about a topic, you should approach a Philosophy staff member who teaches/researches in that general area and ask whether he or she will act as your supervisor. Note that staff members can only supervise so many dissertations each. If your topic falls under a popular area (e.g., ethics), you would do well to contact your preferred supervisor promptly. If there are no staff members available with expertise on your topic, you may be asked to come up with an alternative dissertation topic.
Once you have made formal arrangements with a supervisor, you must inform the dissertation co-ordinator (Dr. Torre) of this.

IMPORTANT: The material you use in your dissertation should not duplicate written material you have used in other courses; i.e. you cannot “cut and paste” material from essays (written for other courses) into your dissertation. This does not, however, mean that you cannot work on a topic you have encountered on previous courses. (Consult your supervisor about this.)

WHAT ROLE DOES MY SUPERVISOR PLAY IN MY DISSERTATION?

Your supervisor’s job is to help you focus and plan your dissertation. However, the dissertation is YOUR responsibility; it is NOT the job of your supervisor (or anyone else) to choose a topic for you, or to tell you what to write!

Supervision will usually involve the following:

- An initial meeting to discuss the general topic, material etc. (Note: You should not expect supervisors to tell you exactly what to read; they are there for guidance only!)
- A meeting to discuss a plan / general outline of your dissertation (proposed chapters, etc.), and your argument. The latter will, of course, develop throughout the process of reading and writing your dissertation.
- A review meeting at which you’ll discuss your progress.

In sum, you should have no more than 3 or 4 meetings with your supervisor (in total approx. 2 hours contact time).
Staff members may differ in their approach to supervision. For example, some supervisors will be happy to read or discuss partial drafts of your dissertation or provide other forms of coaching, but others will not. You would do well to discuss this with your supervisor before beginning your project to ensure that you understand the terms of their supervision. Note, however, that no supervisor will proofread or read complete drafts. YOU are responsible for this as well as arranging appointments for supervision meetings and for handing in material on time.

Your dissertation will be marked by two members of staff and an external examiner. So remember that you’re not writing your dissertation simply for your supervisor.

Dissertation Writing Workshops

Many students will feel that they could use additional feedback on their written work beyond that which their supervisor is able to provide. In order to address this need, there will be a series of 2 writing workshops organized in the second-half session. In these workshops, the dissertation Co-ordinator (Dr. Torre) will go over the basic mechanics of philosophical writing, and students will have ample opportunity for peer-to-peer assessment of their drafted written work. The dates and times for these workshops can be found above in the ‘Timetable’ section of this document.

ASSESSMENT

THE DISSERTATION COUNTS FOR 100% OF THE FINAL MARK.

Click to view the University Level Descriptors (ANNEX A).
Click to view the University Assessment Scale Band Descriptors (ANNEX B).
ESSAYS

You are required to submit one dissertation of no longer than 10,000 words. It is difficult to state a precise lower bound for the word count, as this will depend on the nature of your project. However, as a general rule, one should aim for a final draft within the usual 10% band (including quotations and footnotes). Students should note that they will be penalized for work which is either too long or too short. If you have more specific questions, please address them to your supervisor.

HOW SHOULD I PRESENT THE RESULT OF MY RESEARCH?

First of all, your dissertation needs a

- TITLE PAGE stating the author and title of the dissertation.

This should be followed by a

- TABLE OF CONTENTS (listing your chapter headings and the pages on which the chapters begin) and a
- TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS explaining any abbreviations you’ve used throughout the dissertation

There is no standard format for the body of the dissertation, but most are set out as follows:

- INTRODUCTION stating the main objectives of the thesis and the main sources of information on which it will be based
- CHAPTERS (usually three or four) each following the structure of
  - chapter introduction
  - chapter body
  - chapter conclusion
CONCLUSION which doesn’t just repeat the points made in each chapter, but states the overall conclusions to which the chapters point together.

Along the way you will have to back up your analysis and arguments with evidence drawn from your research materials. This is normally done in the form of:

- FOOTNOTES

For further information on when and how to footnote see:

- University of Madison Wisconsin Writing Center. Chicago-Turabian Documentation.

or


At the end of the dissertation you should include a BIBLIOGRAPHY listing all the books, articles and other resources you have used in the preparation of the dissertation. Entries in the bibliography should follow a conventional style such as the Chicago Manual / Turabian style or the Modern Humanities Research Association style. (See above.)

One last thing worth noting is that typos, spelling mistakes, and poor style are likely to have an adverse effect on the examiner’s assessment – even if the quality of the work is otherwise good. Before you hand in your final draft, check it yourself. If possible have a second person check it as well.
Students can also find advice on essay writing in the Student Handbook, pg 15-19.

**HOW SHOULD MY DISSERTATION LOOK?**

The final draft should be typed or printed in double spacing on A4 pages and comb or heat bound.

**ASSESSMENT DEADLINES**

Due Date: Friday, March 25th at 3pm

**SUBMISSION ARRANGEMENTS**

Submit **two bound paper copies** with a completed essay cover sheet to the **drop boxes in CB008 in 50-52 College Bounds** and **one electronic copy** to **Turnitin via MyAberdeen**. Both copies to be submitted by 3.00pm on the due date.

**Please note:** Failure to submit both an electronic copy to TurnitinUK and an identical paper copy, with the digital receipt attached, will result in a deduction of marks.

Failure to submit to TurnitinUK will result in a zero mark.

**LATE SUBMISSION**

LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT ADEQUATE DOCUMENTATION. EXTENSIONS MUST BE REQUESTED AT LEAST ONE WEEK BEFORE THE DUE DATE.

*Further information regarding late submission and extensions can be found in the Student Handbook (on MyAberdeen).*