

PH402D DISSERTATION

30 CREDITS

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

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Students are asked to make themselves familiar with the information on key institutional policies which have been made available within MyAberdeen (<https://abdn.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/institution/Policies>). These policies are relevant to all students and will be useful to you throughout your studies. They contain important information and address issues such as what to do if you are absent, how to raise an appeal or a complaint and how seriously the University takes your feedback.

These institutional policies should be read in conjunction with this course guide, in which School specific policies are detailed. Further information can be found on the [University's Infohub webpage](#) or by visiting the Infohub.

TIMETABLE

FIRST HALF-SESSION: Introductory Session (compulsory). Attend for Week 2 only, on Thursday, 20 September, 3pm – 5pm MacRobert, MR252

SECOND HALF-SESSION: Informal Writing Workshop (non-compulsory). Attend for Week 5 only, on Tuesday, 12 February, 9am-11am Zoology, ZB18

Students can view their university timetable at

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/timetables-550.php>

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 one mandatory meeting and one recommended meeting. There will a mandatory organisational meeting held in the second week of the term (see above for date, time, and location). In this meeting, the Co-ordinator (Dr Moretti) 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 Moretti) of this. **IMPORTANT: You must inform Dr Moretti about your topic and your supervisor by 26 November 2017.**

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 Workshop

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 writing workshop organized in the second-half session. In this workshop, the dissertation Co-ordinator (Dr Moretti) will go over the basic mechanics of philosophical writing, and students will have ample opportunity to ask questions about writing their dissertation. The date and time for this workshop can be found above in the 'Timetable' section of this document. Students are also encouraged to contact Dr Moretti with any writing questions while working on their dissertations.

ASSESSMENT

THE DISSERTATION COUNTS FOR 100% OF THE FINAL MARK.

To view the CGS Descriptors please go to **MyAberdeen- Organisations- Divinity, History, & Philosophy Student Information for Undergraduates**.

The link to the CGS Descriptors is on the left hand menu.

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.

<<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html>> [Accessed 11 September 2004]

or

Modern Humanities Research Association. MHRA Style Guide: Download Page.

<<http://www.mhra.org.uk/Publications/Books/StyleGuide/download.shtml>> [Accessed 28 September 2004]

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. 2 bound copies are required.

ASSESSMENT DEADLINES

Due Date: Friday, March 22nd at 3pm

SUBMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

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

Paper Copy: One comb or heat bound hard copy typed and double spaced, together with an **Assessment cover sheet on it** – this should have your ID number **clearly** written on the cover sheet, with **NO** name or signature but **EVERYTHING ELSE** completed, including supervisor's name – and should be delivered to the drop boxes in CB008, 50-52 College Bounds.

Electronic Copy: One copy submitted through Turnitin via [MyAberdeen](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/MyAberdeen). (for instructions please see <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/eLearning/turnitinuk/students/>)
Students are asked to retain the Turnitin receipt so they are able to provide proof of submission at a later date if required.

In advance of uploading, please save the assignment with your student ID number listed in the filename, i.e. 59999999 PHxxxx Essay 1.

When asked to enter a title for the assignment, please enter a title identical to the name of your saved assignment, i.e. PHxxxx Essay 1.

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, will result in a deduction of marks.
Failure to submit to TurnitinUK will result in a zero mark.