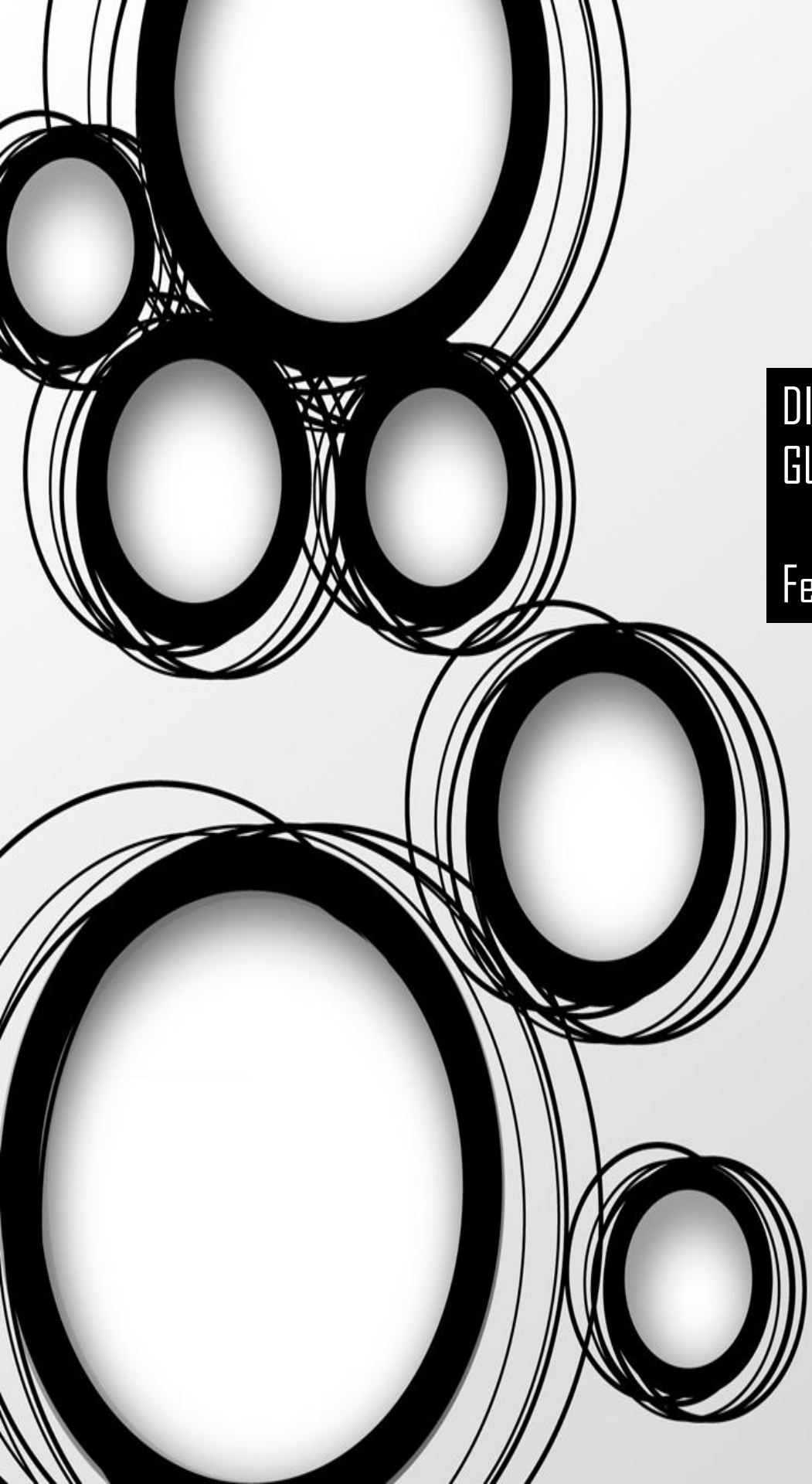


CATÓLICA LISBON
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS & ECONOMICS
UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

February 2015

This document provides guidelines to help students in the preparation and execution of their dissertation for obtaining a 2nd cycle Master of Science degree at CATOLICA-LISBON

Dissertation

Your final semester is dedicated to your MSc Dissertation – your opportunity to demonstrate that, in addition to having acquired significant knowledge, you are also able to apply it to address a theoretical problem.

You have a number of alternatives when it comes to your MSc Dissertation – you can participate in a Seminar (recommended for students of Management and Finance) or follow an independent process (recommended for students of Economics). Additionally, you may also wish to work on your Dissertation while involved in a part-time internship – on this page you can find all the information necessary to make your decision.

All students are required to attend the **Research Methodologies Workshop** with Professor Rita Coelho do Vale. This workshop grants you 0.5 ECTS towards your Dissertation and:

- Will offer students a set of academic skills critical to develop a research project.
- Includes your participation in 4 hours of research sessions which can be undertaken at your wished pace during your MSc program.

Dissertation Seminars

We recommend that you follow a Dissertation Seminar as it creates a structured process to be followed in a group.

Dissertation Seminars are conducted by a professor (who becomes your dissertation advisor) and address a specific topic. Seminars normally meet weekly or bi-weekly during your Dissertation semester.

1. Preparation for the Dissertation

The following resources provide guidance on how to choose a topic, develop research questions, select appropriate methodologies, and structure and write the dissertation document. It is also a good idea to discuss with professors and with colleagues that have completed their dissertation.

- Riley, Michael., Roy Wood, Mona. A. Clark, Eleanor Wilkie and Edith Szivas (2000), Researching and Writing Dissertations in Business and Management, Cengage Learning (ISBN: 9781861526083).
- Rudestam, Kjell Erik and Rae R. Newton (2014), Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (ISBN: 9781452260976).

2. Content and Standard of the Dissertation

i) Objectives of the dissertation and research questions

An MSc dissertation must demonstrate that the student has not just acquired significant knowledge but is also able to apply it to address a theoretical or applied management/finance/economics problem. The dissertation should relate to the content of one or more courses of the MSc program. It is expected to review relevant literature, have a central integrating argument, and include an original contribution.

A good dissertation poses an interesting, focused question, and answers it through argumentation using strong foundations in areas of management, finance and economics and the use of primary and secondary research. Most students pose a question on a theoretical or empirical issue, and develop an *academic dissertation* under the supervision of a faculty member, usually through a dissertation seminar but sometimes individually.

ii) Dissertation length

The quality of a thesis is not assessed by its length. An MSc dissertation should have 8,000 to 13,000 words (excluding appendices, references, and abstract). Appendices can not exceed 30 pages. The length of the thesis will be checked upon delivery, and only theses complying with the word limit will be accepted.

iii) Dissertation Supervision

It is important to meet early with your supervisor to clarify the objectives and methods of the proposed dissertation, and to agree on a timetable for future deadlines and meetings. If a student is not enrolled in a dissertation seminar, he or she should take the initiative to arrange this and other meetings.

Your supervisor will comment on your ideas, suggest readings, and advise you on major challenges. Your supervisor is not expected to provide you with a list of all required readings. Your supervisor will normally comment on a close-to- final draft. However, it is not his/her job to edit, revise, or write any part of your dissertation. The role of the supervisor is to guide you through the process, answer questions, and provide advice and expertise, while at the same time ensuring that the dissertation will be mainly based on your own work and ideas. It is up to you to implement the suggestions you receive.

The quality of the thesis is defined not only by its content, but also by the way the content is presented and communicated. It is your responsibility to assure the quality of your written communication

iv) Sources and Plagiarism

The data used in your dissertation can be primary data and/or secondary data.

Primary data are data collected by the researcher for the specific purpose of addressing the problem at hand. This includes data collected through surveys, experiments, or interviews. The collection and use of primary data is encouraged but is not a requirement.

Secondary data are data that have already been collected for purposes other than your thesis (for example, published statistical data, data in annual reports, a public database, or data in journal articles). You are expected to identify and acknowledge major sources of secondary data relating to your topic and to refer to important literature relating to your research question.

You must properly acknowledge the secondary sources (i.e., when you did not conduct data collection yourself) of any data, ideas, or other material. Please see in Appendix A detailed rules for doing so, and for avoiding plagiarism. Plagiarism is a major concern in all academic work. Plagiarism-prevention software is used by Student Affairs to ensure that work submitted by students avoids plagiarism.

3. Dissertation Format

i) Dissertation layout

Regarding the presentation of the dissertation, the following rules must be observed:

a) The paper used must be A4 size printed front and back.

b) Spacing for the main text should be 1.5 with margins of 25mm.

c) The font should be Times New Roman 12-point or equivalent size.

d) Quotations of less than a sentence, should be integrated into the text. Lengthier quotations should be indented and single-spaced.

e) Typically a dissertation will contain the following parts:

i) **Title-Page** contains the title, your name, your supervisor's name, and the following statement: *Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree [name of the program] X, at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa (with logo), date 20XX'.*

ii) **Abstract page** contains the title, the author and a summary of the objectives, findings/arguments and conclusions of the dissertation. Spacing is single-spaced and maximum length is 250 words.

iii) **Contents Page** the headings of all contents along with page numbers.

iv) **Preface** (optional) acknowledges individuals and organizations that have contributed directly or indirectly to the dissertation.

v) **Main (Body) Text** of the Dissertation normally includes the following parts:

Introduction/explanation of research or project objectives.

Explanation of significance of topic or project.

Review of relevant literature.

Statement of research/project methodology, and limitations/constraints.

Full development of findings/arguments/reasoned analysis.

Conclusions and limitations of the dissertation

(Note that a thesis that develops a case study for teaching purposes would normally also include a teaching note, which might contain some of the literature review, arguments and reasoning, etc.)

vi) **Appendices** are used to provide additional and detailed information about data, methodology or analysis that would break the flow of the presentation in the main text.

vii) **Bibliography** or **References** or **Works Cited** section of the dissertation (depending on the references style used, see below) includes all works referenced within the text.

ii) References

You are free to adopt any of the major conventions commonly used for references, including the MLA system or the Chicago system, so long as you exactly and consistently follow the rules of that system.

4. Dissertation Submission

i) Submission to Student Affairs:

The Student Affairs team will ask you to fill out and sign a checklist of all necessary elements for submission (including specifying number of words).

1. Five hard copies of the thesis (each copy must be bound),
2. Four CDs with 3 digital files of your thesis: 1 file with the whole thesis, 1 file only with the Cover page and Abstract, both **in PDF format,** and 1 file with the whole thesis in Word format.
3. An updated printed paper copy of your CV,
4. A letter from your advisor stating that you have concluded your dissertation,
5. An authorization form to file your dissertation in the Institutional Repository at UCP (to be filled in at Student Affairs),
6. The anti plagiarism declaration (to be filled in at Student Affairs),
7. The number of words in the main text (8,000 to 13,000 words).

Please note: CDs must come packaged in plastic cases. CDs and their cases must be properly identified with the following elements:

- Thesis title
- Author
- Name of the University and the Faculty
- Year of defense
- Type of work (master's thesis)

ii) Penalty for late submission of dissertation

For students starting their dissertation in September 2015 or later, there is a financial penalty for late submission.

1. Before the late submission deadline: one monthly penalty fee in total.

2. After the late submission deadline: one additional monthly penalty fee per additional month.

Working on the thesis after the late submission deadline is only possible with the agreement of the advisor.

5. Dissertation Defense

You will defend your dissertation in front of a jury, who will award a final grade of 0 to 20 (passing grade: 10 or above). The jury will normally have three (but may have up to five) members and will include your Dissertation Advisor. The dissertation defense usually takes 40 minutes, which includes a candidate presentation of their work lasting 15 to 20 minutes, followed by comments and questions from the jury.