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# **Guidelines for Doctoral (Master's) Dissertation Writing**



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# Guidelines for Doctoral (Master's) Dissertation Writing

Students of the postgraduate Doctoral (Master's) Degree programs are required to conduct scientific research or case studies and then produce an original dissertation of certain academic standards. A Doctoral (Master's) Degree graduate should be capable and high quality individuals and therefore dissertation writing and oral defense are very important. In addition, dissertation is an important criterion the University adopts to decide whether a Doctoral (Master's) Degree will be conferred on a student.

## 1. Writing a Dissertation

Students should complete their dissertations independently under the guidance of their Supervisors. Supervisors will provide guidance for individual students on a regular basis. With the assistance of their Supervisors, students will be able to decide on the dissertation topics and produce their dissertation proposals more effectively. After the dissertation proposals have been approved, students should complete the research and dissertations within the time prescribed.

A Doctoral (Master's) Degree is a testimony that the student has in-depth knowledge and understanding of an academic subject. To comply with the legal requirements governing the conferment of a Doctoral (Master's) Degree, the University requires the postgraduate dissertations to be original, achieve certain academic standards and contribute to the knowledge base. Dissertation requirements: The main body of a Doctoral dissertation should be more than 50,000 words. Students should complete the dissertations and pass the oral defense within 19 months after the dissertation proposals. The main body of a Master's dissertation should be more than 20,000 words. Students should complete the dissertations and pass the oral defense within 10 months after the dissertation proposals

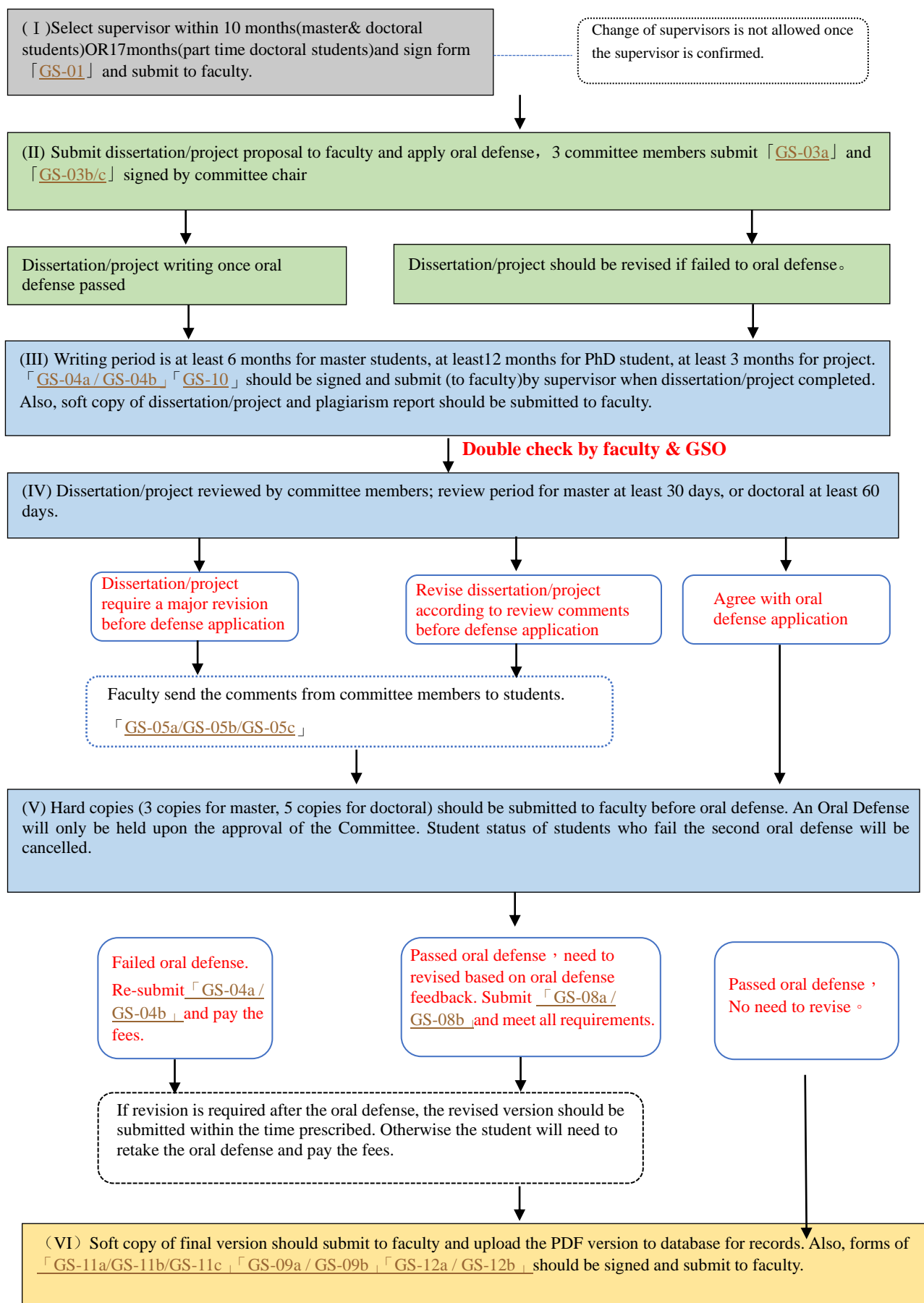
After finishing the dissertations, students need their Supervisors' approval of the dissertations before they can enter the stage of oral defense.

## 2. Dissertation Oral Defense

### 1) Dissertation management flowchart

In addition to submitting the dissertation, oral defense is also an important dissertation assessment criterion and is an important step towards receiving a Doctoral (Master's) Degree. The dissertation management flowchart is shown below:

## Flowchart for Dissertations/Projects



**2) The oral defense procedures for Master's (Doctoral) degree students:**

- i) The Chairman of the Thesis Assessment Committee announces the commencement of the oral defense;
- ii) The Chairman of the Thesis Assessment Committee introduces the name of the candidate and the title of the dissertation.
- iii) The candidate reads out the “Thesis Declaration Statement” and reports on the major contents of the dissertation with emphasis on the major viewpoints, in what way it is innovative and the existing problems (30 minutes for Doctoral Degree student and 20 minutes for Master's Degree students);
- iv) Thesis Assessment Committee members and attendants ask questions, the candidate answers the questions, and the Secretary will make record;
- v) Recess, other people leave, and the Supervisor makes the final statement;
- vi) Assessment by the Thesis Assessment Committee:
  - ① The Thesis Assessment Committee will decide whether the dissertation reaches the academic standards set out in the Regulations on Academic Degrees based on the learning experience and academic results of the candidate, the Supervisor's comments on the dissertation etc.;
  - ② Committee members vote by open ballot on whether conferment of degree will be recommended.
- vii) The Supervisor leaves. The Thesis Assessment Committee discusses and passes the resolution;
- viii) The meeting is reconvened. The Chairman of the Thesis Assessment Committee invites the Secretary to announce the decision of the Thesis Assessment Committee;
- ix) The Chairman of the Thesis Assessment Committee signs on the “Decision on Thesis Oral Defense”. The oral defense ends.

**3. Dissertation Formats**

In accordance with the code of academic articles, all postgraduate dissertations must follow standard formats. The City University of Macau adopts the APA formats and have the following basic requirements:

**1) Printed and electronic files**

The University requires all hard copies of Doctoral (Master's) dissertations to be printed on A4 size white paper. Postgraduate students should send two bound copies of dissertations (dissertations revised according to the University assessment requirements and approved) within the time designated to respective faculties for filing and handling. The students should also upload the complete electronic files (in Word or PDF format) via the dissertation system onto the Library system for record.

**2) Page margins**

Uniform page margins should be used. Left margin should be 40 mm, right margin 22 mm, top and bottom margin 25 mm. Use “justify” alignment for the text and print the dissertations double-sided.

**3) Spacing and fonts**

Traditional Chinese Characters should be used for dissertations. The main body of the dissertations should be printed in horizontal order and be mainly in 14 point 細明. The fonts for sections should be in the order of 22 point 細明體 (bold), 18 point 細明體 (bold) and 16 point 細明體 (bold). The reset should be in 14 point 細明體. The dissertations submitted should be printed by a computer printer. For paragraph formatting, 1.5 spacing should be used and there is no need to write on alternate lines. However, double spacing is needed between titles and paragraphs. Indent two characters on the first line of every paragraph, and leave one character spacing between chapter or section numbers and titles.

**4) The number of chapters and sections**

Too many chapters and sections may affect the flow of the dissertation. Therefore, the University encourages postgraduate students to avoid having five or more sections under a title. For example, for Appendix III, 1.1 under the first section refers to the first point of the first section, the subdivision should end at “1.1.1” and “1.1.2” etc. If a PhD student needs to further elaborate his/her arguments, (1), (2) and then (a) (b) should be used.

**5) The composition and structure of a dissertation**

The dissertation should be structured in the order of cover page, Thesis Declaration Statement, acknowledgements, Chinese abstract and key words, English abstract and key words, table of contents (list of figures, list of tables), main contents, footnotes, bibliography, Biography and appendices. The dissertation should be bound on the left. The detailed format requirements of each section are listed below.

**1) Cover page**

The cover page should be A4 cardboard paper and basic titles will be produced by the University, including the preprinted name of the University, i.e. “The City

University of Macau” in Chinese, Portuguese and Chinese, and “Doctoral (Master’s) Degree Dissertation”. The postgraduate student should print his/her Chinese dissertation title in 18 point 細明體 (bold) and English dissertation title in 16 point Times New Roman (bold). At the lower part of the page, print your name in Chinese or foreign language (or Pingyin), student number, faculty, program, the name of Supervisor and completion month and year in 14 point characters or letters. The color of the cover page of the Doctoral degree dissertation should be light blue (red 150, green 250, blue 200) and that of the Master’s degree dissertation should be light green (red 150, green 200, blue 250).

## 2) Acknowledgments

In the acknowledgements section, students can express gratitude for information providers, such as research targets, test subjects, research assistants, colleagues, Supervisors and institutions or people interviewed. They can also thank owners of information, pictures, literature, research ideologies and hypotheses. Students can express their gratitude for people who have made contributions towards the completion of their dissertations, such as families for support, teachers for guidance and fellow students for advice. Regardless of who you would like to thank, use plain and sincere language and do not do it in an exaggerating style. The title of acknowledgements should be in 22 point 細明體 and the content should be in 14 point 細明體.

## 3) Statement of Originality

The “Statement of Originality”, a standard statement produced by the University, should be attached to the dissertation. Students should abide by the Statement, sign it and insert it at the designated position of the dissertation. The purpose of requiring students to make the Statement is for them to understand that they should write the dissertations themselves and be responsible for the contents. In addition, students should respect others’ intellectual property rights, observe the publication law and should not infringe on intellectual property rights when citing information in their dissertations.

Therefore, students should make reference to the sources when citing others’ views, publications and research outcomes, including research. In addition, students should not alter the information they have cited, including academic information published and not published, without permission. Otherwise, they will have committed plagiarism.

The title of citations and statements should be in 22 point 細明體, the main text should be in 14 point 細明體.

## 4) Chinese and English abstracts and keywords

An abstract summarizes the research objectives, issues explored, most relevant literature, information collection methods (including sampling methods and sampling targets, research designs and questionnaires), conclusions and recommendations for readers so that they can have an overview of the dissertation at a glance. An abstract is not an introduction of the dissertation. At the lower left corner after the last paragraph of the abstract, list four to five keywords of the themes of the dissertation under the title of “Keywords”. There should be a spacing between the Chinese keywords and a semicolon between English keywords. The title of Chinese abstract should be in 22 point 細明體 and the main text be in 14 point 細明體. The title of English abstract should be in 22 point Time New Roman and the main text be in 14 point Time New Roman.

## 5) Table of contents

The title of the Table of Contents should be in 22 point 細明體 and the rest should be in 14 point 細明體.

## 6) Diagrams and Tables

If there are many diagrams and tables in the dissertation, they can be listed in the list of figures and list of tables placed after the Table of Contents page. The list of figures should have numberings, figure captions and page numbers. The list of tables should have numberings, table captions and page numbers. The captions of the figures and tables should be in 16 point 細明體 and the descriptions and explanations should be in 14 point 細明體.

## 7) Nomenclature

For readers’ easy reference, professional, technical and special terms should be listed in the sequence they appear in the dissertation and their definitions should be specified. This list should be placed before the main body of the dissertation.

## 8) List of symbols and abbreviations

For readers’ easy reference, a list of the symbols, signs and abbreviations frequently used in the dissertation can be produced and placed before the main body of the dissertation.

## 9) Main body

The main body of the dissertation usually consists of the following five chapters. The formats of the main text should be:



- Chapter I Introduction (subtitle can be added)
- Chapter II Literature Review (subtitle can be added, or students can decide on their own title)
- Chapter III Research Methodologies and Designs
- Chapter IV (Title decided by students with respect to “information processing, analysis and discussion”)
- Chapter V Conclusions and Recommendations (subtitle can be added)

10) Bibliography

Generally speaking, all academic papers, including the dissertations by students of the University, should list all the literature and sources of information cited. This is not only about ethics and integrity, it also makes the arguments more convincing. Students should note that for most of the time, the reason for citing others' viewpoints is to support one's arguments and you should not try to seek attention, quote out of context or make the dissertation more attractive in the names of others. Information cited in the dissertation should be presented in the form of references. The title of the list of references should be in 22 point 細明體 and the main text should be in 14 point 細明體.

11) Biography

The title of Biography should be in 22 point 細明體 and the main text should be in 14 point 細明體.

12) Appendices

The purpose of having appendices is to avoid the focus on main body of the dissertation being shifted to less important materials. For example, a long survey questionnaire, background information on the respondents, rarely seen and valuable information, especially previous questionnaires regardless whether they are of structural design or are open-end questions, should be attached after the main body of the dissertation. The title of Appendices should be 22 point 細明體 and the main text should be in 14 point 細明體.

Please refer to the APA guidelines for formatting not explained in detail above.