6.14 Dissertation

6.14.1 Headline information about the module

Module title	Research Dissertation
Module NFQ level (only if an NFQ level can be demonstrated)	9
Module number/reference	10
Parent programme(s) the plural arises if there are embedded programmes to be validated.	MSc. in International Business Management
Stage of parent programme	2 (core)
Semester (semester1/semester2 if applicable)	3
Module credit units (FET/HET/ECTS)	ECTS
Module credit number of units	30
List the teaching and learning modes	Full-time, part-time
Entry requirements (statement of knowledge, skill and competence)	Postgraduate Diploma in International Business and Law
Pre-requisite module titles	Research Methods
Co-requisite module titles	Not Applicable
Is this a capstone module? (Yes or No)	Yes
Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff (staff includes workplace personnel who are responsible for learners such as apprentices, trainees and learners in clinical placements)	Supervisor and other personnel should hold a Masters Level (Level 9) qualification and have extensive experience in formal and work-based research programmes.
Maximum number of learners per centre (or instance of the module)	60
Duration of the module	14 weeks
Average (over the duration of the module) of the contact hours per week (see * below)	2
Module-specific physical resources and support required per centre (or instance of the module)	Library access and meeting rooms.

Analysis of required learning effort		
Effort while in contact with staff	**Minimum ratio teacher / learner**	**Hours**
Classroom and demonstrations		
Monitoring and small-group teaching	1:1	28
Other		
Independent Learning		
Directed e-learning (hours)		
Independent Learning (hours)		722
Other hours (group project)		
Work-based learning hours of learning effort		
Total Effort (hours)		750

Allocation of marks (within the module)					
	Continuous assessment	**Supervised project**	**Proctored practical examination**	**Proctored written examination**	**Total**
Percentage contribution		100			100%

6.14.2 Module aims and objectives

This module aims to provide an opportunity for learners to apply skills and knowledge gained in the taught modules to a research project and to make a significant contribution to the chosen field of enquiry. It gives learners an opportunity to choose a topic related to business or law, develop strategic questions, source relevant information, and sharpen their analytical and critical thinking processes through a systematic approach to research.

The dissertation involves an in-depth exploration of a specialised area or issue central to business or law. Drawing on substantial, relevant research, literature, concepts and techniques, learners seek to combine theory and practice. Learners are supported as they devise the research question or hypothesis, design and apply an appropriate methodology, critically review relevant literature and draw up the dissertation report and presentation.

6.14.3 Minimum intended module learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, learners are able to:

(i) display a critical awareness and conceptual understanding of current relevant issues in international business and law by drawing upon an extensive and deep knowledge of primary and secondary sources

(ii) interrelate theory and practice to the formulation of an original and pertinent research question/hypothesis through the critical evaluate and interpretation of relevant literature and data

(iii) demonstrate technical proficiency in the application of the selected methods and techniques of data acquisition and analysis

(iv) identify and apply the appropriate quantitative/qualitative methods in the analysis of data

(v) critically interpret and analyse data and results in light of previous findings

(vi) act autonomously in tackling research problems, sourcing, planning and implementing solutions

(vii) interpret and communicate the results of their research clearly, concisely and professionally to colleagues and peers and present research findings in a form suitable for publication

(viii) demonstrate leadership and interpersonal skills required to build teamwork and coalitions within organisations and to ensure that proposals are accepted and, where appropriate, resources found to implement projects and plans

(ix) demonstrate personal confidence and conviction to champion their solutions, recognise their weaknesses, seek assistance and advice, and to recognise their path of continuous learning.

6.14.4 Rationale for inclusion of the module in the programme and its contribution to the overall MIPLOs

For learners to be awarded the MSc. award they must demonstrate a masters level in their academic work and an ability to apply their research knowledge and understanding in a practical project. The dissertation recognises the strong emphasis placed by learners and their employers on the value of research skills and the effective practical application of module-based learning in the workplace. It has been designed to help learners develop and demonstrate a capability for critical and self-directed learning and a capability to apply masters-level learning integrative to real-world problems and opportunities.

The Research Methods module completed during earlier stages of the programme provides learners with the key skills and knowledge required to carry out a major research project in the form of a dissertation. The dissertation enables learners to utilise and apply the learning gained throughout the taught modules on the programme. Their work on a research project which requires them to engage with the theories learnt and collect evidence to support their thinking. Learners explore the extent to which theory can be applied in practice by applying academic ideas to their dissertation and have an opportunity to reflect on how their MSc. study has changed them as a manager/practitioner.

6.14.5 Information provided to learners about the module

Learners are allocated a supervisor with whom they maintain regular contact through the research process. The supervisor provides learners with guidance on refining topic and research questions/hypotheses, and how to plan and undertake the dissertation.

A Dissertation Handbook and a Dissertation Template are available for learners to draw on as they independently work through the different phases and dimensions of their research project. There are specific requirements on the use of theory from a range of areas during research, along with a requirement to submit appropriate evidence to support learning. Learners are guided to the sorts of resources they need to identify and access as part of the module.

6.14.6 Module content, organisation and structure

Learners can utilise the formal proposal developed in the Research Methods module (in which they already have chosen a topic; drafted research objectives/questions; identified and reviewed some of the relevant literature, and outlined a research strategy and some of the methods available for data collection). Learners build on this and are responsible for a largely self-directed and independently-managed programme of work and study based on a specific and agreed research project.

Given the self-directed and independent nature of the dissertation, the content, organisation and structure provides learners with maximum flexibility. All learners and their supervisor adapt a plan and timetable to suit their research. They outline the critical stages of the research, data analysis and writing-up process within the timeframe of approximately 14 weeks.

Throughout the module learners are expected to monitor their own learning and development. They prepare regular progress reports (Weeks 3, 6, and 9 and 12) and have the opportunity to discuss these with their supervisor. Reflecting on what they have learnt from the module, is also an important part of the later assessment activities.

The process culminates in the submission of a written dissertation to the school, and participation in a viva (presentation and defence) to two assessors. Performance in dissertation planning and management are noted by the supervisor and considered in determining the final mark.

Overview of key deliverables

Refine and develop research objective and questions; prepare literature for review
All learners review feedback on their Research Methods module proposal and forward a revised/refined proposal to supervisor. Learners reformat and transfer elements of the proposal to the Dissertation Template to include:

- a first-draft introduction section (typically less than 1,500 words)
- a draft critical literature review (varying from a set of references and initial bibliography, through to a full list of potential sources, to identification of the major themes of the dissertation and key references for each theme – sufficient to provide a framework for the final literature review of up to 5,000 words)
- placeholders for the conceptual framework (500-1,000 words)
- provisional research methodology and methods section (ultimately 2,000 – 2,500 words)
- presentation and analysis of findings section (approximately 5,000 words)
- conclusions and recommendations section (1,000 and 2,000 words)
- outer shell of the document (title page, acknowledgements, etc.)

Learners thus provide an outline of the content of each main chapter and stage of the dissertation and begin to adopt an appropriate writing style to be used in the dissertation. This work is normally produced prior to the first meeting and discussed with the supervisor.

Literature review and conceptual framework
Learners submit a draft literature review and conceptual framework to the supervisor for review. Typically, this involves a fuller bibliography and an outline of the structure and key content of the literature review. Learners continue to work on, expand and refine both over the first half of the semester, and later competes and integrates the review with the analysis, findings and conclusions during the second half of the semester.

Research design
Taking account of feedback on their initial research proposal learners and their supervisor discuss research design, focusing on primary research. Learners develop a detailed plan and account of the proposed methods of data collection and analysis, draft their justification for the chosen methodology and the design of the specific application of that methodology and suggest how they test the design and make any required changes; etc.

Data collection

Learners generate and/or collect and collate data. Depending on the strategy and method chosen, this may involve provisional analysis as the data is generated/collected. Learners then draft the appropriate section of the dissertation document stating how they have applied their final methodological design to conduct the research and include evidence of questions used in interviews, the organisation of questions in a survey, etc. Learners continue with the literature review and complete secondary research.

Data analysis

Learners forward some of the initial data analysis to their supervisor for review and write up their justification for the approach adopted in the analysis of data. Materials employed in the collection and analysis (questionnaires, etc.) are added to the appendices of the dissertation. Learners revisit the literature review and revise as necessary to integrate with data collection and analysis sections.

Findings and discussion

Learners prepare and submit their final analysis and draft findings and discussion chapter to their supervisor for review. Learners revisit their literature review section and revise as necessary to integrate its contents with the findings and discussion section.

Draft introduction and conclusions

Learners draft the introduction section of the dissertation including the purpose of the study; brief overall description of the study's context; outline of the significance of and justification for the study; the research question or objective that have guided the study/hypothesis statement(s), and an overview of the structure of the dissertation. The draft conclusion section is drafted to include a summary of the main findings and their implications for the research questions; a summary of the differences (if relevant or significant) between the findings and the literature; recommendations – practical and/or academic; limitations and contributions of the research, and suggestions for further research in the area.

Written dissertation and preparation for the viva

Learners independently revise the entire document ensuring consistency of approach and style in the main chapters. The dissertation outer shell (title page, table of contents, abstract, references, appendices, etc.) is finalised. The contents and style are cross-checked against the requirements set out in the Dissertation Handbook. A draft PowerPoint or Prezi presentation is prepared for the viva.

Submission of Dissertation

The final version of the dissertation is submitted to the Graduate Business School Office and the viva takes place.

6.14.7 Module teaching and learning (including formative assessment) strategy

Learners are expected to take responsibility for their independent self-learning while liaising with a supervisor. Typically, the supervisor strives to:

- advise on the development of an achievable research plan/timetable of work and completion and submission deadlines
- provide guidance on the chosen field of study with reference to appropriate literature and research methodology
- review the learner's research design and methodology
- review significant parts of written work and provide feedback on draft chapters
- monitor and record progress
- ensure academic rigour
- advise on the appropriate standards for submitted work
- liaise with other members of staff, as appropriate and required
- advise on key content and approach to the viva.

A Dissertation Handbook and Template Document are available for learners to provide further guidance and allow them to independently work through the different phases of the research project.

6.14.8 Work-based learning and practice-placement

Given the practical, research-based nature of the dissertation, a variety of opportunities exist to apply learning to practice and vice versa:

- full and part-time learners may secure sponsorship from an organisation for their research. Typically, this may involve sponsorship or scholarship funding from a research body, industry body, etc.
- learners may approach potential employers in relation to sponsorship of a research role
- learners may utilise their dissertation to help them convert a part-time employment role into full-time employment role
- learners may complete their dissertation on a case-study company who may employ them on an internship/sponsorship basis
- part-time learners have the option of choosing their existing employer company as the context for their dissertation and thus directly relate learning to professional practice.

6.14.9 E-learning

E-learning supports are provided via the college's online learning environment, Moodle, including extensive library resources.

6.14.10 Module physical resource requirements

Normal meeting rooms and library study areas with internet access. Computer software is installed on machines with specific computer rooms within the college, especially for Nvivo and SPSS. Learners can access both pieces of software for their research analysis through their own personal login.

6.14.11 Reading lists and other information resources

Primary Reading
Graduate Business School (2018), Dissertation Handbook, Griffith College
Graduate Business School (2018), Dissertation Template, Griffith College.

Secondary Reading
The required and recommended reading for the Research Methods module assists learners in the completion of their dissertation.

Other reading
There is no required additional reading for this module other than the required review of literature needed to complete the dissertation. This is likely to include topics such as evidence-based research and action-research. It requires consultation of a range of sources that can be accessed through the Griffith College Library. The library provides on- and off- campus access to electronic journals and databases via Moodle. Where direct access to materials may not be available, document supply and inter-library loan facilities of the British Library and Trinity College Dublin Information Service are used. Learners are not charged for document supply or inter-library loan. If access to materials is only available on site of another library research passes for learners are facilitated.

6.14.12 Specifications for module staffing requirements
Supervisor and other personnel should hold a masters level (level 9) qualification and have extensive experience in formal and work-based research programmes. Extensive details on the role of the supervisor is provided in the dissertation handbook.

6.14.13 Module summative assessment strategy
This module requires learners, based on the research concepts, methodologies and techniques covered in the Research Methods module, to produce and present a dissertation following an in-depth exploration of a specialised area or issue central to international business or law.

The assessed work breakdown can be seen in the table below.

No.	Description	MIMLOs	Weighting
1	Dissertation	(i) – (ix)	100%

6.14.14 Sample assessment materials
Please see Sample Assessment Handbook.