

Guidelines for the Year Abroad Dissertation 2015/16

PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE GUIDELINES ARE FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Please refer to the section 'Academic Framework of the Year Abroad' for the dates and deadlines applicable in 2015/16

1. Introduction

You are undertaking the preparation and writing of the Year Abroad Dissertation. This exercise has long been valued within the University for the unique opportunity it provides for students to undertake primary research abroad over several months and submit the results in the form of a substantial piece of written work. There is a great deal of evidence that it has enabled and encouraged students to awaken and refine academic skills which have had a significant impact on subsequent postgraduate work and in other ways related to career development.

2. Principles and Procedures

2.1 The Dissertation is completed by you under supervision from a member of faculty (normally in your department) at Sussex during your Year Abroad and submitted for examination at Sussex by the stated deadline (**4 pm on 13 June 2016**).

2.2 The Dissertation is written in a foreign language related to your Year Abroad and indicated on your YA Study Plan and should be 6,000 words in length.

Dual language students should pay attention to the following:

Language Assistantship: Pedagogic Report in the language of the country where you are working / Dissertation in your other language

Study/Dissertation: Dissertation to be written in your other language (i.e. not the language of the country where you were studying)

Study/Work Placement: Work report to be written in your other language (i.e. not the language of the country where you were studying)

2.3 You are referred to the *'Examination and Assessment Handbook for Undergraduate Students'* for rules and the submission deadline relating to this assessment unit.

2.4 The Dissertation is a substantial piece of work and carries substantial credit weighting. It is the equivalent of 6 months work.

2.5 You should realise that your Dissertation Supervisor is a busy person and you must be well organised and well prepared to give your supervisor time to make appropriate comments. Research and preparation for your Dissertation should begin early in the Year Abroad. You should initiate contact with your supervisor ideally before going abroad and maintain it when abroad.

2.6 Supervisors are not required or expected to undertake supervisory duties during the Summer Vacations and may refuse to do so. Through the year, you

should remember the termly pattern of work at Sussex and time your communications with your supervisor accordingly (letters, faxes, or emails for preference; telephone calls only if unavoidable). You cannot expect your supervisor to be readily available outside office hours or during holiday periods. If you intend to see your supervisor during a return visit to the UK, you should make an appointment in good time.

3. Supervision and Preparation

3.1 When completing the YA Study Plan, you considered the option of the Dissertation depending on whether or not it is permitted by your Major Subject. Having chosen and been permitted to write the Dissertation, you were referred to your YA Departmental Representative for further consultation and the allocation of a supervisor. You presented a brief outline, establishing an approved topic, which may relate to any or all of the following: your YA destination; your Major Subject; School modules you have taken; modules you plan to take during your YA. The supervisor has signed the appropriate section of your YA Study Plan (occasionally, the Subject Representative may sign on her/his behalf). Concerning your topic, ask yourself the following questions:

- What is my YA destination?
- What kind of topic will make good use of the resources (or take account of the lack of resources) available there?
- Which academic skills do I wish to acquire through researching and writing the Dissertation?
- Do I have a particular academic weakness which work for the Dissertation might address?
- How will my Dissertation topic relate to the range of modules studied at Sussex and on my YA?
- Is there an area of study my Dissertation could help to complement? A gap it could help to fill?
- Does my intended topic require primary research in or around my Year Abroad destination?
- Am I choosing a topic I might just as well, or better, undertake at Sussex? If so, think again!

3.2 You should use the University Library and any other resources suggested by your supervisor to accumulate a brief outline bibliography in preparation for your research, before you go.

3.3 It is occasionally necessary or advisable to change the topic of your Dissertation once you are abroad (for example, because of difficulties in pursuing the required research at your YA destination, or because an appropriate topic, not previously considered, appears particularly viable). In such a case, you should request a change of topic at the earliest possible point, giving your reasons and discussing and agreeing the proposed change with your supervisor. Any change must be agreed by the due date and will be entered on your Study Plan.

- 3.4 You might usefully plan one or more short return visits to the UK in vacation periods to make use of the Sussex University Library if it has material helpful to your topic.
- 3.5 You should investigate any possibilities of obtaining local academic guidance and make the best use possible of this. However, formal responsibility for guidance remains with your Sussex supervisor.
- 3.6 The limits of the supervisor's duties may be described as follows:
- to recommend limited academic preparation prior to the Year Abroad;
 - to correspond with you during the course of the Year Abroad about specific kinds of guidance;
 - formally to approve the Dissertation topic and title;
 - to consider and comment on a writing plan of no more than 2 typed pages.

The supervisor cannot be expected to undertake the following duties:

- to correct draft versions of the Dissertation;
- to learn about the library holdings of foreign institutions or acquire expertise about local issues;
- to comment on Dissertation plans during the Summer Vacations following Year 2 or the Year Abroad.

4. Researching and Writing

4.1 Research evolves gradually and continuously:

Keep your research objectives firmly in mind throughout;

Be aware of the timetable of work throughout the year – assessing the topic, formulating your argument, drafting your plan, confirming the plan and eventual title with your supervisor, writing successive drafts (perhaps 2 or 3), final editing, dealing with illustrations, appendices, etc, typing up, submitting on time;

During your research take careful and accurate notes of the source material as you encounter it: what is the *exact* title of that book or article? which page number for that quotation? which edition did I use? etc.

4.2 Writing:

Don't start drafting the dissertation until you have made a plan and don't make your plan until you have established your thesis or argument;

Write in the foreign language, rather than translating out of English into it;

You may enlist local help with language accuracy but the work must be your own;

Quotations in English (or another language that is not the Target Language) in Dissertations are discouraged and, where necessary, should not be counted in the word limit of 6,000 words. Any such quotations should be introduced, presented or paraphrased in the TL in such a way that the sense

of them would be clear to a reader who does not understand English (or any language other than the TL);

You should not normally use either source or secondary material that has been translated into your Target Language from an original version in another language.

4.3 Editing:

Follow standard academic practice regarding footnotes or references;

Supply a bibliography, arranged in alphabetical order by author or editor, giving full and accurate details of each text cited or consulted, including complete title, place and date of publication, or volume number and date in the case of periodicals;

The Dissertation should follow a standard order: Title Page (your name should not appear; your candidate number should be entered on each page); Preface (a paragraph giving the basic outline of the work and making any acknowledgements required); Contents Page; List of Illustrations, Maps, etc, (if required); Chapters or Sections, each properly headed (with title or number), and each starting on a new page; Notes; Bibliography; Appendices (if required). Do not forget to number the pages.

These Notes are intended to provide general advice and supply answers to frequently asked general questions about the Dissertation. More specific advice regarding presentation and critical apparatus is given in the Style Sheet included with these notes. Also, more subject-specific advice regarding the Dissertation may be obtainable from your YA Departmental Representative, and of course advice about your individual exercise should be sought from your supervisor.

5. Criteria of Achievement

5.1 General criteria:

The examiners of the Dissertation will take into account the following:

- 5.1.1. The quality of the written language is weighted at 40% of the mark for the Dissertation or Report, and is assessed on the same basis as quality of language in a "Content" Essay in the TL (see the Modern Languages "Red Book" for the relevant criteria of language assessment). There is no discrimination as between Major and Minor students of the language.
- 5.1.2. Knowledge and understanding of the topic, reflecting the amount of time and work expected.
- 5.1.3. Structure and quality of the argument. Coherence and clarity of structure and argument; degree of critical insight; adequacy, accuracy and appositeness in the use of evidence. Intellectual adventurousness and originality of thought or approach, sufficiently well grounded in the material and the argument of the Dissertation, will be rewarded.
- 5.1.4. Presentation. Clear, well-ordered arrangement of text and apparatus (notes, bibliography etc.) making proper use of an appropriate system of annotation. See also the attached European Year Abroad Dissertation Assessment Bands and Criteria.

You are reminded of the need to avoid collusion and plagiarism, both of which are forms of misconduct and may be heavily penalised. Consult the section 'Plagiarism, Collusion and Misconduct' in the *'Examination and Assessment Handbook for Undergraduate Students'* if you are uncertain about their meaning, particularly in relation to the advice above concerning local help with the Dissertation which you are permitted or encouraged to obtain on your Year Abroad. Help with the language of your Dissertation should be corrective only and should not amount to (re)writing of the content. **Any help received must be acknowledged.** Further advice about this may also be obtained from your supervisor.

The European Year Abroad Dissertation 2015/16: Style Sheet

Introduction

These notes are intended as a brief guide to presentation, quoting, giving references, and providing bibliographies in essays and dissertations. Fuller advice about these and other matters of presentation will be found in the *Modern Languages Association of America (MLA) Style Sheet* and the *Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) Style Book*, both classified in the University Library under Z 235 Mod. You may also wish to consult the leaflet available from the UL's Information Services: 'References: Guidelines for use'. Further useful guides are: Nancy L Baker *A Research Guide for Undergraduate Students* (3rd edition, 1989); Judith Bell *Doing Your Research Project* (2nd edition); Ralph Berry *The Research Project: how to write it*; Pat Cryer *The Research Student's Guide to Success*; Sue Drew and Rosie Bingham *The Student Skills Guide*; Kate Turabian *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (1982). All these are available in the UL: all but Baker and Turabian are held in the Reserve Collection. Your supervisor or tutor may make other suggestions.

Presentation

- This should be clear, attractive, and simple. Confused and messy presentation will usually be marked down, but over-elaborate or merely decorative typography is not an advantage either. Well spaced text is easier to read: text should be double (or 1.5) spaced: good sized margins are appreciated, enabling tutors to make comments on coursework or note locations for discussion in examined work. Subdividing your text in the case of longer essays or dissertations is often appropriate, using either numerals or section titles, but avoid too fussy a proliferation of sections.

Quotation

- Longer quotations should be set out separately from the text of your essay, indented, and single-spaced. Quotations of a few words only should be incorporated directly into your text, in quotation marks. The distinction is not based purely on length. Quotations set down as illustration or demonstration of a point tend to be separated for emphasis. Those that simply make use of the writer's own words, rather than paraphrasing them, tend to be incorporated directly into the essay or dissertation text. Verse more than two lines long should normally be separated from your text.
- As indicated above, quotations incorporated into your text should be distinguished by quotation marks. Quotations separated from your text are thereby sufficiently distinguished and should not carry quotation marks. But if a further quotation appears within the separated text this should of course carry its own quotation marks.

- Quotations set out separately should be in some sense complete statements and not broken or incomplete grammatically or syntactically. Omissions within the original text you are quoting should be indicated, normally by three dots within square brackets, thus: [...]. Quotations incorporated into your text should fit into the grammatical structure of the sentence they are part of.
- Quotations should be accurate and in the form of the original (important in the case of verse): any alterations or emendations to quoted text should be clearly signalled by being placed in square brackets. Divisions between lines of verse incorporated in your text should be indicated by a transverse slash (/). Italics or bold print in the original should be reproduced in your text.

References

- The purpose of a reference is to inform your reader of the provenance of a quotation or allusion in your text as quickly and easily as possible. There are a number of systems of referencing: consult your tutor or supervisor for specific advice. In general, though, the watchwords are clarity, consistency, brevity: your references must be unambiguous; you must keep to the same system throughout; you should aim for the most economical method consistent with clarity.
- Referencing should be complete: a sufficient indication for every passage you quote, whether from a source text or a secondary critical work.
- Repeated references to the same work or works may be abbreviated, provided a fully explicated list of abbreviations is supplied. If the work to which reference is made is quite clear from the context of your discussion, then your reference need specify only the location within that work. Reference to location may be by page number; page and line number; act, scene, and line number (for plays); line number (long poems). Again, consult your tutor or supervisor for more specific advice. Where references are abbreviated they should normally be placed in brackets within the text of your essay or dissertation.
- Titles of book-length works, including plays and long poems, should be set in italics. Titles of shorter works (short poems, short stories, articles, essays) should be placed within quotation marks.

Bibliographies

- Since pagination, lineation, and even sometimes the text itself can differ from edition to edition of a given work, it is important to specify the edition you are referring to. You may do this in an initial footnote at the point of first reference or quotation; or by a briefer reference together with an indication that full details are given in your bibliography.
- In any case, a full bibliography should be provided, listing in alphabetical order by author all the works you have referred to or consulted in the preparation and writing of your essay or dissertation. It may be subdivided if appropriate: e.g. into 'Works Consulted' and 'Works Cited'; or into 'Primary Works' and 'Secondary

Works': consult with your tutor or supervisor about appropriate subdivisions, if needed.

- As well as a bibliography, a list of illustrations, maps, or any other materials used in the preparation and writing of the essay or dissertation, should be included if necessary.
- Each entry in your bibliography should contain adequate information concerning the work in question, as follows:
- For single author books, primary or secondary: (i) author - last name, first name or initials; (ii) full title – in italics; (iii) editor or translator, if applicable; (iv) publisher and place of publication (the latter optional); year of publication - i.e. the date of the edition you have used.
- For collections of essays or articles: (i) editor - last name, first name or initials; (ii) full title – in italics; (iv) publishing details, as above.
- For individual essays or articles within collections: (i) author of article; (ii) title of article - in quotation marks; (iii) title of collection – in italics; (iv) editor of collection; (v) publishing details, as above. For articles in periodicals: (i) author of article; (ii) title of article; (iii) name of periodical; (iv) volume and/or issue number of periodical; (v) date of publication - in brackets; (vi) page reference - optional.

You are strongly recommended to take down the full bibliographical details of the work you are consulting before you take notes from it.

European Year Abroad Dissertation Assessment Bands and Criteria

University of Sussex
2015/2016

The Year Abroad dissertation is assessed predominantly on the *academic* quality of its content (weighted at 60%) as distinct from the *linguistic* proficiency of the language in which it is expressed (weighted at 40%). The Language criteria are as per those for a 'Content Essay' in the Modern Languages 'Red Book' of Assessment Criteria.

You are reminded of the need to avoid collusion and plagiarism, both of which are forms of misconduct and may be heavily penalised. Students should refer to the section 'Plagiarism, Collusion and Misconduct' in the *'Examination and Assessment Handbook for Undergraduate Students'* if uncertain about their meaning, particularly in relation to the advice above concerning local help with the Dissertation which you are permitted or encouraged to obtain on your Year Abroad. Help with the language of your Dissertation should be corrective only and should not amount to (re)writing of the content. Any help received must be acknowledged. Further advice about this may also be obtained from your supervisor.

70% + First class. Excellent work that shows all the qualities of an upper second piece of work with additional elements of originality and flair, maturity and confidence. A range of critical reading should be apparent, with a fluently written, well-constructed argument showing awareness of the nuances of the relevant issues. Work in this band is often exciting to read; it will stand out from most of the others. Students may have taken a risk and gone out on a limb to make a point about the topic or to challenge some accepted position, but they must be able to back up their argument with sound resort to evidence or to theoretical sources.

60%-69% Upper second class. Work that indicates substantial engagement with a diversity of material and demonstrates a good understanding of the relevant issues and material. It should show that the student has thought about the topic and has not simply reproduced standard arguments or evidence from various sources. In work graded towards the higher end of this band, students will show confidence in handling complex material. There should be no major omissions in the coverage of the topic, nor should there be any significant errors of understanding or interpretation. It will be properly presented in terms of structure, references and bibliography.

50%-59% Lower second class. This will be competent work showing evidence of having read and understood relevant material. Overall the grasp of the topic should be sound. It will be reasonably well structured with no serious errors of fact or understanding, but demonstrating little independent thought. Such work may show signs of an attempt at originality that is nevertheless insufficiently grounded in a thorough appreciation of the material. References and bibliography should be substantially correct.

40%-49% Third class. Work that displays only limited reading and some basic understanding of the topic, but will not have gone beyond this. There may well be signs of confusion about more complex material. Such work is often poorly

presented and inadequately documented, but it will show some sign of proper structure and organisation. Material should be properly referenced, although there may be quite a heavy reliance on a very few sources.

30%-39% Non-honours Pass. Such work is likely to be short, inaccurate and confused, or heavily derivative. Although such work will show evidence of some engagement with the topic it may not draw adequately on relevant readings, concepts or methods of analysis. Significant issues are likely to be neglected, and there will be little or no appreciation of complex or subtle arguments. It is likely to be characterised by assertion rather than argument, inadequate references and bibliography.

29% and below - Fail. This is extremely weak work, below degree standard, very short and/or jumbled, with little evidence of effort or understanding.