Dissertation Guidelines
Master of Public Health Programme

Version 10 – January 2019

Contributors: Programme Director, Director of Online Studies, Director of Master’s Research and Dissertation Lead Faculty
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Introduction to the Dissertation

This guide will help you towards successful completion of your dissertation. You are advised to refer to it regularly when planning, researching, and writing your Master of Public Health (MPH) dissertation to ensure that it fulfils the University and Faculty of Medicine requirements.

Glossary / Personnel

Several administrative positions are referred to in this document according to their functions. The table below links the function/position title to the person who currently has that position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Administration Coordinator (AA)</td>
<td>The Academic Administration Coordinator confirms receipt of your final submission and arranges assessors for submitted papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessors</td>
<td>The members of faculty who grade the dissertation after submission. First assessor and a second assessor are members of faculty that hold Dissertation Advisor roles and are assigned by Laureate Online Education (hereafter ‘Laureate’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Director</td>
<td>The Programme Director is the Laureate academic responsible for the overall management of the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Online Studies</td>
<td>The Director of Online Studies is the University of Liverpool academic responsible for overall management of the programme of study. The Director of Online Studies works collaboratively with the Programme Director.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation Advisor (DA)</td>
<td>The Dissertation Advisor is the instructor that acts as the personal academic advisor for the student as they develop and write their dissertation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Faculty Dissertations (LF-D)</td>
<td>The Lead Faculty Dissertations supports the Instructors with administrative and academic matters related to the dissertation. Provides support to students with initial research topic ideas and coordinates DA-student matches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Librarian</td>
<td>The Online Librarian is the University of Liverpool library assistant assigned to assist Laureate Online students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Support Manager (SSM)</td>
<td>The Student Support Manager is the student’s prime contact point for all non-academic issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Outcomes

The purpose of the dissertation is for you to develop and demonstrate broad public health knowledge and skills relevant to the MPH programme. You must synthesise and integrate what you have learnt across subjects, selecting material and approaches appropriate to your specific area of study.

The aim of the dissertation is to conduct and write up a piece of ‘original’ research of relevance to public health. On completion of the dissertation, you will have demonstrated ability, within a public health setting, to:

- Prepare and present a research proposal
- Conduct a literature search and critically review literature
- Plan and implement a small-scale research project relevant to public health
- Produce a clear and accurate written research report that conveys the public health context and implications

A dissertation should generate new knowledge (or new applications of existing knowledge). This can include secondary data analysis, but not normally routine audit projects.

Overall Structure

The dissertation project carries 60 credit points, the same weight as four regular modules. Writing a dissertation is a creative process, and it does not progress along a straight path. As a guide, the student is expected to spend about 600 hours of work on the dissertation.

The dissertation calls for less online attendance than regular taught modules. There might be periods of intensive interaction, such as when writing chapters, when applying for ethical approval, starting the field work. Nevertheless, it is strongly suggested that the student keeps an ongoing dialogue with their DA in their classroom. Feedback from previous students suggests that the timetable and maintaining regular contact with the DA is really important to successful completion within the time available.

In addition to the core modules of the programme, students in the MPH programme will be required to take one module dependent on their choice of methodology for the dissertation (PUBH530: Qualitative – the Advanced Qualitative Research module or PUBH529: Quantitative – the Advanced Epidemiological Research module). The dissertation is started once the student has successfully completed nine modules and registers for the dissertation. It is recommended that students begin to think about whether they want to utilise qualitative or quantitative methods within their
dissertation, and to do so as early as possible (University of Liverpool does not permit mixed methods on this programme). Information on the dissertation process and ‘getting started’ with the dissertation will be provided in the Dissertation Preparation Pathway within PUBH520, 521, and PUBH523.

**Dissertation Preparation Pathway**

The Dissertation Preparation Pathway (or ‘DPP’) is a component of the Master of Public Health programme that runs in conjunction with the modules. It is divided into nine phases, spread over each of the modules and the dissertation. The work carried out in the DPP ensures that students start the dissertation period well-prepared and with a clear idea of the requirements. A suggested timeline for completion of the nine phases of the DPP is provided. Although students are not required to keep to this timeline, it is strongly suggested students adhere to it in order to properly progress through the DPP. Keeping to the timeline will allow students to maximise their use of the DPP and be better prepared to start the dissertation phase of the programme. Students who utilise the DPP as suggested will likely reduce the time needed in the Dissertation Class to gain proposal approval as well as ethics approvals leaving more time for data collection, analysis, and write up of the dissertation in the 9 months allowed.

Although ungraded and optional, the DPP is an extremely important part of the programme as the dissertation contributes towards 60 credits of the entire programme. The DPP helps a student start thinking about and preparing for their dissertation from the start of their studies and helps them avoid losing valuable time at the start of the 40-week dissertation period because they were inadequately prepared, which can result in a poorer than expected mark for the dissertation.

The DPP is located within every module in the MPH programme under the ‘Dissertation Preparation Pathway’ tab located in the left-hand side navigation bar. The DPP is available to all MPH programme students.

The DPP is comprised of valuable resources, guidance, and skill-building activities. In addition, every module that corresponds to the DPP will have a Dissertation Preparation discussion forum available for students. This forum will be a venue for students to engage with peers around dissertation related topics. Faculty will not engage with students in this forum. Therefore, students should not post questions or comments for faculty in this area.

Completion of each DPP Phase alongside corresponding modules is highly encouraged. Keeping to this suggested timeline will help ensure students have adequate time to develop skills necessary for the dissertation prior to commencing the dissertation phase of the programme.
## Dissertation Process Overview

Below is an overview of the dissertation process. Each stage will be discussed in detail further in this document.

### MPH Dissertation Flow Chart & Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Student Action</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Review of dissertation material           | PUBH521, PUBH523 | • Review MPH Dissertation Guidelines  
• View “preparing for the dissertation & choosing a topic” webinar  
• Participate in Q&A session with lead faculty | Complete review of dissertation guidelines by the end of PUBH521  
Complete other actions by the end of PUBH523.  
*Link for the webinar, Q&A session, and dissertation guidelines are available in the module announcement area.* |
| Initial research topic ideas              | PUBH523       | Complete and submit initial ideas for the research proposal using template to lead faculty. | Submit template by date noted in the PUBH523 announcement (normally 1 week after Q&A session).  
*Brief feedback will normally be sent by lead faculty to students 14 days after document submission deadline.* |
| Dissertation proposal and advisor matching | LAUR913       | Proposal draft and ‘intention to start dissertation’ form must be submitted in LAUR913; if draft proposal and intention form are not submitted student will not be matched to a dissertation advisor (DA).  
Once a student is matched to a DA, the DA will review the proposal. This will be sent back to the student to revise their comments | Dissertation Advisor match is made after the conclusion of PUBH531 and within 10 days of submitting draft proposal and intention form in LAUR913.  
*Student-DA assignment list will be posted in designated discussion area in LAUR913.* |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Student Action</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dissertation proposal approval</strong></td>
<td>After dissertation start date, once in the dissertation advisor class</td>
<td>Work with DA to complete all necessary revisions to the proposal for submission of proposal to review committee for approval</td>
<td>Time required to get proposal ready for review may vary; this is contingent upon the number of revisions required by the DA as well as proposal review committee; proposal approval should be achieved by week 4 (or sooner) after dissertation start date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethics approval</strong></td>
<td>While waiting for proposal review outcome/feedback and to be finalised after proposal approval is achieved</td>
<td>Work with DA to complete ethics documents</td>
<td>Ethics documents are submitted to ethics reviewers (expedited review) or LOREC (full review) by the DA once documents are completed to the satisfaction of the DA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local ethical approval will be required prior to ethical approval being granted by the university; proof of local ethical approval if required will need to be included with the ethics documents for the university approval.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethic documents must be granted prior to obtaining university ethics approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection</strong></td>
<td>After ethics approvals (University and local)</td>
<td>Carry out approved data collection procedures according to approved methods in proposal.</td>
<td>Suggested completion between week 9-16 of dissertation (will vary depending on approved methodology).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Dissertation Guidelines

### MPH Programme

**Version 10 - January 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Student Action</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation write-up</td>
<td>After dissertation proposal approval</td>
<td>Work on writing of introduction and literature review chapters</td>
<td>Students can start to work on these chapters while awaiting ethics approval and can continue to revise throughout using DA feedback during the dissertation phase prior to submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students may also commence write-up of introduction and literature review while waiting for outcome of an ethics review /approval</td>
<td>Work on methods and results chapters</td>
<td>Methods and results chapters can be worked on after data collection concludes and analysis is complete; students may work on methods chapter while waiting for ethics approval as well. However, no data collection can take place prior to ethics approval. Therefore, results cannot be written until after ethics approval is granted and data is collected. Data revisions should be completed using DA feedback prior to submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full dissertation document</td>
<td>All revisions should be completed prior to submission using DA feedback; full document must be submitted to the DA at least 4 weeks prior to submission date for feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation submission &amp; grading</td>
<td>Final dissertation by dissertation submission deadline; Grade will be communicated after board of examiners</td>
<td>Submit full document to Turnitin in DA class and post to the designated discussion forum</td>
<td>Students will receive notification of grade from student support after the board of examiners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Dissertation submission & grading**

- Final dissertation by dissertation submission deadline; Grade will be communicated after board of examiners
- Submit full document to Turnitin in DA class and post to the designated discussion forum

**Timeline**

- Students can start to work on these chapters while awaiting ethics approval and can continue to revise throughout using DA feedback during the dissertation phase prior to submission.
- Methods and results chapters can be worked on after data collection concludes and analysis is complete; students may work on methods chapter while waiting for ethics approval as well. However, no data collection can take place prior to ethics approval. Therefore, results cannot be written until after ethics approval is granted and data is collected. Data revisions should be completed using DA feedback prior to submission.
- All revisions should be completed prior to submission using DA feedback; full document must be submitted to the DA at least 4 weeks prior to submission date for feedback.
- Students will receive notification of grade from student support after the board of examiners.
The MPH dissertation itself lasts for 40 weeks and you will be assigned to a Dissertation Advisor (DA) prior to starting in your dissertation. As you work on your modules you will also be able to work in parallel on activities supporting the writing of your research proposal. Resources will also be available to you in the DPP that will help in the development of other skills, such as surveying the literature adequately, that will be beneficial to you throughout the dissertation. It is intended that as you start in the Dissertation Advisor class you will be ready to receive proposal approval and shortly after that, ethical approval and will spend the remainder months working on the dissertation. The final draft of the dissertation is submitted four weeks before your final submission date. This is to enable your DA to review the final draft in detail (for which 10 days is allowed) with the remaining time for you to make final changes prior to submission.

The student will be enrolled into a Dissertation Class with their DA (as a one-to-one class) at the next available dissertation start date provided required modules have been completed and dissertation prerequisite requirements have been met.

The Student and their Dissertation Advisor (DA)

Throughout the dissertation process, the input from the DA will vary according to the needs of the student. However, it is important that the student maintains steady progress and, at the beginning of the process, agrees their personal timetable so that both the student and the DA are clear what is expected of them and when. A ‘guide’ timetable runs through the structure of the dissertation process. However, this is open to minor modification depending on the nature of the student’s dissertation subject and design.

The working relationship between a dissertation student and his/her GDI and DA is an important one. The Dissertation Agreement document found in your DA class (and the CSS: https://success.liverpoolonline.com/ResearchPortal/DA/DissertationAgreement summarizes the key responsibilities of DAs and students during the various phases of the dissertation.

The DA and the student should both read through the Dissertation Agreement and indicate that they have read and accepted the agreement by replying to the ‘Dissertation Agreement’ thread in the DA’s class.

Acknowledgment and acceptance of the agreement should be completed at the outset of the dissertation and posted in the Dissertation Advisor classroom under its own thread for future reference.

The initial task for the DA is to help the student to refine their Dissertation Proposal. The University of Liverpool sees the development of the proposal as a key stage in the dissertation process and has specific requirements that the proposal must address (see Appendix B: Outline Dissertation Proposal Checklist and Appendix E: Dissertation Proposal Template). The reason for this early emphasis is to ensure a strong foundation on which the rest of the dissertation can smoothly develop. The DAs role in developing the Dissertation Proposal is to offer advice and feedback on the required elements, prior to formal proposal approval.
As the dissertation progresses, the DA is expected to discuss with the student their ideas, read and comment on one set of well-crafted drafts of each chapter as well as the pilot study, data (or data output), or transcripts in the case of qualitative studies, and the analysis. A draft of the whole dissertation should be submitted to the DA in the DA classroom for feedback as well. The DA will only complete one review of the entire draft dissertation. This should be done at least 4 weeks prior to the dissertation submission deadline. It is important that the student arranges with their DA well in advance the stages at which s/he can allocate time to read and discuss draft(s), otherwise a great deal of time may be wasted for both parties. Students should not expect their DA to comment on more than one draft of each complete draft chapter and the full dissertation draft. The student should themselves check the accuracy of all drafts for typography, grammar, spelling, formatting, referencing and data presentation before asking for comments on them. It is the student’s responsibility to correct any such errors. The examiners pay particular attention to such problems in presentation.

The final responsibility for the quality of the dissertation rests with the student, but the DA takes responsibility for providing sound advice along the way. The student is also responsible for keeping in touch with the DA. As already mentioned, the Dissertation Agreement should be discussed and agreed during stage one of the dissertation as this outlines the responsibilities of both the student and the DA. The DA is responsible for updating the academic team about student progress, particularly where the student is falling behind schedule.

DAs will not comment on the mark that a dissertation may achieve; or whether it is likely to achieve a pass. If DAs comment that a certain part of the dissertation is, for example good or excellent, it cannot be inferred that the dissertation is overall likely to pass.

If a student is unhappy about any aspect of his/her supervision, s/he should consult their Student Support Manager as soon as possible. The SSM will contact the Programme Director and/or Lead Faculty to discuss the issues. Every effort will be made to ensure that the student-DA match works well. However, if a change in DA is requested, the Programme Director will make the final decision considering the supporting evidence for a change.

Outside Help with Language Skills

The writing of the dissertation, as well as the work presented within it, should be the students own. It is acceptable to ask your DA to point out unclear sentences, problematic paragraph structure, etc, when reading a draft chapter, but it is unacceptable to give the text to a professional editor for corrections. The University of Liverpool will treat the use of a professional editor as unauthorized collusion. However, your SSM can advise about services offered by the University to improve writing skills.
Even the most minor assistance with any aspect of the writing up of the dissertation should be clearly acknowledged in the dissertation acknowledgements. It is not permitted under any circumstances to write the dissertation in another language and have it translated into English.
Academic Integrity, Copyright, Confidentiality and Publishing

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity, namely proper citation and referencing in all stages of the dissertation cannot be stressed enough. The dissertation must adhere to the same requirements for proper citation that were applicable in the other modules of the programme. Students must use the Harvard Cite Them Right system as explained later in this document and as promoted throughout the programme.

Proper credit should be given to other sources in the proposal and then continued throughout each stage of the dissertation. Correct citation must be an integral part of the final thesis.

For more information please see the Academic Integrity Policy in the Student Handbook on the Centre for Student Success.

The final draft of the dissertation needs to be submitted to the draft Turnitin folder in the DA class by the student, so the student and DA can check for issues of academic integrity. Submitting to Turnitin checks the draft for similarity with other sources and reports on the percentage of matching found. For more details see the page on Turnitin in the Student Handbook on the Centre for Student Success. Any content not correctly cited and referenced will be identified and investigated. Failure to adhere to the citation rules, which are simple to follow, will most likely be considered as plagiarism and have severe consequences for the student and their successful completion of the degree.

The final dissertation is submitted via the second submission point in Blackboard as a Word document so that the first and second assessors can access it for assessment. There will be instructions in your DA class on how to do this. The DA does not mark their own student's dissertation. The assessors are obliged to inform the academic department of any suspected plagiarism or collusion found during the assessment. An explanation will be requested from the student and this explanation, together with other evidence taken from analysis of the dissertation, will be brought to the Board of Examiners when it considers the assessment of the dissertation. The Board has the power to decide, in the light of the evidence presented, the final grade to be recorded for the work, and also to consider whether any further action is necessary. Thus, great care should be exercised when posting the final dissertation document that it is the version the student wishes to be considered for assessment.
Copyright

What is the copyright status of a student’s dissertation, and to whom does it belong?

Traditionally all academic work completed at a University will be ‘owned’ by the University. Usually it is beneficial for them to share the credit with the student and, even though they technically do not have to, most Universities choose to do this. Due to most of the online students being active working professionals, often using their companies/organisations as case studies, the ownership of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) becomes a little more complicated.

The University’s official stance is:

‘Except in the case of students supported by outside bodies, where specific provisions relating to intellectual property are embodied in the conditions of the support, all postgraduate students are required to agree to assign to the University all their rights to intellectual property arising from their studies or research at the university... the University has a policy of sharing profits arising... with the staff and students concerned’

The most relevant section here is ‘except in the case of students supported by outside bodies’, as most Laureate students are employed and so supported externally. However, in addition it is believed that:

1. They (students) are the effective copyright holders of their dissertation. The University/Laureate will not publish their work without their consent.

2. Any published work arising out of a dissertation project should normally be viewed as collaboration between the student and the supervisor/Dissertation Advisor, and each has an obligation to discuss this with the other, and to agree on authorship and/or acknowledgements as appropriate. The University has no rights over any such publication, but it is expected that it will include an acknowledgement that the work was carried out as part of the student’s studies with the University/Laureate. See additional information below on publishing your work.

3. In the case where a student’s dissertation project is sponsored by their employer, or relates directly to their employment, the University will not make any claim on the IPR of the work.

4. In any other case, the student is required to inform Laureate if any commercial exploitation of work carried out for the dissertation is planned. The University/Laureate will not normally assert its claim to IPR, however, unless there is a reasonable argument that the Dissertation Supervisor should share in the benefits of any exploitation.

Probably the most important factor to consider is that it is not in the interests of the University to forcibly claim rights over a piece of work or information. At most the University will request acknowledgement that the work was carried out as part of the student’s studies with the University.
Confidentiality

Students who need to keep their dissertation confidential should include the following sentence on the same page that they make their declaration about plagiarism:

“This dissertation contains material that is confidential and/or commercially sensitive. It is included here on the understanding that this will not be revealed to any person not involved in the assessment process.”

Publishing and Posting

All documents supporting the progress of the study during the dissertation process (proposals, monthly reports and interim dissertation drafts), are internal documents submitted to the University for assessment. They should thus be regarded as coursework assignments which belong to the University of Liverpool/Laureate rather than to the student. In particular, the dissertation is an internal document until after final assessment.

Authorship and potential future publications

Although ultimately the dissertation is the student’s own work, the DA is likely to contribute considerable time and expertise to the development and writing of the dissertation. If the student subsequently submits the material for publication, for example, as an article in an academic journal, they should not omit any authors who fulfil the international authorship criteria:

1. “substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data”, and
2. “drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content”, and
3. “final approval of the version to be published”

Ahead of starting to draft such an article, the student should at least discuss with the DA whether his/her contribution to the dissertation merits authorship of any intended article and whether anyone else qualifies as a potential author.

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Methodology (Steps, Schedule and Duration)

The overall duration of the dissertation is 40 weeks from starting in the Dissertation Class to submission.

This section provides guidance on the key steps to be taken by the student in the development, task and eventual submission of the dissertation. There are three parts to this section. Part One provides a summary of the formal requirements (the ‘must do’s’) in terms of the administrative processes and key milestones that govern the whole process. Part Two sets out a series of (‘should do’) key stages that the student is strongly advised to adopt in order to ensure a suitably structured approach to the whole process. Part Three provides a diagrammatic summary of Parts One and Two in the form of a proposed timeline from initiation to completion.

Scheduling your dissertation

Please note that students cannot take a break between modules for a period longer than 16 weeks without special authorization. This means the student has approximately four months (i.e. 16 weeks) after finishing the last module to start the dissertation. As dissertations are not offered every month, please plan ahead your dissertation start date, in case you are considering study break after your taught modules. Dissertation start dates will only be offered four times per year. For further details about your break options and dissertation planning please contact Student Support.

Initial Research Ideas

Students should view the ‘Preparing for the dissertation & choosing a topic’ webinar and attend the scheduled Q&A session with Lead Faculty during PUBH523 in order to receive feedback on their ideas. An announcement with the date/time of the Q&A session will be posted in PUBH523. Students should submit the completed Initial Ideas template to Lead Faculty within one week following the Q&A session. Students that do not submit the template by the deadline will not receive feedback from Lead Faculty.

The topic to be investigated

You should choose an area of study according to your own interests, but you must be able to demonstrate its relevance to public health. As you will devote so much time to your dissertation, it is essential that you choose a topic that you will enjoy and find interesting. It is also important to consider the practical aspects of the proposed study. Some topics may simply not be researchable because the necessary skills, procedures and techniques are not feasible, available, or ethically acceptable, or would take too long or involve too many people. In addition, you should consider the value of the proposed study in terms of providing new and meaningful insights. This may
contribute to your own career development and may provide material for a peer-reviewed publication or preliminary work for a higher research degree.

**Gaining ethical approval is a ‘must do’ in all dissertations.** In order to obtain proposal approval and ethical approval quickly and without complications, it is important to choose a non-sensitive focus for your dissertation. Your DA will be able to advise you whether your proposed topic is of a sensitive nature and should be avoided. Lead Faculty will also be able to guide you on the appropriateness of your topic if you complete the tasks in the Dissertation Pathway. See information on DPP for further information. Students will need to gain local ethical approval prior to gaining university ethics approval. Hence, it is important that students start the local ethics process, if required, as soon as possible. Please note a formal application for local ethical approval though cannot be submitted until proposal approval has been achieved.

**Dissertation Advisor-Student Match**

Students are assigned to a Dissertation Advisor by Lead Faculty in the Dissertation Advisor Match Class LAUR913 upon the conclusion of PUBH531. Students will be required to complete two tasks in prior to receiving a DA match. Details of these tasks are located in LAUR913 and include submission of the draft proposal and *Intention to Start Dissertation* form. DA-student matches will be made based on DA availability and topic/methodology expertise. DA-Student assignments will be posted in LAUR913 in the corresponding discussion forum. The DA will review your proposal once before the actual start of the dissertation class. The DA reviews will be sent back to you via Contact Faculty by the Lead Faculty. this will usually be about 2 to 3 weeks before the dissertation start date. During these 2 to 3 weeks, you will be asked to address the DA comments on your proposal so that by the time you start the dissertation class, you will have a well-developed proposal.

**Dissertation Advisor classrooms**

*Please note: A Dissertation Advisor will normally be assigned rather than chosen by the student. This is because we have a limited number of DAs and it is important to get the correct match to the student’s study topic as well as the right balance and number of dissertation students for the DA.*

All the correspondence between the student and the DA must be conducted through the individual classroom that they share with their DA.

DAs and students may occasionally have communications outside the classroom. However, if such conversations occur, we ask that the student makes a brief summary of their understanding of what was discussed in a dated post in the most appropriate thread in the DA classroom. **This is essential for audit purposes.**

The student will have worked on their draft proposal prior to starting in the dissertation class and should submit it as soon as he/she is enrolled in the Dissertation Advisor classroom so that the DA
can suggest any amendments before it is sent for formal review process. Please note the draft proposal may require several sets of revisions before it can be submitted for formal review.

Submission of proposal

A dissertation proposal should be submitted to the LAUR913 module, for DA review after the DA-student match has occurred. The LF will send feedback on their proposal to the student through the Contact Faculty in LAUR913 within 10 days of the DA-student match. Further work between the DA and student will not take place after this point until the official start of the dissertation. The student should use the DA feedback and resources provided at this point to further refine the proposal in preparation for the official dissertation start date. Upon the start of the dissertation, the DA and the student will resume their work together.

Once the DA believes that the Dissertation Proposal has reached a stage that will gain academic approval, the DA submits the proposal to the reviewers with an email to the reviewers to alert them that the proposal has been posted for review.

The proposal will be formally reviewed by a Proposal Review Committee consisting of two members of faculty in the programme. Feedback will be provided to the student via the DA within nine days. The outcome of that feedback will be one of three possibilities:

1. Approval
2. Approval subject to minor amendments that can be signed off by the DA. In which case the reviewers do not need to see the proposal again
3. Not approved and requires further work, with resubmission to the reviewers once amended

It is important for the DA and the student to view the formal review process as an opportunity for learning and academic rigour. Often when two people are engaged in developing the proposal they can become so focused on the subject that they can miss certain essential elements. Hence the reviewers can offer a fresh and objective perspective on the proposal.

It is worth noting that most initial submissions of the proposal are returned requiring some further revisions. If this occurs, clear feedback is provided pointing out how the Dissertation Proposal needs to be improved.
Ethics Applications and Approvals

Once the Dissertation Proposal is approved all students are required to apply for ethics approval (students should be working on the ethics documents whilst waiting for feedback on their proposal). In addition, the student usually needs to apply locally for ethics approval (see below). Ethics forms can be found in the DA class. The ethics approval process is detailed in Appendix D. Once all the ethics documents (University of Liverpool and local) are collated together the DA will send them for independent review.

Complying with legal and ethics guidance and specific local or other codes of practice regarding use of all personal data is a requirement of the University of Liverpool. All research will require ethical approval through the Laureate Online Research Ethics Committee (LOREC) or through the Virtual Programmes Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) for expedited review, as well as any other local ethics approvals required.

The procedures for local ethics approvals can vary between different countries and sometimes within countries, depending on the location and local policies. Please do check this out thoroughly. This is your own responsibility. This also applies to the organisation within which your study is carried out: do they have a specific ethical approval procedure? If you are using secondary data, you may also need permission to use the data – check that you can obtain this. Local Ethical approval will be required prior to university approval.

Please note students are not permitted to use vulnerable populations for the dissertation (ie. minors, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, prisoners, individuals that cannot provide consent themselves, etc.). Students should not use anyone who the student holds authority over. The DA will advise the student if the proposed population is vulnerable and hence, cannot be used for the dissertation research.

Research involving refugees should be avoided as full ethics approval will be required and can be a lengthy process.

Any research study that involves access to UK NHS patients, staff or patients’ records, health service facilities, for example, will require the approval of an NHS local research ethics committee (there may be alternative non-local research ethics committee approval requirements depending on your topic of study). Information is available on the NHS Health Research Authority website: http://www.hra.nhs.uk/ (last accessed 26/08/2016). We strongly discourage students to conduct studies where approval is required from the NHS HRA, as in the past students have not always gained approval even after going through the long process and have therefore had to choose another topic and resit their dissertation. There may be other ways of recruiting participants. Your DA will be able to advise you.
**Expedited ethics review**

Expedited ethics review may be considered:

- Where it is judged that the potential risk of harm to participants and others affected by the proposed research is minimal.
- Where the research is undertaken as part of Undergraduate or Postgraduate training and follows a previously approved generic study plan.
- Study does not use sensitive populations or topics
- Study uses secondary data analysis

**Full review via LOREC**

Full review via the University of Liverpool International Online Research Ethics Committee (LOREC) takes place when:

- Applications for full review are considered where expedited conditions have not been met.
- The full review process involves one lead reviewer who will discuss the application at Committee.
- The Ethics Review form that student and the DA completes will aid the DA and LOREC to decide whether an application requires full committee review. This route can take some time and is not recommended for student research. Hence the initial guidance to students is to choose a non-sensitive topic in the first instance.
- The LOREC meets approximately every 2 weeks and you will have a response within 1-2 weeks following the Committee meeting.

Where ethics approval has been sought from a Local Research Ethics Committee in the country or organisation in which the student is carrying out the research, this must be noted on the ethical approval application form and a copy of the ethics approval will be required before the university ethics approval can be granted, and research can commence. Please post a copy in the DA classroom in the first instance.

The important thing to remember is that research ethics, whatever your dissertation topic or method, is an excellent way to prepare for the practicalities of your research. The application will require you to think through each stage of your study and will also require submission of such documents as your participant information and your consent form, for example.

For all applications, ethical approval will involve completing an application form and other forms such as Consent forms and Participant information forms, depending on what the nature of the research study (whether using primary or secondary data). If the student has a local, national, area or organisation ethics process the student will also have to make application there if it is
required. This will need to occur prior to gaining university ethics approval. The student cannot begin collection of data, including the pilot study, until university ethical approval has been granted by LOREC or VPREC.

Throughout the preparation for the dissertation, the student is advised to steer away from ethically sensitive research topics/design. This advice is given with the intention of minimising the time taken to complete the dissertation i.e. within the 40-week period. However, if the student chooses to select a topic and/or design following that require LOREC full ethics approval even after consideration of this advice, the process for gaining ethics approval is likely to take longer, often many months longer. Although applications for extensions to dissertation deadlines based on documented waiting time for ethical approval may be favourably reviewed, the student is still strongly advised to avoid such ethically sensitive topics/research designs for their MPH dissertation.

Monthly Status Reports

From the start of project until the submission of the final version of the dissertation, the student should submit a brief, monthly status report to the DA via the DA Classroom. This monthly status report should briefly detail progress since the last status report, identifying any difficulties encountered, changes to plans, revisions to the timeline, and any other pertinent information that applies to the progress of the dissertation. Plans for the following month should also be outlined.

The monthly status report should be submitted on or before the 28th day of each month. Keeping to deadlines and making regular progress reports are aspects of professionalism that are expected when completing the dissertation.

Dialogue Between Student and DA

The target turnaround time for the DA’s response to questions posed by the student is within four days, and within ten days for feedback on draft chapters and the draft full dissertation. Past experience has shown that work should proceed in well-planned steps and intermediate results should be shown to the DA. Hence a key early activity for the student is the completion of their own research timetable: specifying milestones agreed and signed off with their DA. As has been already emphasised, all discussion should be carried out/recorded in the DA classroom. This is very important as the quality of teaching and student effort may be monitored by the Lead Faculty, Programme Director, Director of Online Studies, and subsequently by the University of Liverpool Monitors and the External Examiners.
Chapter Drafts

Submission of initial chapter drafts should be included in the planning of any dissertation. This will allow the student to gain feedback on each completed chapter before submitting a final full draft of the dissertation for assessment. It is important to keep referring to the Guidelines for Writing and Marking a dissertation, Appendix E, with other resources on writing the dissertation provided in PUBH523 and PUBH 529/530, and the DA class.

The student should submit a draft of the final full dissertation to the Draft folder in Turnitin to check for academic integrity issues in advance of the dissertation submission deadline. It is required that students do this at least 4 weeks prior to the submission deadline so that the student has time to make amendments to the document if needed.

Submission of Final Dissertation and Dissertation Assessment

Submission of the final dissertation document should be made on or before the dissertation deadline. The completed dissertation should be posted through the final submission point in Turnitin in the DA Classroom. Students who are completing a resit of the dissertation will not need to do this. Finally, the final dissertation should also be submitted in a thread in Blackboard in your DA student group. There will be instructions in your DA class on how to do this.

A first and second assessor will mark your dissertation independently. If the two assessors’ marks are less than 15% apart, then an average of the two marks is taken as the final mark. If the two assessors’ marks differ by more than 15% or one gives a pass grade (50% and above) and one a fail, or the grades cross grade bands (example: A-B, B-C) then they are required to share the details of their assessment and reach a final, agreed mark. If they are unable to agree a mark at this point, then one of the Lead Faculty will be asked to act as a third assessor.

The dissertation mark is not revealed to the student until it has been approved by the Board of Examiners. Boards of Examiners are held three times a year: February, May and October for graduation ceremonies in July and December. You can enquire with your SSM when you should expect to be informed of your dissertation grade. Your SSM will inform you of you r grade and the grade will not be posted in the DA classroom.

If the dissertation has been assessed as a ‘fail’ then the student will receive detailed feedback and will need to decide whether to accept the Post Graduate Diploma in Public Health or to resit the dissertation. For students resitting their dissertation nine calendar months are allotted irrespective of the nature of the specified revisions. A DA will be appointed (the original or a different DA) by Lead Faculty for the resit. A ‘fail’ grade following this second submission will be final and there will be no opportunity for the student to resubmit or retake their dissertation.
Dissertation Late Work Policy and Extensions

The student will be penalized for late submission per the Dissertation Late Work Policy (see Appendix E). Extensions will not normally be granted, except in clearly unexpected circumstances beyond a student’s control, such as in cases of real personal/family/medical/work emergencies. The case for an extension will need to be made in writing with supporting documentation. Requests are made online through the Centre for Student Success, and according to the ‘Guidelines for Students Dissertation Extension’ (see Appendix A).

Staying on Track with your Dissertation

In terms of progress, as a guide, the following elements should be completed during the standard 40-week dissertation process:

Months 1 and 2

The Dissertation Agreement should be acknowledged/accepted and posted in the DA class (by the end of week 1 during Month 1).

It is expected that the outline proposal will be submitted to the student’s DA as the student enters the DA classroom. Students will then work intensively with their DA for two weeks in order to finalise the Outline Dissertation Proposal and submit it to the Review Panel.

By the end of month 2, the Proposal should be approved (though this should ideally occur before month 2 but may take longer depending on the quality of the proposal). If resubmission to the Review Panel is required, then obviously more time will be taken at this stage and there will be less time to undertake the research. For example, if the student is unable to obtain proposal approval by the end of month 2 this means they will have less than 7 months in which to complete their dissertation. They will not be given additional time to complete their dissertation solely because proposal approval took longer than 2 months.

In addition to proposal approval, the student should be working on ethics documents during this time with the aim of gaining ethics approval by the end of Month 2. However, ethics applications cannot be submitted for ethics approval until formal proposal approval is achieved. Whilst the main output of Months 1-2 is proposal approval and submission for ethical approval, it is expected that the student will be further refining their study design and methods and also planning their field work/collection of data in anticipation of gaining ethical approval. The student should also plan accordingly for local ethics approvals during this time with the aim of achieving local approval (if needed) as well by the end of Month 2. Time to obtain university and local ethics approvals may vary so the planning of time here is key.
Month 3

The aim for the end of month 3 is the start of field work/collation of data. The key output is the Literature Search, and submission of the completed Introduction and Literature Review draft chapters to the DA (allow 10 days for the DA to read and comment on each draft chapter).

Month 4 and 5

The key outputs at this stage are the completion of field work/data collection and the beginnings of the detailed analysis of data. Data and transcripts should be posted in the DA class for the DA to review.

Month 6 and 7

All those elements from Month 4 and 5 (above) plus;

Data analysis should be completed. Full Method and Results chapter drafts completed by the student and reviewed by the DA, and revisions completed by the student. Target date confirmed by student to DA for whole draft dissertation submission to Turnitin and the DA class discussion forum (which should be at least 4 weeks before the final submission date if the student has not submitted draft chapters in prior months so that the DA can review, and the student can amend).

Month 8

Detailed review of results and discussion of implications. Full draft Discussion chapter should be submitted to DA for feedback (allow 10 days for DA to read and comment).

Final month

A complete draft should be sent to the Dissertation Advisor at the start of Month 9 at the latest so that there will be ample time for corrections and revisions i.e. four weeks prior to the dissertation submission date. The DA will comment in detail once on a single, full final draft before the final submission of the dissertation provided this is submitted in a timely manner.

The submitted dissertation must be written according to the guidance given below (‘The structure of your dissertation’).

Throughout all stages, as stated in the previous sections of this guide, the student and DA should review progress in relation to the key stages and submission dates for the full draft and final dissertation. Students should be aware that the ability to keep to agreed deadlines is a key skill for
the research practitioner. They should also keep in regular contact with their DA and let them know if they are experiencing any problems.
Dissertation Proposal

The outline-proposal should be no more than 2,000 words in length (no +/- 10%), not including the references and the format should be as follows:

1. Title
2. Introduction and background (1 paragraph)
3. Summary of relevant literature (2-3 paragraphs)
4. Research question(s)
5. Study aim and objectives; and assumptions made about the nature of knowledge
6. Epistemological approach, consideration of positionality
7. Methods (including: summary of study design; setting; sample (sample size calculation for quantitative dissertations); recruitment; data collection; data analysis; ethical aspects;)
8. Research outcomes (1 paragraph)
9. Costs
10. Draft timetable
11. References

The appendix of your dissertation MUST include the final, approved, outline proposal. Please use the Outline Proposal Checklist to aid successful completion – which can be found in Appendix B of this document.

Important Tips for Your Dissertation Work

Reviewing the background research

There are a number of practical tips when searching through the literature:

- Use the collections of the University of Liverpool Online Library to access e-journals, e-books and databases. These are available through the University portal http://portal.liv.ac.uk and the Online Library home page http://www.liv.ac.uk/library/ohecampus/ In the tutorials you will learn how to register so you can save your searches.
- If you have any problems in accessing Discover, ask the online librarian: onlinelibrarian@liverpool.ac.uk.
- Consult relevant reference books.
- Regularly review current journals for articles that may be relevant.
- Do not forget the opportunity provided by local libraries for obtaining information.
Stating your aim and objectives/research question/assumptions

It is essential that you clarify the aim of your research. You need to develop a clear idea of what you are hoping to investigate and how this is to be done before you start your research. It might be helpful to start by trying to articulate the overall research question that you are interested in tackling. The study aim(s) and objectives are crucial to your proposal. The study aim should describe the overall purpose of the project and the objectives should outline the steps that will make up your overall aim. Keep the objectives concise and restricted in number. We recommend three to five objectives. Long lists of objectives result in (or from) confusion and do not get done! Often the objectives can take quite a while to get right, so do not be surprised or disheartened by the iterative process involved in designing them.

If your study involves testing a hypothesis, define your hypothesis clearly and ask yourself whether the hypothesis is testable and whether the proposed study is feasible. Be aware that how you frame your research question and, for example, whether or not you have a hypothesis to test will be guided by certain assumptions that you make about the nature of ‘knowledge’/‘the truth’ and possible study design. You need to note what assumptions underpin your work and clarify the implications for your research approach and findings. In the dissertation, this can take the form of several concise statements (with a clear link to the reflective parts of the discussion), or be a lengthier reflective discourse integrated in the relevant sections, as appropriate.

Formulating your research question

It is usually crucial to identify a clear research question before starting the study. The research question is simply the question you intend your study to answer. It should follow on from the previous research questions identified by the studies in your literature review and should provide an overview for the study aim and objectives that you have identified. You should try to articulate one or two overall research questions.

Deciding how you will carry out your research

Once you have carried out a thorough literature search, you must then formulate a plan for conducting the research. First, consider the main research design, e.g. whether the research involves, for example, a descriptive, analytical, or intervention-type ‘quantitative’ study design, or a ‘qualitative’ approach. For surveys involving questionnaires, you need to find a questionnaire that has already been validated, but you may modify it for your own specific needs. You should allow time for piloting. Discuss and obtain advice from your DA as soon as possible and keep testing out your new ideas.
Having formulated your study design, you then need to establish how the data are to be analysed, e.g. using appropriate statistical tests, clarifying the philosophy underpinning any analysis of data collected by a ‘qualitative’ approach. Try to avoid complicated research designs or studies that involve long or indeterminate waiting-times to receive data from (especially multiple) routine data sources. If you need epidemiological, statistical, social science, health economics, management advice, etc. seek such expert advice at the design stage. Do not wait until you start your analysis.

Once you have a clear idea in your mind of the design and methods of data collection and analysis, you should consider how many participants/cases will be included in your study. This will be influenced by the feasibility given the overall time involved (30 patients with a particular injury may be difficult to locate within a limited time-span, for example) and the requirements of your particular study. You may already have a clear idea of the numbers you require from previously published literature, but you must demonstrate a clear rationale, other than just feasibility, for deciding on that particular sample size and type. For quantitative studies you will need to include a sample size calculation – unless there is a specific reason not to. If in doubt, take advice. For qualitative studies, a minimum of 10 interviews (number of interviews not hours) is recommended. You should be aiming to reach saturation. Small sample sizes that do not allow the data to reach saturation should be discussed properly as a limitation in the dissertation.

Do not forget to consider the cost of various components including, for example: travel, telephone, stationery, survey forms and consider how these will be paid for.

**Constructing a research timetable**

It is essential in planning research that you specify the estimated length of time required at each stage. Obviously, you cannot be exact in your time predictions because all sorts of unforeseen circumstances may cause delays. Obtaining ethics approval, for example, can take more than a few weeks – particularly for local approvals and can involve numerous changes to your original intentions. Hence, it is better to take this into account right at the beginning in formulating a non-sensitive focus. A timetable enables you to plan the project and focus on its essential components.
The Structure of Your Dissertation

The dissertation structure provided below is to be used as an example. It does not need to be followed exactly but is recommended. The most recent marking guidelines will be posted in the Dissertation Advisor class. These include the policies for the use of text boxes and tables.

Abstract

This is a 300 word concise but comprehensive résumé of the dissertation. It is a very important part of the report. Select this text carefully as the abstract gives the reader a framework on which to orientate the details of the report and allows the reader to ‘dip in’ and find out the main purpose, design, outcomes, and ‘so what?’ of the piece of work. Take care to craft the abstract very carefully as it may well be the first part (and the last part!) that a reader accesses. The abstract should therefore convey the reason for the investigation, the key research design features, important results (with supporting evidence, as appropriate) and conclusions. Make sure the abstract includes a brief background of the problem, study aim methods, results and conclusion? Is all of the information specific and clear, especially the results? The formatting of the abstract does matter: subsections should be subtitled. You must keep within the specified word-limits. You should also list five key-words on your abstract page that best describe the content and process of your research.

Introduction/background and public health context (Why have you done this work? What is the public health problem?)

Introduction

The Introduction section of your dissertation should explain clearly to the reader why you have decided to embark on this area of public health research and summarise what the reader will find in the dissertation that is being presented.

Background

The Background should identify and justify the reasons for doing the research, the relevant background information about the location; the reasons why the location of the study has been chosen and the context about the public health ‘problem’/situation generating the research question. The emphasis is on setting the scene that existed at the start of the project so that the purpose of your research is made clear. The background will also include key definitions and theoretical assumptions relevant to the research.
Literature review and search strategy

The search strategy should be included at the beginning of the literature review so that the reader knows the scope and aim of the review. This should be specific enough for replication. Which databases were included, using which terms? How many articles were produced from each search and why were articles kept or discarded? What other sources of data were sought? What did they produce? There should be a rationale for inclusion/exclusion of sources. The range of sources used in the literature review should include those directly related to the topic, setting, and method. If there are limited direct links to articles (e.g., no qualitative studies on the topic or specific to the setting), then there should be an attempt made to include material from related studies or settings. For example, there are no specific studies on HIV attitudes of miners in Sierra Leone, but there are studies on this topic in other African countries. There should be some indication that studies have been sought that match the methods (qualitative or quantitative) as well as the topic and setting and if none, this should be indicated.

The literature review should provide more detail on the issues outlined in the Introduction, reviewing and synthesising the literature around the public health issue you have identified critically and raising any ethical issues. The aim of such a review is not only to identify what you have read but also to demonstrate your ability to critique the literature and to summarise the body of previous research. At Masters level you must include critical evaluation of the literature you have reviewed. You should highlight flaws in the logic or argument, method or analyses in such research reports. You should be able to present a balanced appraisal of research approaches and the evidence-base for your topic, and how this leads to your research aim. Each of the identified articles/material from the search should be reviewed. This can be done by summarising each article separately or by grouping and summarising material by themes (all articles covering a specific topic are included). All sources should be correctly referenced. There should be a critical evaluation of the literature. This can be done for each source, or at the end of the section in a summary. The critical analysis should include a summary of what is known, what is not known, where there are inconsistencies, the strengths and limitations of the sources, and how this relates to the current study. Furthermore, try to outline what you hope to achieve through carrying out this research. There should be a ‘rationale’ stated for the current study and how it relates to public health. The gap in the literature which the current study aims to fill should be identified.

Aim, objectives, and research question

A clear statement of the study aim(s) and objectives, hypothesis and a specific research question where relevant, should be documented. Be explicit about the public health context of your study and the rationale for that specific research question/study aim. Having written your research question/aim/objectives (and acknowledged, outlined, and justified your theoretical assumptions), everything else should follow logically on from there. There should be a stated research question
(for both qualitative and quantitative dissertations) and the words that start the question should reflect the chosen methodology. The aim should start with "To...". Strong verbs should be used for the aim and objectives. If the study is qualitative, the words should reflect qualitative methodology (e.g., to explore, to understand, to describe). Objectives should use strong verbs and start with "To...". The list of objectives should not be long (3-5 is ideal). There should be one objective on literature reviews, one on outcomes (e.g., inform policy etc.), and the other two or three should reflect the intent and methods of the study (e.g., To explore the attitudes of teens on smoking behaviour through individual in-depth interviews; To examine clinic data (2005-2007) through statistical analysis in order to assess demographic characteristics of patients). The AIM, RQ, and objectives should follow directly from the literature review, logically flow and link to each other.

**Epistemological approach**

You must include a section on assumptions about knowledge / epistemology in your dissertation. The epistemological approach should be stated and referenced. How and why the approach applies to the study should be present, it should be made clear why this approach was the most appropriate for the study. There should be a brief discussion of how the research will use the approach. It is important to be aware that how you frame your research question and, for example, whether or not you have a hypothesis to test will be guided by certain assumptions that you make about the nature of ‘knowledge’/‘the truth’ and possible study design. You need to note what assumptions underpin your work and clarify the implications for your research approach and findings. In the dissertation, this can take the form of several concise statements (with a clear link to the reflective parts of the discussion), or be a lengthier reflective discourse integrated in the relevant sections, as appropriate. In qualitative research epistemology is vitally important and reflection on epistemology is part of the process of qualitative research. However it is also important to acknowledge epistemology and the assumptions made in quantitative research, and this should be more than a statement that a “positivist” epistemology has been adopted.

**Positionality**

You must include a section on positionality in your dissertation. Positionality is an acknowledgement of your own personal and professional background and how this may impact on the research question, method, analyses and discussion of the implications of the research findings. It includes values, attitudes, feelings, and emotions shaped by background and experiences. It is important to be reflexive – i.e. to reflect on yourself and our own position and how your positionality may affect the research question you develop and your interaction with participants.
Methods (What did you do?)

The method must be designed to meet the objectives and the Method should tell the reader exactly how the study was undertaken in past tense. Internal consistency is very important for a good project design. Key aspects of the methods include:

- Identify the source(s) of information such as routine data sources, an existing research dataset, or new data from survey work or qualitative interviews, focus groups or observations that you carried out.

- If you intend to collect new data, define the population or people you intended to recruit, inclusion and exclusion criteria, the sampling method, method of approaching potential participants and the sample size – particularly important for quantitative research. A power calculation should be included if possible.

- For qualitative research describe what type of qualitative sampling strategy you used, the process of recruitment (and any problems within this), the method of data collection e.g. semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and explain how the data was recorded, coded and analysed. If an interview schedule was used this should be clearly described and included in an appendix. Explain how codes, categories and themes were assigned, who was involved in the process of analysis and if participants were asked to check their data and the analysis.

- For quantitative data (whether existing or to be collected), think about definitions and ‘validity’, including any possible sources of bias, and the data collection method that you intend to use.

- It is also useful to think through how you would handle, present, and analyse the information that relates to your key objective(s). Try and imagine what that part of your report will look like in terms of tables, graphs, quotations from informants, etc.

Ethical considerations/processes must be highlighted. A written statement, from the ethics committee consulted, should be included (in an appendix) to indicate that ethics approval was given or was not required. You must state clearly what tests/questionnaires/interview procedures/observation techniques were used and how they were constructed so that a reader could replicate the approach if necessary. In order to clarify what was done, Methods could, for example, be subdivided into the following sections:

The methods section should include the following subsections and each section should be justified (with references) and have a description and rationale.

1. Design: The student should discuss whether the study is qualitative or quantitative and the research design. Why the choice of methods was chosen should be discussed. This section should summarise the design (e.g. observational study - case-control design, or qualitative).
2. **Setting**: If not covered earlier, or in enough detail, this section should include the setting at an appropriate level of detail (country, region/district, city, and specifically where the study will occur e.g. clinic or community). The country and city should always be included along with the site for the research. If there is more than one site, each site should be described and justified. Visuals may be useful (map of the country and location of the study). Details about the study site should indicate key factors for its choice (e.g., urban/rural).

3. **Sampling Approach; Sample Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria; Sample Size; Sample Recruitment**: This section should show how the sample was selected, who was selected (inclusion/exclusion), how many were selected from each group, and how the respondents were recruited. Specific details and a discussion of each item should be present and justified. Sample demographics of respondents should be included here not in the results section. For quantitative, sample size calculations should be present.

4. **Data Collection Methods**: This should include a clear, logical detailed description of what was done. The reader should be able to replicate the study. The student should describe and justify each method for data collection, the development of the data collection tools, pilot-testing and revisions/results. If a student is using secondary data, then full details of the primary data collection needs to be included as well. The correct language based on methodology should be present (e.g., survey for quantitative, question/interview guide for qualitative). Questions should be present in the text; a survey should be included in the appendices, but a discussion of the main topic areas should occur in the text. Students should use validated questionnaires although they can be modified to suit the study. If the planned data collection methods have not produced enough data (as stated in the proposal), there must be evidence that the student attempted alternative strategies to gain the information. If a questionnaire was used, summarise the main features of the design, and how it is scored where appropriate. Include a copy of the instrument in an appendix. An interview schedule or guide should be described, as well as any modifications of this through the research process, and this should be included in an Appendix.

5. **Ethical Considerations**: There should be a thorough discussion of the ethics approval processes, as the University of Liverpool-Laureate process is compulsory for all dissertations it needs only to be mentioned. Any local ethics approval and/or permission letters should be included in the appendices. How confidentiality, anonymity, and written informed consent were gained and ensured should be discussed. If there were issues with vulnerable populations, literacy, language, outside assistance (translators) these considerations should be discussed in detail. If a student is using secondary data they should include information about the previous ethics approvals gained for the primary study data collection, but their ethics approval should be for permission to reanalyse the data on a secondary basis.

6. **Analytical Approach**: A description of the analytical method should be given and justified. For qualitative, this might include a discussion of transcription process and translations (if appropriate), followed by a step-by-step process for coding data, a description of the analytical approach. An index of the key themes should be provided (usually no more than 5) with the sub themes/categories as a minimum at the end of this chapter. If not too long,
the full theme codebook should be included here – this is an acceptable use of a text box. If long, it can be included as an appendix. For quantitative, this would be a step-by-step analysis plan on how the student approached the data (e.g., cleaning, descriptive analysis, etc.); the type of data collected, any re-coding undertaken, a thorough discussion of the statistical tests used – including what the test was undertaken for and how the results would be interpreted, also level of probability/statistical significance used. For both methods, the ways in which data was validated or verified should be discussed and justified. References should be included. This section should outline how data were analysed, including, as appropriate:

a) the nature of statistical tests and the level of probability or statistical significance that was used, with a brief explanation of how statistical results were interpreted.

b) the qualitative approach used and the theoretical underpinning of the analytical approach. The method of deriving codes and themes should be carefully described.

c) The ways in which data were validated/verified

Overall

Are the methods appropriate to the study aim/objectives/question and stated approach? Will the methods fulfil the study aim/objectives?

Results

This section should only include straightforward reporting of results. Generally, the advice is not to comment or discuss your data in this section, but present the findings in a clear meaningful way. Be selective in highlighting the key findings. Summarise the data, e.g. in tables or graphs. Ensure that summary material (tables, graphs, line drawings, text-boxes, and photographs) are self-explanatory and labelled so that they can ‘stand alone’, requiring no reference to the text for the reader to understand them. This means that headings, captions and legends must be carefully composed so that they are succinct and self-contained. This is not to say that the Results section should only consist of tables and figures or only consist of quotations. At the very least, you must guide the reader through the data, indicating which tables/figures/text-boxes, etc. illustrates a particular statement: “x% (n=**) of the population (n=***) agreed that y was more important than z (Table a), but did not include y in their overall top five rankings Table b).” Do not describe the Results merely in terms of “Table a shows that... and Table b shows that...” as if the section is merely a guided tour of the tables, etc. Avoid repetition of the material presented in the tables in the text; only highlight the important elements. The Results should be a summary of the important findings, with due reference to the summary-material. Be clear whether material is integral to the reader’s understanding of the text or whether it is a stand-alone summary-element (table, text-box, etc.) to which the reader can refer for further information. Where you are presenting quotations, you must be selective and be clear about what concept or theme a particular selection illustrates.
For qualitative, the results should be presented in a logical flow that relates to the study aim and objectives. Each theme and subtheme should have a discussion that compares and contrasts various responses. Quotes from respondents should flow within the text and illustrate what the main points are. If the student did a two-layer analysis the second set of emerging themes should be described in this section.

For quantitative, the results should be presented by objective or from simple to more complex analyses. Students must analyse data for it to be a passing thesis. It is not enough to report and summarise percentages and figures. Tables do not count toward the total word count; they need to stand on their own and cannot be a substitute for the text. The findings should indicate the dangers of multiple statistical significance testing. A summary at the end of the section should include key findings and interpretation. In quantitative research, state the actual number ("n") and not just percentages. Report the n in tables and figures. Do not directly cut and paste output from SPSS. If required, present any examples of raw data (non-identifiable) or statistical calculations in an appendix. Note that negative or non-statistically significant results are acceptable and can be interesting and/or important. Presentation of qualitative findings should follow from the process of analysis described in the methodology and clearly address the research question/objectives(s). Direct quotes from transcripts or observation data should be used to highlight key aspects of the findings and should not be too extensive. Where appropriate, contradictory findings should be highlighted and discussed.

Overall

Are the results/findings and data analysis appropriate to the RQ and objectives? Does the section summarise the relevant results (none are missing) and present them appropriately? A summary section should be used at the end of the section to identify key findings; interpret the results, and notes on what should have been there that was not (what was missing).
Discussion

Implications of findings (What does it mean?)

In the discussion section you must not present new results in this section, but you need to discuss the findings presented in the results in relation to the published material discussed in your literature review so you can demonstrate that you have reflected on the literature in relation to your own findings. You must also show in this section how your research contributes to wider public health. Within the discussion you should critically reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the research. Ensure that you comment on the strengths and limitations of alternative approaches, methods chosen (e.g. Why did you choose to use a questionnaire/focus group/semi-structured interview, etc.? How well were ethical challenges addressed? What theoretical assumptions/ epistemology underpinned your approach to this research?), and results reported, alternative interpretations, and how this all relates to your original research question / study aim(s). You should also comment on what improvements could have been made. No research is perfect and the MPH Dissertation research is limited by time and resources, so the limitations must be described in detail to demonstrate your knowledge of high quality research methods. Above all, this section should demonstrate your ability to interpret and argue the importance of your findings in a public health context.

3.11 Conclusion and recommendations (So what?)

This section should summarise the conclusions arising directly from your study, and those arising from further discussion in relation to other work. The conclusion should be linked to the aim of the study as stated in the introduction and clarify the contribution you are making to public health knowledge). You should also add some suggestions/recommendations for further research (where these clearly follow your findings) or changes that you would make if the study were to be repeated. Be explicit about the public health implications of your study. Recommendations should not be too ambitious but should include a reflection on how the results of the study might be used (here it is useful to think of who the recommendations are aimed at and what could they potentially act on).

Word count

As with all MPH assignments, dissertations that are found to be over the word limit will be penalised. Non-compliance with the word limit means that students are failing to summarise concisely and are giving themselves unfair advantage over other students. Students will be penalised in proportion to the potential advantage they may have gained by not complying with the word limit.
The total MPH dissertation should be 10,000 words (plus a 10% margin) which includes all headings, sub-headings and in text citations; and excluding: abstract (300 words), references, footnotes, appendices, and up to a limit of 10 figures, tables, or stand-alone text-boxes. The word count should be stated at the end of the abstract and checked using Microsoft word count. Importantly the text boxes and tables excluded from the word count have to be classed as 'stand-alone'. See the marking guidelines in your DA class for the detailed policy on the use of text boxes. This means that, unless a permitted use of a text box, their content is NOT essential to the understanding of the text. If it is part of the essential content as given in the marking guidelines, it needs to be counted as part of the 10,000 +/- 10%.

Presentation

Things to note for this section are the referencing style, grammar and spelling, overall flow to the paper, and appendices. If a student has issues with English, formatting (e.g., too many textboxes), this is where deductions are made, not in the section where they occur.

Reference list

This should list all written sources referenced in the text. Use the Harvard style of referencing and be consistent (preferably 'Cite Them Right' system). A useful website is:

Guide forReferencing from the University of Liverpool Online Library for Laureate students http://libguides.liv.ac.uk/onlineprogrammes/referencing

This guide also provides information about using the online reference management tool, RefWorks, which is freely available to all University of Liverpool students.

You should only quote references that you have consulted and fully verified.

The appendices

These should contain details, for example, of data collected if appropriate questionnaires, ethics committee approval (and other permissions), the consent form and Participant Information Sheet, statistical calculations, additional data, or additional reflections as appropriate to the research approach. The appendices may also contain additional material about: (i) methods (ii) data or results and (iii) correspondence but should be kept to a minimum and be selective. Each item included must be justifiable. You should also include a copy of your final proposal in your appendices.
1. Good presentation

Good presentation of your dissertation is crucial. When writing and editing your dissertation, consider the person reading your work for the first time. Careless presentation will raise doubts in the reader's mind about the quality and accuracy of the work itself and will obscure the main messages even where content is good. Presentation covers everything from the strategic considerations of selection of material for inclusion to the structuring of your dissertation. The key points are careful selection, organization, emphasizing your most important material, and clear, concise writing without errors. Each chapter should be numbered and start on a new page. The main sub headings should also be numbered. Tables and figures must be numbered and referred to in the main text. Use short and succinct sentences and paragraph construction, not long and tedious text. Use a dictionary and thesaurus to prevent overuse of common words. If the text requires much technical terminology that may require explanation, include a glossary of terms and abbreviations. *Ensure that you expand all abbreviations on first use in each section* to allow the reader to 'dip into' a section without having to trawl through the whole dissertation to find out what an abbreviation means. It is easy to miss errors when you have written and revised work several times. Therefore, ask a friend/relative/colleague (but not a professional proof reader) to proof read your work to identify spelling or grammatical errors. Make sure they have enough time to read through your dissertation.

There are several texts to help you write your dissertation:


2. Title page

This should contain a succinct title that accurately describes the project, your name, student number, and the institution to which your dissertation has been submitted and the date (Appendix X).

3. Declaration

The following declaration is required following the title-page:

*No portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for degree or qualification of this or any other University or institute of learning.*

*Signature or name*
4. List of abbreviations

Present abbreviations in alphabetical order.

(If appropriate, include a ‘Glossary of Terms’. This should follow the list of abbreviations and be presented in a similar manner)

5. Contents page

This should contain a full list of page numbers for each chapter and subsections, of which the main ones should be numbered) including a full list of tables, figures and appendices (and other such stand-alone elements).

Regulations

1. Typographical detail

Be consistent and accurate in your grammar, punctuation, capitalisation, abbreviation, and underlining practices. Use capital letters (upper-case) for proper names only and the initial word of titles in citations. Furthermore:

• Use double-spaced typing (except for quotations and tables, as appropriate).
• Use Times New Roman, Arial or Helvetica/Arial, font-size: 12.
• You must state the overall word-count at the end of the Abstract (and provide a separate count for the Abstract itself).
• As noted previously, the dissertation must not be more than 10,000 words +/- 10% excluding figures, tables and permitted text boxes.
• Use a minimum of 2.54 cm margins

2. Pagination

Pages must be numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3 ...) throughout the dissertation, beginning at page one of the Introduction.
The preliminary pages should be numbered in lower case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii,...) and be placed in the following order:

- Title-page
- Declaration
- Abstract
- Acknowledgements
- List of Abbreviations
- Glossary (if appropriate)
- Contents page
- List of tables
- List of figures
- List of other illustrative material

All page numbers must be placed in the centre at the bottom of the page.
Appendix A - Extension Application Process

Dissertation proposal approval

Outline proposals should be submitted by the end of Month 2. There is no deadline for proposal approval, however once the allowable period of 9 months for the dissertation period is complete the student will fail the dissertation.

Students who fail to submit by the dissertation deadline will be subject to the Dissertation Late Work policy.

Ethics application

If there is a delay due to lengthy deliberations within the ethics approval process (either within the University of Liverpool/Laureate process or within the student’s own organisation/area/country procedures), the delay and reasons need to be documented and the DA must be informed. Documented ‘waiting time’ outside of the student/country is essential evidence for submission of an application for an extension. Please note delays in obtaining ethics approval will not guarantee an extension is granted.

Final submission

If the student’s deadline is approaching and they do not think that they can make it due to an extenuating/unforeseen, and documented circumstance, the student should request as soon as possible a formal extension via the Centre for Student Success: click on Contact us in writing -> I have a dissertation-related question -> Submit and official dissertation extension request.

Students may also request advice before submitting the official request to ensure that the request is made with sufficient information for a decision to be made. Go to the above link and click on Contact us in writing -> I have a dissertation-related question -> Request advice on submitting a request for a dissertation extension.

The maximum extension that can be approved is 4 weeks. Extensions of more than 4 weeks will be considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Committee (ECC). This will take place outside the usual ECC cycle.

If an extension is denied, the student should contact Student Support for guidance on available options. You can only apply for an extension based on the same reasons once. It is therefore
advisable to wait, although ideally no later than one month before the deadline, until it is clear that the incident in your extension request has prevented you finishing your dissertation on time. Extension requests submitted after your dissertation deadline has expired will not be accepted.

Please provide a concise statement explaining the nature of the incident, when it occurred and how it impeded your progress.

In addition, please provide supporting documentation relevant to each reason you have listed. If you are unsure if the documentation you are providing is applicable to your request, please consult Student Support. Please note that requests without supporting documentation are unlikely to be successful.

1. All documentation needs to be provided in English. If the original documentation is provided in another language, you will need to provide a translation by an official translator.
2. All documentation requires clear evidence of the timing of when the incident took place.
3. An official signature is required from the party who issued the document, if relevant.
## Appendix B - Final Dissertation Assessment Schema

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract, introduction and background to the study aim/research question</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the abstract a structured, clear, and accurate summary, within the word-limit (300 words)?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a clear and concise introductory section, describing clearly the public health relevance of the study?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the background outline sufficiently the public health problem, its context, the setting, and key terms/concepts?</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature Review (Why this study?)</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the literature search-strategy sufficiently detailed (i.e. someone could repeat it), and does it use appropriate databases, search-terms, time-frame, Boolean operators. etc.?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the scope of literature-review relevant and appropriate for the topic?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the literature been appraised critically?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is critical evaluation of previous research detailed enough to show good understanding of research methods and limitations of methods and approaches used?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the work and contributions of others been summarised and referenced/attributed properly?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Epistemology/Positionality</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have the assumptions about knowledge/epistemology been explicitly discussed, justified, and critically evaluated?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has positionality been discussed, and its potential influence on the study critically appraised?</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods (Study design/setting and data handling)</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the methods appropriate to the study aim(s)/objectives/question/stated epistemology, and is the rationale clear?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the study design been clearly described and is it justified?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the research-setting been outlined sufficiently?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the ethical implications of the study been highlighted and approval documents included in the Appendices?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are characteristics of the participants documented appropriately, e.g. demography?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has an appropriate sampling-strategy, including inclusion and exclusion criteria, been clearly described?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the methods of approaching and recruiting participants clearly described, including obtaining informed consent?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the data collection methods appropriate and clearly documented?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a clear, systematic, coherent, and detailed description of what was done and how the data were collected?</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results/Findings</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the data analysis strategy and process appropriate, and is sufficient detail given to allow someone to repeat it?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the results/findings appropriate to the study aim(s)/objectives/question/stated epistemology?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the commentary summarise the results clearly and appropriately?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the summary-techniques (graphs, tables, text-boxes, quotations, photographs, etc.) used appropriately to highlight, summarise, and give further examples of the results, as appropriate?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there appropriate interpretation of the data?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Discussion (critique) (So what?)</strong></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the main findings highlighted?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there critical reflection on the research process and how the researcher may have affected the choice of research, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the results?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the strengths and limitations of the methods highlighted and alternative approaches explored appropriately, showing good understanding of research methods and their limitations?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the strengths/limitations of the findings highlighted and alternative interpretations explored appropriately?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the study discussed in the context of other relevant work and the study aim(s)?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has other relevant work been critiqued in light of this research?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the wider relevance of the findings for public health appraised critically?</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Conclusions and Recommendations</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the conclusions clear, reflective, and relevant to the study?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the recommendations for further research and public health action clear, relevant, and justifiable?</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Presentation (within the word-limit)</strong></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the dissertation written clearly, with minimal typographical and grammatical errors?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a good structure, flow, and coherence throughout the dissertation?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the appendices appropriate and justifiable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is referencing consistent and accurate within the required style, i.e. Harvard or Vancouver?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>

**Total** 100
## Appendix C- Outline Dissertation Proposal Checklist

*(Version - Sept 2009; revised October 2018)*

**Purpose of this checklist:** The Outline Dissertation Proposal is given high importance at UoL on the basis that a good, clear outline is likely to yield a good, clear final dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Summary</th>
<th>Go through each step and ensure that you can answer ‘yes’ to each of them.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the title reflective of the study (should reflect population, intervention or exposure of interest and main outcome)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are all words spelled out? Make sure that words are written in full rather than using acronyms e.g. HIA PAR</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the title include study design, setting, sample and mirror the RQ?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the introduction include a clear link to public health? The case needs to be stated – even if it seems obvious – clearly state what it will be</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is this section one paragraph?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the introduction include sufficient data from the literature to demonstrate the significance of the problem?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the intent of the research clear?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the background information provided support the development of the RQ and study of the identified problem?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have sensitive topics been avoided? Please consult with the Lead Faculty or DA on which topics to avoid.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature Review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the state-of-the art research on the topic reviewed and summarized in no more than 2 paragraphs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have 4-5 relevant studies been included in this section? Do the studies and citations justify the conclusions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the reviewed articles cite the study design and country setting of the studies?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the summary identify any gaps in research? How will this study add to the understanding of the question?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question**

| Is the RQ clearly stated & actually is a question (as opposed to a statement)? (You may have one or more RQs) |
| Is the research question “answerable?” |
| If more than one question, are they separated appropriately? But still need to be linked so not two separate studies |
| Does the RQ accurately reflect the conclusions and identify a gap in the literature? |
| Does the RQ reflect the methodology of the study? (quantitative/qualitative) |

**Aim & objectives**

| Is the aim clearly articulated in a sentence? Aim should begin “To.....” |
| Is the aim related to the RQ and use the same wording? |
| Are the objectives clearly articulated and do they indicate what you want to achieve through specific data collection methods and analysis? |
| Are there between 4 – 5 objectives, including one on the literature review and one on what you intend to do with the results? |
| Are the objectives specific and measurable enough? |

**Epistemological Approach**

<p>| Was the epistemological approach described, including a description of what the approach is and why this is appropriate for your study? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Was the disadvantage of using this approach described?</strong></th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Positionality</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was a discussion provided on how your background may impact on the study and how will you mitigate this impact?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Methods</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the following subsections included: study design, setting, sampling approach, sample inclusion/exclusion criteria, recruitment procedures, data collection methods, instrument, data analysis method, pilot testing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Study design:** Is there a summary and justification of the study design that will be used? Have you stated and justified (with references) the study design that will be used as well as identified limitations of this design? |
| **Study design:** Is the approach clearly either quantitative or qualitative – a mixture of the two is not allowed for the dissertation due to the complexity of mixed methods studies? – Do the methods match with RQ? |

| **Setting:** Is the country/region and the place/s of data collection described and justified? |

| **Sampling approach:** Was the population from which you will be drawing your sample described? Did you describe how you intend select your sample? (ie. purposive sampling, random sampling, snowball sampling, etc.) |

| **Sampling approach:** Is the sample and sample size clearly defined? For quantitative studies the sample size calculation and workings need to be included. For qualitative designs, justification from the literature for sample size chosen must be provided. |

| Sample inclusion/exclusion criteria: Were both detailed? |

| **Sample inclusion/exclusion criteria:** Were vulnerable populations avoided? (ie. minors, individuals with developmental disabilities, prisoners, individuals who cannot provide consent on their own, individuals in acute mental health crisis, refugees, asylum seekers, homeless, etc.) Please consult with your Lead Faculty or DA about the vulnerability of your proposed sample as not all potential vulnerable populations are identified above. |
**Recruitment procedure**: Is the recruitment strategy clearly described (every step)? Including: how and where you will recruit your sample, who will help you, what resources you will use (e.g., flyers), how you will actually make contact with your potential participants, how participants will receive information about the study, when they will have an opportunity to ask questions and what happens then if they want to take part.

**Recruitment procedure**: If gatekeepers or interpreters/ translators are to be used, is how they are to be used described in detail?

**Data collection methods**: Is the data collection method(s) described, including pilot-testing i.e. what you are actually going to do? Was the method justified?

- **Data collection methods**: Is the study time frame specified?

**Instrument**

For quantitative designs, was a validated tool chosen? Was its purpose/use and reliability discussed?

For qualitative designs, will an interview guide be developed detailing the main interview topics?

**Pilot-testing**

Did you describe how this will be done and with how many people, or with how many cases?

Did you make sure that you described why it is important to pilot test and reference this section?

**Data analysis method**

Was the analysis method detailed and does it align with the chosen study design? Quantitative designs should detail statistical tests that will be used. Qualitative designs should detail qualitative analysis method.

- Is the primary outcome or dependent variable described and defined?
- Are the independent or primary predictor variables specified and defined?

Is the types of data collected identified (i.e. categorical, ordinal, interval, or ratio)

**Ethics**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are the methods ethical? Does it conform to the expedited criteria set out by UoL i.e. avoids sensitive issues and vulnerable groups? Full ethics approval by LOREC is needed for potentially sensitive topics and studies that involve refugees.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is confidentiality and anonymity protected and is it described</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have data storage methods been described and for how long? Has who will have access to data been identified?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are all potential ethical considerations addressed? E.g. under 18 year olds cannot be participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If using secondary datasets, has the data been stripped of identifying information before you have access to it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the intended research outcomes described? Was an explanation provided as to where your results can be used and for what purpose?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a total cost figures, as well as line-item costs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a statement acknowledging how additional costs will be paid?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the cost estimate appear to be realistic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeline</strong></td>
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<td>Is the timetable realistic? Are you aiming to complete the first full draft at least a month before it needs to be handed in?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>References</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are all references listed, in Harvard Cite Them Right style? Are only academic sources used?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Is the length of the proposal 2000 words (+/- 10%)(excluding references)?
Appendix D - University of Liverpool Online Ethics Review Process

Ethics Review Steps

The ethics steps below must be completed by every student seeking approval for a dissertation proposal. The programme’s support and recognition of the research activities are dependent upon full adherence to these steps as well as compliance with all terms in the ethics forms and ethics code below.

Step 1. Local ethics

As the first step in the ethics application process, students are required to carefully check whether their research requires local, country, area or organizational ethics approval.

If no local/country/area/organizational ethics authorization is required, the process continues in Step 2.

If local/country/area/organizational ethics procedures are applicable, the student must complete them, and a written permission must be obtained, prior to submitting an application to the University of Liverpool. The local ethics committee or authority’s written permission must accompany the University of Liverpool/Laureate ethics application form.

Note that the University of Liverpool/Laureate ethics application will be judged independently from the local ethics authorization.

Step 2. Completion of the application (student).

The second step in the application process is the completion of the following forms by the student – with support from their DA:

1. University of Liverpool/Laureate Ethics Application Form
2. University of Liverpool/Laureate Ethics Response Form
3. Additional documentation, which typically includes the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form. These are part of the informed consent process, which requires that prospective participants are provided with as much information as possible about a research project in order that they can make an informed decision about whether or not they want to take part in the project. The design of the information sheet and the consent form should reflect the nature of the research study. This means that there is not a single standard form.
However, a commented reference template for PIS can be found as part of the ethics documents in the DA class.

4. Blank reference templates for the University of Liverpool/Laureate Ethics Application Form, University of Liverpool/Laureate Ethics Response Form, Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form can be found at the Centre for Student Success (http://success.liverpool-online.com/ethics).

The student will upload a zip file containing all documents to the appropriate forum in the DA class. That done, the process continues in Step 3.

**Step 3. Initial review (DA)**

The DA, as part of VPREC, will review the documents uploaded to the class and will make a decision, which may be:

- **Submission for further VPREC consideration.** If the project meets all requirements in section C of the application for ethics approval (listed above), and all documents are appropriately completed and presented, the DA will forward them –via email– to the designated ethics reviewer (member of VPREC). The process continues in Step 4 below.

- **Return to the student.** If (a) some element of the application is unclear, incomplete or inadequate, (b) any of the documents is inappropriately completed or missing, or (c) the conditions for expedited review are not fully met; the DA will return the application to the student with full feedback, for modification and resubmission. The process returns to Step 2 above.

- **Submission for full review.** Where there is ambiguity over whether a project meets the criteria for expedited approval, then a full review may be required. This might happen if, for example, a project is considered medium-risk, if there is uncertainty over whether the population should be considered vulnerable, or if there is uncertainty over whether the topic should be considered sensitive. The DA will discuss this thoroughly with you and, when the conditions for expedited review are still unclear, the DA will submit the student’s application to the LOREC for full review. The process will then continue in Step 5 below.

**Step 4. Ethics researcher review**

In this step, the application is reviewed by the ethics reviewer on behalf of VPREC. The ethics reviewer can in this stage discuss the application with the DA, if they consider it necessary. The ethics reviewer will have up to 10 natural days to make a decision, which may be:

- **Approval.** The ethics reviewer will communicate the approval to the VPREC Chair.

- **Conditional approval.** The proposal is approved with the condition that minor errors or issues identified are corrected. The ethics reviewer will communicate the conditional approval –and the errors or issues to be corrected– to the VPREC Chair.
• **Rejection.** The ethics reviewer will send the application back to the DA, with full feedback on the issues identified. The process returns to Step 2.

• **Submission for full review.** Where despite the recommendations of the DA, the ethics reviewer considers that the application must be submitted for full review, they will communicate this decision to the DA. The DA should discuss this thoroughly with the student and, when the conditions for expedited review are still unclear, the DA will submit the student’s application to the LOREC for full review, copying the VPREC Chair (and the GDI where applicable) on this communication. The process will then continue in Step 5 below.

At the end of this step, the VPREC Chair will communicate the approval to the student. The DA will upload the approval communication to the appropriate forum in the DA class.

When the application has received conditional approval, the VPREC Chair will include the conditions in their communication to the student. The student will make the corrections required, and the DA will confirm that the application now meets the reviewer’s conditions (no resubmission to the ethics reviewer is required). If the DA is not satisfied with the modifications, they will discuss this with the you until the appropriate corrections are made.

This step concludes the expedited ethics review.

**Step 5. Full review (where applicable)**

Full review is conducted by the Liverpool Online Research Ethics Committee (LOREC). The Committee will consider all documents and communications provided by the DA, and will make a decision, which will be:

• **Approval.** The LOREC Chair will communicate the approval to the DA who will then communicate with the student. This concludes the full ethics review. The DA will upload the approval communication to the appropriate forum in the DA class.

• **Conditional approval.** The proposal is approved with the condition that minor errors or issues identified are corrected. The LOREC will communicate the conditional approval to the DA, including the necessary amendments. The student will make the corrections required, and the DA will confirm that the application now meets the reviewer’s conditions (no resubmission to the ethics reviewer is required). If the DA is not satisfied with the modifications, they will discuss this with the student until the appropriate corrections are made. This concludes the full ethics review. The DA will upload the approval communication to the appropriate forum in the DA class.

• **Rejection.** The LOREC Chair will send the application back to the DA, with full feedback on the issues identified. The process returns to Step 2.
Time Management

When students submit their proposal for ethics approval, attention to the detail/format is essential to avoid unnecessary delay. The documentation provided on the University of Liverpool ethics website is very helpful, so make sure you read all of the guidance notes. It is better to put in the time now than to rush through it and get it sent back to start over.

Requesting and obtaining local ethics authorization may be a particularly time-consuming process that may detract valuable time from other activities in the dissertation. Students are therefore advised to check their local ethics requirements thoroughly and to start this process externally as soon as possible to avoid delays. Although applications for extensions based on documented waiting time for ethics approval will be favourably reviewed, students are still strongly advised to avoid undertaking a research study that would involve a complicated and time-consuming ethical procedure.

For applications requiring LOREC intervention, please be aware that the committee meets every two weeks, which has implications if the committee returns the research proposal for amendments and resubmission.

Whilst awaiting ethics outcome, it is expected that students will continue to work on the introduction/background, and the literature review, as well as be planning your fieldwork/collection of data, in anticipation of gaining ethics approval. **Nevertheless, you must not approach prospective participants or start any sort of data collection until you receive the approval.** Conducting research without ethical approval may constitute research misconduct. Also, they must be aware that some modifications of design or materials may be required as a result of the ethics review process.

Documenting the Process

Students must highlight the ethical considerations/processes addressed in their study in the Methods section of their dissertation, discuss these in the Discussion section, and submit written evidence on the decision for approval (or waiving of such approval) to proceed with the study in an appendix. You must also include in the appendix written permission from any organisation within which (or on behalf of which) they are carrying out their research, and any permissions for reproducing/using materials, as appropriate.
Good Practice Guidelines on the Proper Conduct of Research: Ethics Code

In the Ethics Application, students are asked to provide their signature certifying that they agree to comply with the University’s regulations and any other applicable code of ethics at all times. It is critical for the student to review the following regulations and codes below BEFORE signing the ethics form.

1. Neither participant recruitment nor data collection may be initiated until ethics approval is posted in the Blackboard.
2. Student researchers must abide by the research ethics principles presented in prior modules, put forward by the Declaration of Helsinki (for medical fields) and the Economic and Social Research Council (for all other fields) as well as the University’s good practice guidelines on the proper conduct of research, together with the codes of practice laid down by the relevant professional and learned societies in the field.
3. Research on minors, (generally those age 17 years or under), unless using secondary data is not permitted. 4. Student researchers must adhere to the precise study plan, the terms of the approved ethics form, and any conditions accompanying approval.
4. Student researchers are responsible for monitoring the research at all times.
5. Student researchers must seek approval from the ethics committee before implementing substantial amendments to the study plan or to any other terms of the approved ethics form.
6. If there are any serious adverse events (such as a participant experiencing harm or upset), student researchers are responsible for immediately stopping the research and alerting the Research Ethics Committee within 24 hours of the occurrence, via liverpooloethics@liverpool-online.ac.uk.
7. Student researchers must de-identify the data as soon as is realistically possible to minimize risk of inappropriate disclosure of personal information. De-identification consists of removing all direct identifiers such as names, addresses, or telephone numbers from the raw data and database. Students must take precautions to not disclose to anyone else any part of the data that is linkable to a participant’s identity.
8. Student researchers must store project data in electronic format (e.g., Word, Excel, SPSS, Nvivo, etc.) for 5 years after the degree is awarded.
9. Student researchers are responsible for being up to date and complying with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
10. All research records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future.
11. Personal data about the student as a researcher in the ethics form will be held by the University and this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.
Appendix E - University of Liverpool Dissertation Late Submission Policy

1. Purpose

All students of the University of Liverpool are expected to be familiar with its academic policies and the ‘Student Code of Conduct’.

2. Application & Scope

These guidelines apply to all students and faculty on all University of Liverpool Online Masters programmes delivered by Laureate Online Education.

3. Introduction and context


The University of Liverpool and Laureate Online Education need to be able to assure themselves that the standards of the awards delivered in partnership are consistent with the general expectations for such awards within the higher education sector nationally. Therefore, these guidelines are situated within external reference points such as the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education’s UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They have been written to inform students and faculty, as well as individuals from outside the University, such as external examiners and external reviewers.

4. Guiding Principles

The University and Laureate require all students to submit assessed coursework by the deadline set by the assessor, or the revised deadline as communicated to the student in cases of extensions. The COPA allows that late submissions of work should be accepted for a set period beyond the submission deadline, but that a standard system of penalties for the late submission of work for assessment should normally be imposed.
5. Definitions

For the purposes of this document the following definitions are used:

**COPA:** University of Liverpool Code of Practice on Assessment

**Dissertation:** The final assessment towards a Masters degree. It may be an extended piece of writing structured in response to a central question or proposition, or may be an equivalent piece of work such as a Consultancy Project.

**Official submission deadline:** The final date on which the student must submit their work for assessment. This may vary from the Submission date (see below) due to a successful Mitigating Circumstances claim or extended deadline following a review by the Disability Centre etc.

Starting with the 1 June 2017 term, the official submission date for all student dissertations is 40 weeks of the start of the dissertation module.

**Submission Time:** The official submission time is considered to be Midnight of the time zone of the student's country of residence as recorded in the University records or as otherwise notified by students (in case of a student travelling outside their home timezone) on the day of the official submission deadline. There will be an additional 6-hour window for students living west of the Eastern Time Zone as far as the International Date Line (American Samoa) in order not to create an unfair disadvantage. Therefore, students have to submit on the submission date prior to 12 am midnight, their local time.

6. Guidelines

6.1. All student dissertations submitted up to 10 calendar days after the official submission date will be assessed.

6.2. Dissertations submitted after the official submission date but before the end of the 10-day penalty window will have their dissertations graded on merit by their assessors.

6.3. Where a student’s dissertation is found to have been submitted late, the penalties described in this document will be automatically applied to the work after it has been graded.

6.4. For every two calendar days after the official submission date, 5% of the total marks available for the dissertation component shall be deducted from the assessment mark, up to a maximum of 25% (i.e. for work marked out of 100, five marks per two days will be deducted; for work marked out of 20, one mark per two days will be deducted).

6.5. If the student work has reached a passing standard on merit, the late penalty will not reduce the grade for the work below the Pass mark for the assessment.

6.6. Work assessed below the pass mark on merit will not be penalised for late submission of up to ten days.
6.7. All work submitted ten calendar days after the official submission deadline will receive a mark of zero.

6.8. Dispensation (without penalty) for the late submission of work may be granted on medical or other exceptional grounds in accordance with the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances.
Appendix F-MPH Dissertation Proposal Template

The outline-proposal should be 2,000 words in length (+/- 10%), not including the references. The format should be as follows:

1. Title
2. Introduction
3. Literature review
4. Research question(s)
5. Study aim
6. Objectives
7. Epistemological approach,
8. Positionality
9. Methods (including: summary of study design; setting; sampling approach/technique (sample size calculation for quantitative dissertations); Sample and Inclusion and exclusion criteria; recruitment; data collection; Instrument; Pilot testing; data analysis
10. Ethical implications
11. Research outcomes
12. Costs
13. Draft timetable

Use the outline template and tips below to make sure that you have covered all areas. **If any of the sections are missing then your proposal is not complete.**

**Title:**

This should include study design, setting, sample and mirror the RQ.

**Introduction:**

Remember this is only 1 paragraph and you need to establish the public health problem, so statistics should be included and you need to define any specific terms that you use (always put acronyms in full first.)

**Literature Review:**

This needs to be targeted at studies which focus on the same topic/s as your own study.

*So, for example, if your study is looking at prevalence and socio-demographic risk factors of Leishmaniasis in Chad, you would need to look at both of these aspects in your review.*
But if there is no study in your country on your topic, you need to look at similar country studies and state what they have found; you need to include studies using the methodology you propose, or state there are none if that is the case. If this is a quantitative study and you will be using a validated tool, describe the tool and how it has been used previously. Make sure that you include 4-5 relevant articles in your literature review, always specify the type of study (methodology) and also the location (i.e. country where the study is set. This shows the relevance of the articles to the reader, and it also helps to identify the gap in the literature that your study will fill. At the end of this section you must state how your study will fill a gap in public health knowledge, which should have been demonstrated in your literature review.

**Research Question:**

Word this as a question/s and it must mirror the title. Use words that reflect your methodology.

For example, in qualitative you might use the word ‘perceptions’, so an example of a question is ‘What are the perceptions of health professionals in Canada on the effect of anti-smoking legislation on smoking behaviour?’

For a quantitative study the research questions may be something like, ‘What is the prevalence of Leishmaniasis in Chad?’ ‘What socio demographic factors are associated with Leishmaniasis in Chad?’

**Aim:**

This is the overall goal of your study. The aim should be related to the RQ and use the same wording.

So, using the above example, this could be: ‘A cross-sectional survey to assess the prevalence and explore socio-demographic factors associated with Leishmaniasis amongst adults accessing primary health clinics in N’Djamena, Chad’

**Objectives:**

Four to 5 objectives are required. The objectives should indicate what you want to achieve through specific data collection methods and analysis. It is important to state what type and where the data is collected from in the first instance.

The first objective should be on your literature review and its focus, the last one on what you intend to do with the results; the ones in the middle should follow the aim, be clear, and indicate what you want to achieve through specific data collection method (e.g. by survey, by interviews etc.)
Please ensure that the objectives of the proposal are clear.

1) The first objective should be on the literature review and its focus. State the countries where you will review the literature. For example, will the literature review be focussed in the country where the study is set and similar countries, or will it include global literature.

2) the 2nd objective should describe how you will collect your data. For example, to collect and describe x and y by undertaking a primary survey of women attending clinic in wherever..

or

to collect and describe x and y by means of secondary data analysis of de-indentified hospital records.....

or

to conduct 16 semi-structured interviews with adults living in [setting/country] to explore the perspectives and understanding of the [public health topic]

3) and 4) should mention what type of analysis and what the outcome will be.

For example, to undertake inferential analysis (can be specific eg Chi sq testing, multivariate analysis) to consider whether there is any association between x and y, taking in to account confounding variables.

5) the last one is what the student intends to do with the results - who will you make recommendations for based on their findings

These objectives indicate how you will conduct your research study.

Epistemological Approach:

Both qualitative and quantitative methods need to have this included. You need to state the approach, give a description of what the approach is and why this is appropriate for your study, use a reference and also state briefly what the disadvantage of using this method might be. The assumptions of the approach need to be included.
Positionality:

For both qualitative and quantitative studies, you need to discuss positionality. How will your background impact on the study and how will you mitigate this impact?

Methods:

There are subsections within this area (see below), please make sure you cover every single one of them.

Study Design:

You need to state the study design (a qualitative or quantitative approach) and justify why you are using this design. Please reference your work.

Setting:

This is the country/region and the place/s of data collection e.g an antenatal clinic or a private room in an antenatal clinic for individual interviews or focus group discussions. You must justify why you chose both the settings and the place/s of data collection. Inform the reader where the actual study setting will take place. For example, where will the interviews take place?

Sampling approach/frame:

You must describe the population from which you will be drawing your sample and how you intend select your sample (use references.) Be specific. For example, if you are using a random sample indicate how you will determine the pool from which to draw your specific respondents from, and then how you will do this randomly (it is not enough just to say you will be using random sampling). Similarly if using purposive sampling, state what this is and why it is appropriate for your study, using references.

Sample and inclusion/exclusion criteria:

This is specifically who you want to select out of the population (inclusion/exclusion criteria) and you need to be specific about how many from each group and why you have determined the criteria you are using. For primary data collection you must not use under 18 year olds, or ‘vulnerable’ populations (such as those with a learning disability, who cannot give consent). You must also avoid sensitive topics.

For quantitative, you will need to show a sample size calculation and reference the figures that you have used in your calculation. Check that the sample size calculation is appropriate to the research question you are asking. You should mention non response / missing data and any additional increase in sample size to compensate for these.

For qualitative, The recommended number of interviews for qualitative interviews is 10 interviews (i.e number of interviews, not hours). However, this is just guidance and you could have more or
less interviews, depending on the quality of the interviews. There has been no minimum time stipulation for these 10 interviews. However, you should be aiming to reach saturation. Small (or even the 10 interview) sample sizes that do not allow the data to reach saturation should be discussed properly as a limitation in the dissertation.

**Recruitment:**

This is required in all proposals. Those studies using secondary data should discuss the primary studies recruitment process. This is where you describe in detail how and where you will recruit your sample — become very practical here, the reviewers are looking to make sure you have ‘walked through’ the process and know how and where and what you are going to do. Describe where you will recruit from, who will help you, and what resources you will use (e.g., flyers). How will you actually make contact with your potential participants? Also state how participants will receive information about the study (participant information sheet), when they will have an opportunity to ask questions and what happens then if they want to take part.

Also consider that there must be no coercion, potential participants must not feel pressured or obliged to take part. So, for example you cannot recruit your own patients, or your own staff.

**Using gatekeepers to access potential participants**

In some cases a ‘gatekeeper’ or ‘go between’ may be required i.e. someone that the student needs to go through in order to recruit subjects. The student can ask a known person in the community or someone in a professional role where they come into contact with potential participants e.g. a clinic manager to assist. However care must be taken so that this does not become a situation where a ‘powerful other’ just by their very relationship may coerce potential participants (without intending to).

A gatekeeper can help by:

Giving an outline of the study to potential subjects (verbally and in writing, to include the student’s contact details so potential subjects can contact him/her). They can also answer straightforward questions e.g. on logistics. However, the student should answer more complex questions potential subjects may have about the study (e.g. on confidentiality, what will happen to the results, the data).

It has been agreed that if and when students need to recruit from several sites, anonymous questionnaires can be given out by another person other than the student e.g. an administrator provided a) they do not ask for any information from the participants and are simply there to hand out the questionnaire. b) they are not in a position of power over the potential participants. They should make it clear that participation is voluntary. An Stamped addressed envelope should be included for return, or a collection box provided for the researcher to collect later.
Data collection methods:

Describe and justify your methods (e.g. in-depth interview, cross-sectional survey). If you have different methods within either the quantitative or qualitative approach you have decided on, you must justify each and identify with what population. However, you must only use either quantitative or qualitative approach, you cannot use both.

Instrument:

For quantitative, if you are using primary data this needs to be a validated tool and you need to reference this tool. You may modify the questionnaire slightly, for example, you can remove a specific section if it is not relevant to your study, or amend wording slightly to suit your population.

For qualitative you will need to develop an interview guide to guide the interviews. You should describe the main topic areas you will be covering.

Pilot-testing:

Describe how this will be done and with how many people, or with how many cases, you need to justify this. For qualitative, two people is usually enough. If only small changes are made to the interview guide, then the pilot study can be included in the data analysis (state this in your proposal). For quantitative, the number should be sufficient to determine that the new survey/or extraction tool for secondary data, gets at what you want and works with the sample you have chosen. For quantitative, you may indicate that this is how you will determine a new sample size after determining missing data. For secondary data describe the checks that you will make to ensure your data is sufficient for purpose.

Data analysis:

This should be a specific approach for qualitative (and reference it). Thematic Content Analysis is usually the most appropriate method – other methods are not encouraged due to the time these take. For qualitative, you should indicate which compare/contrast aspects you will be reviewing. For example, if you have two samples (experts and community members), will you be analysing this as one group or comparing their responses across groups?

Use of an interpreter/translator

For qualitative and quantitative studies students can use translators providing the student researcher is present. The translator must never collect data without the student being there. It needs to be a three-way conversation in qualitative interviews and the translator must not just summarise responses or give their own interpretation or add their own probes. Apart from the fact that the student should be collecting their own data, there is an insurance issue as any translators are only covered by the UoL or Laureate policy if they are with the student i.e. not if working alone. Students may need to pay a translator to translate the PIS, consent form, and
questionnaires/interview guides into the local language and the translator will also need to address any questions potential participants may have, with the student (the gatekeeper or equivalent can answer basic questions).

**Use of a transcriber/translator after data collection.** This is usually essential where an interpreter has been used in qualitative interviews. However the translation is often to the national language which may not be English and the student then needs to translate from that language to English. For qualitative interviews we encourage students to transcribe their own interviews to help with data immersion and as a minimum they have to transcribe or translate their own pilots. They can pay a transcriber to transcribe the other interviews but should check for quality.

For quantitative this should show how you will analyse each individual step of your objectives. State what type of data you will collect, what descriptive and statistical tests you will use for the various data and what each test will achieve. This should show a logistical progression, starting with your descriptive analysis, then any bivariate analysis and then moving on to any multivariate analysis. It is important that you identify the independent and dependent variables, as well as the type of data collected (continuous or categorical). It is also advisable you produce a coding frame illustrating which analyses they will perform for each variable. An example of a Coding frame:

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Frequency | Not applicable |
| | | | **Bivariate analysis**  
To measure the association between gender and treatment outcome | Chi-squared |
| | | | **Multivariate analysis**  
To measure the strength of the association between gender and treatment outcome | Logistic regression |
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<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Data Type</td>
<td>Analysis Method</td>
<td>Association</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
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<td>2=No</td>
<td>Categorical</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td>Bivariate</td>
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<td>Logistic regression</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2=Negative</td>
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<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td>Bivariate</td>
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To measure the strength of the association between HIV status and treatment outcome

<table>
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<tr>
<th>OUTCOME VARIABLE</th>
<th>TREATMENT OUTCOME</th>
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<th>Descriptive analysis</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Frequency</td>
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<td>Failed=2</td>
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<td><strong>Multivariate analysis</strong></td>
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<td>To measure the strength of the association between independent variables and treatment outcome</td>
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</table>

**Ethics:**

This section should include what you foresee as the ethical issues needing to be addressed in your ethics application (e.g. does the researcher’s normal role in that setting create a perception of power for participants?) How you intend to deal with these issues? If you need to use assistance, for example, interpreters or gatekeepers describe how you will ensure good ethics. You must not use Research Assistants to collect primary data for your study, you have to collect the data yourself. Confidentiality and anonymity (for example by using pseudonyms in qualitative studies) should also be covered; both UoL and local ethics need to be discussed. If it is a quantitative study using...
secondary data that is not publically available, how you will gain access should be described. For ethical reasons, data given to students for secondary analysis needs to be stripped of identifying information (ie. names/addresses). In addition, a letter from the data holder indicating that they give permission for you to use the data and that the data will be given to the student de-identified is required. You need to state that primary data will be kept securely for five years before being destroyed, as this is the UoL requirement.

There may be other circumstances where a third party is needed to assist as a chaperone. If a male student is interviewing women in some cultures e.g. Muslim women in some countries, he may need to be accompanied by a female health worker or a local woman. The needs of the researcher e.g. in terms of personal safety also needs to be considered. For example the student may need to be accompanied when travelling to remote areas.

Students need to train the translator, gatekeeper or chaperone on ethics issues, particularly confidentiality and, if transcribing, anonymity. As part of the ethics training, anyone assisting the student researcher will need to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Research Outcomes:

This should be the bigger picture. Where can your results be used and for what purpose? State who you will make the recommendations available to. Ensure that these are realistic.

Costs:

You must indicate all costs in numbers, even if small, and state who will pay for this. Indicate the cost both in your currency and in dollars.

Timeline:

Include only broad headings (proposal approval, ethics approval, pilot-testing/literature review, data collection, data analysis, draft dissertation, final submission.) Remember that you need to submit your draft dissertation one month before final submission.

Proposal Approval – Month/Year; Ethics Approval – month/year; Pilot-testing - month/year;

Literature Review - month/year; Data Collection and Data Analysis – month/year; Methods chapter: month/year; Results chapter: month/year; Discussion chapter: month/year; Draft Dissertation – month/year; Final Submission – month/year.

References:
Remember this is Harvard Cite Them Right throughout. Only academic sources should be used.

Use no less than a 10-point font and 2.54 cm margins.