Management Programmes
Dissertation / Research Project
Student Guidelines

Guidelines for students undertaking dissertations/research projects as part of the University of Liverpool’s online Management programmes (that include an RMT component), who start their dissertation/research project from June 2017 onwards
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Roles in the process

Several Laureate Online Education or University of Liverpool roles are referred to in this document according to their functions. The table below explains the part each role has in the research process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Administration Coordinator</td>
<td>AAC</td>
<td>The AAC confirms receipt of your dissertation/research project submission and arranges assessors for submitted papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessors</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>The people who grade the dissertation/research project after submission. The Dissertation/research project Advisor is the first assessor for the dissertation. Laureate Online Education assigns a second assessor from a list of eligible DAs who are experts on the research field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation/research project Advisor</td>
<td>DA</td>
<td>The DA is the faculty member who acts as the personal academic advisor for the student as they develop and write their proposal and dissertation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Dissertation Instructor</td>
<td>GDI</td>
<td>The GDI is the faculty member who teaches the Research Methods (RM) module.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Librarian*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>The online librarian is the University of Liverpool librarian assigned to assist online students. (<a href="mailto:onlinelibrarian@liverpool.ac.uk">onlinelibrarian@liverpool.ac.uk</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Director</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>The PD is the academic responsible for delivery of the programme of studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Support Manager Team</td>
<td>SSM Team</td>
<td>Student Support is a student’s prime contact point for all non-academic issues. A student’s personal student support manager (SSM) would normally handle most complex queries (or if they were unavailable an SSM from their team with the same level of specialist knowledge), but other members of the support team would handle simple requests for support to ensure a rapid response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Administrator</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>The SA is responsible for class creation and registering students in class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary
The following additional terms are referenced within the document:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Programme Ethics Committee</td>
<td>VPREC</td>
<td>A committee that conducts expedited review of ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool Online Research Ethics Committee</td>
<td>LOREC</td>
<td>A committee that conduct full review of ethics applications (when required).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>RM</td>
<td>This is the module which all students must take before starting their dissertation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Your dissertation is the culmination of your Masters programme. It offers you the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge you have acquired in your studies in an applied setting, and thus justify the award of a Master's level degree.

The dissertation is expected to be a scholarly work (that is, based on sound academic principles) that contributes to a field of knowledge. It must demonstrate your ability to use learning derived from your studies to resolve a problem, answer a question or prove/disprove a hypothesis related to business, markets or organisations.

The dissertation should be between 15,000 and 20,000 words in length, excluding appendices and references. It is a matter of academic judgment as to the quality of the submitted work if the case of an excessively long dissertation, with this also applying in the case of a student submitting a particularly short dissertation.

Specialisation students only: Specialisation students will need to complete a dissertation in the area of their chosen degree specialisation (accounting and finance, marketing, HR, oil and gas, etc.) where relevant.

These guidelines explain briefly how the dissertation process works, the steps you need to take to embark on your dissertation, and the requirements which will be placed on you in this final stage of your Masters programme.
### An outline of the process, and expected outcomes

The key milestones on the route to your dissertation/research project (subject to satisfactory progress) are described briefly in the following table, and in more detail in the sections that follow. Those elements marked with an asterisk (*) are formal evaluation points in the process which you must achieve. Monthly milestones of progress (months 3-7) are guides to expected progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Who</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During module 6</td>
<td>- Read the self-guided resources in the Final Research Project in the Centre for Student Success (<a href="https://success.liverpool-online.com/FinalResearchProjectPreparation/index">https://success.liverpool-online.com/FinalResearchProjectPreparation/index</a>)</td>
<td>You will be notified by the Student Administration Centre when you can start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*During module 8</td>
<td>Contact Student Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Register for your Research Methods (RM) module</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Week 3 of RM</td>
<td>- Topic area of dissertation/research project approved</td>
<td>GDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Dissertation/research project Advisor agreed.</td>
<td>GDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Aims, objectives, methods and literature review of proposal partially completed as assignments in the RM module.</td>
<td>GDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By end of Week 8* of RM</td>
<td>- Submit proposal in DA class for initial review by the DA.</td>
<td>DA and Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- When approved by the DA, submit proposal to RM class for final review by the GDI.</td>
<td>DA, Student and GDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Once proposal is approved, submit the ethics application in the DA class.</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- RM module completed, final mark for RM awarded.</td>
<td>GDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 3</td>
<td>- Research process designed.</td>
<td>DA and Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Draft of literature review delivered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Data sources identified.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 4</td>
<td>- Literature review amended.</td>
<td>DA and Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Data collection underway.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 5</td>
<td>- Data analysis underway.</td>
<td>DA and Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Interpretation of data delivered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Month 5 Progress Report Submitted to the DA class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 6</td>
<td>- Analysis/interpretive chapter delivered.</td>
<td>DA and Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 7</td>
<td>- Discussion, conclusions, data tables (where appropriate) and Introduction delivered.</td>
<td>DA and Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Month 7 Progress Report Submitted to the DA class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 8*</td>
<td>- Final reviews and Amendments.</td>
<td>DA and Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reference list and appendices (where applicable).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-weeks</td>
<td>- Draft dissertation/research project or consultancy project submitted in DA class using Draft Turnitin link at least one month before the final submission date.</td>
<td>DA and Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Final dissertation/research project or consultancy project submitted to Final Turnitin link in DA class.</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some of the more detailed requirements and procedures are detailed below.*
Eligibility and pre-work

The dissertation/research project can be undertaken as soon as you have reached 120 credits, the equivalent of eight modules. After finishing your final module, the maximum period you can wait to enter the dissertation/research project classroom is 16 weeks. However, you are strongly advised to begin thinking of a potential topic for your dissertation/research project well before you have completed the modules. As you are working through the programme, be attentive to topics that have interest for you and make notes of how you may turn these areas into a dissertation/research project topic. It is extremely important that you find a topic with which you can engage, as you will be expected to spend approximately 600 hours working on it over the 40 weeks of the dissertation.

Enrolling for your dissertation/research project – the Research Methods Training (RMT) module

If you meet the eligibility criteria listed above, and you are ready to begin your dissertation, please do not hesitate to contact Student Support to discuss starting your dissertation. You will also be contacted by your Student Support regarding your dissertation/research project registration as you approach the end of your modules to discuss getting ready to begin the dissertation, and to help you decide on an appropriate timeline for starting. Your Student Support can help you register for the appropriate class and will discuss how and when that registration is confirmed.

The Final Research Project preparation materials in the Centre for Student Success (https://success.liverpool-online.com/FinalResearchProjectPreparation/index) are a suite of self-guided resources to help you start planning for your research as early as possible. By reading through these materials, you will learn what makes a good research question, what ethical considerations you will need to consider before you begin collecting data, what information literacy is and why it is important, what processes and policies are involved in the Final Research Project phase, what resources and services are available to help you, and about some research basics such as writing a literature review, choosing a research methodology, and how to maintain a good working relationship with your Dissertation Advisor.

You will join two types of classes related to your dissertation. The first, which you will begin at the start of the dissertation/research project period, is a Research Methods (RM) module, led by a general dissertation instructor (GDI). This module functions in a similar way to those you are already used to in your Master’s programme. You will be enrolled with several other students embarking on the dissertation/research project at the same time as you. In this module, you will:

- Choose your topic for the dissertation, and have it approved by the GDI
- Learn about research methods, structuring your dissertation/research project and planning the research process
- Share your learning experience with your fellow students as you construct your draft dissertation/research project proposal
- Get feedback on your proposed topic, and on early drafts of sections of your dissertation/research project proposal (similar to the research projects you may have completed in your modules)
- Be evaluated on your understanding of basic research methods

You will be given lectures and assignments, you will participate in discussions and you will submit work
for assessment much like any other Master’s module. Guidelines for participation in this module are the same as for those of other modules. However, there are two important differences:

1. After Week 6 you will also join a DA class where you will work for the rest of your dissertation/research project one-on-one with your DA. We will describe this in more detail below.

2. The RMT module will stay open at the end of 8 weeks and remain available to you for the duration of your dissertation.

The advantage to you as a student of the RMT module remaining open is that it allows you to maintain contact with your fellow students as you work through the dissertation, allowing you to share ideas and experiences with them and learn from each other’s progress. You will also be able to refer to the RMT module for all relevant dissertation/research project forms and documents.

Research Methods Training (RMT) module

Learning objectives

- The learning objectives of your RMT module are as follows:
- Recognise and critically evaluate different management research designs and the assumptions upon which they are based
- Develop a structured programme of research in pursuit of your dissertation/research project based upon informed choices about the research designs, techniques and procedures to be followed
- Conduct research in a rigorous and systematic fashion
- Synthesise data from a wide variety of sources and integrate appropriate knowledge gained from study in the taught modules into the dissertation/research project.

Students who perform poorly in the RMT module

A student who does not demonstrate sufficient knowledge of research methods in the proposal will not be allowed to move to the next stage of the dissertation/research project; the student will need to restart the dissertation/research project process (if on the first attempt) or (if on the second attempt) will be offered a Postgraduate Diploma.

A student will not normally be allowed to repeat the RMT module. Approval to repeat the RMT module will usually be accepted only if the student has missed part or all of the RMT module due to illness or on compassionate grounds and has subsequently failed their dissertation/research project because of these circumstances. Approval to repeat should be sought from the Extenuating Circumstances Committee, through Student Support.

Students who fail to find a DA after 4 weeks

Students will, with the help of Laureate academic and student support staff, continue to look for a DA. The deadline for approval of the proposal will not change, however, and the student will remain with the RMT cohort with which he or she started. The consequence of being late into the advisor class is that the student risks missing the deadline for proposal approval (8 weeks) which will reduce the
amount of time available for the balance of dissertation/research project work.

**Enrolling in the DA class**

After the third week of your RMT module you will have a topic for your dissertation/research project approved by your GDI. If you do not already have a DA for the dissertation, during Weeks 3 and 4 of the RMT module, you will communicate with DAs to align your topic with their interests and expertise. By Week 6, you should have a DA that has agreed to supervise your dissertation. You will then join the DA’s class (management advisor class) at the end of 6 weeks of the RM module. Please see below for a more detailed description of how you will ‘find’ your DA.

Most of your work on the dissertation/research project will now take place in the DA class. You will, however, need to re-enter the RMT module to obtain forms and submit your Final Proposal for review by the end of Week 8. You can find more information in your RM class.

**Dialogue between Student and Dissertation Advisor**

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.

**Proposal submission and approval**

Before the end of the eighth week of your RM module (the end of your second month) you will need to have obtained approval for your dissertation/research project proposal. Once you have agreed your proposal is ready for official submission with your dissertation/research project advisor, the DA will post an approval note in the DA class. You will copy this message and submit it with your proposal to the RMT class for a final review (by the GDI) using the format and structure provided.

> This should be done no later than the end of the tenth week of your RM module.

You must also post an agreement to the Academic Honesty Declaration in the Final Proposals Discussion Board Forum.

This is the first formal checkpoint on your dissertation/research project journey, and your progress will depend on getting through it. Final approval of proposals is given by your GDI in the RMT class. The key criterion for judgement is whether the GDI believes you have demonstrated sufficient knowledge of research methods to be allowed to embark on the rigors of the dissertation/research project itself. It is vitally important that you realise the responsibility for your work on your dissertation/research project is entirely yours. Your DA will act as just that — an advisor — and you are strongly recommended to follow their advice. However, it is ultimately up to you to submit the required work on time and to the standards laid down in the student handbook. Failure to do so cannot be blamed on your DA.
You can find the link for the dissertation/research project page for your programme in the right-hand menu of your programme homepage (either under ‘Dissertation’ or ‘Final Research Project’). If you don’t already have the homepage for your programme bookmarked, you can find it by going to the page for Management programmes and selecting your programme from the list, taking care to select the correct link if there are different links for your programme according to the date you started your programme. Once your proposal has been approved, then you will be allowed to continue with your Ethics application.

**Ethical policy**

The University of Liverpool and Laureate are fully committed to the advancement of high-quality academic research, and to ensuring that all research activities involving human participation are conducted in a way that safeguards the dignity, rights, health, safety, and privacy of those involved.

*Conducting research without ethical approval is likely to constitute research misconduct. Any final research projects (dissertations / consultancy projects) that contain data collected without ethical approval will be classified as not having been submitted, will not be assessed and will be treated as a non-submission. This applies to dissertations containing any data collected prior to ethics approval or data collected beyond the scope of the ethics approval. In such cases the Board of Examiners will normally award a mark of zero and require a re-take on a new topic. However, students will only be entitled to re-take if the breach occurred during the first attempt to academic entitlement.*

As a University of Liverpool student, you must conduct your research in accordance with some fundamental ethical principles. These principles are:

- Except where the nature of the research makes this impossible, researchers and participants must be fully informed about the purpose, methods, and intended possible uses of the research. Based on this information, they must give their voluntary consent to take part in the project, free from coercion.
- The confidentiality of the information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents must be respected. Wherever possible data is anonymised and there is full compliance with the principles within the Data Protection Act. Personal information can only be disclosed when permission to disclose is part of the consent procedure.
- Risks to those involved in the research must be minimised, and harm to research participants and researchers must be avoided. Participants must be warned about any potential risks of harm.
- The independence of the research must be clear, and any conflict of interest or partiality must be explicit.
- The research must conform to all relevant statutory requirements and to the requirements of the institution in which the research is undertaken.

You can find more information about the ethics procedure in the Centre for Student Success: [http://success.liverpool-online.com/ethics](http://success.liverpool-online.com/ethics).
Students who fail to achieve proposal approval after ten weeks

Students are expected to have their proposals approved by the end of Week 10 of their RMT module. Failure to do so will reduce the amount of time that you must work on the chapters of your dissertation. If the student has failed to achieve proposal approval at the end of Week 8 of the RM module, the DA should indicate the reason for the delay to the GDI.

Dissertation Submission

Submission of draft dissertation/research project or consultancy project

You will be expected to submit a full draft of your dissertation/research project to your DA class one month before the deadline for final dissertation/research project submission. The DA will review for formatting and structure only at this stage.

You will find in your DA class a link to submit your draft dissertation/research project through the Turnitin plagiarism checking tool. This is to enable you to review your draft for compliance with our plagiarism guidelines and make any minor adjustments to your citation practices before your final submission. As this is a draft submission, your dissertation/research project will not be added to the main Turnitin database and will not be matched against your final submission. Please note that this checking process is your responsibility and will not involve your DA.

Submission of final dissertation/research project or consultancy project

You should submit the final version of your dissertation/research project or consultancy project to the Turnitin link by clicking on the 'Final Submission tab' in your DA class before the end of the 40th week of your dissertation/research project period.

Dissertation/research project deadlines

The dissertation/research project deadline is also referred to as the submission date. The official submission date for all student dissertations is 40 weeks of the start of the dissertation/research project (Research Methods) module. Previously, the time used to determine if a final research project was submitted by the deadline or was late was based on the time used by our online classroom (US Eastern Standard Time). Now, with effect for any submission with a deadline after 28 December 2016, the time used will change to the time zone of your country of residency (i.e. midnight, your local time) as recorded in the University records or as otherwise notified by the student (in the case of a student travelling outside their home time zone). For more information see:

(i) The Final Research Project: Submission, Deadlines and Extensions section of the CSS:
http://success.liverpool-online.com/finalresearchproject/submission

(ii) The module calendar for your programme:
http://success.liverpool-online.com/modulecalendars/2019
Marking your dissertation

Your dissertation/research project will then be marked by your DA, as the first assessor, and by a second assessor. Once the final submission has been made, you will receive an email confirming the receipt of your dissertation. This contains the final acceptance of your dissertation/research project and marks the point at which communication between you and your DA should end so that the grading process can begin.

Grading will continue for several weeks once the dissertation/research project is complete. Final grades will be released to you as soon as possible after the Board of Examiners has met and agreed on a final award. This could mean a wait of several months, depending upon the deadline and submission date of the dissertation. You will be contacted with official confirmation of the results once the Board of Examiners has made its decision.

Extensions

Extensions will not normally be granted except in clearly unexpected circumstances beyond student control, such as in cases of real personal/family/medical/work emergencies, or in instances where the Disability Centre have authorised an extended deadline following a review. Please contact student support or view the support website for details of making a claim for Extenuating Circumstances to be taken into consideration, or to learn about the Disability Centre. More information You can find more information in the Centre for Student Success: http://answers.liverpool-online.com/faq/129457

Late Submission

1. All student dissertations submitted up to 10 calendar days after the official submission date will be assessed.
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.
3. Where a student’s dissertation/research project 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.
4. For every two calendar days after the official submission date, 5% of the total marks available for the dissertation/research project component shall be deducted from the assessment mark, up to a maximum of 25% (ie. 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);
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. Work assessed below the pass mark on merit will not be penalised for late submission of up to ten days.
7. All work submitted ten calendar days after the official submission deadline will receive a mark of zero.

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 or a friend / colleague 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.
## Dissertation/research project Assessment Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% to 100%</td>
<td>Theoretically or practically significant topic; clearly defined research question, meticulous literature review, careful execution of research design, high quality analysis, discussion and conclusions. Signs of originality in selection of question and/or approach to research. Presentation excellent. Makes a significant contribution to knowledge. Potentially publishable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80% to 89%</td>
<td>Very carefully designed and executed study. Sound theoretical framework based upon good literature review and carefully formulated approach. Clearly articulated research question, use of appropriate methodology, reflective and thorough discussion, defensible conclusions. Displays mastery of the subject matter and of appropriate theories and concepts. Presentation excellent. Useful contribution to knowledge. Potentially publishable with some refocusing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70% to 79%</td>
<td>Very carefully designed and executed study. Sound theoretical framework based upon good literature review. Carefully formulated approach and evidence of independent critical ability. Clear conclusions, detailed recommendations for practice. Good critical grasp of relevant theories and concepts. Presentation excellent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% to 69%</td>
<td>Well designed and executed study. Adequate literature review and framing of study and good effort to collect data. Ability to reflect upon weaknesses in approach. Clear conclusions, detailed recommendations for practice. Presentation good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% to 59%</td>
<td>Generally adequate design and execution. Generally adequate literature review and framing of study and attempt to collect data but may contain weaknesses in approach, for example, poor alignment of research question and methodology. Failure to obtain all of the requisite data, conclusions lame, recommendations for practice weak or omitted. Presentation satisfactory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40% to 49%</td>
<td>Inadequate evidence of independent research (e.g. inadequate design and execution). Literature review partial, framing of study imprecise, data collection partial, poor alignment of research question and methodology. Conclusions lame, recommendations for practice weak or omitted. Presentation barely satisfactory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30% to 39%</td>
<td>Makes some attempt to conduct independent research but is significantly deficient in one or more of the following: adequacy of literature review; design and methodology; data collection, analysis, discussion and conclusions and general standard of presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0% to 29%</td>
<td>Submission contains serious weaknesses on one or more of the following counts: adequacy of literature review; design and methodology; data collection, analysis, discussion and conclusions and general standard of presentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guidance on the action to be taken if the student is unhappy with their Dissertation Advisor

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.

Some Questions and Answers

You said it must be an original work. What does that mean?

The dissertation/research project must constitute an original application of theory to a business problem or situation. Originality implies that you should contribute something to the knowledge of the topic area, often through the work involved, such as interviews, surveys, observing a situation or obtaining and analysing data from a source such as a government department. Usually, the practical work that you do, such as interviewing people in your workplace, will ensure that the study is original. It must, of course, be original also in the sense of not being copied from an existing source.

Does the dissertation/research project have to involve doing practical work? Can I just study something and write about that?

If you simply studied something, for example the present state of the economy, then it might not be an ‘original application of theory’; it could be simply an extract of existing sources. If your study applied previous knowledge to a new situation, then it could contribute something original.

What are research methods and are they the same as research methodology?

Research methodology and research methods are not the same thing. Research methodology is the overall approach that you adopt in your study. Research methods are the specific ways by which you go about collecting data to answer your research questions. For example, if one of your research questions was ‘Do employees feel happier under the new culture of the company?’, then the methods for answering this question might include interviews, focus groups or surveys, and possibly, less directly, analysis of staff turnover figures.

Contrary to the impression some people gain from some texts, reviewing published research is not a method of research, and it belongs in the literature review, not the methods section. Documentary research is not a literature review, but it is the extraction of information from public or other documents—for instance, population statistics from census data.

I am not in business. I work in the not-for-profit sector. Is this a disadvantage?

Although we often speak of the business or the firm, this normally includes the public sector, charities, colleges, universities, etc. You should not find this to be a disadvantage, as there is ample scope to apply the business disciplines to these areas.
I am a management student and I work in the computing department and want to do something in this area. Is computing a business discipline?

A dissertation/research project that studies the implementation of a system would be within the scope of the management Masters, if it is concerned with, for example, financial appraisal or employee motivation, but if it was concerned only with computer programming, for example, it would not be.

I have looked in the library and there is nothing on Bluetooth technology, which is what I want to write about.

We assume you are not writing about Bluetooth technology as such because that would be a computer topic, so we assume your dissertation/research project is about a business application of Bluetooth technology. If you are studying the effect of the new technology on marketing a product, then there is material in the library on marketing an innovative product. If you are studying the effect of a new technology on competitive position, then you could look up disruptive technology. Every topic has a theoretical foundation that can be found in the literature, but it may not be easy to identify. You should refer to your Information Literacy module, ask your DA and, if still stuck, ask the online librarian.

Do I have to use primary data? Can I use other people’s data?

You do not have to have numerical data at all, and you can make use of data collected by, for example, government departments or any other reliable source. You can also use work done by other people, but this must form a minor part of the dissertation/research project and must be clearly denoted and not form the main research.

Can I publish or sell my dissertation?

The University of Liverpool’s policy on the intellectual property rights of student dissertation/research project is that, while all postgraduate students are required to assign all intellectual property rights to the University, the students are the effective copyright holders of their dissertations. The University will not publish a student’s work or place a copy of the work in the Library, without the author’s consent.

In cases where students wish to publish or sell their dissertation, the University has no rights over such a publication. However, the work should be viewed as a collaboration between the student and DA and the student and DA should reach an agreement regarding authorship and acknowledgements. It is expected that the author will include the University of Liverpool, Laureate Online Education and the DA in the acknowledgements.

Students are required to notify the University/Laureate if any commercial exploitation of their dissertation/research project work is planned. The University will not assert any claim of intellectual property rights, however, unless there is a reasonable argument that the DA should share in the benefits of any exploitation.

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

**My employer wants my dissertation/research project kept confidential.**

Confidentiality can only be offered to a limited extent. All dissertations must be made available to DAs/CAs, second assessors, External Reviewers and members of the Board of Examiners. Our policy of transparency allows the classroom to be read by all Instructors.

**Can I send a questionnaire to all the other students as part of my research?**

We agree in our contract with students to use their personal data including email addresses only for the purposes of the course, so we cannot allow dissertation/research project students to use their Liverpool Online Office 365 email accounts (online.liverpool.ac.uk) for sending out questionnaires generally. However, students may ask for volunteers by posting a message in the Laureate LENS Student Community - please see [http://answers.liverpool-online.com/faq/130118](http://answers.liverpool-online.com/faq/130118).

**My dissertation/research project concerns some private products. Is that a problem?**

Students should seek advice from the University through the director of online studies if any ethical problem is at all probable. This should emerge from your completion of the ethical application. Some, but not all, of the areas to be aware of are questionnaires that ask for personal, medical, sexual or racial data, or where you are expecting to work with children.

If it emerges from completing this checklist that your dissertation/research project topic is likely to raise an ethical issue, you should discuss this with your DA.