

Monash University

FACULTY OF ARTS

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS WRITING RESEARCH PROJECTS

These Guidelines are designed as a supplement to discipline-specific advice that may be provided by the Schools in which the projects are undertaken.

1. Units that consist of a research project are normally taken over one semester. A 12 point unit normally requires a submission that is 9,000 words in length, however students are advised to complete between 10-12,000 words if they wish to apply for a research degree. A 24 point project normally requires 18,000 words.
2. The topic of your research project should be worked out with your supervisor before beginning the necessary research and writing. The selection of your supervisor should be discussed with the course coordinator, and will normally be based on the supervisor's closeness of the area of expertise to the proposed topic of research.
3. All research projects, both 12 and 24 points, involving research with humans, require approval from the Human Ethics Office at Monash University. Prior to commencing research it is the responsibility of the student, under the guidance of the supervisor, to initiate the necessary arrangements to meet the University's ethical research requirements.
4. Your research project should reflect your independent thought and initiative, and should aim to analyse an issue or problem, develop a coherent argument and arrive at clearly articulated conclusions based on your research. It should include appropriate footnotes/endnotes or in-text references, and a comprehensive bibliography. Your supervisor will provide you with advice on the preferred format for the presentation of the research project, and it is your responsibility to ensure that you proof read your final copy for grammatical or typographical errors. It is your responsibility to ensure that you keep back-up files of your research and that all works consulted have been correctly cited and there is no plagiarised material in your project.
5. The project will normally consist of an Introduction in which you indicate what your major question(s) and argument(s) will be, and in which you provide an outline of the proposed structure of the project. The Introduction will also enable you to indicate the major theoretical texts you will be drawing upon and your proposed methodological approach. Depending on the length of the project, you may wish to structure it in chapters which focus on particular parts of your overall investigation and which build your discussion into a sustained argument. (This is more likely to be the format of a 24 point project, given the word length.) The project (whether 12 or 24 points) should have a Conclusion in which you will draw together the main strands of your argument, and indicate the originality and significance of your research in light of the theoretical and methodological frameworks within which you have been working. Your conclusion may also provide the opportunity for you to suggest ways that your research topic has opened the way for further research in the area.
6. It is expected that students will be (or become) familiar with library and computer facilities within the University. This might involve, for example, becoming familiar with particular

databases, or with specialised sections of the Matheson Library (such as Rare Books), as well as taking any necessary introductory or further training sessions on research methods run by the Library or other relevant University services.

7. It is essential that candidates maintain regular contact with their supervisors, normally beginning in the first week or two of semester. A schedule for such consultations should be agreed upon at the outset of the research project (usually approximately fortnightly). Such contact should normally be face-to-face, but email and/or phone contact can also be used, as agreed by student and supervisor. The nature of these consultations will vary as the project proceeds, but they should include (but not necessarily be limited to) initial advice on theoretical and conceptual issues, appropriate source materials, structuring the arguments to be presented.
8. As determined in consultation with your supervisor, draft written submissions should be made on the project aims, methods and outlines of the arguments at appropriate stages of the candidature. By maintaining this agreed pattern of research and writing, students can expect to gain constructive feedback and advice on their progress (normally within a fortnight of submitting drafts), and, following discussion of such advice, to reshape their work accordingly.
9. If for any reason you are unable to keep an appointment with your supervisor, s/he should be notified in advance and a suitable replacement time arranged. It is worth remembering that you will not always have anything to show in the way of writing, but it is equally important at certain stages of the project to talk about your ideas and materials you have been reading.
10. It is often the case that as you proceed with your research, you find that you discover more sources and wish to revise the initial idea for the research project. This often means that you are acquiring a greater clarity in your understanding of the theoretical dimensions of your topic and a better idea of how to structure the project and the most appropriate methodology to adopt. It is essential that you discuss such changes in perspective with your supervisor as soon as possible and before you proceed in implementing such changes, in order to ensure that they are appropriate to the specific requirements of the research project and its word length.
11. It is essential that students keep their supervisor informed if they are experiencing difficulties that are impeding the progress of the research project. If they are having difficulties with the supervisory process that cannot be resolved by discussion of this with their supervisor, students should consult the relevant course and/or research coordinator in the first instance. It is important for all concerned that any problems with the progress of the research project are dealt with as they arise and are not allowed to worsen through lack of attention.

Non English Speaking Background students should note that the Language and Learning Services staff run a Research Writing Workshops for NESB students who face the additional challenge of conducting their research in another language. The course covers approaches to research, reading, writing and presenting.

12. Where provision exists within the School in which the research project is being undertaken, students are encouraged to avail themselves of seminars, meetings and other academic and social events that are arranged for their benefit. Such activities can often make the difference between feeling a part of the intellectual and social life of your peers and feeling isolated.

13. Candidates are encouraged to enjoy the independent research that a research project enables them to carry out and to seek to gain the maximum benefit from the supervisory and intellectual relationship and skills that research and writing a 12 or 24 point research project can offer.
14. Off-campus students will be required to comply with whatever arrangements have been made for suitable contact with their supervisors. Where deemed viable, this may involve some face-to-face contact with academic staff. All students should ensure that they utilise the clearly defined and agreed upon mode of regular contact and provision of feedback on their written drafts, as advised in relevant course/unit materials.