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PLEASE READ BELOW BEFORE REFERRING TO THIS DOCUMENT

Instructions for document users with access to College SharePoint System

All MCAST employees can access current, controlled and approved documents related to the Quality Management System from the College website and Intranet system.

*Document users who do have access to online documents are therefore encouraged **NOT** to retain printed hard copies of the Quality Management System documents.*

If however a hard copy of the document is required, the user is to ensure that the printed document is the current revision.

Continuous Improvement

Procedures are meant to be 'living' documents that need to be followed, implemented and maintained. If the procedure does not reflect the current, correct work practice, it needs to be updated!

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1. PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide the guidelines for the development and submission and grading of MCAST dissertations.

2. APPLICABILITY

- 2.1 These guidelines are applicable to MCAST MQF/ EQF Level 6 and 7 programmes.

3 DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Undergraduate Students are expected to complete a dissertation as part of their final degree studies. Masters Students are expected to complete a dissertation in their final leg of studies. The recommended mode of grading a dissertation shall be through a viva session, where the indicative grading provided by the Student's supervisor will be taken into consideration. The student's final dissertation, that is formally submitted in hard bound and soft copy, shall be that which includes any changes requested by the viva as well as the subsequent Degree Ratification Board.

- 3.1.2 Students will be required to follow the Research Ethics Policy and Procedure referenced below when conducting their research. This procedure refers the Institute Research Sub-Committee (IRC) that is responsible for approving the research project once a Research Proposal has been submitted to the IRC by the Student. Students shall not commence their research before they have approval in writing to proceed by the IRC. The IRC shall, in turn, seek ethics approval from the Research Ethics Committee before giving the final approval to the Student. Students should be very cautious in attempting to change their research theme once they have submitted their Research Proposal to the IRC, as this will cause delays that may result in the Student failing the research module.

Reference Document:

Doc 074: Research Ethics Policy and Procedure.

- 3.1.3 The Research Proposal, also called the 'Initial Proposal Form (Statement of Intent)', is a vital initial part of the Student's research endeavour. Students will normally be requested to submit at the end of their MQF Level 5 academic year, an 'Initial Research Proposal Form' (refer to document referenced to below that outlines plans for their early stages of research. Additionally, students are required to submit a detailed research proposal before entering the final year of the Level 6 programme that may be a continuation of their earlier research. In both cases, students shall seek approval from the IRC before commencing the research. The 'Initial Research Proposal Form' also includes summarized guidelines for ethical standards that are explained further in the 'Research Ethics Policy and Procedure'.



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- 3.1.4 The Institute Director shall assign a dissertation Supervisor to support the student during the duration of the dissertation process. In cases where the Director, in consultation with the student, considers that the necessary expertise is not available in-house, the student is required to fill in the appropriate section in the 'Initial Research Proposal Form (Statement of Intent)' justifying and requesting prior approval of the proposed external dissertation Supervisor. The Student will also be required to ask the expert being nominated as an external dissertation Supervisor to submit to the Institute Director a CV including an attestation of his/her expertise. The Institute Director will determine, in consultation with the IRC, whether the choice of external dissertation Supervisor is justified and appropriate, or not. The Student cannot enter into commitments with the external Supervisor prior to the written approval of the Institute Director, after consulting with the IRC". The final decision is that of the institute director.

Reference Documents:

Doc 074: Research Ethics Policy and Procedure

Doc 164: Initial Research Proposal Form (Statement of Intent)

- 3.1.5 Final Level 6 dissertation submissions shall (unless specified otherwise) follow the following schedule. The Student is to:

- Submit 2 spiral-bound copies of the dissertation to the Institute concerned together with an online submission for plagiarism checks, by Friday of the first full week of June.
- Collect 1 corrected spiral-bound dissertation copy by the 15th of July from the Institute concerned during office hours.
- Subsequently, submit 2 hard-bound copies and 1 PDF soft copy of the final corrected dissertation (in line with Clause 14.1.1) by the last Friday of September to the Institute concerned. One hard-copy of the dissertation will be kept in one of the MCAST Library and Learning Resource Centres, generally, the one closest to the Institute Campus where it was generated, while the other hard copy will be kept by the Institute concerned.

Students that fail their dissertation shall be provided with the following options to remedy their situation, following a decision by the MCAST Degree Ratification Board. This will be one of the following:

1. In cases of a marginally incomplete submission, Students will be given an extension till the end of October to resubmit their work. The research theme is to remain unchanged. The maximum grade achievable shall be a Pass, or 59% (Grade D). Students will still have the facility to graduate with their existing class cohort. In cases of extenuating circumstances, the Student's grade will not be capped at a Pass. As students will only have one chance to resubmit their work, they may opt to forfeit submission in October in favor of a later submission in the June window of the following year thus graduating the following year.
2. In cases of a significantly weak submission or no submission, Students will be requested to repeat their research project entirely over an additional academic year. The Degree Ratification Board may request that the Student enters a new or revised research stream here. The maximum grade achievable shall be a Pass, or 59%. In cases of extenuating circumstances, the Student's grade will not be capped at a Pass.

If the student (a) does not submit the dissertation on time or (b) the student fails the dissertation during the first submission, the final mark of subsequent submissions of the dissertations (as approved by the Degree Ratification Board) will be capped.



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3.1.6 Undergraduate (Level 6) dissertations which are not accompanied by a tangible outcome in the form of a model, prototype or an actual product, shall normally be between 10,000 to 15,000 words in the main text that is excluding the abstract, the bibliography and the appendices. Masters dissertations shall be between 15,000 to 25,000 words in length. For Students carrying out their research within Level 5, this will follow similar structural expectations to Level 6 research, but with the following points of notice:

- a) A Level 5 research endeavour is considered to be a complete research project in itself, with the same ethical expectations, need for a Research Proposal and approval by the IRC, and such.
- b) Students should target researching Level 5 that is then enhanced and concluded at Level 6. For this aim, the outcome of the Level 5 research should follow a similar structure to the final L6 dissertation but with lesser volume/content. Level 5 research should be strongest in secondary research (i.e. literature review) and in developing and piloting a successful research project through a robust research methodology. It is then the Level 6 research that will enhance the existing literature and methodology, and focus predominantly on applying rigorous primary research and critically analyzing the outcomes of this research.

For the Level 5 research project, each student (or student team if it is group research) is required to evidence the research carried out through a Research Poster that is suitable for presentation in a Poster Exhibition. Research Posters aim to summarize the research concisely and visually to help the students present their work, and to generate discussion and encourage further research. The Research Poster should be a blend of text, tables, graphs and pictures, and should include the following that is compiled by the Student in an electronic format advocated by MCAST:

- Important text should be clear, relevant, and readable from up to 3 metres away.
 - Titles should be bold, short and interesting.
 - Word count would be from around 300 to 500 words.
 - Effective use of graphics, colours and fonts is required.
 - A consistent and neat layout is required.
 - The Poster is to include the name of the College (MCAST), Institute, Student/s and Lecturers/Mentors.
- c) There will be programmes where the Level 5 poster exhibit can be of substantial content and rigour such that this exhibit, and its presentation, would take the place of a report or write-up as the final product of that research, as determined by the lecturer concerned.
 - d) Students may opt to change their research stream when progressing from Level 5 to level 6, but must be aware of the disadvantages that starting over again will bring about.



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3.1.7 Students on programmes where a tangible outcome is expected as an integral part of the final major project, such as in the institute for the Creative Arts, shall present a relevant 5,000 – 6,000-word dissertation. This number excludes the abstract, the bibliography and the appendices. The dissertation shall be of direct relevance to the product. This means that the designed product, model or prototype must be intelligently supported by a relevant argument. This writing will thus follow the same guidance offered above and must also include the Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review and other main chapters, as well as the Bibliography and the Appendices.

3.1.8 The Student is encouraged to:

- a) Seriously consider the advice of the supervisor/tutor at all times;
- b) Attend all tutorial sessions as these give an opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues with the dissertation supervisor/tutor;
- c) Read regularly and take note of all relevant information and instructions;
- d) Work out a timetable of dissertation activities and scheduled meetings with the dissertation tutor to ensure that the final objective of a good dissertation by the prescribed deadline is met;
- e) Become well familiar with library resources both in print and electronic format through visits to the library and use of the online library catalogue and library web pages.

3.2 Research Proposal

3.2.1 The Student is required to submit an Initial Research Proposal (Statement of Intent) on the appropriate template. When completing the penultimate year of the course (i.e. 2nd year in the case of 3-year programmes and 3rd year in the case of 4-year programmes), the Student may be required to submit his early research in the form of a Detailed Research Proposal, to be continued through further research when in Level 6. At latest, the Detailed Research Proposal is to reach the IRC by the end of the third full week of September of the final year of the Level 6 programme.

Reference Documents:

Doc 164: Initial Research Proposal Form (Statement of Intent)

3.3 Dissertation Meetings with the Supervisor and Dissertation Logbook

3.3.1 The Student is expected to keep a Dissertation Logbook (refer to document referred to below) of the work carried out towards the development of the dissertation and also a record of the meetings with the dissertation supervisor. As a general rule at least ten (10) Student-Supervisor meetings are expected over the research period.

The Student is to ensure that the Dissertation Logbook is correctly documented and maintained. The logbook is to be submitted together with the dissertation at the end of the dissertation period. Students are to request written supervisor feedback and signatures to each logbook input that they will make, relating to the various individual meetings that take place throughout the academic period. Supervisors will add their comments and feedback/direction to the descriptions and inputs made by the Student in each logbook entry. Students have to actively seek out their supervisor to ensure that this feedback/direction is regularly provided and the logbook adequately documented.



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The Institute reserves the right not to accept the dissertation for evaluation if the logbook is not filled in correctly and each meeting duly signed off by the Student and Supervisor.

Reference Documents:

Doc 067 : Dissertation Log Book

3.4 Dissertation Structure, Layout, Font Size and Line Spacing

3.4.1 The following section provides information regarding the design of the front cover, dissertation chapter structure, layout, font size and line spacing. No page designs are to be included within the dissertation.

Front cover

For details of front cover and binding of dissertation copies, refer to section 14.8 and Appendix 6.

Front page

This page is to include in font size 14 and 1.5 line spacing:

1. MCAST logo positioned in top right corner
2. Dissertation title (bold font) and full justified
3. Student's name and surname (italics)
4. Supervisor name and surname (italics)
5. Month, the year when the dissertation is submitted.
6. The following text: 'A dissertation submitted to the (*name of Institute*) in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of (*degree title*).

'Authorship Statement' page

Note: Plagiarism occurs when someone else's work is used by the Student without acknowledging it. Dissertations are to be uploaded through Unicheck. Refer to MCAST regulations regarding plagiarism (Doc 099).

This page is to include in font size 12 and 1.5 line spacing:

Text 1: This dissertation is based on the results of research carried out by myself, is my own composition, and has not been previously presented for any other certified or uncertified qualification

Text 2 : The research was carried out under the supervision of (name of dissertation tutor – Title, Name and surname)

Signature and date



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'Copyright Statement' page

This page is to include in font size 12 and 1.5 line spacing

Text 1: In submitting this dissertation to the MCAST Institute of..... I understand that I am giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of MCAST and the Library and Learning Resource Centre. I accept that my dissertation may be made publicly available at MCAST's discretion.

Signature and date.

'Acknowledgments' page

This page is to include:

- in font size 12 and 1.5 line spacing
- the list of people that the Student would like to thank on the completion of the dissertation. For example 'Mr Name Surname, who supported me during my dissertation work as my tutor'.

Acknowledgements should be kept to a maximum of five people.

'Contents' Page

This page is to include in font size 12, with 1.5 line-spacing the main items of the dissertation indicating the page from where each item starts.

The contents include:

Dissertation Title (and corresponding page number)
Authorship Statement (and corresponding page number)
Copyright Statement (and corresponding page number)
Abstract (and corresponding page number)
Acknowledgements (and corresponding page number)
Contents (and corresponding page number)
List of Abbreviations (and corresponding page number)
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Chapter 1 : Introduction (and recommended page number)
Chapter 2: Literature Review (and recommended page number)
Chapter 3 : Research Methodology (and recommended page number)
Chapter 4 : Analysis of Results and Discussion (and recommended page number)
Chapter 5 : Conclusions and Recommendations (and recommended page number)

List of references (and recommended page number)
Bibliography (and recommended page number)
Appendices (and recommended page number).

Refer also to Appendix 1 for sample of contents page.

Subsequent Pages

The font of all the remaining text (following the contents page) is to be Times New Roman, font size 12, double-line spacing and printed on one-sided pages.

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A wide left-hand side margin of 3.7 cm is to be included throughout the dissertation. All other margins are to be set at 2.5 cm

Quotations of more than three lines should begin on a new line, indented on the 2.5 cm from the main text.

Pages are to be numbered consecutively, in bottom right corner, using Roman numbers for the initial pages and natural numbers starting from the first page of Chapter 1.

It is normal for chapters to have sub-sections (1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.) to display text in a more readable format.

3.5 Guideline for Content of Main Sections

3.5.1 Abstract (400 – 500 words)

This section should clearly state what the study is about, summarizing how it was carried out and what the results were. References are not to be included in the abstract. It should present only the essentials of the work in general.

3.5.2 Introduction (500 – 1000 words)

In this section, the Student is expected to state clearly:

- the 'problem' or 'question' being researched;
- why this topic was chosen;
- what motivated the Student to choose this topic;
- why did the Student investigate it the way they did;
- what problem did the Student wish to explore;
- what is the context for the research?

3.5.3 Literature Review (2,000 – 4,000 words)

The main purpose of a literature review is to show the reader that the Student studied and analyzed viewpoints of other researchers on the problem under consideration. A literature review is not just a summary of the books read but rather a thorough analysis of other viewpoints on the problem being analysed.

3.5.4 Research Methodology (1,500 – 3,000 words)

This section should make about 20% of a dissertation. It presents the chosen research methods and explains why these methods are effective.

3.5.5 Analysis of Results and Discussion (3,000 – 4,000 words)

This section includes critical discussion about the Student's findings and shows how these findings support the original objectives laid out for the dissertation, which may be partially or fully achieved, or even exceeded. The Student may also include new areas of an investigation prompted by developments in the research dissertation. Above all, it is required to present strong arguments which show how findings may offer a valid contribution to the development of the subject of the selected research area or issues related to it.



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3.5.6 Conclusions and Recommendations (1,000 – 3,000 words)

In this chapter, the Student has to evaluate the significance of the work done and give recommendations for any further investigations.

3.5.7 Bibliography

This section demonstrates what sources were used to conduct research. All sources presented in a bibliography list should be sorted alphabetically.

3.5.8 References

The Student is generally requested to use the following Harvard referencing style in the dissertation:

For books

Coleman, M (2002) *Women as head teachers: striking a balance*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

i.e., author (surname first, followed by a comma and initial of his name in capital letter) – date (in brackets) – the title of the book (in italics) – a place of publication – publishing company.

For a chapter in an edited book

Brenner, M. (1985) "Survey Interviewing' In M. Brenner, J. Brown and D. Canter. (eds) *The Research Interview: Uses and Approaches*, New York: Academic Press.

i.e., author (surname first, followed by a comma and initial of his name in caps) – date (in brackets) – title of chapter (in single quotation marks) – name(s) of book editor/s followed by the abbreviation "ed' or "eds' (in brackets) – title of book (in italics) – location of publication – publishing company.

For journal articles

Becker, H. (1984) "Fieldwork with Computers', *Qualitative Sociology* 7(12): 16-33.

i.e. author (surname first, followed by a comma and initial of his name in caps) – the title of the paper (in single quotes) – the title of the journal (in italics) – volume number – issue number (in brackets) – colon - page numbers.

For Internet references

Include the date when the page was last accessed because of the comparatively dynamic nature of internet resources. For example

Dowling, P.E. (2000) "A manifesto for design and the charismatic intellectual'. [Online]. Presented at *Education and Social Democracies: Changing Forms and Sites*. Institute of Education, University of London. 3-5 July 2000. Available at www.ioe.ac.uk/ccs/dowling/c2000. Last accessed 18 July 2000.

For References in the text

The Student is to place direct quotations over three lines long, in a separate paragraph indented left and right. Spacing between lines should be single.

The page number/s of the quotation should be given at the end of the quotation or after the date of the reference, for example, (Smith, 1976: 15) if it comes after a quotation, or Smith (1976: 15) if the reference just precedes the quotation.

In the body of the text, references are noted with the author's surname, followed by the date of publication in brackets, for example, Smith (1976). The "et al.' can be used when the number of

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authors is greater than two. However the full list of authors must be included in references at the end.

3.5.9 Appendices

Interview summaries, sample questionnaires, and references should be placed in this section.

For easier referencing, figures, tables, graphs, photos, diagrams, etc., should be inserted within the main text such as the literature review, the experimental process or procedure, the results and discussion chapters.

Appendices are usually used to present further details about the results. Appendices may be a compulsory part of a dissertation, but they are not treated as part of the dissertation for purposes of assessing the dissertation. So any material which is significant to judging the quality of the dissertation or of the project as a whole should be in the main body of the dissertation (main text), and not in appendices.

3.6 Timeframes for Dissertation Tutorials

- 3.6.1 Scheduled dissertation tutorial sessions are expected to start immediately after the beginning of the academic year. These tutorial sessions are meant to facilitate the choice of the students' research topic and the drafting of their Statement of Intent. ‘

A minimum of 10 tutorial sessions is advised over the academic year.

3.7 Grading Criteria

- 3.7.1 The documents referred below provide the expected dissertation grading criteria and a corresponding grading rubric for the specific Institutes as listed:

DOC 374: General Dissertation Grading Criteria and Rubric
 DOC 375: Dissertation Grading Criteria and Rubric – Institute for the Creative Arts
 DOC 376: Dissertation Grading Criteria and Rubric – Institute of Information and Communication Technology

3.8 Hard Bound Presentation and Front Cover

- 3.8.1 Before final printing, students must ensure that their final dissertation text includes any corrections that their dissertation tutor and/or the Institute academic staff would have indicated.
- Undergraduate: The hardbound should be in a **black** cover and is to have all script printed in **gold** lettering.
 - Masters: The hardbound should be in a **blue** cover and is to have all script printed in **silver** lettering
 - Doctoral: The hardbound should be in a **red** cover and is to have all script printed in **gold** lettering

On the front top-part (middle position) of the cover the Student must write the TITLE of the dissertation in BLOCK LETTERS using Arial font size 17pt.

On the front lower-part (right-hand corner) of the cover the Student must write the following, not in block letters but using capital letters using Arial font size 14pt:

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Student Name and Surname
 Programme Name
 Month, Year

On the spine of the cover, the following data shall appear positioned from left to right:

Title Dissertation (*in Capital Letters*)
 STUDENT NAME AND SURNAME (*in BLOCK letters*)
 Year

As specified in Clause 14.1.4, two hardbound copies and 1 PDF soft copy of the dissertation must be submitted by the Student to the Institute. The Institute is to ensure that one copy of the dissertation will be kept in one of the MCAST Library and Learning Resource Centres, generally the one closest to the Institute Campus where it is generated, while the other hard copy will be kept by the Institute concerned.

- 3.8.2 All dissertations are copyright of MCAST (in line with MCAST Regulations and Chapter 417 of the Laws of Malta, and Legal Notices 181 and 186 of 2006, 426 of 2007, and Act XXX of 2014), and as such, under the discretion of MCAST, dissertations may be uploaded onto internal portals and repositories for academic reference by researchers, lecturers, students and other select parties, after ensuring that no personal student details are exposed outside of their name and relevant academic information.

In extraordinary cases where students require an embargo of publication of their dissertation due to any reason, students must by the first week of June, submit to the IRC the filled-in form 'Request for Exemption Embargo for Dissertation Publication' (refer below), which can be found on the College Documentation web page. The student will need to present detailed reasons of why such embargo is required to the IRC, who will approve or reject the embargo request, and if approved, decide for which length the embargo shall be retained.

Once the embargo has been sanctioned it is the student's full responsibility to ensure that the final, approved embargo form is included as the first inside page of the final dissertation, both for the hard bound and soft copy versions.

Reference Document

Document 034 : Request for Exemption Embargo for Dissertation Publication



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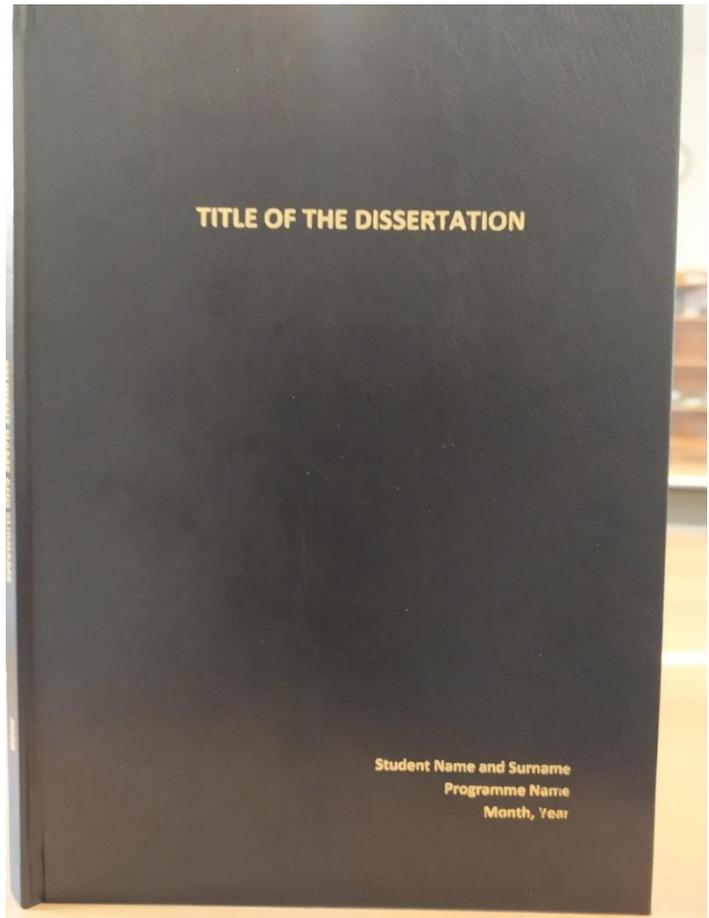
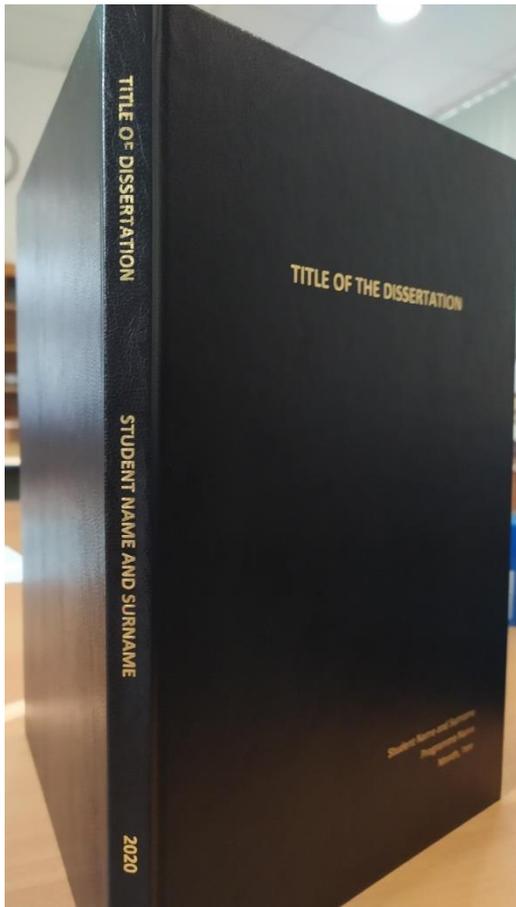
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Black hard bound with gold lettering