

ADVICE ON PART IIB DISSERTATIONS FACULTY OF DIVINITY, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Candidates for Part IIB of the Tripos may offer a dissertation in place of a written paper. The dissertation may be on any topic falling within the scope of any paper in the Tripos, subject to the approval of the Faculty Board. Opting for a dissertation does not in itself prevent a candidate from offering the Tripos paper to which it relates, but in approving a particular topic the Faculty Board may stipulate that the candidate concerned may not offer a particular paper or answer questions on a particular subject in it.

Definition of a dissertation

A dissertation is an extended essay rather than a research thesis. While originality is not discouraged, the purpose of a dissertation is to give experience of handling a subject at some length, and of presenting material in a scholarly way. A dissertation should show evidence of reading, judgement, and criticism, and of a power of exposition, but not necessarily of original research, and should give full references to sources used.' (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2016, p. 399).

Examples of First Class dissertations from past years are kept in the Divinity Library if you would like to consult them.

Strategy

You should consult your Director of Studies about your topic and contact a potential Supervisor before submitting your application. Try to choose your topic and submit your application in the Easter Term a year before the submission of the dissertation, so that you have the Long Vacation to work on it.

Define your topic carefully: the Faculty Board will require alterations in titles which it considers too broad, or which are phrased as a question.

Remember that the dissertation only counts as one paper in the Tripos, so do not spend disproportionate amounts of time on it!

Supervisions

For the supervision of dissertations, students are entitled to a short preliminary meeting to discuss the topic and bibliography, followed by **no more** than four hours of supervision. The division of those four hours need not be as four supervisions, but could consist of longer and shorter meetings as necessary. Feedback may be given on no more than two drafts of the dissertation.

Deadlines

If you wish to do a dissertation, you must download the application form from the Faculty website (<http://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/faculty/forms.html>) and have it signed by your Director of Studies, your proposed Supervisor and the Paper Coordinator for the Paper to which it relates and submit it to the Secretary of the Faculty Board. No application will be accepted without all three signatures. The deadline is **10 October 2016**.

Tripos

- You may submit your application to do a dissertation to the Secretary of the Faculty Board as early as the Easter Term a year before submission.
- The **latest date** by which you may apply to do a dissertation is the first Monday of Full Michaelmas Term (**10 October 2016**).
- Changes in the *topic* proposed are permitted up to the end of the Michaelmas Term; this means that you would need to get any changes to the **Chief Secretary** by **21 November 2016**.
- Minor changes in the wording of the title, which clarify the topic or narrow it down, are permitted up to the division of the Lent Term (**15 February 2017**); after that no more changes of any sort are permitted.

Tripos and Advanced Diploma

- The dissertation itself must be submitted by midday no later than **the third Monday of Full Easter Term (15 May 2017)**.

How to lay out your dissertation

- A cover page can be downloaded from <http://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/admin/document-library#section-2> You should enter on the form the following information:
 - The course you are enrolled in (Tripos/Diploma)
 - The year of examination
 - The title of your dissertation
 - Your Exam Candidate Number (NOT your name). **Please note that you must not put your name anywhere on the essay, in order to preserve your anonymity in relation to the Examiners.**
 - The number of words in the dissertation - word count (the word count should include the text and footnotes used to convey information, but not any prefatory material, bibliography and footnotes which act simply as references).
- Dissertations must be written in English and word-processed or typed. They should be double-spaced, with generous margins.
- You do not have to bind your dissertation - simply present it neatly in a folder.
- You must hand in your dissertation in duplicate (one copy will go to each of the two Examiners) plus an electronic version via Turnitin. Information about how to do this will be emailed by the computer officer.
- Dissertations must be no longer than 10,000 words, which should include the text and footnotes used to convey information, but not any prefatory material, bibliography and footnotes which act simply as references.
- Footnotes and bibliographical references should be given consistently and in accordance with recognised conventions. Those recommended are those adopted for scholarly publishing in the humanities by Cambridge University Press - see its pamphlet Preparation of Manuscripts and Correction of Proofs. See also the Faculty's website notes on Referencing.
- See the Faculty notes on plagiarism for a definition of this term in relation to your work. You will have to sign and attach to your dissertation a statement confirming that it is all your own work.

Please use the (English) spell-checker on your computer if you are not sure how good your spelling is!

N.B. - Extensions to deadlines

The deadlines for assessed dissertations are firmly enforced and students should plan carefully to have their work ready by the set dates. This means arranging final supervisions with plenty of time to spare and allowing at least a day's leeway in case of unexpected problems such as computer failure.

Dissertations must be handed in at the Faculty Office during opening hours. Candidates will be expected to sign against their name as confirmation of the submission of their work.

Penalties

The Faculty Board has agreed to adopt the following **penalty** in relation to dissertations which are handed in late without good cause: a deduction of 5 marks per day (**to include weekends**) from the total number of marks which would otherwise have been awarded for the dissertation in question. The only exceptions to this rule will be those candidates who have obtained an appropriate medical certificate or those whose Director of Studies has applied to the Chairman of Examiners for exemption (with good cause) in advance.

Contact details

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