
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

INSTITUTE OF HUMAN PERFORMANCE

B.Sc EXERCISE & HEALTH

DISSERTATION HANDBOOK 2011-12

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1 GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Every candidate studying the BSc Exercise&Health degree is required by our regulations and syllabus to complete a dissertation before they can be considered for the award of the degree:

“All candidates complete a research project. This is an opportunity for students to develop an extended piece of independent enquiry in their area of specialism leading to a research paper. Topics offered may vary from year to year, depending on the research interest of the lecturer.”

This handbook is intended to guide you through the dissertation, but it should be noted that it is for guidance and should be read in conjunction with the formal degree regulations.

The dissertation is an opportunity for you to:

- Undertake a significant independent piece of research work
- Build and demonstrate knowledge and research skills in a particular sub-area of Exercise Sciences.
- Show your ability to communicate your work in the normal academic style of a journal article.

We expect you to:

- Read and assess the academic literature and make decisions about your own project based on this reading
- Be able to critically judge, evaluate and interpret data and text in light of a research question
- Be able to develop an original reasoned argument in light of that text and data
- Take responsibility for your own learning

More specifically by the end of the dissertation you will have:

- Planned, designed and executed a piece of rigorous research and produced a final report in the form of a research paper written in journal article style.
- Undertaken data collection relevant to the research problem
- Employed the appropriate social, scientific or experimental interpretative methods
- Gathered a range of evidence, effectively combining and interpreting them to further understanding of the research problem
- Practiced and developed written communication skills
- Developed motivational skills for autonomous work

2 CHOOSING A TOPIC AND SUPERVISOR

When choosing a topic you need to ask the following questions:

- Why is this issue relevant? e.g., is there a practical or theoretical problem that needs to be solved?
- What has already been written about the topic? You can find this out by conducting a literature search
- What question am I asking?
- Is the research feasible within the confines of the BSc Exercise&Health dissertation?

Some staff have projects that are available for students to follow. **Please see the following pages for staff interest areas.**

You should approach the staff directly. If you cannot find a supervisor, we will allocate one. It is up to you to contact the Supervisor.

Please let Cindy Chan in the Academic Office know who your supervisor is by **Monday September 26th 2011.**

Name	Area of Expertise	Tel no.	Email Address	Language of Communication
Ester Cerin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • environmental and psychosocial determinants of physical activity behaviour • applied statistical modeling <p>Special Project 1: Application of GPS monitors for measuring travel behavior in Hong Kong</p> <p>Special Project 2: Parental influences on preschoolers' physical activity</p> <p>Special Project 3: Built environment, physical activity and depression in Hong Kong elders</p> <p>Special Project 4: Socio-ecological factors associated with adolescents' physical activity and dietary behaviors</p> <p>Special project 5: Validation of a walking questionnaire for adults</p>	2831 5258	ecerin@hku.hk	English
Antony Barnett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise physiology • Sport and exercise training • Measurement of energy expenditure 	2589 0590	abarnett@hku.hk	English

Duncan Macfarlane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exercise physiology • health/fitness issues • physical activity of people in Hong Kong <p>Special Project 1: Comparison of VO2 data from two serial on-line metabolic gas analysis systems (in-series testing)</p> <p>Special Project 2: Comparison of VO2 data from two parallel on-line metabolic gas analysis systems (in-parallel testing)</p> <p>(ideal if two students work together on these two projects in increase the efficiency)</p>	2831 5247	djmac@hku.hk	English
Rich Masters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance anxiety and skill failure • psychology of coaching • skill acquisition <p>Special Project 1: The role of reputation in sport</p> <p>Special Project 2: The role of vision in implicit motor learning</p>	2831 5261	mastersr@hku.hk	English
Alison McManus	<p>Special Project 1: Validation of bio-electrical impedance with dual x-ray absorptiometry in 5-7 year olds.</p> <p>Special Project 2: Validation of the GeneActiv accelerometer for assessment of children's physical activity.</p> <p>Special Project 3: Body composition and lifestyle factors in 5-7 year old school children.</p>	2831 5250	alimac@hku.hk	English

Jamie Poolton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • skill learning • surgical skills training and expert performance • performance and skill failure under pressure <p>Special Project 1: Skilled performance under fatigue</p> <p>Special Project 2: Multi-tasking and self-focus in skill learning in surgery and sport</p>	2831 5262	jamiep@hku.hk	English
Cindy Sit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sport participation motivation in children and youth • disability issues relating to physical activity participation <p>Special Project 1: Eating and active behaviours in home and school settings among children with physical disabilities</p> <p>Special project 2: Physical activity and anti-social behaviours among secondary students</p>	2831 5260	sithp@hku.hk	Chinese/English
Robin Mellecker	<p>Special Project: Exploring the “Gateway Effect”: Does ‘Exergaming’ result in motor skill transfer?</p>	2831 5313	robmel@hku.hk	English
Frank Zhu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implicit and explicit motor learning • Surgical skill training • Neurophysiology of implicit and explicit processes <p>Special Project 1: Development of errorless and errorful learning paradigm in a laparoscopic tracking task</p>	2831 5308	ffzhu@hku.hk	Chinese/English

	<p>Special Project 2: Comparison of gaze behavior between implicit and explicit learners during a continuous tracking task</p> <p>Special Project 3: Implicit learning of a continuous tracking skill in healthy children or children with disabilities</p> <p>Special Project 4: How cortical activity and blinking change within trial during a continuous tracking task?</p>			
Andus Wong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech motor learning • Implicit motor learning of speech • Reinvestment in speaking / voicing <p>Special Project 1: Development of a reinvestment scale for speech</p> <p>Special Project 2: Applying the principles of implicit motor learning to the acquisition of novel speech tasks</p>	2831 5312	draw@hku.hk	Chinese/English

3 THE ROLE OF THE DISSERTATION SUPERVISOR

The relationship between a student and the dissertation supervisor is a very individual one. For most staff the role of supervision is that of a helping resource, responding to the initiatives of the student. Supervisors respond fully to all reasonable requests for advice, assistance and monitoring, and it is expected that the student will be asked to account for his/her progress on a regular basis.

Sometimes the student feels comfortable with his or her own ideas and sense of progress and wants little if any supervisory help at all. This may be appropriate in some cases, but more often is a source of potential danger. The value of the process of appraisal, discussion and interaction is implicit in the requirement that each student must have a supervisor, and you fail to take advantage of the system if you sit in a corner and write by yourself. You may also get a rude shock if the supervisor reacts negatively to your carefully nurtured project which they first see two weeks before submission date!

A programme of meetings should be scheduled during the entire period of your dissertation. You are encouraged to use all meetings with supervisors to discuss specific stages in the preparation of the project e.g. proposed topic, literature reviewing, methods etc. Some supervisors may wish to keep a formal log of meetings, however, in all cases, please follow the procedures arranged by your supervisor.

In the initial months you must agree upon the topic, approach and methodology. See your supervisor regularly, since regular comments and opinions of your supervisor can indicate a great deal about the likely acceptability of your dissertation when it is finally presented. Students normally present the supervisor with a final draft for comment prior to submission.

4 DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

A good dissertation has a clear focus, an interesting perhaps even new approach, and is executed in a logical and convincing way. Therefore, it is worth expending much effort on:

- Specifying the prime focus which interests you;
- Considering various alternative or complementary ways of tackling the issue;

- Developing your ideas in a comprehensible way (i.e. comprehensible to someone other than you).

To help in this process we ask you to work with your supervisor to develop a research plan (proposal). It requires you to consider:

- The central question or hypotheses to be addressed;
- Why it's important; what has led up to it (evidence of understanding of the available literature);
- What methods seem appropriate or could be developed, as well as the design of the study;
- What conclusions might be drawn;

Students often find it annoying to prepare as comprehensive a document as this, but it will provide an ideal basis for a thorough and worthwhile discussion with your supervisor. It will also help you evaluate and refine your own ideas before you commit yourself to research, which otherwise you may subsequently regret. Students are expected to give every effort in Semester 1 to develop a very thorough proposal. This will lay the foundations of a good dissertation and prepare you for the first Poster session in early February. Proposals should be submitted to your supervisor and the academic office by November 28th, 2011.

An outline and checklist for the proposal is given in **Appendix 1**.

5 EQUIPMENT

Please check with your supervisor that any equipment you may need is available, and is available at the times you would like to use it. Please liaise with your supervisor about the borrowing rules and regulations of equipment and to find out availability.

6 WRITING-UP/ASSESSMENT

In the first instance, please refer to for the University guidelines on plagiarism:

<http://www.hku.hk/plagiarism/> You will be required to submit an electronic/softcopy of your final journal article to your supervisor that may be checked for plagiarism using Hong Kong Universities licenced "Turnitin software" (www.turnitin.com) – so DO NOT COPY!

You will be required to present FOUR components for your dissertation:

- **1. By 5pm on Monday November 28th 2011 submit a one-page outline of your proposed dissertation topic to your supervisor and the Academic Office (include: name, supervisor, proposed title of dissertation; brief background of the study – 1 short paragraph; brief justification on why this topic is important – 1 short paragraph; brief methods – 1 short paragraph; at least 5 key references. (See APPENDIX 2 for the Dissertation Proposal Proforma). Sign it and have your supervisor counter-sign it.**
- **2. A3 poster on Friday February 10th 2012 12:30pm (value 5%) –details in Section 7 below**
- **3. A1 poster on Friday April 27th 2012 4:30pm (value 15%) –details in Section 7 below**
- **4. Final journal article paper presentation by Friday May 25th 2012 3.00pm (value 80%) – including a copy of journal requirements – details below (you must also submit a full electronic/softcopy to your supervisor).**

Your dissertation will be prepared as an article for a leading journal in the discipline. To do this you must collect, analyze and interpret some empirical data (ie. data collected during an experiment/observation).

IT WILL NORMALLY ALWAYS CONTAIN: (1) AN INTRODUCTION THAT INCLUDES A SMALL REVIEW OF LITERATURE, (2) METHODS, (3) RESULTS (including appropriate statistical analysis), (4) DISCUSSION, (5) LIST OF REFERENCES, (6) copy of the Guidelines for Authors/Manuscript Preparations from the journal you have chosen.

You CANNOT simply do a large essay/review of the literature!

You must, in consultation with your supervisor, choose a leading journal in the discipline you are working. You must prepare your dissertation in accordance with the Guidelines for Authors/Manuscript Preparation Guidelines of that journal. Normally a journal article will be approximately 25-30 pages in length. A copy of the journal Guidelines for Authors/Manuscript Preparation Guidelines MUST be included.

COMMON PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

1. Dissertations should be typed/printed on one side of white A4 (210 x 297 mm) paper
2. Must include a **title page** using the format/example shown below.
3. Must include a **declaration** that is it the student's own work. See the format/example shown below.
4. A copy of the **journal Guidelines for Authors/Manuscript Preparation Guidelines** MUST be included.
5. Two hard copies of the final dissertation (with journal guideline attached) should be submitted to the **ACADEMIC OFFICE**. The softcopy must be submitted directly to your supervisor by the same date.

THE DISSERTATION MUST BE HANDED IN BY 3.00pm, Friday MAY 25th 2012
(and submit a full electronic/softcopy to your supervisor as well).

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE FOR THE DISSERTATION

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS APPLIED TO

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES FOR

HEALTH PROMOTION

IN HONG KONG

BY

MAK NGA LAI

A dissertation submitted in part requirement
for the degree of BSc(Exercise&Health)

The University of Hong Kong

May 2012

DECLARATION PAGE FOR THE DISSERTATION

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to The University of Hong Kong, or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

_____ (signature) _____ (date)

7 POSTER PRESENTATIONS

To help ensure to prepare well in advance and stay to your projected timeline, you are **REQUIRED** to also make **TWO** poster presentations – each will be graded:

No 1: On Feb 10th Friday at 12:30pm in the Active Health Clinic at Stanley Ho Sports Centre (in front of the Henry Fok Swimming Pool, Sandy Bay), you must present an “A3” sized poster on your planned research (approx. 12 inches high x 17 inches wide; ie. 300mm x 420mm). This must include

- Title; some explanation of the Rationale including Research Questions or Hypotheses you intend to address/answer/test; your planned Methods; your planned Statistical Analyses (with justification on why these statistics are appropriate); list of key References; **AND AT LEAST ONE** diagram/graph/figure on what “you expect” your major findings to look like if you major hypothesis is true.
- **Grade:** This will be worth 5% of your final grade and will be assessed by all staff present. But the main focus is to help your project as it is an important chance to gain valuable feedback on how your study could be improved.

No 2: On April 27th Friday at 4:30pm in the Active Health Clinic at Stanley Ho Sports Centre (in front of the Henry Fok Swimming Pool, Sandy Bay), you must present at least an

“A1-sized” poster – or equivalent size (approx. 2 feet high x 3 feet wide; ie. 600mm x 800mm) on your research project. This must include

- Title; Rationale including Research Questions or Hypotheses; Methods; Results including Statistical Analyses; Discussion and Conclusions; key References. If you have not completed your data collection by this date, then you must present an analysis of whatever data you have collected so far.

- **Grade:** This will be worth 15% of your final grade and will be judged by your supervisor and second marker.

8 BSc GRADE CRITERIA: Your submitted paper will be worth 80% of your final grade (other 20% = posters)

Guideline for Grading B.Sc.(Exercise&Health) Dissertation

Descriptions of Grades

GRADE “A”

- Overall, a very **impressive and excellent** piece of work. Equivalent to a distinction.
- Accurate, complete and brief abstract
- Topic of practical/theoretical importance, reasonably original, contribution to the field of knowledge
- Critically appraised, relevant and well organized literature review
- Sound conceptual framework
- Well designed and executed methodology
- Clear and appropriate analyses of data and interpretation
- Thorough discussion of data in light of the findings and review of literature
- Accurate, complete and self reflected conclusion
- Excellent presentation with appropriate referencing and few proofreading errors.

GRADE “B”

- Overall, a **good and commendable** piece of work
- Contains all the elements listed in GRADE A but to a lesser degree

GRADE “C”

- Overall, a **satisfactory** piece of work
- Shows some understanding of the research topic
- Literature review not critically appraised
- Presentation of conceptual framework needs further improvement
- Acceptable research methodology
- Reasonable effort
- Acceptable presentation of results and interpretation, but errors in facts and language

GRADE "D"

- Overall, a **bare pass**, does not justify an F
- Limited understanding of research topic
- Insufficient literature review
- Poor conceptual framework
- Weakness in methodology
- Poor presentation of results and interpretation
- Weakness in overall presentation, style and language

GRADE "F"

- Overall, a very **poor** piece of work. A **failure** grade
- Poor understanding of research topic
- Insufficient literature review
- Questionable/irrelevant conceptual framework
- Inappropriate methodology
- Poor or wrong presentation of results and interpretation
- Poor overall presentation
- Little effort and many errors of omission and co-mission

B.Sc.(Exercise&Health) Dissertation: Criteria for Assessment

Student: _____

Title: _____

List of Criteria	Comments
Abstract: Accurate; complete; brief	
Statement of Problem: clearly stated; well defined; reasonably original/ contribution to knowledge	
Literature Review: Sufficient; relevant; critically appraised; clearly organized; current	
Conceptual Framework: Appropriate to the problem; relevant	
Design and Methodology: Rigorous; appropriate; systematic; careful collection of data	
Results: Presentation - Clear and appropriate; Analysis/interpretation – Accurate, valid, appropriate	
Discussion/Implication: Discussion in light of present results and review of literature	
Conclusion: Accurate; critical self- appraisal; implications for further research and practice; limitation/delimitation of the study	
Reference (footnotes): Full; accurate; consistent	
Language/Style: Intelligible; proofread (grammar, spelling)	

Overall Impression:

First examiner: _____ Second examiner: _____ Final Grade: _____

9 DEFERRALS AND LATE SUBMISSION

Students should note that the deferral of submission for dissertations is used in exceptional circumstances only, such as serious illness, bereavement, major equipment failure, etc. Deferrals are not automatically granted and applications for deferrals must be fully substantiated (eg., including written support from a qualified doctor for deferrals based on medical grounds). Circumstances such as pressure of work, moving flats, local competitions, etc., are not acceptable grounds for deferral. Any student wishing to make an application for deferral of the dissertation should do so in writing to the Assistant Director (Teaching) at least ONE MONTH prior to the submission deadline. **Requests for deferral within one month of submission will normally be rejected unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Late submission of dissertation

The late submission of a dissertation will follow the same process as for other assignments (see flow diagram), i.e., normally a 10% penalty per day and a Fail grade awarded after 5 days.

Please see the procedure and deferral request form on the two following pages.

Late/Deferral procedures

Application to defer assignment deadline

Students are required to (i) make application on the appropriate form prior to the deadline (available at Academic Office or downloaded from the IHP website), (ii) attach medical certificate or other supporting documents

Submit request to Module Lecturer

Lecturer considers if one of the following circumstances apply:

- 1) appropriate medical reasons
- 2) childbirth
- 3) marriage
- 4) death in family
- 5) unexpected personal crisis
- 6) unexpected work-related crisis (P/T students only) – a workload crisis for F/T students is **not** acceptable grounds
- 7) National or International-level competition
- 8) similarly serious reasons considered acceptable by the lecturer/AD (Teaching)

YES

NO

- 1) Lecturer approves application
- 2) Informs the IHP Academic Office, and the Office will inform the student and all parties concerned.
- 3) All parties should keep signed hard copies of applications for deferment and the approval /non-approval.

- 1) Lecturer does not approve application
- 2) Informs the IHP Academic Office, and Office will inform the student and all parties concerned.
- 3) All parties should keep signed hard copies of applications for deferment and the approval /non-approval.

Late submission of assignment without prior approval

1 to 5 calendar days late*

The IHP Office informs student a 10% penalty per day is deducted and advises students to refer to the Handbook on penalties and appeal procedures.

More than 5 calendar days late*

Academic Office informs student the assignment is normally failed and advises students to refer to the Handbook on penalties and appeal procedures.

Appeal

No Appeal

- 1) Student may submit a written appeal to the Assistant Director (Teaching) not later than **10 calendar days** before the Board of Examiners meeting (student may check with IHP Academic Office to find out the date of meetings);
- 2) Assistant Director will consider whether there are valid reasons for not submitting the assignment on time, and whether there are valid reasons for not making a prior application to defer the assignment deadline.

YES

NO

- 1) **No penalty** if there are valid reasons for not submitting the assignment on time and not seeking prior approval.
- 2) Assistant Director (Teaching) recommends grade to Academic Office for Board of Examiner's approval and Office will inform all parties concerned.

- 1) If there are valid reasons for not submitting the assignment on time, but there is no valid reason for not seeking prior approval, then **the appropriate 10% penalty per day is deducted.**
- 2) Assistant Director recommends grade to Academic Office for Board of Examiner's approval and Academic Office will inform all parties concerned.

- 1) **Penalty stands**
- 2) Assistant Director (Teaching) recommends grade to Academic Office for Board of Examiner's approval and Academic Office will inform all parties concerned.

* Late submission of assignment without prior approval:

- (i) Assignments should be handed directly to the Academic Office for immediate time-stamping.
- (ii) Assignment cannot be submitted "outside normal opening hours". Do NOT try to put these under the Office door and DO NOT leave at the IHP Front Desk.
- (iii) For assignments submitted by post, the post-marked date will be considered as the date of submission.
- (iv) Lecturer marks assignment on merit and makes appropriate grade deduction. The Assistant Director (Teaching) will handle appeal cases, if any.

REQUEST FOR LATE SUBMISSION/DEFERRAL OF ASSIGNMENT/DISSERTATION

**Institute of Human Performance
The University of Hong Kong**

Note: Applications for a coursework assignment deferral should reach your module tutor prior to the submission date. For dissertation deferrals, the application should reach the Assistant Director (Teaching) one month prior to the deadline.

Student Name: _____ Student Number: _____

E-mail address: _____ Mobile Phone: _____

BSc Year: 1 or 2 or 3 Semester: 1 or 2 Date: _____

Module title: _____ Module code: PBSL_____

Module Lecturer/Tutor: _____

Request Deferral for which assignment: _____

Current submission date: _____

Reason for deferral (give full details):

List any attached supporting documents: _____

Action: Received by _____ Date: _____

Supervisor's actions: (i) Deferral Approved/Not Approved (select)

(ii) New submission date: _____

(iii) Copy sent to Academic Office

IHP Academic Office: Student informed of result and new date.....

Assistant Director alerted to multiple deferrals.....

10 FINALLY

Although the dissertation is a major piece of work you do not have to be a superman/woman to complete it successfully. However, unlike an essay it cannot be completed in a quick burst of effort over a few days or weeks. This is a substantial piece of work and requires continual effort over a long time (the majority of Semester 2 is dedicated to this project). So the best strategy is to plan out your project, and stick to your plan by doing a consistent amount over the whole period of time available for its completion. If you are in difficulty at any point with the dissertation, especially if you seem to be getting nowhere, consult your supervisor in the first instance, or failing that, the Assistant Director (Teaching) – this is Dr Ali McManus.

APPENDIX 1 DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Suggested Format

1 Problem, hypotheses, or questions to be tackled.

- This should not be a trivial issue, or too broad an issue.
- It must provide a basis for analysis and for the drawing of sound conclusions, and be set in a worthwhile context, and using a worthwhile design.
- There may be several related problems that you are interested in, but the dissertation should focus on one.
- Why you are concerned with this topic, and how do you assess its relative importance. This will include an overview of the available literature. DO NOT cut corners – you must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of your chosen area.

2 Method

- Possible approach (es) to the problem.
- What method(s) are proposed – including sample selection and source of the sample?
- Are these (the methods?) familiar to you, or will you have to learn them?
- What analyses are likely?

3 Time and Resources

- Target completion date, with time in hand for revision?
- Special resources needed
e.g. technical support; equipment; special books/information; specialised software for analysis
- Any outside resources anticipated?
e.g. use of subjects from e.g., school/leisure service organisation?
- Timescale envisaged; hours needed to do the work?

4 Suggested Journal for write-up style

- Guidelines for Authors/Manuscript Preparation Guidelines for the identified journal should be downloaded

**APPENDIX 2 DISSERTATION PROPOSAL PROFORMA - submit by Monday
November 28th 2011**

Student Name:

Student Number:

Supervisors Name:

Proposed Title:

Background information:

Justification of study (why it is important/research gap):

Expected Methodology:

At least 5 key references:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Student signature:

Supervisor Signature: