

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 26 January 2018

Two Issues Concerning PGT Dissertations in the Adam Smith Business School

1. Scope of the 60 credit dissertation on the MBA

The Adam Smith Business School is currently in the process of revising the MBA with a view to its growth in size and reputation. The ASBS has asked for some feedback on what is permitted under the term 'Dissertation'. The information below has been provided for ASC's consideration before ASBS embarks on the formal course approval process.

The current PGT regulations state the following:

4. Programme Components

4.1 In order to qualify for an award in respect of the programmes specified in §11 and §12, a candidate must complete minimum credits¹ as follows:

- i) For the award of a Masters degree: 180 credits, which includes both taught courses and a 60 credit (or more) dissertation or other substantial independent work.

The ASBS has indicated that in other institutions MBA students might undertake a company project, business case study or something similar. A range of options is under consideration to make the MBA more attractive to the market, but these must be consistent with University regulations. The information below includes links to examples of practice elsewhere.

ASC is asked to consider whether the proposal below is consistent with the requirement for a 'dissertation or other substantial independent work' set out in the PGT regulations, and what features are required in a 'substantial independent work' in order to ensure appropriate academic rigour.

MGT5019P - MBA Dissertation (60 credits)

The final purpose of the changes proposed to the course is to enhance the students' experience, in terms of assuring their learning experience and developing skills expected from an MBA graduate. The MBA (Master in Business Administration), in addition to being a postgraduate teaching (PGT) programme, is characterised by its practical orientation on how courses link theoretical frameworks and day-to-day practice. Students already have managerial experience that may have been linked to previous academic (degree) work or through their professional practice. Most participants look at the MBA as a programme by means of which they can:

1. develop or strengthen managerial and/or entrepreneurial skills
2. enhance their professional network
3. learn concepts that they can apply into their professional career; both functional well-rounded approaches to problem solving
4. change his/her current professional path
5. accelerate their professional career.

¹ In compliance with the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework a minimum component of the total credit must be gained from **Masters level** courses (level M/SCQF level 11) as follows: 150 credits for a Masters Degree, 90 credits for a Postgraduate Diploma, 40 credits for a Postgraduate Certificate.

Consequently, a capstone closing learning experience, such as the dissertation, should be one that helps individuals realising how the programme has equipped her/him in accomplishing their professional and personal goals. Therefore, the course title and its description could better show the flexibility it has, as well as how demanding it is.

Course Title: Project (MBA) instead of Dissertation (MBA)

Justification:

1. Within the School at least one dissertation type course, MGT5359P, already has the title of Project (MSc Management with IF)
2. Reviewing MBA programmes, the following are titles given to these kind of capstone learning experiences at some of the Russell Group universities:
 - a. University of Birmingham – **Consultancy Project Dissertation** (60 credits)
<https://program-and-modules-handbook.bham.ac.uk/webhandbooks/WebHandbooks-control-servlet?Action=getModuleDetailsList&pgSubj=07&pgCrse=29376&searchTerm=002018>
 - b. University of Cambridge – **Individual Project** (credits N.A.)
<https://www.ibs.cam.ac.uk/aboutus/opportunities/student-projects/mba-individual-project-work-placement/> In addition to other Learning Milestone: [Cambridge Venture Project + Global Consulting Project + Concentration/Board Impact]
 - c. University of Cardiff – **Business Project** (30 credits)
www.cardiff.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/taught/courses/course/business-administration-mba
 - d. Durham University – **Strategic Business Project** (60 credits)
https://www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate/modules/module_description/?year=2017&module_code=BUSI4J660
 - e. The University of Edinburgh – **MBA Capstone Project** (40 credits)
www.drps.ed.ac.uk/17-18/dpt/cxcmse11255.htm
 - f. University of Manchester – **International Business Consultancy Project** (55 credits)
<https://www.mbs.ac.uk/study/mba/full-time/>
 - g. LSE – **Dissertation** (credits N.A.)
www.lse.ac.uk/resources/calendar/courseGuides/MG/2017_MG420.htm
3. Better size and align students' and programme expectations.

Short Description of the Course

Based on the information gathered (some illustrated through the links above), the following is the description proposed:

As a capstone course, it will show how a student integrates material covered in core and elective courses, and conducts an in-depth investigation of an issue that is applicable and relevant to business and/or management, theoretically underpinned and using appropriate methods to show rigour in its approach and development.

Summative Assessment Methods

Considering it is a PROJECT, comparable to the current case for the MGT5359P course, although a dissertation type it is proposed that the method of assessment be changed to **100% on the Report** rather than on Dissertation.

2. Proposed PGT programme with 40 credit dissertation

ASC is also asked to consider a proposal to introduce a one-year masters programme with a 40 credit project in place of the standard 60 credit dissertation.

Currently a two-year MRes Economics is offered by the ASBS. An exit route was approved by which students who had completed year 1 could leave with a masters award despite not having completed a 60 credit dissertation. At the time of approval it was envisaged that the number of students exiting would be small. The two-year programme was targeted at well qualified students who were expected to progress to a PhD. The ASBS now wishes to introduce the one-year programme as a stand-alone degree, retaining the 40 credit dissertation.

Professor Anna Bogomolnaia and Professor Robbie Paton have provided the information below, and Professor Bogomolnaia will attend the meeting.

Adam Smith Business School – Proposal for MSc in Quantitative Economics (Research)

The proposed “MSc in Quantitative Economics (Research)” is a 12 month, 180 credits programme, consisting of 140 credits of taught and 40 credits research project:

Macroeconomics - 40 credits (20 + 20)

Microeconomics - 40 credits (20 + 20)

Research Methods and Research Design - 40 credits (30 + 10)

Econometrics - 20 credits (Semester 2)

It is currently approved as an exit degree for 2 years MRes in Economics.

This MSc is designed and delivered for students wishing to follow a highly technical and advanced programme of study; one that explores the foundations and future of Economics in a highly quantitative manner.

The in-depth mathematical treatment of economics as taught on this programme is intended for both those with a strong quantitative background (in mathematics, statistics, or physics or engineering) but limited exposure to economic ideas, as well as for those with Economics background, who have sufficient preliminary quantitative training, but are interested to bring it up to the technical standards of the current state of art of Economics research.

Thus, the programme includes extensive training in qualitative research methods (Mathematics, Statistics, and Econometrics), as well as rigorous mathematical treatment of the core areas of Economics (Micro- and Macro-economics), using a proofs-based approach.

Given the strong mathematical emphasis of the taught courses, on which the degree is based, these are weighted more highly than the normal MSc offering. The project is intended to be significantly more challenging technically, than a usual MSc Dissertation, however, it too is essentially a quantitative, if individual piece of work, based upon an exploration of a selected econometric approach. The design team, students and external examiners, given the significant guidance and support provided and the prior exposure to a rigorous research methods course, feel that a credit weighting of 40 credits is more appropriate.

Graduates of this programme would progress, if an academic career is intended, to the 2nd year of MRes in Economics at Glasgow and thereafter the doctoral programme. However, there is interest from the private/public sector for advanced exposure to highly technical and quantitative training, for example, employees, or prospective employees of, finance services

companies, economic consultancy firms and insurance companies, as well as those working within governmental agencies. By reconfiguring the degree this wider market may also be attracted to the programme.

Examples of existing (and well established) analogous programmes in UK are:

- LSE: MSc Econometrics and Mathematical Economics – with taught course only, no research project

www.lse.ac.uk/study-at-lse/Graduate/Degree-programmes-2018/MSc-Econometrics-and-Mathematical-Economics

- Cambridge: MPhil in Economic Research – where thesis counts for only 20% of the total number of credits

<https://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/directory/ececmpmer/study>

- Edinburgh: MSc in Economics – they are currently considering proposing two tracks, one of them being 140 credits of taught courses and 60 credits of independent work (“Moving the dissertation from a ‘by research’ model traditional in the UK, to a ‘taught’ model, popular in the US.”)