

DEPARTMENT OF MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
DISSERTATION HANDBOOK

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You may wish to print out this Handbook before you go on your year abroad.

INTRODUCTION

Dissertations can be offered on any subject that falls within the field of Middle Eastern Studies, subject to the availability of a supervisor. Many students find writing a dissertation to be one of the most challenging and rewarding parts of their course. It allows you to explore issues more widely or deeply than is possible within the supervision essay format and many excellent dissertations have been produced in the Department. For those planning to continue at postgraduate level, it also gives a sense of research possibilities, and is something that can be shown to prospective postgraduate supervisors, to prove you have what it takes to be a serious and independent scholar. More generally, it develops skills of collating, analysing and presenting a broad range of materials that may be useful in many contexts later in your career.

Work on the dissertation starts before the Year Abroad, during which you need to assemble relevant material and start to read on your chosen topic. The dissertation must be based on sources related to your language area, on an approved topic. It must be submitted at the beginning of the Easter Term of the year in which you sit your Part II examination (usually your fourth year). It is worth two papers—that means the Faculty places great weight on this project. It gives you a chance to display all the academic skills you have been acquiring over your four years as an undergraduate: language, research, critical thinking, style, creativity, confident self-expression, and breadth and depth of knowledge.

You are strongly advised to ensure that your project is compatible with your year abroad activity. Your opportunities to work on the dissertation will clearly be conditioned by your location and the time available to you.

This Handbook is divided into two sections. Section 1 provides information about the formal aspects of your dissertation and outlines what you are required to do and gives advice on matters which you may want to keep in mind while writing your dissertation. Section 2 is intended to give you an idea of what doing a dissertation is like—the view from the dissertation writer, as it were—and

provides a general outline of related issues such as conducting fieldwork or working in archives in the Middle East.

THE PART II COORDINATOR

The Part II Coordinator has responsibility for matters relating to the dissertation, so please contact them if you have any queries or problems concerning it. The contact details of the current Part II Coordinator are: Professor JE Montgomery jem33@cam.ac.uk.

SECTION ONE: THE FORMAL FRAMEWORK

THE DISSERTATION TIMETABLE

Second year

1. Late Lent Term

The Department organizes an information session to give students general advice on how to approach the dissertation: choice of topic, allocating a supervisor, planning your time, as well as practical guidance on presentation and submission. This session is compulsory. The date for current second years is: **6 March 2012 at 4pm in Room 7.**

The Department does not offer training in field research methods, but anthropologists in the Faculty will offer a half-day ethnography seminar for students in their second year before their year abroad.

2. By early Easter Term

You need to submit a provisional dissertation topic electronically, so that you can be assigned a supervisor by the Department. This must be done no later than **the Friday of the second week of Easter Full Term (4 May 2012)**. You should also inform your Director of Studies of your provisional topic by this date. You would be well advised to contact a potential supervisor before you submit the topic. This provisional topic is no more than an indication of your area of interest and any further thoughts you may have which help to clarify what you intend to do. It is not binding and you may change your topic during the Year Abroad, **after consultation with your supervisor**. You will be notified of your supervisor mid-way through the Easter Term.

3. Late Easter Term

Contact your supervisor and arrange one supervision before you go abroad. Make sure you have a preliminary research plan and reading list to get you started.

Third year

4. While abroad

Progress Reports are required on the dissertation by **the end of Michaelmas Term** and by **the end of Easter Term** (at the same time as the Year Abroad reports). You should submit these electronically to the Part II Coordinator and your supervisor. In addition, stay in touch with your supervisor by email during your year abroad, especially with research method queries.

5. By the time you return to Cambridge in October

You should at the very least have gathered and begun to organize the bulk of your primary research materials. Collect all the local language publications and other materials that you may need, such as novels, magazines and newspapers, local MA and PhD dissertations, etc.

Fourth year

6. The beginning of Michaelmas Term of your fourth year

Contact your supervisor as soon as possible. It is up to you and your supervisor to determine a schedule for completing a dissertation outline, chapter drafts, complete drafts, etc., and in particular at this stage to work towards the final title of the dissertation.

7. By the division of Michaelmas Term (9 November 2012)

You must submit your final dissertation title to the Faculty Office, signed by your DOS and supervisor, for approval by the Faculty Board. The title **cannot** be changed later, but a sub-title can be added and changed if necessary.

7. By the first Monday of Easter Term (23 April 2012)

You must submit the dissertation in electronic form as a pdf file and two hard copies to the Faculty Office **by close of business, 5 p.m.**

REQUIREMENTS

1. The research may be library-based, using literature or archival sources, for example, or may include field-work. The dissertation must be based significantly on research materials, written and/or oral, in the language or languages studied.

2. Plagiarism

You must ensure that you are familiar with the Faculty's guidelines on plagiarism and the Faculty's policy on the use of plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) reproduced in this Handbook.

3. Supervision

The maximum permissible amount of supervision is: **one** hour of supervision in the Easter Term of the second year, and **four** hours of the supervisor's time during your final year.

4. Progress Reports

These should contain:

1. A statement: give a brief description of the work you've done to date, including an overview of your current thinking on the topic. For the first report this should be not less than 200 words, and for the second not less than 400.
2. A list of the works you've read so far.
3. A list or account of the material you've collected.
4. Your bibliography, in its present form.

3. The Title

The title of the proposed dissertation has to have the formal approval of the Faculty Board. A special form is obtainable from the Faculty Office for the submission of the final title of the dissertation: the form has to be signed by your

supervisor. After the title has been approved, no change may be made to the formal title, although a subtitle may be added at a later stage.

4. Word limit

Your dissertation must be written in English. Quotations from primary sources must be in the original language, with an English translation if appropriate, and transliterated if it is relevant to the research to do so (such as in linguistic topics). Longer quotes can be included in an Appendix. Keep in mind, though, that the dissertation must be no more than 12,000 words, and that includes the Appendices.

The word count **includes**:

- Text
- Chapter and section headings
- Foot- and end-notes
- Appendices
- Image labels, captions for maps

The word count **excludes**:

- • Bibliography
- • Preliminary material: title page, table of contents
- • Illustrations and maps

Marks may be deducted if the dissertation is longer than the approved maximum length. Examiners are not obliged to read beyond 12,000 words. There is no minimum length, but a dissertation less than 5,000 words is unlikely to impress.

All appendices are to be included in the word count of dissertations. No extensions to the word limit will be granted under any circumstance and neither the Faculty Board, nor anyone else with any official say will enter into correspondence on this matter. Fitting your material and argument into the allotted length is an important part of the exercise. Believe it or not, you are likely to be confronted with word limits throughout your life.

The electronic submission of the dissertation may be used to ascertain the exact word count. If you are using a computer or word-processor to calculate word length, you should note that most computer programmes count as a 'word' anything with a space on either side of it. When typing, therefore, do not enter spaces between multiple initials in an author's name (e.g., J.A.W. Bennett), nor between numbers in line or page references (26-27).

7. Format

The dissertation must be typed in double-spacing on A4 size paper, single- or double-sided, with a left-hand margin at least one inch wide. For advice on binding, see the Dissertation style guide, point 17 below.

8. Summary

Each copy of the dissertation shall be accompanied by a summary (not bound into the main text, though it may be saved as part of the same pdf file) of not more than 300 words in English.

9. References and citations

The purpose of references and citations is primarily to direct the reader to the source of a factual statement or quotation. All citations should be properly and consistently referenced in accordance with a system used within the discipline to which the subject of your dissertation belongs. In-text referencing and citations and the Bibliography should follow the same system consistently throughout.

10. Bibliography

A bibliography is an alphabetical list of all the primary and secondary sources (they may be subdivided into separate lists), which have been used in the course of researching and writing the dissertation. It should contain only works cited or referred to in the dissertation.

11. Submission of Dissertations

You must submit the dissertation in electronic form as a pdf file and two hard

copies to the Faculty Office by the first Monday of Easter Full Term, and **by close of business, 5 p.m.**, accompanied by a signed statement that the dissertation is the candidate's own work and that it does not exceed the maximum length required.

Each hard copy of the dissertation must provide the following information on the front cover of your project:

- University of Cambridge
- Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
- Tripos Part II 2012
- Dissertation
- Title
- Candidate number
- Word count

The electronic submission should consist of a single pdf file. Use your candidate number and the word "Dissertation" as the file name.

Note: you must **not** include your name on any copy of your submitted dissertations.

Late Submission

Late submission of dissertations or of other written work is not allowed. In the case of acute medical problems or family emergencies which may cause problems for completion of the project, the student's DOS and College Tutor at the college must be informed so that they can raise the case with the Chairman of Examiners. Failure of computer equipment, for example, is not a valid excuse.

The Faculty examiners reserve the right either to refuse to accept late submissions or to impose a serious reduction of marks.

Extensions will not normally be granted, except for serious medical reasons.

Consequently, it is highly advisable that you **complete** your dissertation before you come back to Cambridge for the Easter Term.

13. Assessment

In assessing dissertations, examiners will take into account clear and cogent argument, informed, thorough and systematic treatment of the subject, critical acumen, and clear facility with the language of study. It will be read independently by two examiners, neither of whom will be the candidate's supervisor. It may also be read by the external examiner.

Class I and Class I - Characteristics*

The dissertation should demonstrate a good balance between primary sources, interpretive/critical material and originality of method and interpretation. In the best dissertations, substantial use of both primary sources and interpretive material in the target language will also be combined with a solid understanding of the English-language (or other) scholarship and a basic knowledge of research method/theory in the relevant academic discipline. The ability to move beyond a descriptive/analytical approach in order to give an original interpretation a grounding in a reasonable amount of primary and secondary material, and to write clearly and effectively with carefully attention paid to style and format in notes and bibliography, merit a Class 1. Dissertations which break new ground in identification and use of primary sources and/or bring into play fresh critical perspectives which question received interpretations of the topic and/or locate new directions for research may merit Class 1* Distinction.

Class II.1 – Characteristics

The dissertation combines primary sources, interpretive/critical material and a serious individual engagement with the topic. Confident use of primary sources in the target language, and some use of secondary material in that language, is combined with a good knowledge of English-language (and other) material, as well as a familiarity with the relevant academic discipline. The dissertation may rely mainly upon a descriptive/analytical approach to its topic. Or it may make use of methods/theories which fall somewhat short of expectations. It should be clearly organised and written, and show basic mastery of style and format in notes and bibliography.

Class II.2 – Characteristics

The dissertation makes use of a variety of primary and secondary sources. The amount of target-language material utilised may be limited, and the topic may be treated in a descriptive/analytical manner. Familiarity with English-language (and other) material may partially make up for lack of target-language sources, but lack of knowledge concerning the relevant academic discipline may limit the effectiveness of such material. Style and format of notes and bibliography lack careful treatment, and writing overall may seem less than confident and clear.

Class III – Characteristics

The dissertation has made some use of target-language primary sources, and may have used secondary sources. It may seem over-reliant on the use of English-language (and other) material or may instead give excessive attention to describing/analyzing target-language sources without interpretive balance. Writing may be somewhat careless or hurried, and style and format of notes and bibliography inconsistent or sloppy.

Fail – Characteristics

The dissertation falls short of minimal standards for use of target-language sources, reasonable use of secondary material of any kind, and fails to present a coherent individual argument concerning the topic. Writing, style and format show thorough lack of attention to care and coherence.

RETURN OF WORK SUBMITTED

One hard copy and one electronic copy of the Dissertation will be retained in the Faculty. The other hard copy will be available for collection from the Faculty once you have received your exam results.

SUPERVISION

You have what may seem like a long time to work on the dissertation, from the end of the Easter Term of your second year, throughout your Year Abroad, until the end of the Long Vacation before your final year. But it goes fast, and you have a lot to do. Obviously you should first embark on a programme of general reading and decide exactly what the subject, scope and approach of your dissertation will be. You should seek guidance on this from your supervisor before you leave Cambridge for your Year Abroad.

You will be able to correspond with your supervisor and your Director of Studies, usually by e-mail, during your Year Abroad. If you are intending to spend your year in a place where access to academic libraries could be difficult, you should ensure that you take copies (or scans or photocopies) of essential materials with you. Wherever you spend the Year Abroad, there should be no problem in maintaining contact with your supervisor during the Cambridge Terms.

The specific format of supervision is for negotiation between student and supervisor. It is your responsibility to take the initiative in making contact with your supervisor. Students should be aware that supervisors are not normally available in University vacations. If you have difficulty contacting your supervisor, please consult your Director of Studies or the Part II Co-ordinator for advice.

The project must be your own work, and the final content and formal wording of the project are your responsibility. Therefore supervisors are not allowed to comment on the final draft of a dissertation.

FACULTY PLAGIARISM POLICY AND TURNITIN

The information on plagiarism in the Undergraduate Handbook is reproduced here for your benefit. Make sure you understand what it means!

Plagiarism is 'the taking and using as one's own of the thoughts, writings or inventions of another' (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edition)

Plagiarism in work submitted for examinations (long essays and dissertations)

Copying out someone else's work without due indication and acknowledgement (quotation marks and footnotes or endnotes) is plagiarism. So is rewording someone else's work in order to present it as your own without acknowledging your intellectual debt. The golden rule is that 'examiners must be in no doubt as to which parts of the submitted work are your own original work and which are the rightful property of someone else' (See University-wide statement on plagiarism at

www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/students/statement.html).

Students who submit long essays or dissertations for examinations are required to sign a statement that the writings in question are their own work and that any use of the work of others is indicated by footnotes or endnotes and a bibliography. If a student has received significant help with the style or the detailed content of their work, the statement should acknowledge this and indicate the nature of the help received. Referencing conventions vary by discipline, but for the basic principles, please see

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/students/referencing>.

Supervisors are able to give advice. Often it is easiest to adopt the style of a leading journal in a particular field. Whatever system is adopted, it is important to apply it consistently.

Plagiarism in work submitted for formal assessment is regarded by the University as the use of 'unfair means' (i.e. cheating), and is treated with the utmost seriousness. Where examiners suspect plagiarism, the case will be

referred to the Senior Proctor and may then be brought before the University's Court of Discipline, which has the power to deprive culprits of membership of this University and to strip them of any degrees awarded by it. The Faculty may use Turnitin, a plagiarism detection software package, to investigate cases where plagiarism is suspected.

It would be inhuman to expect students to provide quotes and references in essays written during three-hour examinations. But in this case, too, students will impress examiners if they indicate the source of a particular argument, idea, or fact by reference to its author.

Plagiarism in coursework and study

Weekly essays and other assignments are meant to be your own work. The point of a degree in the humanities is that you learn to read, think and write for yourself. Deliberate plagiarism in your supervision work is therefore not only lying, but also missing the point. Supervisors who suspect a student of plagiarism are advised to take this matter up with the student concerned. If there is no improvement, they should report it to the Director of Studies, who may well regard this as 'neglect of studies' and take appropriate disciplinary action.

Unconscious plagiarism is a more common failing in coursework. It often arises from excessively full and faithful note-taking followed by an excessively faithful use of notes in writing essays. These are bad working habits. Notes should be a summary in your own words of an argument and of the evidence or reasoning used to support it. Essays should be written with reference to notes rather than by copying them out. Plagiarism can also creep in when, instead of taking notes, students mark texts or photocopies with highlighting pens and write their essays with close reference to such materials. Supervisors are often able to detect such plagiarism by the occurrence in essays of passages whose prose style is markedly more incisive and sophisticated than the student's usual work.

Downloading material direct from the Internet into essays also constitutes plagiarism. Internet material should be treated like any other primary or secondary source. You may wish to download material for your own use, but you should then read, question, and take notes from it as you would from any other source. Because Internet material is often not subject to any kind of editorial

control, it may be advisable to treat it with more than usual scepticism. When referring to material only available on the Internet, students should provide the URL and the date it was accessed. Only material that can reasonably be expected to have a stable URL should be used. The point of references is that someone can look up the source referred to and verify for his or herself whether it supports an argument or fact in the way suggested.

In weekly essays and similar assignments, the kind of precise footnotes required in long essays and dissertations are not compulsory (although you or your supervisor may choose to use them). However, when your essays discuss or depend upon a particular source or author or piece of research, you should indicate this in an appropriate phrase or parenthesis. Most supervisors like students to add to their essay a list of the books and articles used in writing it.

Plagiarism, research, and secondary literature

'Copy from one, it's plagiarism; copy from two, it's research' (Wilson Mizner, 1876- 1933). Not quite so simple, unfortunately (Mizner was a cheat and a con-man). An essay which simply reports the ideas and findings of other scholars is not transformed from 'plagiarism' into 'research' by exhaustive footnotes. Even if your assignment is to review the literature on a given topic, you should be 'adding value' through criticism and analysis.

Where material is cited word for word from primary or secondary sources, it must be placed in quotation marks and bibliographically referenced. When paraphrasing sentences, paragraphs, or a whole argument, this too must be referenced; often it is better to provide a direct quotation with a reference.

Common knowledge, the kind of thing which you will find in almost any textbook on a topic (e.g. 1066: the date of the Battle of Hastings), need not be referenced. But the distinctive views of particular authors should be properly credited, and any reasoning or evidence especially important to an argument should be properly referenced or credited (in a fashion appropriate to the kind of exercise you are writing) when it is derived from someone else's work or represents the fruit of someone else's research or reflection.

For good guidance on how best to paraphrase an argument, please see:

<http://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/part2/plagiarism.pdf>

Further advice on plagiarism and how to avoid it can be found at this website:

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/>

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/students/statement.html>

Finally, don't panic. The point of this advice is not to plunge you into a frenzy of worry over whether your hard work is plagiarism. It is rather to inculcate good working practices.

This statement of policy is based on a statement originally produced in the Faculty of Divinity.

If you have any questions, please contact:

The Faculty Administrator Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Telephone: 01223 335107, Email: administrator@ames.cam.ac.uk

Student information and consent form for the use of Turnitin UK text-matching software in 2011-12 in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Introduction

The University subscribes to Turnitin UK software which is widely used in UK universities and matches text in work submitted to the software to that in a large database of online sources. This document explains how Turnitin UK will be used by the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and explains the implications of submitting your work to the software.

You are asked to read the information thoroughly and then sign the attached declaration to show that you consent to your work being submitted to Turnitin UK as described in this document. Without your written consent the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies cannot submit your work to the software. You are reminded that Turnitin is only one method of checking the originality of your work. Examiners may initiate the standard investigative procedures if they have unresolved queries about the originality of your work, regardless of whether Turnitin has been used or whether it has substantiated any concerns. The University Advocate may decide to prosecute a student suspected of plagiarism even where that student has not consented to the use of Turnitin. In such circumstances the student may be specifically asked by the Advocate to consent to submission to Turnitin and a failure to consent will be provided as part of the evidence against him or her.

○ Plagiarism and good academic practice: your responsibilities

You should ensure that you are familiar with the discipline-specific guidance about referencing conventions and good academic practice which is issued by the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and can be found at <http://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/faculty/students/plagiarism.html>. If, after reading the guidance, you have any outstanding queries you should seek clarification at the earliest opportunity from your Director of Studies or supervisor.

You can find a good deal of straightforward guidance about plagiarism and how to avoid it on page 50 and 51 of the Undergraduate Handbook http://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/ug_handbook_1112.pdf

You should also familiarise yourself with the statement on plagiarism which is appended to this document. This statement is posted on the University's plagiarism website www.cam.ac.uk/plagiarism which also features links to useful resources and guidance.

○ About Turnitin UK text-matching software

Who controls the service?

Turnitin UK is part of the JISC Plagiarism Advisory Service (JISCPAS). This University is the recognised Data Controller for the data held and processed by,

or on behalf of, the service. An American company, iParadigms, is the Data Processor.

How does Turnitin UK work?

Turnitin UK may detect direct plagiarism, paraphrasing and collusion as submitted work is compared with a vast database of online material and with a 'private' database of previous submissions. Therefore, submitting work to the database helps to protect it from future attempts to plagiarise it, and helps to maintain the integrity of the University's qualifications.

The software makes no judgement about whether a student has plagiarised, it simply shows the percentage of the submission that matches other sources and produces an originality report which highlights the text matches and, where possible, displays the matching text and its immediate context.

In many cases the software highlights correctly cited references or 'innocent' matches. Therefore, Examiners will carefully review all originality reports to determine whether the work does contain plagiarism.

○ **How will Turnitin UK be used in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies?**

Work submitted for assessment in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern may be processed by Turnitin if examiners have a concern that the work may contain extensive plagiarized material. Students should make an electronic submission in Word format.

○ **What will happen if matches are identified between my work and another source?**

If Turnitin UK detects matches between your work and another source, the Examiners will review the resulting originality report to judge whether the matches are innocent, or whether you have appropriately referenced these matches (if not, this may constitute plagiarism), and/or whether you have made excessive use of material from other sources (which may be poor academic practice).

The Examiners will mark your work purely on the basis of its academic merit. However, depending on the extent and context of the matches, your work may be referred to the Proctors for further investigation. In such cases the Turnitin UK originality report may be used as evidence. If you are found to have plagiarised the penalty may be severe and your degree may be withheld.

○ **Will Turnitin UK affect my intellectual property rights or copyright?**

The copyright and intellectual property rights of the submitted material remain wholly with the original owner (normally the student, with the exception of some collaborative or sponsored research projects). However, you are asked to permit Turnitin UK to:

- reproduce your work to assess it for originality;

- retain a copy of your work for comparison at a later date with future submissions.

- **Will my personal data be retained by Turnitin UK?**

Material submitted to Turnitin UK will be identified by your examination number, course details and institution: personal data will not be used.

- **What will happen if text submitted by another student matches that in my work?**

Matches to text submitted from other HE institutions

If a report generated by another institution identifies a match to your work the report will only show the extent of the match and the contact details of the University's Turnitin UK Administrator. If approached, the Turnitin UK Administrator will attempt to contact you about the matter. The contents of your work will not be revealed to a third party outside Cambridge without your permission.

Matches to text submitted from within the University

If a match is found to material submitted from within the University, the Examiners can obtain the full text without approaching you.

- **How do I apply for my work to be removed from Turnitin UK?**

Work submitted to Turnitin UK will be stored indefinitely on the Turnitin UK database unless you specifically request that it be removed. To maximise the effectiveness of the software it is hoped that such requests will be kept to a minimum. However, once examinations have been concluded, you may at any time contact the Undergraduate administrator to request that your work be removed.

- **Sources of further information and support**

The University's plagiarism website: www.cam.ac.uk/plagiarism
Turnitin UK's website: www.submit.ac.uk

PRESENTATION

Department of Middle Eastern Studies

Dissertation style guide

Layout

1. Margins should be 1 inch/ 2.5 cm all round on A4 paper, single- or double-sided.
2. Chapters should begin on a new page.
3. Paragraphs should be marked off – either through indentation or double line spacing. Quotations of more than three lines should normally be separated from the main text, indented on both sides.
4. Section headings must be clearly indicated and/or numbered in a consistent way.
5. Spacing should be double. Font should be no less than 10pt and no more than 12pt. When choosing a font and spacing, keep in mind that you do not want your examiners struggling to read your text.

A note about Fonts: Many Unicode font packages are available for you accurately to capture in Roman script the diacritics and other features specific to the languages you are working with. One commonly used font is 'Gentium' which is free to download:

http://scripts.sil.org/cms/scripts/page.php?site_id=nrsi&id=gentium

6. Pages must be consecutively numbered.
7. Annotations. Footnotes and endnotes are a common way to record references and the sources of citations. Remember that they are included in the word-count.

8. References and Citations: There are several main styles of referencing in common use, among them a traditional style and the streamlined 'Harvard' style of referencing. There are a number of handbooks that spell out how to use the different styles: for example, David Fisher and Terry Hanstock, *Citing References* (Blackwells/The Nottingham Trent University, 1998). Style guides in related journals, such as the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)*, or, for anthropology essays, the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, are also models you could use. Consult the relevant web sites of these journals for more information.

Further advice on referencing can be found on the following University web page:

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/students/referencing/index.html>

It is important that you settle, in consultation with your supervisor, on a consistent and clear style of referencing as early as possible. Failure to do so can lead to headaches once the final deadline approaches.

9. Bibliography

The bibliography should consist of references only. This means that work not cited in the text should not appear in the bibliography.

Generally, titles of books and journals are italicized. Titles of articles in journals, or chapters in books, or of short stories, poems, etc., are written with single inverted commas and not italicized.

Style guides in related journals, such as the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)*, or, for anthropology essays, the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, are models you could use. Consult the relevant web sites of these journals for more information.

Bear in mind that whatever system you choose, you must adhere to it consistently and rigorously.

10. For students incorporating participant-observation and/or interview material, an appendix of interviewees and interview dates can be helpful, but is not required. Keep in mind that ethical research standards should be adhered to, including preservation of informant anonymity. For more guidelines, see Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth, Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice: www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml. Dissertations based on field-work should include a brief section describing the research methods and sources. Articles published in major anthropology journals, such as *American Ethnologist*, *Cultural Anthropology*, or *JRAI* are good models for how to present your research.

11. Transliteration of material from non-English language sources should follow the system that is standard practice for that language.

12. Plagiarism. It is imperative that any and all quotations taken from the work of other people are fully acknowledged in the text and the work listed in the bibliography. It is equally important to acknowledge the provenance of ideas and material that you use and paraphrase in your dissertation. Failure to give proper acknowledgement is **plagiarism** -- presenting the ideas or work of another person as your own. Examples include students who copy short passages into their essays without references to indicate that the material is a quotation, essays and other material downloaded from the internet, and senior academics who fail to acknowledge the real source of important ideas and insights in their work. It may also involve the use of work obtained from other students.

The Department, Faculty and University view all kinds of plagiarism as a serious attack on standards of academic behaviour. Students necessarily work with the ideas of other people and must therefore ensure that they make proper use of references and citations. This will ensure that there is no danger that any of their work might be construed as a deliberate attempt to deceive the reader into believing that borrowed or copied ideas or passages are the original work of the student. Unmistakable evidence of plagiarism will be reported to the appropriate

disciplinary authorities in the University. For further guidance on how to avoid plagiarism, see the appropriate section of this Handbook and the University-wide statement on plagiarism at

www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/students/statement.html.

13. Before submission spell check your text then proofread a printed version of your dissertation –i.e. **not** on screen– paying close attention to spelling, typographical errors, repetitions and the like. It is also a good idea to ask someone else to check your work for errors and also for clarity of exposition.

14. All figures, tables, illustrations, etc. should be clearly numbered and listed in a table of contents.

15. Samples of previous dissertations are available in the FAMES library. They are for reference only and must not be removed. These may also provide useful examples of style and layout.

15. A simple plastic or stiff paper cover with suitable binding is satisfactory.

AVMG based in the Anatomy Department offer a binding service

<http://www.pdn.cam.ac.uk/groups/avmg/avmgabout.html>

The Graduate Union shop also has information on thesis binding

<http://www.gradunion.cam.ac.uk/facilities/shop/>

SECTION TWO: THE DISSERTATION PROCESS

These following notes written by three members of the teaching staff are intended to give you a sense of what may happen when you embark on a research project such as a dissertation, especially during your year abroad, and to help you get the most out of the experience.

The Dissertation Process

There is so such thing as a perfect or a standard dissertation. They are as varied as their authors and their topics – but not an exercise in some sort of free composition or an impressionistic jumble of observations. It is an important piece of independent research which is the core of your last year of study and in a real sense the highlight of your undergraduate studies. Note that your dissertation supervisor will **not** be involved in examining your dissertation.

1. Writing something this long is a step into the unknown. Any longer projects you may have written so far do not compare with the sustained level of attention and focus which a 12,000 word dissertation demands. So you have few if any experiences to draw on or to assess your progress by.
2. You must begin to think about your dissertation topic in the Lent Term of your second year, and let the Part II Coordinator know your area of interest by no later than the Friday of the second week of Easter Term in their second year, so you can be assigned a supervisor and have one supervision with them to get you started before you go abroad. Talk to your lecturers and DoS about potential topics, to get advice about the practicality of them and whether a supervisor would be available. It may be helpful to consult dissertations which have been produced in the past (which are available in the Faculty Library). It is necessary to be clear on the scale of the project and the research methodologies which might be employed, as well as understanding what defines a good dissertation.
3. You can change your topic while abroad – indeed you may find you need

to. But if you do, you should discuss it with your supervisor (by email) and make contact with another supervisor, as appropriate, **as soon as possible**.

4. Once your second year exams are over and during the summer you can begin to read around your subject and compile a preliminary bibliography. Not all sources will be available during your third year, and equally many things will be available during your Year Abroad which will not be available in the UK.
5. Do not abandon your dissertation during your Year Abroad. You can read through primary sources or collect data or conduct interviews when you are in the Middle East. Take notes as you read or compile as comprehensive a body of data as possible. Compile a complete and accurate bibliography of references. These will be invaluable resources in the months ahead. Remember that the less work you have to do on the dissertation during your fourth year, the easier it will make the year for you. Returning to Cambridge without much work done on the dissertation puts enormous pressure on the year, and often leads to a nightmare in terms of both workload and dissertation quality.
6. Write up the results of your research. It is a very common mistake to confuse reading with research. Research is the writing up and completion in written form of the work you have done. Without the writing you only have a list of books you have read, people you have interviewed etc.
7. Write much and often. Writing is not a natural exercise. It is an exercise similar to practising a musical instrument or playing a sport. You would not expect to be able to play a guitar just by picking it up for the first time. The same is true of academic writing. It needs to go through many drafts and much rewriting. So begin early and do it often. It is an invaluable transferable skill which will stand you in good stead in your life after university.
8. This stage of research is like the answer to the question, 'How long is a piece of string?'. You can never read too many books, for example, but be very selective about them, and about what parts of the books you read. Aim to spend a fair chunk of time on your dissertation when not learning

Arabic or Persian or Hebrew. You may find this disorienting — it is part of the experience of writing a dissertation. Towards the end of the dissertation-writing process – Lent Term of your fourth year – you need to reverse this and just do what is necessary. Don't be over-perfectionist about it, as you will have other things that need doing. But the more you do before that stage, the better the dissertation is likely to be.

9. When you come back to Cambridge, familiarise yourself with what a dissertation is by reading at least three past dissertations (they are kept in the Library), not necessarily on subjects you find interesting or on a similar topic to yours.
10. At the start of the academic year arrange to meet with your supervisor to discuss your progress to date and to test your theories, ideas and insights. In addition to the supervision before you go abroad, the Department recommends four during your fourth year.
11. As the dissertation is the result of your own work, your supervisor can only really advise, for example, on what does and does not work, on the viability of your approach, or on different approaches to take. It is not the supervisor's job to hold your hand, do the work for you, or proof read. You will make the most of their expertise and experience by turning up well prepared for supervisions. Don't expect your supervisor to respond immediately to your needs. If you want them to read something you've written, expect them to take at least a week.
12. Aim to have the first draft of your dissertation written by the beginning of Lent Term. This will allow time for the engaged feedback and response which research needs in order to be improved. In our experience, few dissertations written up at the last minute impress the examiners.
13. It is normal for young researchers to invest a lot of emotional energy in their work and to become too emotionally attached to what they have written - because of the amount of time you spend on it and the fact that you have chosen your own topic. Try not to be too upset if what you have written meets with less than adulation from your supervisor. Informed and constructive criticism is a vital component of the development of your work.

14. Presentation is important. You must provide accurate references to any work not by yourself which you use. Plagiarism can extend to the unacknowledged use of another person's ideas as well as their words. If in doubt err on the side of caution and be scrupulous. Your footnotes must be accurate and clear. Your bibliography must be presented in a manner which is consistent and clear.
15. There is also no excuse with modern software not to use a recognised transliteration system. For Arabic and Persian, for example, follow the guidelines of *The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, or use a specialised transliteration system for the field you are working in, or choose your own. Just remember to apply it consistently throughout the dissertation.
16. Your dissertation will be read independently by possibly three examiners, two from within our department and perhaps by the external examiner who will be an academic at another university. A mark is then agreed between all three examiners and then passed via the departmental examiners to the Faculty examiners. The mark you receive will therefore have been through a very rigorous process of checks and double-checks and is not an impressionistic decision arrived at arbitrarily. See the guidelines in this Handbook for the marking conventions as they are applied to dissertations.
17. Finally, try to enjoy the experience. You may never get another chance in your working life to devote the best part of two years to thinking about, looking into and writing on a subject of your own devising. The transferable skills of independent learning, self-motivation, analysis and synthesis of data, and composition and presentation will be invaluable for your life in the workplace.

(James Montgomery)

Dissertation Research in the Middle East

Doing research in the Middle East can be great fun but it is also often a challenge.

There are all kinds of resources you can use including national libraries and archives, mosque and madrasa libraries, private collections, book shops, museums and monuments, depending on what interests you. You might collect contemporary materials such as newspapers, magazines, school books or recent literature, or carry out more visual types of research which require photographing and making notes on historical buildings. We have even had students photograph and analyse posters to show the political messages they convey.

A letter from the Faculty stating that you are a registered student with a stamp on it is very useful for getting access to libraries or archives. Ask for one before you go on your Year Abroad. It is worth getting a few copies as some institutions will want to keep your letter, or a copy of it. Although you can try to make arrangements to visit libraries or archives ahead of your arrival, in general Middle Eastern institutions will not respond to you and it is necessary to go in person to make contact and get access.

Do not expect to find a convenient computer catalogue or a structured system for viewing materials when you arrive. Most institutions still have card catalogues, and access to the catalogue is not automatic, so you will be very dependent on the staff to help you. Like much else in the Middle East, the key to successful archival research is personal contact. Be prepared to visit a couple of times, talk to staff politely, sit and drink tea if necessary, explain your project to them, and look at some irrelevant stuff before you get access to what you are really looking for. The staff will be waiting to see if you are a serious researcher before bringing you valuable documents. There is no point being impatient - and if you strike up a good rapport with staff you may actually get access to unexpected treasures. It is also wise to present your project in a fairly simple non-controversial manner: it is much better to say you are interested in the reign of a particular sultan, for instance, than to say you are investigating opposition to that ruler! Also be aware that history is a live issue in many Middle Eastern countries: you may think that your medieval project has little resonance in the present but given the political climate in many countries, dissent is often expressed using historical analogies. Obviously this applies even more directly to projects of a contemporary nature.

Expect to work in the library or archive rather than quickly acquire copies of materials, if you can get copies at all. If you have a digital camera you may be able to take pictures of useful documents but make sure you ask if this is possible before doing it. Again, if you have a good relationship with staff and they want to help you, you are more likely to be able to acquire copies one way or another. I have on occasion been unexpectedly given photocopies of entire manuscripts having visited an archive several times and become known to the staff.

You may also make contact with individuals whose families have private libraries or family memoirs and this can be fantastic source of information for a dissertation. This is not something you can plan for but if you do make contact with members of eminent families, there is always the possibility that it could open up research opportunities. Many mosques and madrasas also have libraries but finding a custodian is not always easy. The materials in them are usually religious but may also include biographical dictionaries and other things, and it's a great experience in itself to explore these places. As they are attached to religious buildings, you should be appropriately dressed and women should have a headscarf with them in case they need it – always in Iran. In general, you should dress appropriately to enter libraries or archive too - if you dress smartly and discreetly you will be taken seriously. If you roll up in shorts, T-shirt and sandals you probably will not!

Another way of doing research is to decide on a particular set of materials - school books are quite popular - and simply go to book shops and buy relevant materials or get to know local people who can lend them to you or will allow you to photocopy them. Political pamphlets and books of other kinds from literature to history (written in Arabic or Persian, of course) can all form the research basis for a dissertation. It can be very illuminating to see how Syrian school books, for instance, deal with modern Middle Eastern history or how a contemporary Moroccan or Iranian historian views their country's history in comparison to histories written by Western academics. If you are collecting political materials, again, express your interest in as non-controversial way as you can.

If you find the idea of doing something more visual appealing, be aware that taking photographs can be considered suspect in the Middle East. Although photographing recognised 'monuments' is fine, be careful if the object you wish

to photograph is close to sensitive sites such as government buildings, presidential residences, barracks, bridges or railways. I once got arrested for photographing an attractive neo-Andalusi style building in Cairo because the President's palace was the other side of the road! It is also important to be aware that many people in the Middle East do not like being photographed. If you want to photograph people introduce yourself to them and ask their permission. If they refuse, respect that, but most people are quite accommodating if you talk with them first. Children love to be photographed but do often expect a sweet or a penny in return. The zoom facility on modern cameras makes it quite easy to 'steal' pictures without people realising but that doesn't show much integrity! In conclusion, there are myriad opportunities to do research of many different kinds in the Middle East. If you approach the subject carefully, respect local sensitivities, and demonstrate that you are a serious person, it should be a rewarding experience. Many previous students have carried out interesting and innovative research in many different countries and we hope that you will do the same.

(Amira K. Bennison)

Fieldwork and Interviewing

For those considering conducting fieldwork, see the film 'Fieldwork in the Himalayas' narrated by Professor Alan Macfarlane (<http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/DO/filmshow/film30.htm>). This film takes the viewer through the fieldwork endeavour, from leaving one's own country through to getting back to it after fieldwork.

Interviewing

An interview can be structured, with set questions, or semi-structured, which is more a free-ranging discussion around a particular topic. Interviews are best conducted once you know quite a bit about your subject and have a specific idea of what your research is about. Formulate goals for the interview. As you prepare for it, think about what you want to learn. Ask people for illustrating stories, events, concrete examples of what they're talking about. Ask follow-up,

or “probing” questions (such as: what do you mean? what’s an example of that? did that happen to you? do you know anyone who disagrees with you on that point? why?), which allow the person to offer more detail.

Planning the interview

Find people to interview who can intelligently speak to you about the significance of the specific topic at hand. Sometimes you want an official view of a particular topic—say, education from the perspective of a school principal. Then you might complement that perspective with interviews of teachers, students, and parents. It may be important to get a good sense of how the person you are interviewing defines themselves, what is the social category they are representing to you.

Arrange an interview time and location that gives you sufficient time to conduct a long-ish conversation, and will make the interviewee as at ease as possible. Tape-record or handwrite the results. Remember to ask permission before tape-recording, and assure them of the confidentiality of the material. Remember also to test your equipment before beginning, and label the date, time, location, subject of the interviews. Every hour of interview tape will take at least three, and probably more, hours to transcribe, so it can be more efficient to write out the conversation as it’s happening. That can distance you from the person you’re talking to, but may be allow them to speak more freely than if they know they’re being recorded.

Try not to impose or assume that concepts you use are understood in the same way by the people you are talking to. Try to glean what the concepts or social categories mean to the people you are talking to. People are often quite self-conscious of the fact that they are ‘representing’ something to you, whether it be their institution, their country, or their social position, and that may shape how they answer your questions. This is also useful data. They may also be uncomfortable with saying certain kinds of things, so think carefully about the significance of their answers, and how far you can take them at face value. Also avoid asking questions about sensitive subjects.

Ethics

It is extremely important to consider some basic principles that should guide how you conduct your research: honesty, confidentiality, impartiality, safety of persons and information.

You must make it clear to anyone you interview who you are, what the purpose of your research is, and how it will be used. You must also find out whether they would prefer to be named in the written report of the research or given a pseudonym, and offer the results of the research if they would like to read it. Most of all, you must be sure that the research does not harm or exploit those among whom the research is done.

There is a more detailed and specific account of ethnographic fieldwork and interviewing in the document 'Fieldwork and the Ethnographic Interview' in the Files section of the CamTools MES Year Abroad site.

(Lori Allen)