

# Dissertation Guide

From choosing your topic  
to successfully defending your dissertation

# INTRODUCTION

The Dissertation is a coronation of all academic efforts and knowledge you have accumulated so far. This paper is intended to be a valuable, solution-oriented, practical and ultimately publishable piece of work. Achieving this goal requires serious study, commitment to excellence and perseverance.

This Manual intends to inform you in detail about how to decide on your subject, how to do your research, timing and organizational processes such as coaching and advice. Each Dissertation coordinator will inform you about own additional rules and procedures.

In accordance with the methodology of organizing and conducting the diploma exam at Emanuel University of Oradea the license exam consists of 2 examinations:

- evaluation of fundamental and specialty knowledge
- presentation and defense of dissertation paper

The objectives of this Dissertation Guide are:

- to improve the coordination and mentoring work in regards to the dissertation paper
- to facilitate accurate writing and presentation of the dissertation paper
- to increase the quality of such papers
- to ensure a consistent evaluation of graduated defending their dissertation

In order to achieve these objectives the Dissertation Guide includes:

- guidelines and advices on formulating the research topic
- information regarding the structure of the paper
- writing principles and rules applied to such papers
- presentation guidelines and rules

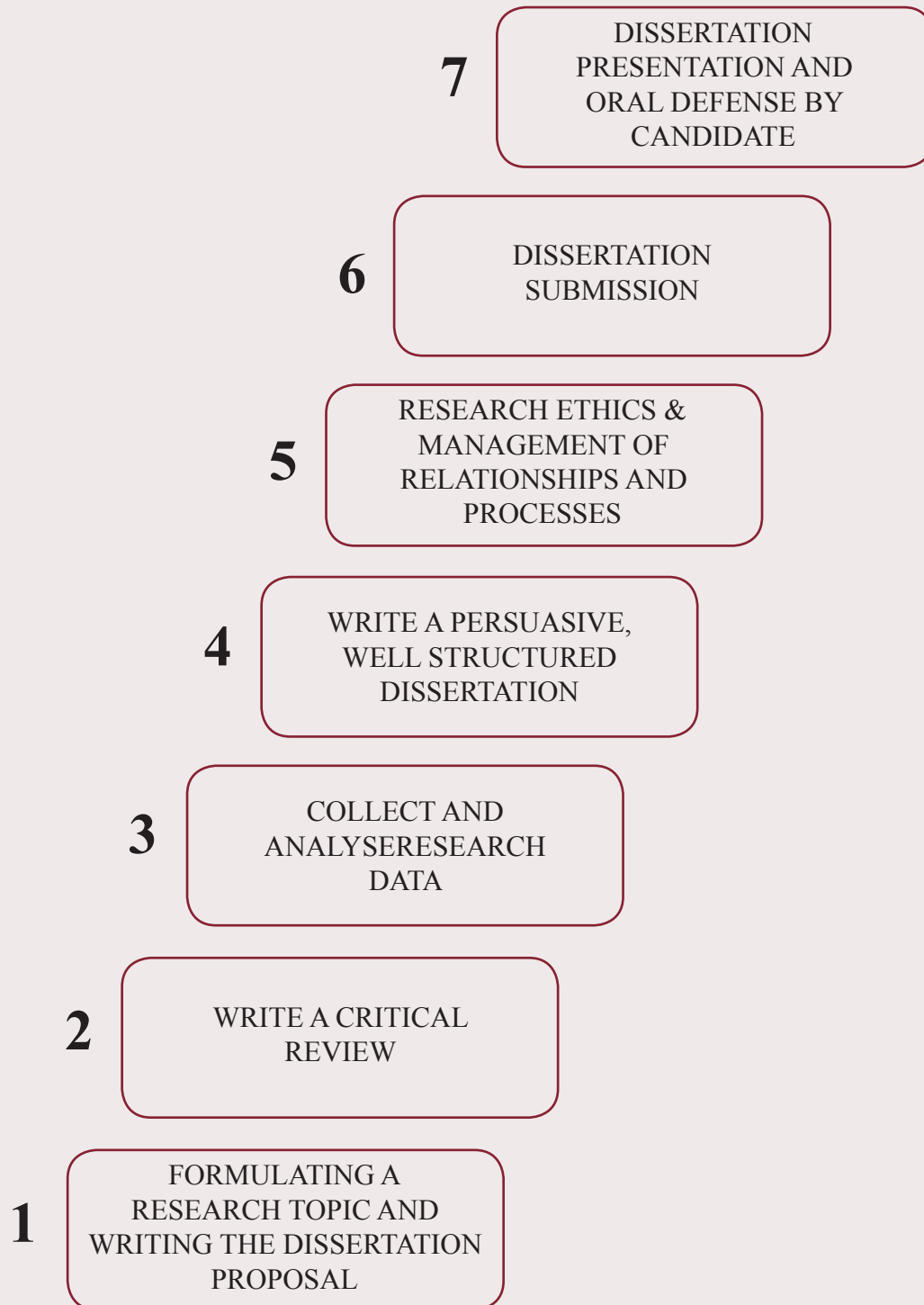
We wish you a fruitful time and a successful graduation.

Acknowledgement:

The present guide was inspired by the work of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill in the field of Business Research Methods and by the practice of Erasmus University.

## DISSERTATION PROCESS FLOW

The typical steps that you will go through in the process of developing your dissertation



# 1

## FORMULATING A RESEARCH TOPIC AND WRITING THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The starting point of the Dissertation is identifying and defining a topic in which you are interested and willing to put research effort. Whether you choose a subject that you are passionate about, one that you do not know a lot about or one that will help you get the job you envision or even to get paid for the research it is important to realize you will need to put quite a bit of effort into this. The process of formulating and clarifying the research topic is the most important part of the research project.

### A. IMPORTANT STEPS IN FORMULATING A TOPIC

1. Identifying the attributes of a good research topic
2. Generating ideas that help you select a suitable topic
3. Turning ideas into clear research questions and objectives

Let's look at some tips and techniques for these steps

#### 1. The attributes of a good research topic

Capability: is it feasible?	Appropriateness: is it worthwhile?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are you fascinated by the topic?</li><li>• Do you have the necessary research skills?</li><li>• Can you complete the project in the time available?</li><li>• Will the research still be current when you finish?</li><li>• Do you have sufficient financial and other resources?</li><li>• Will you be able to get access to data?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will the examining institute's standards be met?</li><li>• Will the proposed research provide fresh insights into the topic?</li><li>• Are the findings likely to be applicable?</li><li>• Does the research topic match your career goals?</li></ul>

*Source: Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, Research Methods for Business Students, 2009*

#### 2. Gathering research ideas - Useful Techniques

Rational thinking

Searching the literature

Brainstorming

Exploring past projects

Keeping an ideas notebook

Creative thinking

Scanning the media

Relevance Trees

Discussion



### 3. Turning ideas into clear research questions and objectives

In order to be able to turn your ideas into clear and valuable research questions and objectives:

- Start with a general focus question
- Use the ‘Russian Doll’ principle to reach the essence of the question
- Use questions that go beyond description and require analysis – ‘**why**’ questions

#### Examples of research ideas and their derived focus questions

Research idea	General focus research question
Advertising and share prices	How does the running of a TV advertising campaign designed to boost the image of a company affect its share price?
Job recruitment via the Internet	How effective is recruiting for new staff via the internet in comparison with traditional methods?

*Source: Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, Research Methods for Business Students, 2009*

#### Example of research ideas rephrased as research objectives

Research question	Research Objective
1. Why have organizations introduced team briefings?	1. To identify organization’s objectives for team briefing schemes
2. How can the effectiveness of team briefing schemes be measured?	2. To establish suitable effectiveness criteria for team briefing schemes
3. Has team briefing been effective?	3. To describe the extent to which the effectiveness criteria for team briefing have been met
4. How can the effectiveness of team briefing be explained?	4 a. To determine the factors associated with the effectiveness criteria for team briefing being met 4 b. To estimate whether those factors are more influential than other factors
5. Can the explanation be generalized?	5. To develop an explanatory theory that associates certain factors with the effectiveness of team briefing schemes

*Source: Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, Research Methods for Business Students, 2009*

## B. WRITING THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The Dissertation proposal serves as a starting point in the Dissertation process. The proposal gives an initial idea to the coach on what to expect from the student.

There are multiple reasons why you are required to write the research proposal but three of them are of greater importance:

- To organize your ideas
- To convince your coach
- To gain credibility with the organization you are studying or doing the research for

The format of the Dissertation proposal can be found at the end of this Manual (APPENDIX 1)

# 2

## WRITE A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review part of the Dissertation should describe a clear line of reasoning and argumentation in a logical manner. The content should be clear and consistent.

### THEORETICAL LINE OF REASONING

What kind of ideas exist about the chosen subject in the field of business? What have other researchers had to say about the subject? What theoretical notions or concept describe the researched subject?

There is no one correct structure for a critical review, although it is helpful to think of it as a funnel in which you start at a more general level prior to narrowing down to your specific research question(s) and objectives.

Literature sources can be divided into three categories: primary, secondary and tertiary. In reality, these categories often overlap. Students' use of these resources will depend on their research question(s) and objectives.

### PRACTICAL STEPS IN WRITING A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

**Follow the process described in the following diagram in order to experience a meaningful and fruitful literature review. This process will force you to think carefully about your research and justify why you are doing what you are doing**

**Research Questions and objectives** – by now you have defined and refined your research questions and objectives. Please review Step no. 1 A.3. to review the details on Research Questions and objectives

**Define parameters of your literature search** – subject area, business sector, geographical area, publication period, literature type (e.g. books, journals)

**Keywords** – those that define your subject. You can generate keywords by reading both articles by key authors and recent review articles in the area of your research.

*Source: Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, Research Methods for Business Students, 2009*

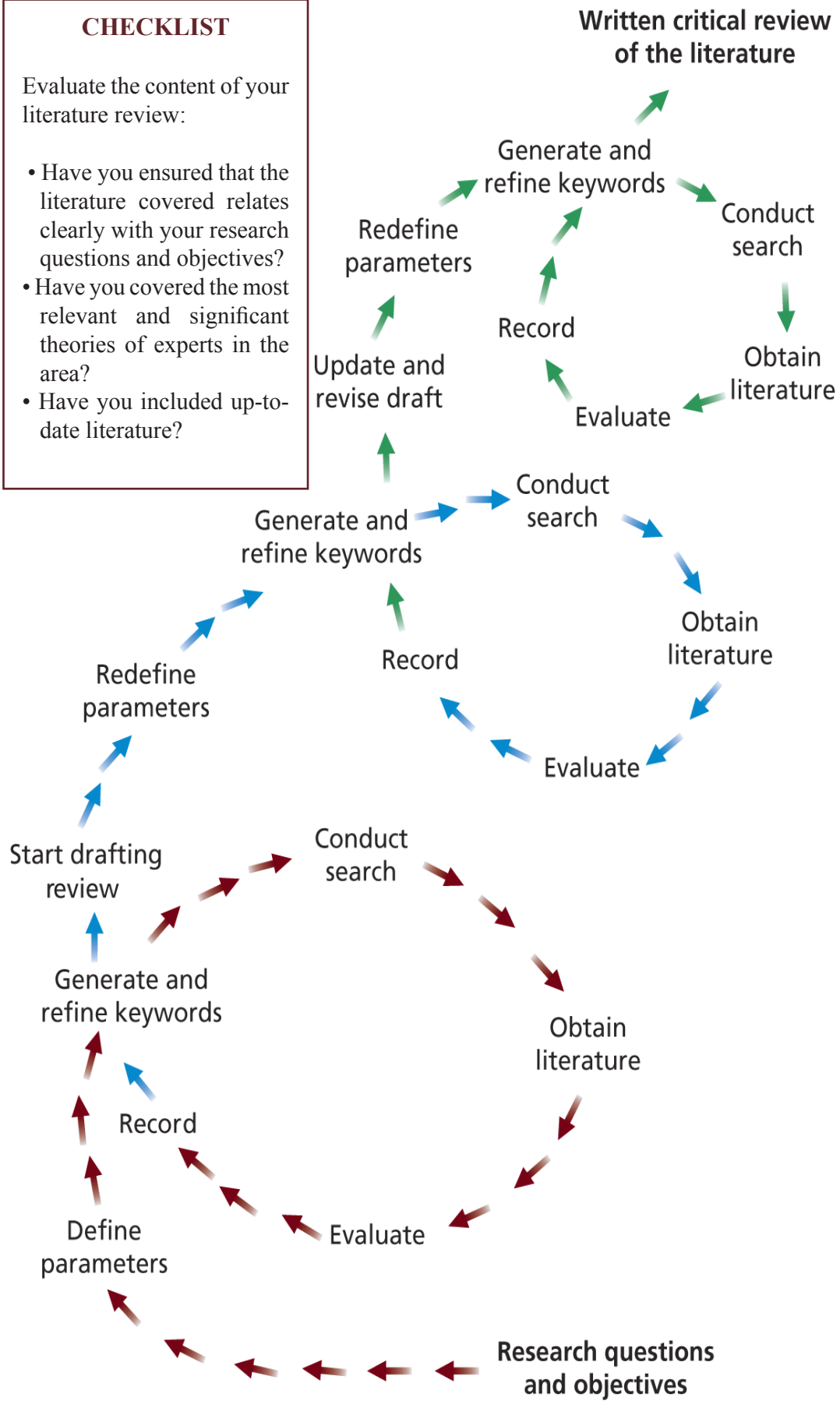
### TWO CRITICAL ADVICES:

- Adopt a critical perspective in your reading
- Care should be taken when writing the literature review not to plagiarize the work of others

## CHECKLIST

Evaluate the content of your literature review:

- Have you ensured that the literature covered relates clearly with your research questions and objectives?
- Have you covered the most relevant and significant theories of experts in the area?
- Have you included up-to-date literature?



# 3

## COLLECT AND ANALYSE RESEARCH DATA

Research methodology and methods should be clearly stated and followed in the Dissertation writing process.

This represents the practical and empirical part of your Dissertation and it can take different forms:

- Company analysis (the purpose of the analysis must be clearly stated, this part should not be regarded as a means of increasing the number of pages in the final Dissertation. Only aspects that are pertinent to the chosen subject should be studied and presented in this section)
- Business plan
- Financial analysis
- Field research on different topics

Depending on the form of the research (mentioned above) suitable data collection and analysis methods must be used.

After all data were collected and analyzed, findings must be interpreted. These findings form the basis for making recommendations.

### **Presentation and analysis of findings:**

- Describe what you found and what it means
- Use the literature review to interrogate and evaluate your research

### **Conclusions and recommendations:**

- **Conclusions** are made at the end of the Dissertation process and represent students' ideas and understanding of the processes and dynamics of the researched subject.
- **Recommendations** represent students' contribution to the studied subject and must take the form of practical steps that need to be taken to implement the strategic conclusions.

# 4

## WRITE A PERSUASIVE, WELL STRUCTURED DISSERTATION

The Dissertation must be a publishable piece of work, relevant for the economic and business environment of our days. It has to be a clear, persuasive and well-structured document written with style and strong arguments.

### **DISSERTATION LENGTH AND STRUCTURE**

The length of the dissertation paper is between 40 and 80 pages and will include the following elements structured in, in this order:

A. **Cover** - information that must appear on the cover of the dissertation will be provided by the Griffiths School of Management Secretaryship.

B. **Title page** - the information that must appear in the title page of the dissertation are presented in Appendix 2 in the document titled "Ghidul de tehnoredactare".



C. **Standard Statement** - dissertation will contain an affidavit (declaratio pe propria raspundere), dated and signed in original, showing that the work belongs to the student and has never been published somewhere else and is not plagiarized. The affidavit model will be provided by the Griffiths School of Management Secretaryship.

D. **Table of Contents** - dissertation will have a table containing the titles of all chapters accompanied by the page number that begins each chapter. [Note: it is important that the paper structure follows 3 relevant parts: theoretical part (clarification of the studied phenomenon – the literature review), the methodology (which methods were used) and the practice or research part] See an example of Table of content at the end of this document

E. **If the dissertation contains figures** (images, graphics) and / or tables they should be presented in the form of lists after the Tabel of Contents. The paper must have a separate list for figures and a separate list for tables, each of them presented on a separate page. These lists should include the title of figure/table and the page number where it is located. See an example of List of Figures and List of Tables at the end of this document.

F. **Introduction** - this will be a 1 page text which will contain the reasons for choosing the theme, the scientific relevance of the topic, novelty of the topic, the general objectives of the work, the assumptions of the work or questions, research strategy, methodology, data collection instruments and the tools to interpret the data, the structure of the paper (chapters) and work limitations (privacy, low response rates / interviews, lack of access to some bibliographical reference and so on ).

The Introduction will not be numbered as a chapter.

G. **Chapters** – chapters and sub chapters will be numbered using only Arabic number (1 – 1.1 – 1.1.1 etc.)

Each chapter will debut on a new page with a short abstract written in italic, which will shortly present the main ideas and objectives of the chapter.

The full body of each chapter will start on the page following the chapter abstract (on a new page).

G. **Conclusions** - this part of the dissertation will present the most important findings and recommendations of the paper, based on the literature review, personal opinion the results obtained during this work, as well as potential future research directions related to the subject .

The Conclusion section will be numbered as a chapter in Table of Content

H. **Annex** ( if applicable) - these will appear in a separate section and will not be numbered as chapters in Table of Contents. Annex will be numbered in ascending order (Annex 1, Appendix 2, etc.).

I. **Bibliography** - this is the last part of the paper and will contain a list of all sources of information used by student/ author in the paper (including Internet pages).

The Bibliography will not be numbered as a chapter in Table of Contents

# 5

## RESEARCH ETHICS, MANAGEMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS AND PROCESSES

As a graduating student you should bear in mind that the writing of this final paper is a learning process. During this process you are expected to show managerial skills and initiative in conducting your research and managing the relation with your mentor/coach. This process is in your hands and it is up to you to manage it successfully.

You are expected to show respect to the work of other and give credit to those whose ideas/ concept/ research you use in your paper. The ethical dimension also has to do with the quality of your work. You are expected to nothing less than your very best and to practice both integrity and excellence during this process

# 6

## DISSERTATION SUBMISSION

### **Submission to mentor**

By June 15 you will have to submit the final version of the Dissertation to your mentor in electronic format. This submission will be followed by the mentor's review and grading of your final Dissertation according to the grading system (see pages 11-12).

The submission will give your mentor enough time to read your final paper and make final suggestions and also will give you enough time to incorporate those suggestions in the final form of your dissertation.

### **Formal submission**

The dissertation paper will be submitted to Secretarship before the deadline (June 26, 16.00 ) in the following format:

- 2 printed copies of the document in hard cover. The printing will be 1-side only.
- 1 CD containing the electronic version of the dissertation in MS-Word.
- The mentor's referat with the proposed grade for the dissertation

The dissertation will be submitted to mentor before the formal submission.

# 7

## DISSERTATION PRESENTATION AND ORAL DEFENCE OF CANDIDATE

The Dissertation has to be orally defended by each graduating student. The oral defense is a short presentation of your research and its main conclusions in front of an evaluation committee made up of Griffiths School of Management faculty members and external guests. The evaluation committee will grade your performance starting from the grade your mentor has proposed for your dissertation.

## DISSERTATION TIME SCHEDULE

The complete Dissertation writing process takes in average approximately 6 months and requires a considerable energy, concentration and resources. In general, students need to take about three months on a primary responsibility basis for the actual paper theory and findings.

In order to make this process a fruitful and beneficial experience there are several milestones with specific deadlines that have to be met. Papers not complying with the general deadlines dates are subject to mark cuts of 0.5 points per missed deadline from the final grade. Additional milestones and deadlines can be set by your mentor also as per your discussions.

### DISSERTATION TIME SCHEDULE

STEP	ACTIVITY TO BE UNDERTAKEN	DEADLINE
1.	Dissertation Topic	November 4
2.	Validation of Dissertation Working Structure (cuprins)	December 9
3.	Progress Report*	March 31
4.	Dissertation Submission to Mentor	
5.	Dissertation Oral Defense (estimated date)**	June 26

\*The Progress Report requires presenting the theoretical part (literature review) of the dissertation in front of the Support Committee together with the plan for the research (practical) part.

\*\*Make sure you confirm with the Secretary the finale date for your official submission.

## COACHING AND ADVISE

Once you have determined your research subject you have to find the appropriate mentor for your paper. The Dissertation coordinators (coaches/ mentors) can help you with all questions related to the paper before, during and after the process of writing. S/he will also mark your paper based not only on the final results but based on the whole process.

The mark proposed by the coordinator (mentor) usually represents the upper limit for the grade you receive after the defense of the paper. The coach mark is greatly influenced by the quality/economic soundness of the ideas, meeting of deadlines, the student's management of the entire process.

The Dissertation Mentor is there to:

- Guide you in all activities related to your Dissertation
- Have regular contact/meetings to discuss progress
- Regularly read and assess your written documents in the context of your Dissertation
- Agree explicitly with you on the content of the guidance, including timely submissions of documents and feedback
- Encourage you to view research from different academic perspectives

The coach is not responsible to write your Dissertation. You have to take ownership of your work.

## **DISSERTATION MENTORS**

Each student is required to choose his mentor for the dissertation paper and comply with his/her requirements. during the preparation and presentation of the dissertation.

According to the field and subject you have chosen for your research you can approach the following Dissertation coordinators

<b>Name of Mentor</b>	<b>Field of Coaching for undergraduate students</b>
Sebastian Vaduva	International Business, Strategic Management, Organizational Behavior, Organizational Culture
Ioan Pop	Transdisciplinarity, Communication, Energy
Angela Vinter	Continental Accounting
Emanuel Tundrea	Managing of Information Systems
Ioan Fotea	Marketing, Marketing Research, Strategic Management, Production Management
Florin Filip	Financial analysis, Finance, Economics
Silvia Fotea	NGO management, SMEs Management, Social Entrepreneurship, Organizational Culture, Marketing
Sorin Dan	Administrație publică, Management public, Economie Mondială

<b>Guest Mentors</b>	<b>Field of Coaching for undergraduate students</b>
Raul Fantana	Intellectual property, Production, Law, Innovation, Management
Daniel Burtic	Media, NGO management
Ovidiu Micula	IT, Web, E-commerce
Bogdan Babalau Maghiar	Human resources
George Acsente	General management
Gabriel Cabau	Global business, International business

Name of Mentor	Field of Coaching for graduate students
Sebastian Vaduva	International Business, Strategic Management, Organizational Behavior, Organizational Culture
Ioan Pop	Transdisciplinarity, Communication, Energy
Angela Vinter	Continental Accounting
Emanuel Tundrea	Managing of Information Systems
Ioan Fotea	Marketing, Marketing Research, Strategic Management, Production Management
Florin Filip	Financial analysis, Finance, Economics
Sorin Dan	Administrație publică, Management public, Economie Mondială

Mentors and fields of study for *graduate students*

There are different academic titles that the mentors in our school have (e.g. Conf. univ. Dr.; Lector univ. Dr.; Assistant univ. Dr; etc.).

Make sure you use the correct academic title of your mentor when creating the first page and cover of your Dissertation. If you do not know the academic title of you mentor please check with Management secretary (sora Monika).



# DISSERTATION PRODUCTION PROCESS (DPP)

Each column in this diagram represents a dimension of performance in the Dissertation.

Formulating a research topic and writing the dissertation proposal	Write a critical review	Collect and analyse research data
1	2	3
<b>Excellent- 9-10</b>		
Well-balanced and innovative topic and paper conception	The literature review itself is a significant contribution. A critical position has been adopted. Student demonstrates a clear understanding of concepts	Methods for gathering and analysis are competently used and reflect methodological understanding
<b>Very Good-8-9</b>		
Clear and specific research question, paper design and research method	Literature is well described evaluated from new and complex perspective.	Methods of gathering and analyzing data are the most suitable and have been selected after a process of evaluating all methods available
<b>Good-7-8</b>		
Explicit ideas but there are some doubts about relation between questions, design and methods	Literature is evaluated using positions already available in literature. Just descriptive without a personal critical perspective	Methods of gathering and analyzing data are used competently and in accordance with the particularities of the chosen topic
<b>Competent pass-6-7</b>		
Identified interesting topic but too broad topic. The research questions do not comply with the general topic	Description of appropriate fields but no close evaluation of concepts. Broad approach	Methods of gathering and analyzing data do not present high potential
<b>Borderline Fail-5-6</b>		
Project focus, purpose and method are unclear	Inadequate or limited description of literature	Methods of gathering and analyzing data are inadequate for the topic, confusing and unsystematically used
<b>Fail -&gt;5</b>		
No proposal has been submitted by the due date and the student shows a lack of interest in the process	Student appears to have read little and understood less	No primary research of any value

Write a persuasive well structured dissertation	Research ethics and management of relationships and processes	Dissertation submission	The dissertation presentation and oral defence of candidate
4	5	6	7
Work of art written with style and strong arguments	Research paper and relationship process with the coach are well managed. All documents are timely submitted. Interest is demonstrated	All deadlines are respected	Superior mastery and power in defending the paper, its findings and conclusions
Clear, persuasive and well-structured document	The relationship with the coach is well-managed	All deadlines are respected	Answering questions confidently and well-prepared
Expressed well or technically correct (but not both). Clear structure, adequately argued	Student doesn't prove managerial skills in managing the relationship with his coach	25 % of the deadlines are not met	Answering questions but not always confident and well-prepared
Adequate expression but several mistakes. Argumentation is weak	The management of the process is poor and delays are frequent	50% of the deadlines are not met	Presentation is good but handling of questions proves a lack of understanding of the subject
Sentences often do not make sense. Lack of argument	Student is frequently late for meetings and submission of documents and doesn't follow the advices provided by the coach	75% of the deadlines are not met	Presentation is fairly poor
Scrappy presentation, illogical structure	Student behavior demonstrates lack of interest in the process writing his paper and disrespects coach's time	Non of the deadlines are met	Presentation demonstrates a lack of understanding and preparation

# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX 1- THE DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This proposal has to be presented to your mentor/coach together with your updated CV. This document represents the starting point in your discussions with your mentor and in developing the structure of the dissertation.

Fill in the following fields with the information you have at this time.

**1. Dissertation topic**

**2. Official mentor**

**3. The company you will study** (if applicable- in case of a research study please mention the target group you will study)

**4. Theory** - List the key theoretical concepts your study will be grounded in

**5. Research justification** – what is your motivation in studying this particular topic?

**6. Dissertation Questions/Objectives/Hypotheses** – what you want to achieve in this paper and what you want to have at the end of research (no more than three)

**7. Methodology** – how will you collect your data?

**8. Dissertation Plan – Time schedule** - Describe your project plan chronologically using the Gantt-Chart bellow (the fixed milestone have been filled in for your ease. Please add the additional tasks that you will need to do in your dissertation process and your proposed timing for them).

Activity	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Dissertation <b>proposal</b>									
Dissertation <b>structure</b>									
<i>Task</i>									
<i>Task</i>									
<b>Progress Report</b>									
<b>Defending</b> dissertation									

## **APENDIX 2 - DISSERTATION**

This guide is a recurring document and is found as a template Word electronic document that is kept up to date.

You will get an updated electronic copy from the secretary at the beginning of the academic year.



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