



# Media and Communications

## **MC499.1 DISSERTATION**

### **Guidelines 2016/17**

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**For students on the following MSc programmes:**

MSc Media and Communications

MSc Media and Communications (Research)

MSc Media and Communications (Governance)

MSc Media and Communications (Data and Society)

MSc Media, Communication and Development

MSc Politics and Communication

MSc Global Media and Communications (with Fudan)

MSc Global Media and Communications (with USC)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines provide important information and guidance on the practical procedures for the writing, supervision and submission of dissertations within the Department of Media and Communications. Please consult the *MSc Student Handbook* for further information regarding extensions, penalties for late submission, referencing and bibliographies, and assessment criteria.

You can find these guidelines, along with other sources of information relating to the dissertation, on the MC499 area of Moodle. You need to be signed up to MC499 on Moodle to receive updates from this module.

**Please do refer to the Dissertation Guide video on our MC499 Moodle page for further information and FAQs.** Topics covered include: What is a conceptual framework? What might a literature review look like? And: what should I include in my introduction and conclusion?

### 1.1 Who's Who

Staff in the Department of Media and Communications are responsible for aspects of the dissertation process as indicated below:

Role	Name	Responsibilities
<b>Dissertation Coordinator:</b>	<b>Dr Rafal Zaborowski</b> <a href="mailto:r.zaborowski@lse.ac.uk">r.zaborowski@lse.ac.uk</a>  Dr Zaborowski will be covering for Dr Alison Powell whilst she is on Sabbatical in Lent Term	Coordinates dissertation supervision and associated teaching events.
<b>Dissertation Supervisor:</b>	All teaching staff in the Department of Media and Communications supervise dissertations.	<b>See section 2.2 below</b> for information on the role of the Dissertation Supervisor.
<b>Dissertation Officers:</b>	Names of the Dissertation Officers will be posted on Moodle later in the year.	<b>See section 2.3 below</b> for information concerning the role of the Dissertation Officers.
<b>Programmes Manager – Assessment</b>	<b>Michael Etheridge</b> <a href="mailto:m.etheridge@lse.ac.uk">m.etheridge@lse.ac.uk</a>	Oversee administration related to dissertation supervision, submission and assessment.
<b>Programmes Manager – Teaching Delivery</b>	<b>Nicole Garnier</b> <a href="mailto:n.garnier@lse.ac.uk">n.garnier@lse.ac.uk</a>	

## 1.2 What's What

When reading your timetables please note:

MC499.1A	Lectures and Symposiums	Compulsory
MC499.1B	Group Supervisions	Compulsory
	Dissertation Skills Lectures	Optional
MC499.2B	Dissertation Skills Workshops	Optional

## 2. PROCEDURES AND ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

### 2.1 Aims and Objectives of the Dissertation

#### Aims

- To conduct an original investigation of an issue relevant to the content of your programme under the supervision of an academic member of staff.

#### Objectives

- To construct a detailed plan of a research project.
- To review relevant literature on the selected issue.
- To identify relevant research questions.
- To operationalise the research questions.
- (In the case of an empirical dissertation) to select and justify an appropriate research design in relation to an area of theory, to select and employ suitable methods/techniques to investigate the empirical questions, and to analyse relevant data.
- (In the case of a theoretical dissertation), to set out a coherent and focused argument that advances, clarifies and (where appropriate) reframes the theoretical questions.  
**[NB: See the advice on theoretical dissertations below and make sure you have approval from your supervisor if you are pursuing a theoretical dissertation.]**
- To write a dissertation covering a review of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature, the research questions, an explanation and justification of the research conducted, and a discussion of the findings in relation to the background literature.

## 2.2 The Dissertation Supervisor

Late in Michaelmas Term, following the submission of the dissertation topic/title, a supervisor will be allocated to each student. The supervisor will be allocated based on your research topic and available supervisor expertise, taking into account student preferences where practical.

From the beginning of Lent Term the Dissertation Supervisor will also take over the role of Academic Adviser for the remainder of the year.

Students can expect to see their supervisor during term time around four to six times overall in both individual and group sessions. The role of the supervisor is to advise on all aspects of the research project including:

- the topic area and relevant literature;
- the feasibility of the topic;
- the time scale of the research;
- the specification of the research questions;
- (in the case of an empirical dissertation) the design and adequacy of methods, sources of data and access to fields of observation, and the analysis and interpretation of results;
- (in the case of a theoretical dissertation) the focus of the argument, its relation to and implications for the theoretical literature on which it draws, including its implications for future empirical research;
- the structure and style of the dissertation.

### Notes:

- (i) Students are responsible for making initial contact with their supervisor by email, attaching their **first Dissertation Plan [MC499.1 Plan #1]**, and for attending all subsequent agreed meetings.
- (ii) Supervisors will not generally be available outside of term times.
- (iii) Supervisors will not read/comment upon final drafts of dissertations.

## 2.3 The Dissertation Officers

After formal supervision finishes at the end of Summer Term, the Dissertation Officers (PhD students in the latter stages of their research), will be available to advise students on the final stages of the analysis and writing up of their dissertations. The Dissertation Officers' names and availability will be posted on Moodle.

## 2.4 Key Dates

<b>MT9</b>	Dissertation Topic/Title Submission	<b>4pm Thursday 24th November 2016</b>
<b>MT11</b>	Supervisor allocation made public	<b>4pm Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016</b>
<b>LT1</b>	First Group Supervision	<b>See MC499 Timetable</b>
<b>LT3</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Dissertation Plan	<b>4pm, Thurs 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017</b>
<b>LT7</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Dissertation Symposium	<b>See MC499 Timetable</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Group Supervision	<b>See MC499 Timetable</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Dissertation Plan (Ethics Form, Literature Review Outline)	<b>4pm Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017</b>
<b>LT11</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Dissertation Symposium	<b>See MC499 Timetable</b>
<b>ST6</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Group Supervision	<b>See MC499 Timetable (provisional due to Exam Timetabling)</b>
<b><u>Final Submission Date</u></b>	<b>MSc Global Media and Communications – Hard copy and Moodle</b>	<b>4pm Mon 14th August 2017</b>
<b><u>Final Submission Date</u></b>	<b>All other students – Hard copy and Moodle</b>	<b>4pm Mon 21st August 2017</b>

**[i] The Dissertation Topic Selection Guidance**

Slides of staff research expertise will be available from MT6 on the MC499 Moodle page. Students should explore possible research topics with their Academic Adviser and with relevant members of staff by making appointments to discuss during feedback and consultation hours.

**[ii] MT9: Dissertation Topic/Title**

Students should submit their **proposed dissertation topic/title** electronically using the link provided in the MC499 Moodle area by **the date detailed in the key dates above**. Please read and follow the instructions carefully and ensure that you enter all the required details.

Dissertation supervisors will be allocated and announced by MT11 (**note that allocations of supervisors will be made, even if you have not yet submitted your title/topic, so it is very much in your interest to comply with the deadline**).

**[iii] LT1: 1<sup>st</sup> Group Supervision**

The first group supervision sessions take place in Week 1 of Lent Term. Each supervisor holds a two-hour introductory meeting for all her/his supervisees, giving students a chance to discuss, amongst other things, their first dissertation plans before formal submission. Times and venues for these group sessions will be published nearer the time.

**[iv] LT3: MC499.1 1<sup>st</sup> Dissertation Plan due Thursday of LT3.**

The first dissertation plan, to a standard format [see Appendix 1 and Moodle for template], should be emailed to the student's supervisor as a Word document. The plan comprises a summary of the proposed work, its rationale, objectives and likely methodology, and the time scale of the different components of the project, to be set out as indicated on the template:

1. Dissertation topic/title, date.
2. Key words: 2 on concepts, 2 on methods, 1 on the field of observation.
3. Short summary/abstract (100 words).
4. (a) Empirical dissertations: the central theoretical questions to be explored and their relation to relevant existing literature; the field and how to gain access, with contingency plan in case of failure.  
(b) Theoretical dissertations: the central theoretical questions to be explored and their relation to relevant existing literature. The original contribution of this dissertation to the theoretical area.
5. Time schedule.
6. Ethics Checklist: A hard copy signed by student and supervisor is kept in the department for our records.
7. Ethics Review Questionnaire: You only need to complete this if you have noted some ethical issues arising in your checklist and/or if your Academic Adviser/Dissertation Supervisor has suggested you do. You can liaise with them in regards to deadline but we suggest you get it completed as early as possible.

**Forms are available on the MC499 Moodle area for download and completion**

If they make appointments with their supervisors, students will receive **oral feedback** on this formative work in individual supervisory sessions.

**[v] LT7: 1<sup>st</sup> Dissertation Symposium  
2<sup>nd</sup> Group Supervision  
2<sup>nd</sup> Dissertation Plan (Literature Review Outline)**

The symposium will start with an introductory session for all students. In the same week, students will meet in small groups with their dissertation supervisor. It does not matter how far a student has



progressed with their ideas at this stage of their research. All students must attend. Times and rooms for each group meeting will be published nearer the date.

The second dissertation plan gives the opportunity for you to outline your proposed literature review and receive helpful **formative feedback** from your supervisor. Try to include as much detail on the substance of the literature review as you can in this assignment, to begin building your argument and helping to frame and justify your research question.

**[vi] LT11: 2<sup>nd</sup> Dissertation Symposium**

The second dissertation symposium features insights from previous MSc students and further framings and assistance for the home stretch of dissertation research.

**[vii] Start of ST: Progress and Strategic Planning Meeting**

In early June students should arrange an individual meeting with their supervisor to discuss progress on data collection, analysis and the structure of the dissertation.

**[ix] ST6 3<sup>rd</sup> Group Supervision**

The third group supervision should take place in ST3 (check timetables) with your supervisor.

**[x] FINAL SUBMISSION DATES**

<b>FINAL SUBMISSION DATE</b>	<b>MSc Global Media and Communications students</b>	<b>As above in Key Dates</b>
<b>FINAL SUBMISSION DATE</b>	<b>All other students</b>	<b>As above in Key Dates</b>

Submission of two hard copies of the dissertation to room TW2.6.01J. An electronic copy to be uploaded to Moodle by the same date. See section 5 of these guidelines for further details concerning submission.

Hard copies to reach TW2.6.01J and electronically via Moodle by 4pm

**Examples of Dissertations**

Students may find it helpful to browse the selection of dissertations from previous years, which can be found on the MC499 Moodle page and in the Electronic MSc Dissertation Series

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/mediaWorkingPapers/ElectronicMScDissertationSeries.aspx>

### 3. GUIDANCE NOTES ON THE WRITING OF THE DISSERTATION

As in other forms of assessment it is the written text that is evaluated. However much time and effort has gone into the research work, the assessment stands or falls on the quality of the dissertation. To this extent the structure and clarity of the dissertation is crucial. There is no single correct way to write a dissertation because each dissertation is unique and a body of research results is polysomic, inviting a variety of different interpretations. That said, there are ways and means of writing a good dissertation and the following guidance notes set out the broad structure and other considerations to be taken into account.

Most dissertations have an empirical focus and what follows generally assumes this. However, dissertations with a theoretical focus are also possible; here general guidelines are less useful, and students are strongly advised to discuss the structure of their dissertation and their time schedule with their supervisor; see also the separate section at the end of these notes.

**Dissertations can be anywhere between 10,000 and 12,000 words long. The minimum length of the dissertation, including footnotes, endnotes and abstracts but excluding bibliography, table of contents and appendices is 10,000 words. The maximum length of the dissertation, including footnotes/endnotes, but excluding bibliography, table of contents and appendices is 12,000 words.**

***NB:** The section word-lengths below are suggestions only, and assume a 10,000 word dissertation. **They can be adjusted pro rata for 12,000 word dissertations**, and supervisors can advise on the overall balance of individual dissertations.*

For purposes of fair, double blind marking procedures, you should **make sure that your name or contact details do not appear anywhere** in the dissertation (including in the Consent form and any acknowledgements).

#### 3.1 Empirical Dissertations

##### **Introduction (approx. 700 words)**

The introduction sets the scene. It raises the questions that inspired your research interest and sets them in context. Whether the research is inspired by a contemporary or historical social/political/cultural/media (etc) issue or by a problem raised in the literature, it should be set in its broader conceptual context, and the potential contribution of the proposed research explained.

##### **Theoretical Chapter including Statement of Research Question (approx. 3,300 words)**

First, the relevant research literature should be critically reviewed (**approx. 2,500 words**), leading to a specification of the research questions or hypotheses. Clearly it is not possible to cover all the literature on most topics; a particular skill is to determine what is the relevant literature, and what is not so relevant, constructing an argument throughout. Thus a judicious selection must be made, highlighting the key findings and controversies that provide the justification for the research that is conducted.

This should be followed by a statement of the conceptual framework in doing the research (**500 words**), that is, the main aspects of the theoretical approach that you have used to frame your research project.

Finally, this chapter should end with a clear, concise statement (**approximately 300 words**) of the objectives of the research. The rationale for the research should be explained and its potential contribution outlined. What is your research question and/or hypothesis, and how will researching it contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon and go beyond what is already known?

## **Research Design and Methodology (approx. 1,500 words)**

First, outline your research strategy (**approx. 1,000 words**) and present a justification for the particular approach selected to investigate the stated research questions. For media-related empirical projects the research design might include a mix of approaches: e.g. content or discourse analysis, questionnaires or qualitative interviewing, appraisal of documentary and other evidence. Whichever approach you follow, it should be justified. On what criteria was the method used considered to be appropriate, why were other approaches rejected? Were there unexpected issues or problems that arose? How were these fruitful for the research? One can think in terms of the indication of the method in the same way that medical interventions are more or less well indicated for different illnesses. (An aspirin is good for headaches but not so good for other ailments.)

Second, the particular methods and procedures adopted should be summarised (**approx. 500 words**). While research questions are normally of a general nature, in order to conduct empirical research these must be made concrete and amenable to empirical investigation from data that is readily available. There are two issues here:

### **(i) The sampling or selection of data**

Whether the design involves content analysis, discourse analysis, an experiment, a survey or a set of qualitative interviews, the issue of sampling needs to be discussed in detail. On what basis was the sample of texts or people or both selected and why? For surveys this involves sampling respondents from some population, while for qualitative interviewing the issue may be one of sampling significant currents of opinion or sampling an appropriate range of media users or producers. Where media or documentary material is being analysed, the procedure for selecting materials from a 'population' whose full extent may not be known should be described. In the context of an MSc dissertation it may be helpful to outline the ideal strategy that which one might employ without time constraints, and then to state how the actual method was selected and what limitations in terms of data quality this more feasible and practicable strategy entails. In qualitative work, it might be sensible to outline why some data was rejected and other data included in the sample.

### **(ii) Design of research tools**

Research tools refer to questionnaires, interview schedules, topic guides and thematic codes for analysis for interviews, and coding frames for content analysis. Whatever tool is used, it should be fully documented and any developmental/pilot work briefly reported. For a content analysis an inter-coder reliability test should be mentioned here.

In either case, the procedures adopted in applying these methods should be summarised. The procedure is the recipe for conducting the research, after all the ingredients are assembled. For example, how were the interviews conducted, were they recorded and later transcribed? How was the coding done? How was the analysis undertaken?

## **Results and Interpretation (approx. 4,000 words)**

Your dissertation needs fully to express the work that you have undertaken to produce it, and therefore this is a crucially important section. You should use these 4000 words to detail, explore and analyse your results and findings.

This means that you should devote sufficient space within it to a discussion of the results and findings of your empirical work, ensuring that you make it clear what you have found, what you have understood from your findings and how those findings relate to the hypotheses or questions that you set yourself in the earlier sections of the dissertation. Allow sufficient space, therefore, to explore your results fully.

**There are different ways of presenting quantitative and qualitative findings.**

## **Quantitative Research**

### *Results*

Report your main results here. These will follow the research questions as specified in a previous section of the dissertation and state whether the relevant hypotheses have been corroborated or not, how the research questions have been addressed, or a summary of the most significant results.

### *Discussion*

In the discussion you must review your observations in relation to your objectives. Explanations for unconfirmed hypotheses should be offered and reflective comments on the research design and methodology given. Finally the implications should be discussed and further research outlined.

## **Qualitative Research using Interviews**

In qualitative research the results and interpretation often go hand in hand, but in some cases it may be possible to offer results and discussion separately. Results may be based on the outcome of a manual analytic procedure or taken from the output of one of the computer packages for textual analysis.

**Most commonly with qualitative research the results and the interpretation are reported simultaneously and integrated with the discussion.** If so, it is advisable to move directly to the commonly occurring themes, again illustrating these with direct quotations from the transcripts. An explanation should be offered as to **how** the quotations were selected and the basis on which these are judged to be of importance. It is crucially important when presenting interview data to show an awareness of the kind of evidence the quotations form. Interview data needs to be analysed, not just presented.

**If results and interpretation are to be presented separately,** it may be useful to present the key findings from a set of interviews in an N by N tabular form. Here the topic guide issues would be the column headings, and in each row correspond to one interview, with cells of the table offering a short summary of what the interviewees said on that topic. There would then follow the identification of the commonly occurring themes relevant to the broader research questions, which would be developed further through quotations from the transcripts (with references back to the tables for clarification).

However the data and basic analysis are presented, there should follow a discussion which reviews the key findings and sets these in the context of both the research questions and the literature outlined in the introduction. Explanations for surprising findings should be offered and reflective comments on the research design and methodology given.

## **Conclusion (approx. 500 words)**

This should comprise a short statement highlighting the key insights and implications (theoretical, methodological, empirical) of the dissertation, with an outline of the possibilities for further research.

## **Abstract (approx. 300 words)**

Although the abstract is placed at the beginning of the dissertation it should be revised on various occasions and finalised as the last piece of the dissertation. The abstract will succinctly review the research questions, the design and methods and the key findings.

## References

All references in the text should be fully and consistently cited in alphabetical order. Consider using the “Endnote” bibliographic software available on the LSE network at an early stage in the dissertation work.

**See also** section 3.4 ‘Guidelines for Essay Writing’ in the *MSc Student Handbook 2015-16*, and the School’s online resources at: [http://www2.lse.ac.uk/library/training/citing\\_referencing.aspx](http://www2.lse.ac.uk/library/training/citing_referencing.aspx)

## Appendices

The appendices should include only supporting material, data, statistical tables or transcripts that are judged to be essential in the evaluation of the main text. Appendices do not have to include the ethics checklists, but dissertations should mention ethical approval in the methodology section. Appendices should include (anonymized) consent forms as part of the questionnaire or interview guide(s). Include enough material to illustrate to the assessors how data was collected and analysed: as an example, one full interview transcript, translated into English if necessary, is considered sufficient. For reasons of double blind marking, make sure that your name or contact details do not appear anywhere in your appendices!

It is generally not necessary to provide raw data if summary analysis has been provided in the body of the dissertation, but details of complex statistical procedures and relevant outputs, coding frames, code book, questionnaires and interview transcripts should be included. You can use the Summative MC4M1 Assignment Guidelines as a guideline for what types of appendices to include and should ask your supervisor if you are unsure about what should be in the appendices.

## 3.2 Theoretical Dissertations

The approach, content and organisation of theoretical dissertations vary greatly. **It is particularly important to agree the detailed structure of these dissertations with your supervisor.** The advice given above in section 3.1 on ‘introduction’, ‘statement of research question’, ‘conclusion’, ‘abstract’, ‘references’, and ‘appendices’ applies equally to theoretical dissertations. While theoretical dissertations might take various forms, we require that any theoretical dissertation is directed towards clarifying what are the most important directions for future empirical research. It is also possible and even advisable for a primarily theoretical dissertation to contain some original empirical evidence such as discourse analysis of texts or archival analysis of documentary materials. Additionally, evidence of the contribution of the dissertation to the chosen theoretical area needs to be highlighted succinctly in the conclusion. ‘After reading this dissertation, people will be enabled to think differently about...’

**Note:** The assessment criteria for both empirical and theoretical dissertations are the same, as outlined in section 4 below.

## 4. DISSERTATION ASSESSMENT

In general, assessment criteria for the dissertation are the same as for coursework [please refer to section 3.6 'Formative and Summative Assessment Criteria and Marks' of the *MSc Student Handbook 2016-17*]. Students should also note that examiners are looking for a number of qualities in a successful dissertation:

**Argumentation and understanding** would include the following:

- quality and breadth of literature review;
- the fit between your assessment of the literature and your choice of empirical research focus;
- the appropriateness of research design and strategy;
- selection, discussion and implementation of methods and techniques;
- data integration and data analysis;
- interpretation of results;
- identification of research gaps and shortcomings;
- discussion of further research.

**Analysis** would include the following:

- depth of interpretation;
- theoretical knowledge and sophistication;
- conceptual clarity
- critical appraisal;
- thoroughness of analysis;
- imaginativeness /flair/boldness.

**Organisation and presentation** would include the following:

- clarity of expression;
- a coherent and consistent structure (with appropriate chapters, titles and subtitles);
- satisfactory abstract;
- complete, correct and consistent referencing (see section 3.4 'Guidelines for Essay Writing' in the *MSc Student Handbook 2016-17*, and the School's online resources at: [http://www2.lse.ac.uk/library/training/citing\\_referencing.aspx](http://www2.lse.ac.uk/library/training/citing_referencing.aspx));
- satisfactory appendices (including, as appropriate, details of complex statistical procedures and relevant outputs, coding frames, code books, individual interviews and focus groups topic guide, questionnaires, statistical tables and transcripts judged to be essential in the evaluation of the main text, including a full transcript of one sample interview (translated into English if necessary), with other transcripts to be available on request).

### Plagiarism

Students should refer to section 3.5 'Avoiding Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty' of the *MSc Student Handbook 2016/17*, **and be aware that plagiarism is a serious offence with serious consequences for those found guilty of academic misconduct**. Self-plagiarism, understood as copying from previously submitted academic or professional work without substantive changes or development, is a form of plagiarism. Students should also note that unpublished MSc dissertations of former students and/or PhD theses referred to in the text of their dissertation must be included in the bibliography, in the same way as published materials. In general it is best to avoid citing one's previously submitted academic work as the expectation is that this work will be built upon to produce the dissertation.

### Editorial assistance

Students should refer to section 3.5 in the *MSc Student Handbook 2016/17*.

## 4.1 Dissertation Prizes

There are two Dissertation Prizes which may be awarded to MSc students:

### **Best Dissertation Prize**

Criteria: to be awarded to the candidate receiving the highest distinction-level mark (70%+) in module MC499 Dissertation, regardless of marks in other modules and overall degree classification.

### **Silverstone Dissertation Prize**

Criteria: to be awarded (regardless of marks in other modules and overall degree classification) to the candidate receiving a distinction-level mark (70%+) in their module MC499.1 Dissertation, which continues the work of the late Professor Roger Silverstone. **This dissertation should address the key theme of Roger Silverstone's intellectual legacy, media and morality, and should engage with an ethical aspect of mediation, in its production, representation or consumption dimensions, in order to show how the ethical perspective may inform the practices of journalists, audiences and/or media users.**

*The Department reserves the right not to award the prize in any given year where there is no suitable candidate (e.g. where there is no candidate with a mark of 70%+ in the dissertation).*

## 5. DISSERTATION SUBMISSION

### 5.1 Submission Deadline

The deadline for submission for MSc Global Media and Communications students and all other students can be found in the key dates section above.

**Hard copies must be delivered to TW2.6.01J by 4pm on the deadline and electronic copies via Moodle by 4pm on the deadline.**

### 5.2 Extensions/Penalties for Late Submission

As for all assessed coursework, requests for extensions must be made using the online form: [http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/study/Handbook/Coursework\\_Extension\\_Requests.aspx](http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/study/Handbook/Coursework_Extension_Requests.aspx) giving full details of the circumstances leading to the request. Note that medical or other evidence will be required if an extension is granted. Please see section 3.3 and 3.5 (v) of the *MSc Student Handbook 2016/17* for full information concerning penalties for late submission and extensions.

### 5.3 Length

**Dissertations submitted for MC499 should be not less than 10,000 words and not more than 12,000 words in length.** *In calculating the length of the dissertation, endnotes, footnotes and abstracts are included, but tables of contents, bibliographies and appendices which provide supporting information only are excluded. Acknowledgments are not included in the final word count.*

**Dissertations which are under 10,000 words or over 12,000 words may attract a penalty.** The word count must be recorded on the coversheet.

### 5.4 Format/Style

- **Dissertations should be type-written** using a font size 12 or larger, 1.5 or 2-line spacing, must include a full bibliography and an abstract, and should be printed double- or single-sided on A4, or American letter-size, paper. Apart from this, style and format are up to individual students.
- **Front page:** the following information should appear on the front page of your dissertation:
  - Title
  - Candidate number
  - Supervisor's name
  - Sentence along the lines of: "Dissertation (MC499) submitted to the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics, August 2017, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc in ....."
- **Binding:** How you bind your dissertation is up to you – there are no formal requirements; most students prefer to use spiral binding with plastic covers. This can be done at the Library or Copy Shop relatively cheaply.



## 5.5 Submission Instructions

Submission of the dissertation for MC499 consists of 2 hard copies and an electronic copy uploaded within the MC499 Moodle area.

Submission deadlines can be found in the above Key Dates section.

**Dissertations are only considered to be on time when both the electronic and paper versions are submitted by the deadline.**

### Submission of hard copy

**2 hard copies of the dissertation should be submitted to Michael Etheridge in the Administration Office. Do not submit electronic media (ie, DVDs or disks) with the hard copy.**

- **Accompanying forms:** each copy of the dissertation must contain a completed coversheet/plagiarism declaration form provided by the department. This form may be either slipped inside the front cover of the dissertation or bound into your document, but must be the first visible page of the document.
- **Candidate numbers/names:** Your name must not appear either on the coversheet, or anywhere in the dissertation itself. Please use your **5-digit examination candidate number** rather than your LSE ID number to identify your work.
- **Submission by email is not permitted.**

### Submission of electronic copy

- Instructions for uploading and submitting coursework on Moodle are provided by the LSE Centre for Learning Technology: <http://clt.lse.ac.uk/Help/student-moodle-assign.php>
- To ensure anonymous marking, students *must* use *only* their candidate number, the course code and the year in the name of the file, in the following format: (e.g. for a student whose candidate number is **12345**) file name: **12345\_MC499\_2017**
- You must adhere strictly to this naming convention and must not use your name, the name of your course, or the title of your dissertation.

### Postal submission

You may post hard copies of your dissertation to us **but note that they must arrive at LSE on or before the deadline**; being postmarked on the deadline is not sufficient.

You should address the package to:

**Michael Etheridge  
Department of Media and Communications  
TW2.6.01J  
LSE, Clements Inn  
London  
WC2A 2AE  
UK**

**IMPORTANT: Label the package “no commercial value” in order to avoid paying import taxes.**

**We regret that we cannot confirm receipt of dissertations submitted by post but we will contact by email any student whose dissertation has not arrived by the due date.**

**All raw data and source materials relating to assessed assignments** should be kept until students graduate from LSE (i.e. until the date of the first presentation ceremony after the relevant exam board).

## APPENDIX 1. TEMPLATE FOR FIRST DISSERTATION PLAN

[available on the MC499 Moodle area for download and completion]

(1)	<b>Dissertation topic/title:</b>		
(2)	<b>Key words:</b>		
	Two key words on concepts:		
	One key phrase on the field of observation:		
(3)	<b>Short summary/abstract [max 100 words]:</b>		
(4a)	<b><u>Empirical dissertations</u>: the central theoretical questions and their relation to relevant literature; the field and how to gain access with contingency plan in case of failure:</b>		
(4b)	<b><u>Theoretical dissertations</u>: the central theoretical questions to be explored and their relation to relevant existing literature; your original conceptual contribution or hypothesis which is to be explored:</b>		
(5)	<b>Methodology:</b>		
	<i>Please tick as appropriate</i>		
	Interviews		Discourse analysis: talk or written text
	Case study		Focus groups
	Content analysis		Ethnography/Participant observation
	Visual analysis: semiotics, discourse analysis or content analysis		Survey
	Document analysis		Other [describe below]
(6)	<b>Time schedule:</b>		

## APPENDIX 2. LSE RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST

[available on the MC499 Moodle area for download and completion, or here:  
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/researchAndDevelopment/researchDivision/policyAndEthics/ethicsAnnexB2014.docx>]

### PART I - CHECKLIST

The Checklist is designed to identify the nature of any ethical issues raised by the research.

This checklist must be completed before potential participants are approached to take part in any research.

#### 1. Name of Researcher:

Status (mark with an 'X' as appropriate)	Undergraduate student		Masters student	
	Research degree student		Staff	
Email		Telephone number		
Department				

#### 2. Student Details if applicable

Degree programme:			
Supervisor's name:		Supervisor's email:	
Supervisor's department:			

#### 3. Title of the proposal and brief abstract

(150-200 words – your abstract should outline in non-technical language the purpose of the research and the methods that will be used.)

#### 4. Funding

Is it proposed that the research will be funded? If so by whom?

	Please mark an X in the appropriate right-hand column/box	Yes	No	Not certain
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#### 5. Research that *may* need to be reviewed by an external Ethics Committee

i	Will the study require Health Research Authority approval? ( <a href="#">See Note 1</a> )			
ii	Does the study involve participants lacking capacity to give informed consent? ( <a href="#">See Note 2</a> )			
iii	Is there any other reason why the study may need to be reviewed by another external Ethics Committee?			
<b>If you have answered Yes to any of the questions in section 5, go to <a href="#">Part II, C</a> (there is no need to complete the rest of the Checklist)</b>				

#### 6. Consent

i	Does the study involve participants who are potentially or in any way vulnerable or who may have any difficulty giving meaningful consent to their participation or the use of their information? ( <a href="#">See Note 3</a> )			
ii	Are participants to be enlisted in the study without their knowledge and consent? (e.g. via covert observation of people in public places)			
iii	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited?			
<b>7. Research Design / Methodology</b>				
i	Does the research methodology involve the use of deception? ( <a href="#">See Note 4</a> )			
ii	Are there any significant concerns regarding the design of the research project? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• where research intrudes into the private sphere or delves into some deeply personal experience;</li> <li>• where the study is concerned with deviance or social control;</li> <li>• where the study impinges on the vested interests of powerful persons or the exercise of coercion or domination; or</li> <li>• where the research deals with things that are sacred to those being studied that they do not wish profaned.</li> </ul>			
iii	If the proposed research relates to the provision of social or human services is it feasible and/or appropriate that service users or service user representatives should be in some way involved in or consulted upon the development of the project?			
<b>8. Financial Incentives</b>				
i	Are there payments to researchers/participants that may have an impact on the objectivity of the research?			
ii	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?			
<b>9. Research Subjects</b>				
i	Could the study induce unacceptable psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life? Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?			
ii	Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics? For example (but not limited to): sexual activity, illegal behaviour, experience of violence or abuse, drug use, etc.). (Please refer to the Research Ethics Policy, § 13).			
iii	Are drugs, placebos or other substances to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?			
<b>10. Confidentiality</b>				
i	Will research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given?			
ii	Will the research involve respondents to the internet, e.g. social media, or other visual/vocal methods			
iii	Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?			
<b>11. Legal requirements</b>				
	The Data Protection Act 1998 will apply to any data-processing activities entailed by this research. Is there any cause for uncertainty as to whether the research will fully comply with the requirements of the Act? ( <a href="#">See Note 5</a> )			
<b>12. Dissemination</b>				
	Are there any particular groups who are likely to be harmed by dissemination of the results of this project?			

### 13. Risk to researchers

	Do you have any doubts or concerns regarding your (or your colleagues) physical or psychological wellbeing during the research period?			
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#### **PART II: Self certification and/or next steps**

**A** If, after careful consideration, you have answered **No** to all the questions (whether you are a member of the academic staff or a student), you do not need to complete the questionnaire in Part III, unless you are subject to some external requirement that requires you to seek formal approval from the School's Research Ethics Committee. You should tick **Box A** in the **Self-Certification Section** below, sign as appropriate and submit the form to your Head of Department, Research Centre Director, or their administrations as appropriate. Occasional audits of such forms may be undertaken by the School.

**B** If you have answered **Yes** or **Not certain** to any of the questions in sections 6-13 of the checklist you will need to consider more fully how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your research. Answering the relevant questions in the Questionnaire in Part III below may assist you. Alternatively, your own department or institute may have alternative forms or procedures to assist you. If having done so you are wholly assured that adequate safeguards in relation to the ethical issues raised can and will be put in place, you may tick **Box B** in the Self-certification Section below, sign as appropriate and submit the form to your Head of Department, Research Centre Director, or their administrations as appropriate. Occasional audits of such forms may be undertaken by the School.

**C** If you have answered Yes in section 5 that your research will be subject to an external ethics committee, please tick **Box C** below and send the completed Checklist (questions 1-5) to [research.ethics@lse.ac.uk](mailto:research.ethics@lse.ac.uk). You should submit your research for ethics approval to the appropriate body. Once approval is granted please send a copy of the letter of approval to [research.ethics@lse.ac.uk](mailto:research.ethics@lse.ac.uk).

Students who self-certify their research proposals should do so in consultation with their supervisors.

If you are unable to self-certify your proposed research you should in any event complete the questionnaire in Part III below and complete the **Refer to Research Ethics Committee Section** at the end of the form.

### **SELF-CERTIFICATION**

**Select A, B or C (delete as appropriate):**

I have read and understood the LSE Research Ethics Policy and the questions contained in the Checklist above and confirm:

- A** that no significant ethical issues are raised by the research, or
- B** that adequate safeguards in relation to such issues can and will be put in place, or
- C** that the research will be subject to an external ethics review

**Please sign the relevant section below**

#### **Academic Research Staff**

Summary of any ethical issues identified and safeguards to be taken (expand box as necessary):

I hereby confirm that I have undertaken training and/or have had significant experience in research ethics in the course of my career and/or have sought and obtained expert advice in connection with the ethical

aspects of the proposed research:			
Researcher signature:		Date:	

<b>Undergraduate/Taught Postgraduate Student/PhD Student</b>			
Summary of any ethical issues identified and safeguards to be taken (expand box as necessary):			
<p>I hereby confirm that I have undertaken training in research ethics in the course of my studies and/or that I have consulted and been advised by my supervisor or other expert with regard the ethical implications of my proposed research.</p>			
Student's signature:		Date:	
Supervisor's signature:		Date:	
<p>By signing here the supervisor confirms that the student has been advised in relation to any ethical issues raised by her/his research; these have to the best of the supervisor's understanding been adequately addressed in the research design; and the student has been made aware of her/his responsibilities for the ethical conduct of her/his research.</p>			

## Part III - QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire enables you to explain how the ethical issues relating to your research will be addressed. If you are intending to submit your proposal to the Research Ethics Committee it needs to be completed in full.

### 1. Research aims

*Please provide brief (no more than 500 words) details in non-technical language of the research aims, the scientific background of the research and the methods that will be used. This summary should contain sufficient information to acquaint the Committee with the principal features of the proposal. A copy of the full proposal should nonetheless be attached to this document in case it is required for further information.*

### 2. Informed consent

i	<p>Will potential participants be asked to give informed consent in writing and will they be asked to confirm that they have received and read the information about the study? If not, why not?  <i>Please attach a draft information sheet and/or consent form if this has been prepared</i></p>
ii	<p>How has the study been discussed or are there plans to discuss the study with those likely to be involved, including potential participants or those who may represent their views?</p>
iii	<p>Has information (written and oral) about the study been prepared in an appropriate form and language for potential participants? At what point in the study will this information be offered? (see Annex A of the research ethics policy for links to guidance on informed consent).</p>
iv	<p>How will potential participants be informed of whether there will be adverse consequences of a decision not to participate? Or of a decision to withdraw during the course of the study?</p>

v	What provision has been made to respond to queries and problems raised by participants during the course of the study?
<b>3. Research design and methodology</b>	
i	Where relevant, how does the research methodology justify the use of deception?
ii	If the proposed research involves the deception of persons in vulnerable groups, can the information sought be obtained by other means?
iii	How will data be collected and analysed during the project?
iv	How have the ethical and legal dimensions of the process of collecting, analyzing and storing the data been addressed?
v	What concerns have been taken into account with regard to the preparation and design of the research project? If agencies, communities or individuals are to be directly affected by the research (e.g. participants, service users, vulnerable communities or relations), what means have you devised to ensure that any harm or distress is minimized and/or that the research is sensitive to the particular needs and perspectives of those so affected?
vi	Have you been able to devise a timetable of research?
<b>4. Ethical questions arising from the provision of incentives</b>	
i	Are any incentives being offered to participants?
<b>5. Research participants</b>	
i	Who do you identify as the participants in the project? Are other people who are not participants likely to be directly impacted by the project?
ii	What are the specific risks to research participants or third parties?
iii	If the research involves pain, stress, physical or emotional risk, please detail the steps taken to minimize such effects.
<b>6. Confidentiality</b>	
i	What arrangements have been made to preserve confidentiality for the participants or those potentially affected, and compliance with data protection law?
<b>7. Dissemination</b>	

i	Will the results of the study be offered to those participants or other affected parties who wish to receive them? If so, what steps have been taken to minimize any discomfort or misrepresentation that may result at the dissemination stage.
<b>8. Risk to researchers</b>	
i	Are there any risks to researchers? If so, please provide details.

## REFER TO RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Approval is required by the Research Ethics Committee on one or more of the following grounds (please mark with an 'X' in the appropriate place in the right-hand column):

a.	Significant ethical issues are raised by the research, including research characterised by one or more of the following features: (i) Research involving deception of participants, or which is conducted without their full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out or when the data is gathered, or which involves the use of confidential information. (ii) Research involving more than minimal risk of harm to participants, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ research involving vulnerable groups</li> <li>○ research involving personally intrusive or ethically sensitive topics</li> <li>○ research involving groups where permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial access to members</li> <li>○ research which would induce unacceptable psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation or cause more than minimal pain</li> </ul>	
b.	The researcher wants to seek the advice of the Research Ethics Committee	
c.	External obligations (for instance, funder requirements, data access requirements) require it	
d.	Research undertaken by a student or member of staff who has not received appropriate training or has insufficient experience in research ethics and has been unable to access appropriate advice or support.	

## NOTES

1. If your research involves NHS patients, staff or premises then it will most likely fall under the remit of the NHS Research Ethics Committees; similarly, social care research involving adults, intergenerational social care studies involving adults and children or families and some proposals for social science studies situated in the NHS will fall under the remit of the Social Care Research Ethics Committee. For further guidance see: <http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/before-you-apply/determine-which-review-body-approvals-are-required/>

2. Under the Mental Capacity Act 2005, research involving adults aged 16 or over with learning difficulties or who otherwise 'lack capacity' will be subject to approval by an NHS REC if that research is deemed to be 'intrusive'. For guidance see: <http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/research-legislation-and-governance/questions-and-answers-mental-capacity-act-2005/>

3. As general guidance, research participants under the age of 18 may be vulnerable. Also, see Note 2 above re the Mental Capacity Act.

4. Deception can occur at a variety of levels: for example, at one level, experimental methods may depend on participants being deliberately misled as to the true nature or purpose of the research in which they are taking part; at another, covert participant observation may entail an implicit deception



as to the true identity and role of the researcher. Deception may be a legitimate and necessary feature of social scientific research, but its use must always be properly justified.

5. Please refer to the School's guidance on handling the Data Protection aspects of research data: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/legalAndCompliance/dataProtection/researchData.asp>.

Further information about the Data Protection Act 1998 can be found in Annex A of the research ethics policy

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