



UNIVERSITY *of* NICOSIA

## **MBA Thesis Guide**

**Acknowledgement of Sources:**

*This document has used material from a diverse variety of sources but primarily from the Henley Dissertation Guide for Students*

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. What is a Thesis?

To be awarded the degree of Master of Business Administration you must demonstrate your ability to undertake an investigation of a significant and specific management issue and to reflect on it in an insightful manner. This is the main purpose of the Thesis.

The Thesis offers you the opportunity to link your own interests and requirements with the skills and ideas that you have developed during the programme in a challenging and satisfying piece of work. At the same time, it is a chance for you to reflect on your learning and personal development needs so that you complete the programme better equipped to tackle future challenges.

You are required to investigate a management issue from both a *theoretical and practical perspective* using business research methods. The Thesis gives you an opportunity to conduct research into an area of your own choosing (pending approval of your Thesis supervisor) that will help you to develop your knowledge, understanding and skills. You are able to pursue your own area of investigation within the scope of recognized academic practice. The content of the work submitted must be unique and original to your Thesis and may not be repeated from previous assignments or projects.

## 1.2 The Nature of your Thesis

At the beginning of your Thesis you will need to decide on its nature. One option is to use the Thesis to address an organisational ‘problem’, or part of it, for the benefit of an organisation, as well as yourself. If you conduct research only within your own organisation your findings may not be generalisable to the wider industry population and the conclusions that you are able to draw may be more limited. However, you should still demonstrate that you are aware of the potential implications of your findings to the wider industry or market situation when drawing your conclusions and you should discuss the limitations of the research.

Alternatively, your Thesis may not be based on one organization alone. If you are able to conduct research across a number of organisations you will be more likely to be able to draw generalisable conclusions. With generalisable results you will be able to draw conclusions that are applicable to the wider industry or business context.

When conducting a piece of work that fits with your employer’s objectives you should be aware of the potential tension between the requirements of your employer and those laid out within this guide. Your Thesis must be an academic piece of work, the output of which may not meet the needs of your employer. A separate company report or presentation may need to be prepared by you in order to provide feedback in an appropriate format for your organisation.

A Thesis may on the other hand not be organisationally based. You may wish to address a more conceptual issue or may decide to take an existing theory or model that you have discovered during your studies and apply it into a specific business, industry, consumer or geographic setting.

## **1.3 The Objectives of the Thesis**

The objectives of the Thesis are as follows:

- To allow you to apply the knowledge that you have acquired during your MBA studies to a specific management issue.
- To provide you with an opportunity to study a topic, that is of interest and relevance to you, in a detailed and thorough way.
- To expose you to the principles and process of academic enquiry and business research.
- To enable you to demonstrate your ability to think conceptually, as well as develop and communicate structured and rational thinking.

## **1.4 The Learning Outcomes**

Below is a summary of the learning outcomes that you should have achieved upon completion of your Thesis.

### **1.4.1 Knowledge and Understanding**

1. Develop a comprehensive and critical understanding of the body of knowledge within your chosen Thesis topic. You should have developed a degree of expertise and practical experience within the topic field.
2. Gain an understanding of the practical application of business research. You should understand the uses and limitations of a range of research methods and data analysis techniques that can be used to evaluate outcomes in the business and management field.

### **1.4.2 Cognitive and Intellectual Skills**

3. Critically analyse information and evidence from both academic and practitioner sources. You should be able to develop and communicate a cohesive argument in support of a particular theoretical position.

4. Evaluate and argue alternative approaches to theories and models from your use of applied research.
5. Identify and appraise options and make practical recommendations for action and implementation.

#### 1.4.3 Behavioural Skills

6. Self-manage your own time and prioritise activities. Have an appreciation of your own competencies and skills in relation to the planning and organisation of a research project.
7. Work autonomously, exercising initiative and personal responsibility for the achievement of your stated objectives.



# **2. Managing your Thesis**

## **2.1 Self-Management**

As you enter the Thesis stage of the MBA you will notice a change of learning experience. Until this point your programme of study will have been relatively structured and you will have worked collaboratively with fellow students.

The Thesis is intentionally an individual piece of work in which you have to exercise your own initiative and demonstrate both self-reliance and independent working. It will be your own responsibility to drive forward the progress of your work and to organise, plan and manage the various activities that will be involved.

We strongly recommend that you spend time at the outset of your Thesis, and specifically when preparing your proposal, considering your own time management, use of resources and support systems that you will require in order to successfully manage and complete the Thesis. It is your responsibility to set a realistic time schedule at the time of writing your proposal and then to monitor and maintain progress against your intended schedule. You must set your own deadlines and then adhere to agreed dates for the delivery of work to your supervisor.

You will be assigned a Thesis supervisor who is a member of faculty specialized in your chosen subject area. The role of the supervisor is to support you from both an academic and personal perspective.

The total time allocated for the completion of your thesis is one year. In special cases where unforeseen circumstances occur, you can apply in writing to the MBA Director or School Dean for a further extension of 2 additional months. The above deadline includes the completion of the Thesis, as well as the oral presentation that accompanies it.

## **2.2 The Role of the Supervisor**

The role of the supervisor has three aspects:

- To provide you with support, advice and encouragement regarding the process of preparing and completing your Thesis.
- To give you advice and direction in terms of the academic content of your Thesis in relation to your subject discipline.
- To be responsible for maintaining the University's academic standards.

## 2.3 Developing a Relationship with your Supervisor

You should make contact as quickly as possible with your supervisor and agree with him or her how you wish to work together. Your supervisor will indicate to you a preferred means of communication that may include telephone, email or face-to-face meeting depending on location, time availability, type of programme and personal commitments. It is important that at the start of the relationship clear expectations are set by both parties regarding contact times and ways of working.

Due to the varying work schedules of faculty, each supervisor will have a slightly different preferred way of working particularly with regard to being contacted, giving feedback and reviewing drafts of work. Talk to your supervisor at the start and reach a mutual working agreement. It is important that you are aware that it is your responsibility to keep in contact with your supervisor. Following, table 1 provides you with a summary of the expected responsibilities for both the student and supervisor through the Thesis process.

**Table 1: Student and Supervisor Responsibilities**

<b>Student Responsibilities</b>	<b>Supervisor Responsibilities</b>
<b>At the start:</b>	<b>At the start:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Identify topic area</li><li>○ Identify research problem and question</li><li>○ Think about research methodology and methods</li><li>○ Read examples of a good Thesis</li><li>○ Read appropriate literature</li><li>○ Speak to relevant people with experience of your topic</li><li>○ Clarify your objectives</li><li>○ Prepare a proposal that meets the University's accepted standard.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Gives constructive feedback on proposal submission(s)</li><li>○ Helps the student to identify and understand the appropriate literature</li><li>○ Provides guidance on reading</li><li>○ Ensures the student is clear about the focus of the work and clarifies objectives</li><li>○ Agrees research methods, structure and time schedule</li><li>○ Assists with project design and research questions.</li><li>○ Asks questions and gives you advice on implementation of your proposal.</li></ul>

**Table 1: Student and Supervisor Responsibilities** (continued)

In the middle:	In the middle:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Refine the literature review and finalize the methodology</li> <li>○ Develop outline and objectives for each chapter</li> <li>○ Carry out the research plan accepting possible adjustments</li> <li>○ Identify deviations from the plan/difficulties</li> <li>○ Begin write up and review of chapters</li> <li>○ Keep in touch with your supervisor and take advice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Questions and gives advice</li> <li>○ Responds to questions relating to your work and gives written or verbal feedback</li> <li>○ Comments on implementation of your research method and overall progress.</li> </ul>
At the end:	At the end:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recognise the importance of the research and drive the plan forward.</li> <li>○ Collect data, analysis and interpret.</li> <li>○ Formulate conclusions and specify areas for further research.</li> <li>○ Sends drafts as the work nears completion</li> <li>○ Submits final draft and be prepared to re-write/edit as necessary.</li> <li>○ Keep in touch with your supervisor and take advice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Comments on drafts and provides written feedback.</li> <li>○ Is supportive and willing to provide advice and encouragement</li> <li>○ Is one of the three markers of the final submission.</li> </ul>

# 3. The Thesis Topic

## 3.1. Selecting a Topic

You may choose any topic area for your Thesis as long as it relates to a business or management issue. It may be a new topic to you or alternatively you may develop a topic you have worked on earlier in the programme, a module assignment, or an elective you have studied. Your topic is expected to be relevant to contemporary business and stretching in terms of academic thinking. Your area of research should be relevant to your specific MBA concentration.

For some students the Thesis topic may be provided by their sponsoring organisation. However, if this is not the situation for you, then you need to begin to think about areas of interest that you could investigate. The task of selecting a topic can be one of the most difficult in the Thesis process. Students often spend many weeks and months reading and thinking about a potential topic. We strongly recommend that you select a topic that you find interesting and personally rewarding. You will need to sustain your motivation and enthusiasm throughout many long and difficult periods of the Thesis and you may find this difficult to do if you are not motivated to understand and really interrogate the subject area.

Your starting-point for finding a topic may be to try to answer some of the questions below:

- Is there a managerial problem or issue relating to your job or organisation that you would find interesting to investigate?
- Is there a subject area that, if you were to become more of an expert in it, would enhance your career?
- Did you come across any theory or model during your programme studies that you found intriguing, challenging or feel is highly appropriate or relevant to your own business area?
- Is there an area of business practice that you feel is currently under-researched and there is scope for further investigation?

Initially you are likely to be thinking in very broad terms about the topic. You will need to begin reading as early as possible in order to gain a good understanding of the broad topic area. However, whilst reading, you should be thinking about an actual issue, problem or concept upon which you can focus. Essentially, your topic must have a conceptual or theoretical basis that underpins the practical problem or issue that you are investigating.

## 3.2. Choosing a Title

For the submission of the proposal you will need a working title which indicates clearly the subject area of the Thesis. You may adjust the wording of the title up to the point of final submission after discussion with your advisor. Following are some examples of Thesis titles:

- Restructuring and privatization: anatomy of a management buyout and lessons learned in the transformation of an economy;
- Eastern Europe – an opportunity for a new consumer product market: how can a company approach this market in the most meaningful and profitable way?
- Shifting to new core competence;
- Managing mergers: how a project management approach to managing mergers can help avoid employee conflict;
- Globalisation in the Euromarket: the Dutch banking industry and Euromarketing;
- Planning a successful ISO 9000 Quality Management assessment;
- Creating and sustaining competitive advantage through Total Quality Management: a case study for a local company;
- Creating competitive advantage and superior performance in a tool and die company;
- Facilities management of technical publication services in the aerospace industry;
- An investigation into the implementation of information technology projects in chemicals;
- The relationship between the reward system within an organization and its impact on employee motivation;
- The strategic use of competitor intelligence: a management blueprint.

Although you are likely to be thinking in broad terms at the initial conceptual stage, recognize that when you undertake your research your topic must be feasible and focused. When you select a topic make sure it satisfies the following conditions:

- You can access data;
- You have the skills and interest to pursue it to completion;
- The scope is tight enough that it can be achieved within the given time and length (15,000 words) constraints.

# 4. The Proposal

Once you have decided upon your topic and research question(s) you have to prepare a proposal for submission.

## 4.1 The Objective of the Proposal

At the beginning of any research project it is usual to write a proposal that identifies the key objectives, methods and resources involved in conducting the research. The audience for a research proposal is normally a client (if it is commercial research) or a funding body or research committee (if in the academic field). For you, the audience for your proposal is the University, your supervisor and, in some instances, your own organisation who may be supporting your work.

The proposal is in effect a plan in which you set out a statement of your intended investigation and the methods by which you will conduct the work. The proposal is intended to ensure that you have clearly considered all elements of your intended investigative study prior to commencing actual data collection or writing. Without a proposal that has been clearly worked through, you may advance in your work making errors that may be costly in terms of time, money and emotional energy.

The proposal stage particularly requires you to answer the following questions:

- What is the focus and boundaries of the topic I have chosen (what it will and will not include)?
- What is the aim and objectives of the Thesis?
- Is the proposed research feasible (is the research beyond my capabilities in terms of scale and scope)?
- What knowledge and understanding already exists regarding the topic?
- What method will I use to conduct my research?
- Do I have the skills, competencies and resources to conduct the research and analyse the findings?
- What time scale is involved in completing the work and is this within my existing registration time?
- What resources will I need to undertake this research?

## 4.2 The Structure of the Proposal

### 4.2.1 Thesis Title

See Section 3.2

### 4.2.2 Research Aim and Objectives

#### **Aim**

The aim is a general statement of the intent or direction for the research; what are you trying to achieve?

#### **Objectives**

Objectives are specific and clear statements of the intentions and outcomes of your research. What are you trying to achieve?

Objectives should be followed by the Justification (justification is the rationale for doing the research; why the research needs to be done).

### 4.2.3 Literature Review

In this section you summarise the key literature that you have so far read and state how the ideas or findings within them have relevance to your work. Your literature review section must provide support for the research question that you intend to investigate. It is recommended that you provide at least 25 key academic literature references with your proposal. It is expected that your final Thesis will cite between 40 to 50 relevant and credible references. You must use the Harvard-style reference system in both the body of the text and your Reference section.

### 4.2.4 Methodology

This section presents your proposed research method. You should state whether you are intending to undertake qualitative or quantitative research and give justification for your decision. The method should be clearly explained giving details of your intended sample, research instrument and data collection method. (Note that at this stage you are not required to have designed your research instrument i.e. questionnaire or interview schedule. The specific questions for your questionnaire or interviews will be developed by you as your understanding of the literature grows.) You should make clear your intended data analysis technique(s) and how you intend to present your findings. Identify any potential practical and ethical implications in relation to your research activity.

## 4.2.5 References

### (a) Citing Books

#### *in the text*

According to / as stated by Vrontis and Thrassou (2013) or  
Vrontis and Thrassou (2013) outline...etc.

#### *in the reference section*

Vrontis, D. and Thrassou, A. (2013), *Innovative Business Practices: Prevailing a Turbulent Era*, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

### (b) Citing Chapters in edited books

#### *in the text*

According to / as stated by Vrontis (2009) or  
Vrontis (2009) outline...etc.

#### *in the reference section*

Vrontis, D. "Internet Consumer Behaviour", (Eds), Singh, S. (2009), *Handbook of Business Practices and Growth in Emerging Markets*, Singapore: World Scientific Publisher, pp. 433- 452.

### (c) Citing Articles

#### *in the text*

According to / as stated by Vrontis (2003) or  
Vrontis (2003) outline...etc.

#### *in the reference section*

Vrontis, D. (2003), "Integrating Adaptation and Standardisation in International Marketing, The AdaptStand Modelling Process", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol.19, No. 4, pp. 283- 305.

#### *When citing a document with more than two authors*

When the authors are more than two then you include in the text Kagel *et al.* (1981), and in the reference section at the end of your work the following:

Kagel, J., Battalio, R., Rachlin, H. and Green, L. (1981), "Demand curves for animal consumers", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 96, No. 6, pp. 1-15.



# **5. Literature Review**

## **5.1 What is a Literature Review?**

The start-point for undertaking any research has to be the current body of knowledge that exists about the topic. In some instances this may be very extensive if it is a topic that is well researched and written about. In other cases, the topic may be relatively new or under-researched. Even where you are in exploratory mode with a relatively new topic, you must undertake an exhaustive review of the topic, perhaps from the perspective of an alternative discipline, or in terms of allied theories or concepts in order to develop your own perspective.

The purpose of the literature review is to review and critically analyse documented evidence and theory relating to your topic and to identify what is, and what is not, known in the area. Your aim is to document what other authors have discovered about the subject and related ideas, so that you can present your topic within the context of the existing body of knowledge. The objective is to critically analyse existing thinking and to show linkage to your ideas about the topic. If you are in explanatory mode, it is likely that you will be basing your own research investigation upon the application of an existing theory to a specific business context. You therefore need to critique existing theory and show how it relates to your own research question(s).

You should begin reading generally around your topic as soon as you are aware of your area of interest for the Thesis. Reading will assist you to focus in on the specific topic and research question(s) of your work. You should begin reading prior to preparing your proposal and be able to identify the key articles or papers relevant to your proposed research. Your literature review and reading will continue throughout the early stages of your Thesis and you should take guidance from your supervisor regarding both the quantity and quality of your references.

## **5.2 Types of Literature**

The type and standard of the literature that you consult is very important. Your objective is to both review and critique existing theoretical knowledge and ideas and to do this you should consult literature of a good quality academic standard. The majority of your references should be drawn from peer-reviewed academic journals and good quality text books.

## **5.3 Undertaking your Literature Review**

Finding appropriate literature may seem a daunting task at first. You may think your topic is so specific that literature does not exist. This is rarely the case. The problem is usually limiting the scope of the literature search, rather than not finding enough.

Having identified literature you will need to critically analyse the publications that you find in order to evaluate their relevance to your work. Your discussion of the literature should be more than a summary or description of the content of the literature. Rather you should critique them in terms of the perspective taken on the subject, and the relevance and linkage to your own research question. Your review should develop key arguments from the literature either thematically or by concept (rather than by author) and show where there is consensus or controversy around a particular issue. You should write in a succinct, clear and logical way that relates the research question within the context of the literature. Ultimately your literature review should provide a clear framework for your research.

A literature review is typically no less than 3,500 words or more than 5,000 words. When citing literature in your Thesis you must use the accepted Harvard Referencing system. All sources (including tables and diagrams) must be acknowledged and referenced. Whilst you may use direct quotes from a paper, you should use these sparingly and ensure they are always referenced.

## 6. Conducting your Research

The purpose of this section is to introduce you to the nature of research and to provide guidelines regarding the University of Nicosia's expectations of the research component of your Thesis.

### 6.1 Types of Research

The nature of the topic you have chosen and the issue(s) under investigation will affect the type of research approach you need to undertake, and more fundamentally the type of Thesis you will create. Many alternative research designs exist, however they are most often categorized according to three types:

**Exploratory research** is undertaken when there is little existing knowledge or theory about the topic. It involves the exploration of a new or previously under-researched topic. Exploratory research is used to develop a better understanding. The research design is likely to use qualitative methods and it is not intended to test specific research hypotheses.

**Descriptive research** is used to describe or define a phenomenon or situation. Such an approach is usually well structured and aims to measure the characteristics or features of the phenomenon or situation under investigation. The start point for the investigation may be existing theory and hypotheses may be used to identify the variables to be measured. The research design may involve quantitative methods and the use of descriptive statistics. Alternatively qualitative methods such as case study method or structured interview can provide relevant descriptive data.

**Explanatory research** may also be referred to as 'causal research'. It seeks to identify and explain the relationship between two or more variables that influence or affect a phenomenon or situation. The researcher will develop hypotheses to be tested and collect data that supports

or refutes the hypotheses. The approach is likely to employ quantitative methods of either experimentation or survey design.

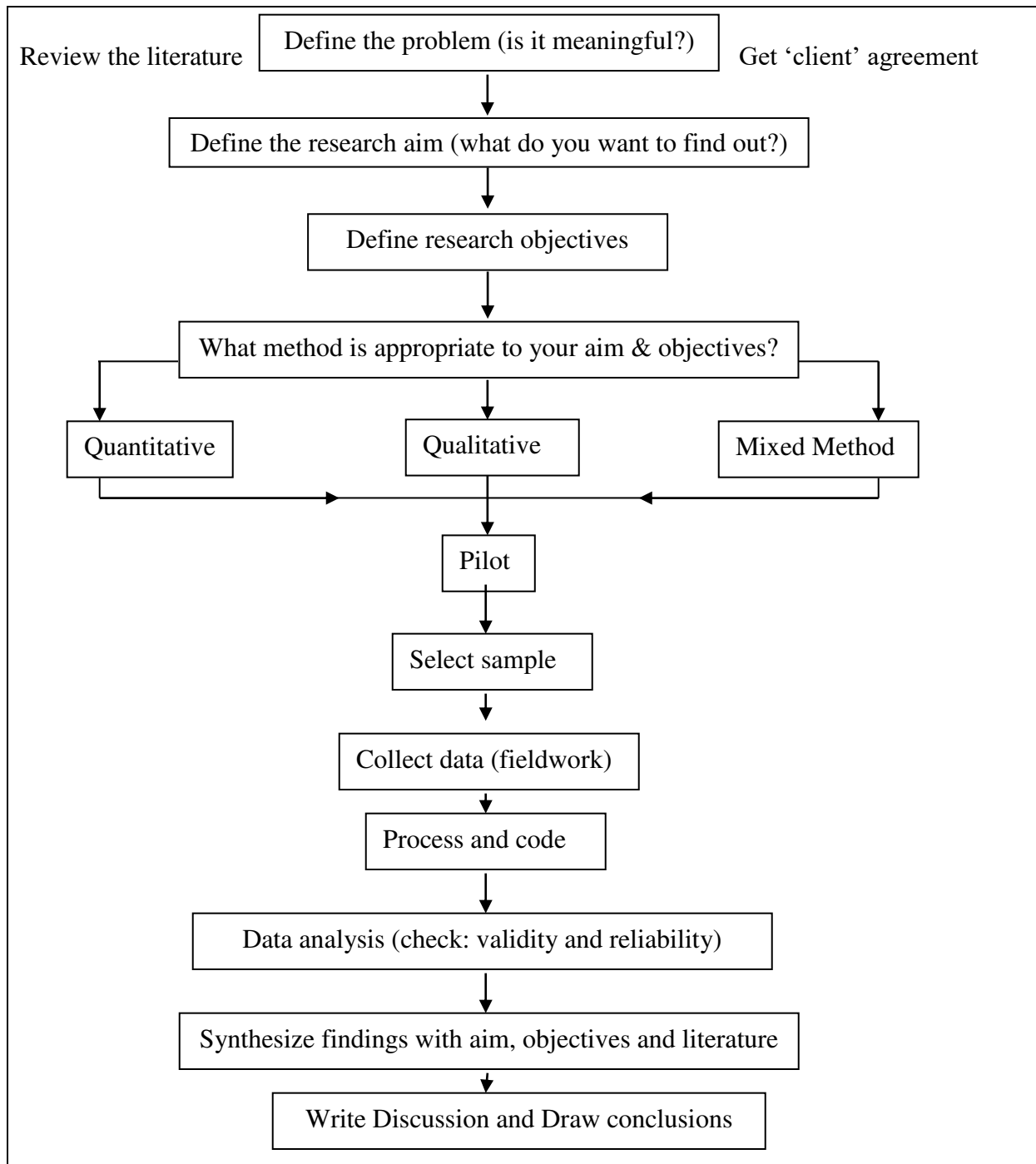
Whilst these three broad categories exist, research design may draw from more than one approach. It is most likely that your work will be aiming to either test theory (a mix of describing and explaining the phenomenon against an existing theory) or to build theory (a mix of exploring and describing a new phenomenon).

## **6.2 What is Research Design?**

Your research design is the plan that you intend to follow in order to carry out your research study. It covers all stages in the research process including decisions regarding the research method you will use and how you will ultimately analyse your data. You have a series of decisions to make regarding your research design and these will be based on your research question, the nature of the topic area/phenomenon under investigation and the resource available to you.

Below we provide you with a research process flow diagram showing the logical stages of your research study.

**Figure 1. Field Research Flow Chart**



You should devote time to considering your research design at the proposal stage. You are required to identify your proposed research design in your proposal and give a complete discussion and justification of your design within your final Thesis. In developing your research design you should be answering the following questions:

- Should I adopt a qualitative or quantitative approach to my research?
- What is the most appropriate research method? Which method will provide me with the type of data that will enable me to answer my research question?
- Amongst whom should I conduct my research? What is the population group relevant to my research question? How will I identify a sample of respondents to take part? How many people should take part in my sample? How will I gain access to them?
- How will I design my research instrument to collect my data (e.g. questionnaire or interview schedule)?
- Which is the most appropriate analysis technique to use to conduct my data analysis?
- What practical issues will I have to consider?

The answers to these questions (and others) will dictate the final design that you use.

## **6.3 Research Guidelines**

Most Thesis involve the student in gathering new information (primary data) about their particular research question. In certain circumstances, a student may be permitted to undertake a significant reworking of secondary data, if applicable to the research question. You should discuss and agree the research method with your supervisor prior to commencing any work. You should be aware that research is an iterative process. You may need to revisit your ideas and thoughts about your research design in the light of your literature review. Similarly you may revisit the literature in the light of your findings. Be prepared that your work may not follow a linear process, but rather you may change and adapt your thinking as your work progresses.

### **6.3.1 Methodology:**

- Make sure you are aware of the different research methods within the qualitative and quantitative perspectives and ensure that you can justify your selection within your research design discussion in your final Thesis.
- You should demonstrate an understanding of the methodology you have chosen, providing a critical discussion i.e. discussing both strengths and limitations of the method in your final Thesis.

### 6.3.2 Fieldwork:

- You may use existing research instruments (e.g. a published questionnaire) but must acknowledge sources at all times.
- Questionnaires or interview schedules devised by yourself should have a pilot test in advance of being applied to collect final data.
- For quantitative surveys you should aim for a sample size of 100 completed questionnaires. It is recognised that in some cases a lower number may be acceptable, but the student must then acknowledge the limitations of the sample size. You should consider the effect of sample size upon your subsequent statistical analysis.
- When conducting a survey you should consider in advance your likely response rate from the sample to whom you distribute the questionnaire. In order to achieve a sample of 75 questionnaires you will need to distribute considerably more questionnaires.
- For qualitative interviews you should aim to conduct a minimum of 10 and focus groups a minimum of 4.
- You must gain your supervisor's approval to your questionnaire or interview schedule prior to release to respondents or interviewees.
- All fieldwork must be carried out in an ethical manner and with due respect for people's privacy.

Please note that you should keep the following information as your supervisor, examination committee, School or University may request them at any time:

- SPSS or Excel electronic file that allowed the performance of the analysis
- Completed questionnaires as completed by the interviewees
- Written transcripts following any interviews and focus groups
- Tapes from tape recorded interviews and focus groups
- Any other information that may be asked by the committee and could justify the originality of your research

## 6.4 Practical Considerations

When designing your research you should consider the practical issues and constraints that will affect the quality and timeliness of your work.

- **Time:** Be realistic about the time that it will take to access your sample, collect data and undertake your analysis. In particular, if you are conducting qualitative indepth interviews it may take a considerable amount of time to gain appointments and then to actually conduct the interview. You should also schedule in extra time in the event that errors occur in your data or difficulties occur with data collection or analysis.

- **Achieving sample size:** Be realistic about the response rate that you are likely to obtain. Try to calculate in advance how many questionnaires you will need to distribute in order to achieve a useable sample size. You should discuss with your supervisor any requirements in terms of sample size/response rate for your discipline.
- **Researcher skills:** Before embarking on your chosen research method you should consider whether you have the skills and knowledge to undertake the work (e.g. case study analysis can involve working with large quantities of different types of data, in-depth interviews or focus groups require interviewing skills).
- **Data Analysis:** If you are conducting quantitative research, consider in advance how you will analyse your data and again, whether you have the necessary skills. Decide in advance whether you will conduct descriptive and/or inferential statistics and what type of software you will use (Excel or SPSS). Similarly for qualitative research, you will need to understand qualitative data analysis techniques.
- **Anonymity and confidentiality:** There is an ethical issue relating to the anonymity and confidentiality of personal data. You should ensure anonymity by referring to participants in your research by using generic job roles (e.g. employee, manager) or by using pseudonyms (e.g. Respondent A, Respondent B).
- **Cost and resources:** Be aware of the financial cost that may be involved in conducting your research (e.g. printing and mailing questionnaires). Additionally you may need to gain access to resources such as software. If you will need support from others within your organisation (e.g. access to data or authority to distribute a questionnaire) you should ensure that you have this in advance of commencing your research.

# **7. Writing up the Thesis**

## **7.1. Introduction**

The transition from investigation to writing is rarely an abrupt one. It is seldom the case that a student stops collecting data one day and begins writing on the next. However, you should attempt a formal start, and a specific timetable for the completion of draft chapters.

The preparation of a complete draft has to be given priority over other tasks, even though the process of writing up material often reveals gaps in information. Such problems should be noted in passing and marked down for future attention, but the business of pressing on with the draft should not be interrupted.

It almost always takes some time to settle down to writing after a concentrated period of investigation; the general pattern is for the writing to proceed slowly at first and to speed up as the final chapters are reached.

The need for clear writing should also be emphasized. There is always a temptation to use obscure words and complicated forms of expression so as to demonstrate a knowledge and command of jargon and complex literary structures. This temptation should be resisted! Any piece of writing should be accessible to as many people as possible, although it may be that some concepts can only be expressed accurately in technical language.

## **7.2 An Explanation of Each Part of the Thesis**

The Thesis should be presented in sequence as follows:

### **7.2.1 Preliminaries**

The preliminaries pages are numbered in low case Latin numbers and include the following:

Title page: not numbered, but counted

Blank page: not numbered, but counted

Declaration of Acceptance: not numbered but counted

Acknowledgements: numbered iv

Abstract – about five hundred words: numbered v

Table of Contents: numbered in Latin numbers (i.e. vi)

List of Tables – if applicable- numbered in Latin numbers

List of Figures – if applicable- numbered in Latin numbers

List of Appendices – if applicable- numbered in capital letters



### 7.2.2 Main Body

The proposed chapters are as follows:

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

Chapter 4 Analysis/Research Findings

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 7.2.3 End Part

The End Part consists of Appendices (if any) and References and numbered as before. More specifically:

The Appendix or Appendices are numbered in upper case (i.e. Appendix A, B etc) and their page numbers are as before.

References are listed as indicated in Harvard style and their page numbers are as before.

Further information for using appendices is provided below.

## 7.3 Word Count

The expected word count for the Thesis is 15,000 words plus an additional 500 words for an abstract. In addition you may include appendices and, where appropriate, attachments. Whilst the target length for the Thesis is 15,000 words, a Thesis will be accepted within the range of –10% (13,500) to +20% (18,000) words.

## 7.4 Writing Style

You should aim to communicate the content of your Thesis clearly and concisely. You should refer to some of the recommended Thesis examples for guidance on writing style. Below we list some guidance points that you should consider before beginning to write.

- It is common practice to write a Thesis in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person rather than the 1<sup>st</sup>. You should write in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person unless your supervisor advises you not to do so.
- Lay out a structure at the start. Prepare a draft Table of Contents and agree this with your supervisor at an early stage.
- Make linkages (a paragraph will do) at the beginning and end of each chapter to ensure a logical flow throughout your work. Use headings and sub-headings (as necessary) and paragraphs to subdivide ideas into manageable chunks for your reader.

- The Thesis must be written in English. Whilst you may reference a literature source from another language you must discuss the reference in English. Use correct syntax and grammar and ensure that your work does not contain any spelling, typographical or grammatical errors. If you can, you should ask a friend or colleague to proof-read your work for such errors.
- Use diagrams, charts and tables where they can underpin or strengthen your argument. Always refer to them in the text if they are used and ensure you include all 'Figures' and 'Tables' listed in your Table of Contents.
- Include appendices at the end of your Thesis – but use them sparingly (they are not a device for circumventing the word limit!). They may include copies of questionnaires, documents or data that relate to more than one part of the Thesis.
- It may be helpful to write your Introduction last after you have finished the body of the text and therefore are aware of the content and direction of your work. However you should write it before your abstract which is a final summary of the totality of your work.
- Do not attempt to write your Thesis correctly the first time. It is better to get something down on paper and then revise it several times than to assume you can articulate your thoughts perfectly the first time.
- Always submit a draft. Your supervisor will be experienced in Thesis development. He/she can give you an objective view of your efforts and suggest ways you can improve your work. Take careful notes of the feedback and ask for clarification if you are not sure of anything.
- Always check your work. Read it and re-read it and if you can, get someone else to read it. In terms of the presentation of your work, University's expectations are listed below.
- Clear use of English language, reasonably grammatically correct and with correct spelling (English or American). Please use a spell-checker.
- Use of an academic style of writing for example:
  - support all statements with evidence or reference
  - do not use 'in my opinion'
  - use of humour is not expected
  - avoid use of English that includes slang or comments in the vernacular
- A title that is grammatically correct and without spelling mistakes.
- Very sparing, if any, use of footnotes.
- Correct use of prose, with minimal use of bullet points. Your work should tell a convincing story with clear logical development of your argument and clear linkage between sections.
- Referencing to be in Harvard style.

- Diagrams, tables and figures must all have a title and be numbered. They must be acknowledged if taken or adapted from a source. They must be relevant and easy to comprehend and with adequate explanation and clearly referenced within the text.
- Any images/inserts/illustrations used must be relevant and appropriate to academic standards.
- You must include a word count to include text and tables but excluding appendices and reference list.
- Do not put your student name or other detail as a footer or header to each page.

## 7.5 How to Reference the Literature in your Thesis

You must clearly identify and reference within your Thesis, any words you use that are not your own. Similarly if you make reference to work by another author (including models, measurement scales or diagrams) you must cite the original author and source. References are contained within the text of a Thesis to enable any reader who is interested to be able to find the complete details of the work you have drawn upon. The University of Nicosia requires that you use the Harvard system of referencing, both within the body of your work and also within your reference list at the end of your work.

‘Reference section’ is the term used for the section of all the documents you have cited in your Thesis and is found at the end of the body of your work, but before your appendices. These are listed in alphabetical order. The reference section is useful to those marking your work to see the scope of your reading in the preparation of your final Thesis. It is also useful for future readers to access your cited references.

### 7.5.1 Referencing

#### (b)Citing Books

##### *in the text*

According to / as stated by Vrontis and Thrassou (2013) or  
Vrontis and Thrassou (2013) outline...etc.

##### *in the reference section*

Vrontis, D. and Thrassou, A. (2013), *Innovative Business Practices: Prevailing a Turbulent Era*, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

#### (b) Citing Chapters in edited books

##### *in the text*

According to / as stated by Vrontis (2009) or  
Vrontis (2009) outline...etc.

*in the reference section*

Vrontis, D. "Internet Consumer Behaviour", (Eds), Singh, S. (2009), *Handbook of Business Practices and Growth in Emerging Markets*, Singapore: World Scientific Publisher, pp. 433- 452.

(d) Citing Articles

*in the text*

According to / as stated by Vrontis (2003) or  
Vrontis (2003) outline...etc.

*in the reference section*

Vrontis, D. (2003), "Integrating Adaptation and Standardisation in International Marketing, The AdaptStand Modelling Process", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol.19, No. 4, pp. 283- 305.

*When citing a document with more than two authors*

When the authors are more than two then you include in the text Kagel *et al.* (1981), and in the reference section at the end of your work the following:

Kagel, J., Battalio, R., Rachlin, H. and Green, L. (1981), "Demand curves for animal consumers", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 96, No. 6, pp. 1-15.

## 7.6 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the knowing presentation of another person's thoughts, writings or ideas as one's own. It includes the incorporation of another person's work from published or unpublished sources without indicating through the use of quotation marks and source referencing that the material is derived from those sources. The penalties are likely to be severe. A proven charge of plagiarism is likely to lead to the removal of the offender from the programme or the removal of the degree if already awarded.

Please be aware that in addition to the normal tutor screening, the University uses a software programme designed to review both electronic and paper-based scripts for plagiarism.

## 7.7 Appendices

Appendices normally contain secondary, or supporting material, whose inclusion in the main body of the report would either make the project difficult to read, or is not very important. For example, this may include a copy of the questionnaire used, research questions asked, supporting letters from organizations, cover letters etc. If there is more than one appendix they should all be numbered with capital letters, e.g., Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.

Students are advised to be prudent when including appendices in assessments. They are also advised that there are no specific marking criteria or mark allocation available for appendices. Hence, the assessment process focuses on the appropriate use of appendices.

To assist in the decision as to whether appendices should be included or not in an assessment, students should consider the following points:

- Appendices should add value or detail to the discussion and analysis that is undertaken in the main body of the thesis. Hence, models, theory and discussion that demonstrate critical evaluation and analysis of issues related to the module being assessed should always be presented within the main body of the text. This discussion should make sense without referring to the appendices. In practice, using bullet points in the text (which does not constitute analysis) and putting the detailed analysis in the appendices is not acceptable practice.
- The appendices offer students the opportunity to give greater relevant and appropriate detail to support the main analysis and discussion.
- Appendices should always be referenced at the appropriate point within the discussion in the main body of the text.
- The inclusion of appendices should not be viewed as an opportunity to include anything that cannot fit in the word-count in the appendices. As already noted the main body of the text must make sense without referring to the appendices.
- As a guide, we would not normally expect appendices to exceed 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the length of the thesis.

## **7.8 Final Thesis Layout**

Your Thesis must begin with a title page, abstract and a table of contents page which must be numbered. You may include, although it is not obligatory, a dedication and/or acknowledgements page between the title page and the contents page.

The University of Nicosia requires three hard copies (to be accompanied by an electronic copy in the form of a CD) of the final Thesis printed and bound as follows:

- The Thesis must be typed on A4 sized paper.
- The text must have 1.5 line spacing and a 12 p. font.
- Margins must be 3 cm on the left side, 2.17cm on the right and 2 cm top and bottom margin.
- Alignment must be justified.
- Chapter and section headings emboldened.
- Must contain a contents page at the start.
- Your Thesis must have page numbers (bottom centre is recommended).

- The Thesis must be submitted to the MBA office at least ten days prior to the presentation before the assessment committee.

## 8. Submission and Assessment Process

Once the Thesis has been submitted, a Committee is formed consisting of the Thesis advisor and two other MBA faculty.

Students will then be invited to present their Thesis for 20 minutes to the Assessment Committee. The presentation will be followed by approximately 20 minutes of questions. The questions will be specifically related to the Thesis topic (literature review, research methods used, results analysis, conclusions).

The Committee will assess both the written and the oral presentation of the Thesis. 80% of the total marks is allocated towards the project itself and 20% to the presentation given. Tables 2 and 3 show the assessment sheets used by the Committee.

After the presentation, the committee will announce the grade to the student. Depending on the grade, the student must submit one or two copies of the Thesis to the MBA office, within the next week, following specific binding guidelines which will be provided.

### 8.1. Grades

The Thesis grades follow those used for assignments during the MBA programme. Details of the grading system are shown below:

<b>GRADING POLICY</b>			
<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Numerical Grade</b>	<b>Grade Points</b>
A	Excellent	93-100	4.0
A-		90-92	3.7
B+	Very Good	87-89	3.3
B		83-86	3.0
B-		80-82	2.7
C+	Good	77-79	2.3
C		73-76	2.0
C-		70-72	1.7
D+	Poor but Acceptable	67-69	1.3
D		63-66	1.0
D-		60-62	0.7
F	Failure	0-59	0.0

Once the final Thesis has been submitted, you cannot subsequently amend or withdraw it. Following the viva presentation, students may rarely be asked by the committee to perform minor changes only when the work submitted does not comply with the MBA thesis

guidelines. Any changes performed will not affect the final mark. At the end of the presentation, the committee will announce the grade to the student.

The criteria by which a Thesis will be assessed and graded are as follows.

### 8.1.1 Pass Grades

To pass, an MBA Thesis must clearly demonstrate the following criteria to the satisfaction of the examiners, whose decision shall be final:

- Clear objectives and clear definition of the problem, issue or hypothesis addressed;
- Adequate and appropriate research/investigation design and methodology undertaken in a straightforward and justified manner;
- Straightforward and accurate analysis and interpretation of research findings using appropriate methods;
- Identifies and correctly uses and reviews the relevant literature in an appropriate manner;
- Critical and logical discussion that demonstrates a sound understanding of the chosen subject/topic and links theory to practice;
- Clear and valid conclusions that follow on naturally from the objectives and substance of the Thesis;
- Provides the necessary evidence to support the chosen line of argument;
- Accurate source referencing.
- Coherent content that is consistent with the title/topic;
- Appropriate presentation, structure and sequencing of context, including clear tables and charts where appropriate;
- Appropriate appendices to support the substance of the work;
- Clear English with accurate spelling but not necessarily completely accurate grammar;
- Is within the required word length.
- Follows the requirements set down in this Thesis Guide.
- Tidy overall design and presentation and bound as specified.

The actual pass grade awarded is dependent upon the extent to which the foregoing criteria are met, or exceeded. In particular, an 'A' grade will only be awarded to a Thesis that demonstrates originality of approach, novel or new insights and is a potentially publishable scholarly piece of work. Only a small number of Theses can be expected to be awarded a grade 'A'.

The assessment sheets used by the examining committee are provided in the next page.

**Table 2: Written Part of Thesis Assessment sheet**Course: Thesis: written part (accounting for 80% of grade)

<b>Marking Criteria</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Write-up is based on MBA Thesis guidelines Project title (clear, concise relevant) Thesis structure (preliminaries, main body, end part) and style of presentation Use of references	/20	
Clarity of research aim, objectives and purpose of study Clarity of research problem / hypothesis (es) / statements	/10	
Content / outline of theory from books and journal articles Relevance to topic and research aim/objectives Coherent literature review section	/20	
Research methodology used Relevance of research method (s) adopted to collect data Primary vs. secondary data Quantitative and/or qualitative Sampling procedure used Includes limitations of study	/20	
Data analysis methods (s) and relevance with research aim and objectives Ability to link theory with practice	/20	
Quality and value of conclusions and recommendations Practical implication Future directions of research	/10	
Total	/100	
Additional Comments:		



**Table 3: Presentation of Thesis Assessment sheet**

Course: Thesis: presentation (accounting for 20% of grade)

Marking Criteria	Grade	Comments
Presentation skills and style Clarity of presentation	/30	
Presentation structure Knowledge of the subject	/30	
Ability to respond to questions clearly and effectively	/30	
Timekeeping Dressing code Level of professionalism in behaviour and manner	/10	
Total	/100	
Additional Comments:		

Signature:

Committee Members:

- 1) .....  
2) .....  
3) .....

80%	20%	Total
1) .....	.....	.....
2) .....	.....	.....
3) .....	.....	.....
Final Grade Awarded:		..... %

## **9. Sample Thesis**

In the following pages students are provided with a sample of the document they need to write for their Thesis.



# UNIVERSITY *of* NICOSIA

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Nicosia, Cyprus

***TITLE***

***SUBTITLE***

**BY**

**NAME SURNAME**

“This thesis was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degree at the University of Nicosia, School of Business, Nicosia, Cyprus, **(month/year)**”

University of Nicosia  
46 Makedonitissas Avenue  
P.O.Box 24005  
1700 Nicosia  
Cyprus

Date: **(month/year)**

***The second page of the Thesis should be blank***

**A Master's Thesis**  
**In**  
**Business Administration**  
**By**

.....

**“Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Masters of Business  
Administration (MBA) degree at the University of Nicosia”**

**Approved by:**

**Date of Approval:**

.....

**(name)**  
(position)

.....

.....

**(name)**  
(position)

.....

.....

**(name)**  
(position)

.....

# **Acknowledgements**

In the acknowledgements you normally thank people who helped you somehow in completing your project.

# **Abstract**

The abstract is a brief summary of your project (up to 500 words). It should include the purpose of the project and its objectives, a brief description of the approach or methodology and a few sentences about the outcome of the project (e.g. conclusions). The purpose of the abstract is to provide an overview so that by reading only the abstract the reader can tell what the project is about and decide whether to read the rest of your report. A good idea is to write the abstract after the rest of the report is completed. The abstract should be single spaced.



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# List of Tables

The list of tables is included only if there are tables in your project report. These are listed here along with their caption (description) and the page number where they appear (see example).

	Page
<b>Table 1</b> <Title of Table 1>.....	7
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# List of Figures

Like the list of tables, but shows the figures. These are listed here along with their caption (description) and the page number where they appear (see example).

	Page
<b>Figure 1</b> <Title of Figure 1> .....	5
<b>Figure 2</b> <Title of Figure 2> .....	12

# List of Appendices

Like the list of tables, but shows the Appendices (if any). These are listed here along with their caption (description) and the page number where they appear (see example).

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Heading

This is an example of how the project report should be formatted. Note that the pages up until the first chapter are numbered with Roman numerals (i), (ii), etc., whereas from now on Arabic numerals are used for the page numbering, starting at 1. Page numbers appear on the bottom center of each page.

For the chapter heading you use HEADING 1 style, which is Times New Roman 28. For the section heading you use HEADING 2 style, which is Times New Roman 18. You use decimal points to denote sections (i.e. 1.1, 1.2, ..., 2.1, 2.2 etc). For the text you use 1.5 space and Times New Roman 12 pts.

Every chapter must have an introductory section and a concluding section. In the introductory section the student must state the issues that he/she examined in the previous chapter and identify what are the topics that are going to be examined in this chapter. For the concluding section, which may be called “Conclusions”, the student must state the issues he/she examined in the current chapter and what is going to be examined in the next.

### 1.1.1 Subheading

Subheadings should be in style Heading 3, that is Times New Roman 14. The decimal format should also be followed here (i.e. 1.1.1, 1.1.2, ..., 2.1.1, 2.2.2, etc).

#### *1.1.1.1 Sub-subheading*

Other sub-divisions may be used. The general rule is that they should have a font size no greater than the heading before it, or smaller than the size for normal font.

## 1.2 Tables and Figures

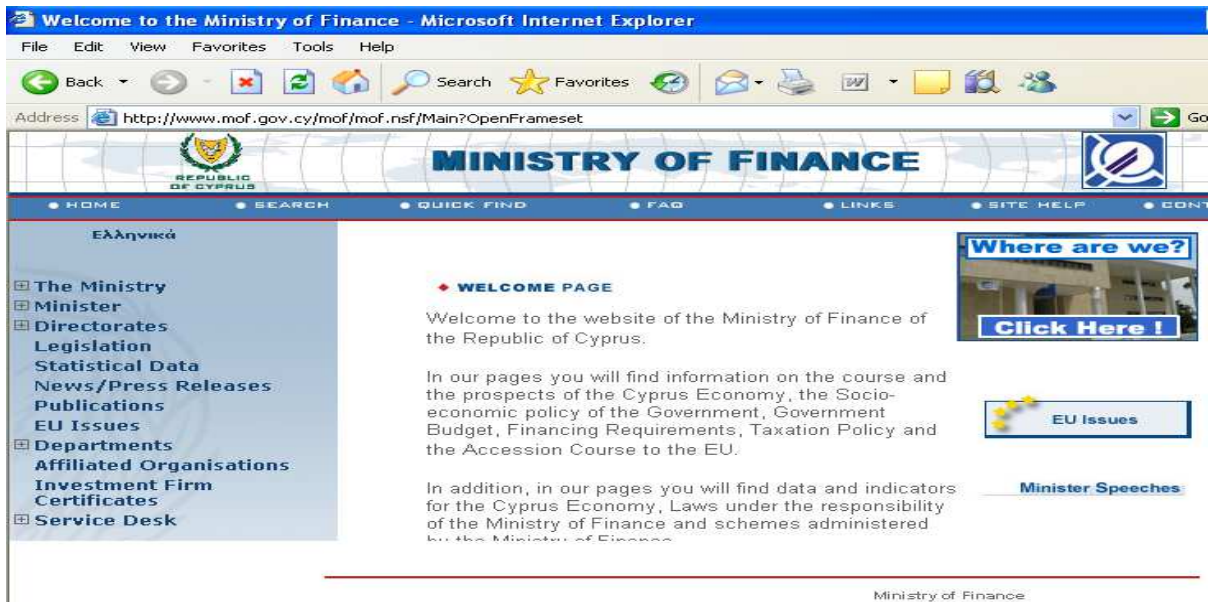
Tables should use text, which is not greatly different in size than the normal text font. Tables should be included in the text close to the location of their first reference. Each table must have a caption on the top centred, giving the table number and a description. The table number should follow a decimal numbering format using the chapter number, e.g. Table 1.1, Table 1.2, etc. A table is referenced in the text using its number. See Table below as an example.

**Table 1.1: Design Criteria for Ministerial Web Sites in Cyprus**

Ministries Criteria	Ministry Of Interiors	Ministry Of Foreign Affairs	Ministry Of Education and Culture	Ministry Of Finance	Ministry Of Health	Ministry Of Communi cation and works
Design Criteria						
Readable Text	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjustable Text	No	No	No	No	No	No
Level of Contrast	Good	Good	Varies	Good	Good	Good
Background	Good	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Good	Good
Navigation	Good	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Good	Good
Download Time	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Design Coherence	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Figures should be included in the text close to the location of their first reference. Each figure must have a caption at the bottom centre, giving the figure number and a description. The figure number should follow a decimal numbering format using the chapter number, e.g. Fig. 1.1, Fig. 4.5, etc. Figures should be clear. Any images must have a resolution of at least 300 dpi. A figure is referenced in the text using its number. See the Figure illustrated in the next page.

**Figure 1.1: Snapshot of the homepage for the Ministry of Finance**



Source: Fox (2006: 73)

Tables and figures must be adequately discussed in the text to enable the reader a better understanding of the related issues.

## 1.3 Equations

Equations should be properly formatted. There are two types of equations, in-line and stand-alone. In-line equations like this,  $y = \frac{ax^2 + bx + c}{x^3 - d}$ , appear along with the text inside a paragraph.

These equations do not have a number and therefore cannot be referenced. Usually in-line equations are simple. Stand-alone equations appear on a separate paragraph/line and are numbered sequentially with a number in brackets close to the right margin next to the equation:

$$f(x) = Ae^{x^2} \begin{pmatrix} b_{11} & b_{12} \\ b_{21} & b_{22} \end{pmatrix} \quad (1)$$

Numbering should follow the decimal notation, to number each equation for each chapter, (1.1), (1.2) etc. To refer to an equation use the corresponding number, prefixed with the word Eq. For example to refer to the above equation, write 'see Eq. (1)'.

## 1.4 Programme fragments

In MIS projects it is often required to provide programme listings and describe their function or purpose. Programme listings should appear in a different style than normal text. Usually a proportional font, such as Courier is more appropriate; indentation and background may also be used to emphasize that it is a programme listing. Lines should be numbered for easy reference. You may place a programme listing in a figure if you need to refer to it from different sections or chapters, or provide it exactly at the location where it will be described. An example listing is given on the following page. Note that the indentation is different from normal text and that a frame has been placed around the code to highlight it. You may also use shading to emphasize code, but remember that shading may be distorted during photocopying and it might make your text difficult to read.

```
1 char token_buffer[BUFSIZE+1];
2 static int buffer_idx = 0;
3
4 /* appends c to the end of token_biffer[] */
5 void buffer_char(char c)
6 {
7     if (buffer_idx<BUFSIZE) {
8         token_buffer[buffer_idx++] = tolower(c);
9         token_buffer[buffer_idx] = '\\0';
10    }
11 }
```

Remember that if a long programme listing is included in a chapter, reading the corresponding chapter will be difficult, so ask yourself whether including the whole listing is really important in the chapter. Often, a small fragment is sufficient to explain how your programme operates. The complete programme may be listed in the Appendix, or provided on a CD-ROM or other medium and the reader may be directed to look there.



# **Appendix A**

**<Title of Appendix A>**

Appendices normally contain secondary, or supporting material, whose inclusion in the main body of the report would either make the project difficult to read, or is not very important. For example, this may include a copy of the questionnaire used, research questions asked, supporting letters from organizations, cover letters etc. If there are more than one appendix they are all numbered with capital letters, e.g., Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.