

# Dissertation Handbook



**T | I | M | E MBE**

technology innovation  
management & entrepreneurship

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## 1. Introduction

Successful completion of the TIME MBE degree requires submission of a dissertation. The dissertation should demonstrate your ability to consolidate the range of the tools taught during the taught component of the program with the practical knowledge acquired during the Summer Internship or the Entrepreneurship Summer Course. In this dissertation, you may, *inter alia*, review a business case, investigate a research question, or construct a business plan.

Completion of the dissertation is done under the supervision of an advisor of your choice with the assistance of TIME Dissertations Coordinators. The dissertation is written in English and should be no more than 20,000 words. The first deadline for the submission of the dissertation is December the 31<sup>st</sup>. The ultimate deadline is 30<sup>th</sup> of June (for those wish to exit on the 21<sup>st</sup> month). Note that the successful drafting of a dissertation accounts for 30 ECTS units.

Selected students will be given the opportunity to participate in a student-industry project (SIP) and write their dissertation on a specific problem targeting the needs of a partner private company collaborating with TIME. Students will be expected to use the latest theories and tools to deliver high quality solutions to real problems entrepreneurial firms face.

At the very early stages, most of the students have no idea how to write the dissertation, but this is absolutely normal. “*What I do have to do in the dissertation? Who will advise me? How should the dissertation be written?*” The above questions and many other related concerns make students anxious. In most of cases, students make it out and submit successful dissertations. However, they spend valuable time to get answers to their queries by discussing with professors, former students and colleagues on how the procedure should be done. Certainly, this is not a productive time for you.

In TIME MBE you do not have to worry. The present handbook guides you on every issue you will face in your dissertation. You will find guidance on how to select your topic; how to contact your possible advisor; how to write your dissertation and how to submit it. The handbook clearly explains what you are expected to do in your dissertation and saves you from possible pitfalls. You do not need to spend your valuable time. Read carefully this handbook, rely on it and be productive from the first moment.

## 2. Selecting a Topic

Your first mission is to find an appropriate topic to work on it. This is perhaps the most important part of the dissertation. The topic should be precise and up-to-date but first of all should inspire you and develop your knowledge and analytical skills. Although the dissertation should present some degree of scientific originality, you are recommended to work with well-established theoretical models and empirical methods. You will not have the time to create your own model and empirical technique. Moreover, make sure that you can find sufficient and credible data as well as relevant information in the literature for your topic. Similarly, make sure that you are not the only person in the world who is interested in this topic. Search in the literature, talk to your professors and colleagues and find out whether your topic is really an interesting one.

In the dissertation, you are expected to formulate your own idea or investigate a research question. You may choose between a case study and a sectoral study or perform a comparative study. Alternatively, you may review a business case or construct a business plan. In general, the analysis may be either quantitative and/or qualitative and should have an analytical impact on business related issues.

Each dissertation applies to one or more areas of expertise. These may be accounting, corporate finance, decision making, management, marketing, etc. When selecting your topic, make sure that you have classified the area of expertise and the business sector in which your topic applies. Next, choose your methodological strategy and the empirical/analytical tools.

### 3. Submitting the Dissertation Proposal

Once you have selected a topic, discuss with your professors about your idea and choose an advisor. Prepare a preliminary dissertation proposal and give it to your potential advisors. The preliminary proposal should include an indicative title, a brief description of the topic (no more than a page), a basic outline of research and a list of few references. The brief description should explain what you are going to investigate and why you think it is interesting. Moreover, it should highlight that you are familiar with the topic and that you have conducted a preliminary, but sufficient for the moment, literature review. The research outline should demonstrate your methodological strategy, the type of data and the empirical methods you will use. Namely, make clear to your potential advisors whether: (1) you are going to conduct a qualitative or a quantitative analysis; (2) you will use primary or secondary data and how you will collect your data; (3) you will employ comparative analysis, time series analysis, mathematical modeling, etc.

You should expect that the professor who will be willing to advise you on your dissertation may suggest minor or major changes to your proposal. Discuss these suggestions with her/him, and if you think that some of the changes are out of the scope of your interest do not hesitate to express your reservations. Don't forget that the dissertation is not a joint work with the advisor. It is your own work!

If your professor has approved your proposal and has agreed to advise you on your dissertation, prepare a formal dissertation proposal and submit it to TIME Dissertation Coordinators by **????**. The formal dissertation proposal should include the following parts:

- i. Student's name
- ii. Advisor's name
- iii. Title of the dissertation
- iv. Dissertation classification:
  - a. area of expertise (for example, decision making or marketing, etc.)
  - b. related business sector (for example, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals or tourism, etc.)

- c. methodology (for example, quantitative analysis or business case review, etc.)
- d. empirical/analytical tools (for example, time series analysis or critical literature review)
- v. Brief description of the dissertation (no more than a page), including:
  - a. Your motivation and the importance of the topic
  - b. Trends in the literature and the expected contribution of the dissertation
  - c. The theoretical and empirical framework
- vi. Preliminary list of references

When you finalize the formal proposal, send it back to your advisor and don't submit it to TIME Dissertations Coordinators unless you have received the advisor's approval. Likewise, you may be asked to revise and resubmit your proposal to TIME Dissertation Coordinator committee. After TIME Dissertation Coordinator committee has approved the dissertation proposal, start preparing your dissertation.

## 4. Writing your Dissertation

### 4.1. Prepare a Plan

Your proposal has been approved and an advisor has been assigned. Hence, it is time to conduct your research, perform your analysis and write your results. In other words, you have to write your dissertation. Unfortunately, this is not a simple job, especially if there is no any plan to begin with it. Fortunately, in your case, the dissertation proposal you have prepared at an earlier stage is a very good starting point. Refer to your dissertation proposal, recall your motivation, the theoretical framework and the empirical strategy of your study and create your plan. The plan will be even more effective if you set a timetable as well. An indicative example of a timetabled plan is given below:

Example of a timetabled dissertation plan:

Weeks 1-2:	Literature Review
Week 3:	Data collection and preliminary estimation
Weeks 4-5:	Main estimation and results delivery
Weeks 6-8:	Writing

#### Useful tips before writing:

*Tip 1:* It will be helpful to prepare a preliminary table of contents.

*Tip 2:* Be careful not to plagiarise. Plagiarism is the practise of presenting others' views, ideas and statements without citing the original source. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and of course is not allowed in TIME dissertation.

*Tip 3:* Keep your advisor informed about your dissertation progress on a regular basis.

## 4.2. Dissertation Structure

The dissertation should have a straightforward structure. A standard structure of a dissertation is illustrated below:

### **Cover Page**

For your dissertation cover page use TIME's template given in the appendix of this handbook.

### **Title Page**

The title page should contain:

- the tile of the dissertation,
- your name and ID
- the advisor's name
- an abstract (up to 200 words)
- few keywords (up to 5)

### **Table of Contents**

### **List of Tables** (if any)

### **List of Figures** (if any)

### **Acknowledgements**

This part is optional.

### **Summary**

Write a comprehensive summary of your dissertation. Avoid technical representation and explain briefly what you have done in your dissertation. The summary should not exceed two pages.

**Chapters:** Divide in sections and subsections as follows:

1. / 2. / 2.1. / 2.2. // 2.2.1. //2.2.2. / 3. / etc.

### **Introduction**

This section introduces the reader to your dissertation. Describe your topic and define the objectives and the background of the study. Explain clearly what you have investigated and why it is significant. You may cite few articles to identify any gap in the literature. Introduce your analytical methodology, remark the contribution of your results and in the final paragraph illustrate the structure of the remainder of your dissertation.

### **Literature Review**

It is a summary of what we already know about the topic of the dissertation. This is a result of a thoroughly review of the related literature. Although journal articles are preferable, working papers, textbooks, newspapers and web material are also acceptable sources. However, avoid relying on newspapers and web material when making a theoretical argument. Write all the relevant, but also important, information you have discovered in the literature. Avoid repetition and plagiarism.



## **Theoretical and Operational Framework**

In this section describe the theoretical background of your topic. Demonstrate the model which links the variables of interest with your research hypotheses. The theoretical and operational framework may vary depending on the type of your dissertation (i.e. quantitative analysis; case study; business plan, etc.).

## **Empirical and Analytical Methodology**

This section illustrates the empirical and analytical tools you have employed in your dissertation. Discuss the methodological limitations of your study and explain why your analytical strategy is preferable to other methodologies. Similarly, the choice of the empirical and analytical techniques is subject to the type of the dissertation.

## **Results and Discussion**

Usually, this section begins with the description of the dataset, the source of the data and the method of data collection (the latter applies to primary data analysis). Next, present your findings using tables and figures (where appropriate) and discuss the implications of your results. Note that tables and figures cannot stand alone as a sufficient way of results presentation. Tables and figures should be accompanied with clear explanation and analysis of their content. Provide enough information so that the reader can follow your arguments (i.e. estimators; test statistics, p-values or critical values, etc.) The discussion of the results should focus on the implications related to the research problem of the study. You may give answers to the research questions and make relevant suggestions and recommendations. However, avoid making too strong recommendations. In general, avoid strong arguments.

## **Conclusion**

This is the final chapter of your dissertation. It summarises the objectives of the study, the research hypotheses and the empirical findings. Give emphasis on the practical implications of your results and make sure that you have answered the questions you have stated throughout the dissertation. Remark the contribution of your work and make a comparison with other studies findings. Finally, you may suggest some issues for future research.

## References

List alphabetically the sources (articles; papers; textbooks; websites; newspapers; etc.) you used in your dissertation. Make sure that the list of references contains all the sources you have cited in the text. The list of references should not include any reference that has not been cited the dissertation. To find more about how to write the reference list, see the subsection 4.4.2.

## Appendixes (if any)

Provide any supplementary material that is better to be placed outside the main body of the dissertation (for example, questionnaire forms; mathematical proofs; technical details of econometric models, etc.)

## 4.3. Dissertation Format and Style

All dissertations in TIME should follow a specific format and style. Prepare your dissertation according to the following instructions:

- Write your dissertation in English. You may use British or American English, but not a mixture of those.
- The dissertation should not exceed 20,000 words (including footnotes and references).
- Use a double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point font.
- Page margins should be as follows: 2.54cm (top and bottom) and 3.18cm (left and right).
- Page numbers should be placed at the bottom center of each page. Do not give any number to the cover page.
- Tables and figures should be consecutively numbered throughout the dissertation and placed into the text. Supplementary (not basic) tables and figures may be placed in the appendix section. Give a short and coherent title at the top of each table and figure. Notes should be placed at the bottom of tables and figures.
- Variables should be presented in italics. For example, use “*y*” instead of “y”.

- Equations should be numbered consecutively throughout the dissertation and written in a separate line. Use the format (1), (2), etc. and place numbers at the right-hand side of the page. You may use a different numbering format for equations, which are shown in the appendix section. For example, you may use (A1), (A2), etc.
- Footnotes should be numbered consecutively throughout the whole dissertation.
- Citations and references should follow the Harvard referencing style.

#### 4.4. Referencing Style

Since you have already read a number of articles in the literature, you may have noticed that there is not a unique referencing style that authors use. In Economics, authors usually employ either the Harvard referencing style, which is an author-date approach or the Chicago style, which is a notes-bibliography approach. However, the Harvard referencing style is widely used by authors in Business Economics. For this reason, you are advised to use the Harvard referencing style in your dissertation. Below you will find further information and examples on how to cite your sources and make the list of references using the Harvard style.

##### 4.4.1. Citations

Normally, in your dissertation you will reproduce numerous arguments, ideas and findings that are available in the literature. By citing the original sources, you acknowledge that the above is not your own ideas, arguments and findings.

To cite a source, use the author's surname and the year of publication. There are several citation styles depending on the number of authors and the type of the reproduction. Some useful examples are given below:

- **One author:**

Conner (1991) found that resource-based theory reflects a strong IO heritage.

*or alternatively,*

Resource-based theory reflects a strong IO heritage (Conner, 1991).

- **Two authors:**

Low and MacMillan (1988)

- **Three or more authors:**

Cumming *et al.* (2016)

- **Same author, same year:**

If an author has published two articles during the same year and you want to cite both, then use the following style:

Jones (2016a); Jones (2016b)

- **Quotation:**

If you want to reproduce an exact phrase or statement, use quotation marks, cite as usual and give the corresponding page number as well. For example:

“Banks will try to spread their risk better across markets and business segments. It is certainly no coincidence that banks with a greater geographic footprint and a more diversified business spectrum fared far better than those without.” (Ackermann, 2008, p. 337)

Alternatively, you may state it as follows:

According to Ackermann (2008):

“Banks will try to spread their risk better across markets and business segments. It is certainly no coincidence that banks with a greater geographic footprint and a more diversified business spectrum fared far better than those without.” (p. 337)

#### 4.4.2. References

References are the sources you have cited in the entire dissertation (including appendixes, footnotes and tables' notes). Likewise, the style of writing references varies according to the type of the source (i.e. journal article, working paper, book, etc). References should be alphabetically ordered by author(s) surname. Further directions and examples are given below:

▪ **A reference for a Journal Article should include:**

- Author(s) surname and initials
- Year of publication (in parenthesis)
- Article's title
- Journal's title (in italics)
- Volume number
- Issue number (in parenthesis)
- Page numbers

Examples:

**One author:**

Conner, K.R. (1991) A Historical Comparison of Resource-Based Theory and Five Schools of Thought Within Industrial Organization Economics: Do We Have a New Theory of the Firm? *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 121-154.

**Two authors:**

Low, M.B. and MacMillan, I.C. (1988) Entrepreneurship: Past Research and Future Challenges. *Journal of Management*, 14(2), 139-161.

**Three authors**

Cumming, D., Knill, A., and Syvrud, K. (2016) Do international investors enhance private firm value? Evidence from venture capital. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 47(3), 347-373.

▪ **A reference for a Book should include:**

- Author(s) surname and initials
- Year of publication (in parenthesis)
- Title (in italics)
- Edition (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc)
- Place of Publication
- Publisher

Example:

Thomas C.R. and Maurice S.C. (2016) *Managerial Economics: Foundations of Business Analysis and Strategy*, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York, McGraw-Hill Education.

▪ **A reference for a Chapter in Collective Volumes / Edited Books should include:**

- Chapter's author(s) surname and initials
- Year of publication (in parenthesis)
- Chapter's title, followed by "in:"
- Editor(s) surname and initials, followed by "ed." (one editor) or "eds." (two or more editors). "Ed." or "eds." should be in parenthesis.
- Title of the collective volume (in italics)
- Publication Series (if any)
- Edition (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc.)
- Place of Publication
- Publisher
- Page numbers (use "pp." before numbers)

Example:

Branson, W. and Henderson, D. (1985) The Specification and Influence of Asset Markets., in Jones, R. and Kenen, P. (eds.) *Handbook of International*

*Economics*. International Monetary Economics and Finance, volume 2, pp. 749-802.

▪ **A reference for a Working Paper should include:**

- Author(s) surname and initials
- Year of publication (in parenthesis)
- Paper's title (in italics)
- Working Paper Series Number
- Place of Publication (if any)
- Publisher

Example:

Kerr, W. R., Nanda, R., and Rhodes-Kropf M. (2014) *Entrepreneurship as Experimentation*. Entrepreneurial Management Unit Working Paper Series No. 15-005, Harvard Business School.

▪ **A reference for a paper published in Conference Proceedings should include:**

- Paper's author(s) surname and initials
- Year of publication (in parenthesis)
- Paper's title, followed by "in:"
- Editor(s) surname and initials, followed by "ed." (one editor) or "eds." (two or more editors). "Ed." or "eds." should be in parenthesis. (if any)
- Title of conference proceedings or title of conference (in italics)
- Place of Publication
- Publisher
- Page numbers (use "pp." before numbers)

Example:

Autio, O. (2016) Motivated behavioural choices of male and female technological talents, in *International Academic Business Conference*, Whashington DC., Clute Institute, pp. 147-1 – 147-8.

▪ **A reference for a dissertation should include:**

- Author surname and initials
- Year of publication (in parenthesis)
- Dissertation title (in italics)
- Degree level (i.e. PhD dissertation; MSc dissertation, etc.)
- Awarding institution

Example:

Lim, J. (2012) *Decision Making under Uncertainty: An Investigation into the Effects of Decision Context, Information Characteristics and Decision Aid on Performance*, PhD Dissertation, The University of Sydney Business School.

▪ **A reference for a newspaper/magazine article should include:**

- Author(s) surname and initials
- Year of publication (in parenthesis)
- Article's title
- Newspaper's/Magazine's name (in italics)
- Date and month of publication
- Page numbers (use "pp." before numbers – use "p." if it is a single page)

Example:

Max, S. (2016) New overtime rules challenge culture, many small businesses say. *The New York Times*, May 19, p. B4.



- **A reference for a website material should include:**
  - Author(s) surname and initials
  - Year of publication (in parenthesis) – Use “no date” if no publication time is given
  - Website’s title (in italics)
  - Available at: give the URL
  - Accessed: give the date of access

Example:

Williams, D.K. (2016) How to achieve success in sales without selling out. *Forbes*, Available at: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidkwilliams/2016/07/11/how-to-achieve-success-in-sales-without-selling-out/#20d7fcb24d77>, Accessed: July 11, 2016.

## 5. After Writing

You have just finished writing! To ensure that all are as appropriate, read carefully your dissertation and perform an in depth check to make sure that your dissertation is free of errors and omissions. Check that:

- the topic of the dissertation is well-defined
- your motivation is sufficiently explained
- your methodology is lucid
- your results are clearly illustrated
- the contribution and the practical implications of your results have been highlighted
- the dissertation has the appropriate structure and format
- all cited papers are present in the list of references
- references have been written in the appropriate style
- there are no grammatical and spelling errors

After completing the necessary check, you are almost done! What you have to do next is to deliver your dissertation to your advisor and wait for her/his comments.

Give to your advisor enough time to review your dissertation. Do not send it to her/him only few days before the submission deadline. Make the most of your advisor's comments and revise the first draft along the lines of her/his suggestions.

When the dissertation has been finalized and your advisor has approved it, submit your final draft to TIME Dissertations Coordinator committee by the end of the submission deadline. The committee will forward your dissertation to your examiners. Subject to the examiners' reports, you may fulfil the dissertation requirement. The examiners' recommendation may be:

- Accept
- Accept with minor changes
- Accept with major changes
- Reject

## 6. Conclusion

At the end, you will probably share the view that TIME dissertation is an awesome experience. It is amazing that you have written your first paper! Either you have constructed a business plan, reviewed a business case or investigated a research problem, it is true that you have already treated similar issues business managers and practitioners usually face in their professional career.

The aim of this handbook was to help you writing your dissertation in a professional way following the standards of academic writing. Use this handbook as a guide for a number of concerns related to your dissertation. It guides you on how to select your topic and your advisor; how to structure your dissertation; how to write your dissertation, etc. The most important guidelines are summarized below:

- First, choose a topic that you are interested in.
- Then, discuss with your professors about your idea and choose an advisor.
- Once an advisor has been assigned, prepare a formal dissertation proposal and submit it to TIME Dissertations Coordinators.

- You may be asked to revise and resubmit your proposal to TIME Dissertations Committee.
- After TIME Dissertations Committee has approved your proposal, start preparing your dissertation.
- Prepare a dissertation plan before writing.
- You should prepare your dissertation following the TIME format and structure.
- Write citations and references following the Harvard referencing style.
- Be careful not to plagiarize.
- Keep your advisor informed on a regular basis about your dissertation progress.
- Read and check your dissertation before sending it to your advisor.
- When your dissertation has been finalized and the advisor has approved it, submit it to TIME Dissertations Committee by the end of the submission deadline. The committee will forward your dissertation to your examiners.
- Subject to the examiners' reports, you may fulfil the dissertation requirement.

*Enjoy the experience!*

## Appendix: Cover Page Template

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**[Title]**

Dissertation submitted

by

**[Student's Full Name]**

to

**TIME MBE**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master in Business Economics

Supervised by: **[Advisor's Full Name]**

[Place and date of submission]

--- end of template ---