



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION/PROJECT REPORT

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY
The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Mode, Kerala

GUIDELINES FOR DISSERTATION / PROJECT REPORT – B21PH01PR

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

Credits: 6

1. Introduction

As part of the undergraduate curriculum in Philosophy at Sreenarayanaguru Open University (SGOU), learners are required to submit an individual Dissertation/Project Report during their Sixth Semester. This course carries six credits and is a core requirement for the completion of the BA Philosophy programme. The dissertation is intended to enable learners to engage in reflective, analytical, and critical thinking through independent research on a philosophical issue or problem.

Under the supervision of a qualified faculty member, each learner selects a philosophically relevant topic, formulates a research question or problem, and conducts a critical inquiry using appropriate methods such as textual analysis, argumentation, conceptual clarification, or comparative reasoning. The aim is to foster the philosophical imagination and develop the learner's capacity to articulate coherent arguments, interpret key texts or ideas, and contribute thoughtfully to philosophical discourse. All dissertations must adhere to the academic standards and formatting guidelines prescribed by the university.

2. General Guidelines

- Read these guidelines carefully to understand each stage of the dissertation process, from topic selection to final submission.
- The dissertation/project may be typed using MS Word or LaTeX, or be handwritten in a neat, legible format.
- Handwritten dissertations are permitted, but must be neat and meet the structural and page-length requirements (minimum 30 pages).
- Do not include any personal contact information. Only the learner's name and enrolment number should be present.
- Learners must regularly consult their supervisors to finalise the topic, structure the argument, and develop the paper.
- The final dissertation should be submitted to the respective Learner Support Centre by the deadline announced by the University.
- The Controller of Examinations will officially announce the deadlines for submission and the dates for Viva Voce examination.
- Two learners are not permitted to submit the same topic or a joint project. Plagiarism, duplication, or submission of previously submitted material will result in strict disciplinary action, including cancellation of the dissertation.
- Learners are strongly advised to retain a soft copy of their work for reference and backup purposes.

3. Selection of Topic for Dissertation / Project Report

Choosing a suitable philosophical problem or theme is critical to the success of the dissertation. The quality, relevance, and timely completion of the dissertation heavily depend on the research question chosen.

The topic must:

- Be relevant to philosophy (e.g., ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, Indian or Western thought, logic, aesthetics, social and political philosophy).
- Be conceptually significant and allow scope for critical or interpretative engagement.
- Be feasible to complete within available resources and time.
- Allow scope for personal insight, critical reflection, or original interpretation.

Steps:

- Identify areas of interest based on previous coursework or readings.
- Review existing debates and discussions in that area.
- Discuss with your supervisor to refine the scope.
- Frame a precise research question or theme.
- Draft a tentative title for approval.

Topics must be approved by the assigned Supervisor before the learner begins detailed research or data collection.

4. Literature Review

The literature review is a vital component of the dissertation. It situates your research within the existing body of knowledge and helps justify the need for your study. A well-developed literature review shows the learner's grasp of the philosophical landscape of the chosen topic.

Objectives:

- To establish the background and context of the study.
- To identify key thinkers, debates, and positions.
- To justify the rationale for your inquiry.
- To help refine the focus of your argument.

Steps:

- Define the scope of your review.
- Read key primary texts and relevant secondary literature.
- Analyse philosophical positions critically.
- Organise the review thematically or argumentatively.
- Cite all sources appropriately (APA 7th edition recommended).

A strong literature review will not only inform your research design but also strengthen the academic quality of your analysis.

5. Executing the Research Project

Once the topic is finalised and a literature review is conducted, learners should proceed to the core phase of the dissertation: executing the research. Philosophical research may not involve empirical data, but it does require methodical argumentation and interpretation.

Key Components:

- **Methodology:** Philosophical analysis, comparative study, hermeneutic interpretation, conceptual analysis, logical argumentation, etc.
- **Sources:** Classical and contemporary philosophical texts, academic articles, commentaries, or translations.
- **Analytical Tools:** Logical reasoning, textual analysis, and dialectical engagement with differing views.
- **Ethics:** Uphold academic honesty; avoid plagiarism or misrepresentation.

Stay in regular touch with your supervisor and ensure clarity and coherence in your developing argument.

6. Writing and Presentation

The dissertation must be written in a clear, coherent, and scholarly manner. Effective presentation of your ideas is as important as the quality of research conducted. The document should demonstrate your ability to structure arguments, engage in philosophical reasoning, and articulate conclusions with conceptual clarity.

Writing Guidelines:

- Use formal, academic language.
- Organise chapters logically with clear subheadings.
- Maintain consistency in structure, referencing, and terminology.
- Avoid plagiarism; give credit to all sources used.
- Ensure clarity in definitions, arguments, and conclusions.

Structure of the Dissertation:

- **Chapter I:** Introduction – Background, objectives, significance, and methodology.
- **Chapter II:** Literature Review and Philosophical Framework
- **Chapter III:** Critical Analysis and Argumentation
- **Chapter IV:** Conclusion and Philosophical Reflections

Final Checks:

- Revise thoroughly.

- Label all headings, references, and page numbers clearly.
- Verify that citations and bibliography are accurate and complete.
- Discuss your final draft with your supervisor before printing and submission.

7. Dissertation Supervisor

The role of the dissertation supervisor is essential to the success of the research project. Supervisors guide learners in topic selection, research design, analysis, and final presentation.

Eligibility:

- Faculty (regular/guest or contract/retired) from SGOU or affiliated government/aided colleges.
- PhD holders in Philosophy.
- Academic counsellors associated with SGOU.

NB: A dissertation supervisor must be a Ph.D or NET holder in Philosophy.

Bio-data cum Certificate:

A Bio-data cum Certificate (Annexure II) must be submitted along with the final dissertation, signed by the supervisor, confirming their eligibility and willingness to supervise the learner.

Learners must remain in regular contact with their supervisors throughout the project period and seek written or verbal approval at each stage of development.

8. Academic Integrity

Learners must maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity throughout the dissertation process. Any form of misconduct may result in disciplinary action, including disqualification of the dissertation.

The following actions constitute academic misconduct:

- Plagiarism:** Using another person's work, words, or ideas without proper acknowledgment. This includes copying from books, internet sources, peers, or AI-generated content without citation.
- Self-Plagiarism:** Reusing your own previously submitted academic work, in part or full, without appropriate disclosure and permission.
- Fabrication:** Inventing, altering, or falsifying data or research findings.
- Cheating:** Receiving or giving unauthorised help in the preparation of the dissertation.
- Misrepresentation:** Providing incorrect or misleading information about your research.
- Unauthorised Collaboration:** Working jointly on a project that requires individual submission.

Institutional Policy:

All dissertations will be subjected to academic scrutiny, including plagiarism checks. If misconduct is detected, the dissertation may be rejected and further penalties may be imposed under the Regulations for the Prevention of Malpractices in University Examinations, 2023.

Learners are advised to:

- Use plagiarism detection tools before submission.
- Cite all sources accurately.
- Seek guidance from supervisors if unsure about proper citation.

Maintaining academic integrity is a foundational principle of scholarly work and ensures the authenticity and credibility of your research.

9. Dissertation Submission

Learners must adhere to the following norms during submission of the final dissertation:

- a) Submit one hard copy of the completed and bound dissertation to the respective Learner Support Centre (LSC) on or before the last date notified by the University.
- b) The dissertation must be spiral bound or hard bound. Use of plastic covers or lamination is not permitted.
- c) A typed dissertation should be of minimum 25 pages. If handwritten, it should be a minimum of 30 pages.
- d) The dissertation must include a Certificate by the Supervisor and a Declaration by the Learner, both duly signed (refer to Annexure II).
- e) The learner must retain one copy of the submitted dissertation and bring it during the Viva Voce examination.
- f) Learners are advised to keep a digital copy of the report for future reference and record.
- g) The date and venue for the Viva Voce examination will be notified by the Controller of Examinations.
- h) Late submissions or submissions without proper certification will not be accepted and may be liable for disqualification.

10. Format of the Dissertation

All submitted dissertations must conform to the prescribed academic format. Any deviation may lead to rejection or return for correction.

Order of Contents:

1. **Cover Page:** Must include:
 - Title of the Dissertation
 - Name of the Learner
 - Enrolment Number
 - Programme Name (e.g., BA Philosophy)
 - Name of the University
 - Date, Month and Year of Submission
2. **Certificate by Supervisor** (Annexure II)
3. **Declaration by Learner** (Annexure II)
4. **Acknowledgement**
5. **Table of Contents:** With section and page numbers
6. **Chapters (Minimum 4):**
 - Chapter I: Introduction
 - Chapter II: Literature Review and Philosophical Framework

- Chapter III: Critical Analysis / Exposition / Comparative Study
- Chapter IV: Conclusion

7. **Bibliography / References**

8. **Appendices** (if applicable)

Formatting Specifications:

- Paper size: A4, one-side print only
- Font: Times New Roman
 - Title: Size 15, Bold
 - Sub-headings: Size 14, Bold
 - Body text: Size 12, Regular
- Line spacing: Double spacing throughout
- Paragraph spacing: No additional space between paragraphs
- Margins: 1.5 inches on the left, 1 inch on top, right, and bottom
- Page numbers: Placed at the bottom-right corner
- Each chapter should begin on a new page

Follow APA 7th edition format for references unless otherwise instructed by the supervisor.

11. Assessment and Evaluation

The dissertation/project report will be evaluated for a total of 100 marks, distributed as follows:

- **Dissertation/Project Report:** 70 marks
- **Viva Voce Examination:** 30 marks

Evaluation Criteria for Dissertation:

1. Introduction & Research Context (5 marks)
2. Statement of the Research Problem & Objectives (5 marks)
3. Review of Literature / Philosophical Sources (10 marks)
4. Research Methodology & Philosophical Approach (5 marks)
5. Argumentative Development & Analysis (25 marks)
6. Conclusion – 10 marks
7. References & Academic Apparatus – 10 marks

Evaluation Criteria for Viva Voce:

- Clarity of research objectives
- Understanding of methodology and tools
- Interpretation of findings
- Communication and presentation skills
- Ability to answer questions related to the project

The evaluation will be conducted by an external examiner appointed by the University. Final marks will be based on the combined assessment of the written report and oral defence.

12. Supervision and Responsibilities

Role and Responsibilities of the Supervisor:

- Help the learner choose and narrow down the topic for research
- Suggest suitable primary texts and secondary sources
- Assist the learner in selecting a suitable philosophical approach or method
- Comment on chapter drafts and offer critical academic comments
- Ensure academic integrity and avoid plagiarism
- Approve the final version of the dissertation prior to submission

Learner's Responsibilities:

- Regularly contact supervisor assigned to him/her respectfully
- Submit drafts and feedback on supervisor's comments within agreed timeframe
- Take notes of meeting or correspondence for reference
- Investigate materials independently and carry out extensive research
- Accurately credit supervisor's contribution in final report
- The learner should value independence of mind as much as direction in philosophical writing and take an active role in the process rather than passively waiting to be instructed.
- Acknowledge all sources and avoid any form of plagiarism

Conflict Resolution

In case of any unresolved academic dispute between the learner and supervisor:

- The learner may submit a written representation to the Head of the Department / Programme Coordinator.
- The university will facilitate a fair and timely resolution in consultation with both parties.

13. Language of the Dissertation

- The dissertation must be written in entirely in a single language either English or Malayalam.
- All technical terms, citations, and references should be clearly explained and properly formatted.
- Learners must ensure that the language is formal, academic, and free from spelling or grammatical errors.
- Use of software tools for grammar and plagiarism checks is encouraged before submission.

14. Examples of reference list in APA 7th format

Single Book Author:

Format: Author, A. A. (Year). Title of book (Edition/Vol. if any). Publisher.

Example: Hiriyanna, M. (1994). *Outlines of Indian philosophy*. Motilal Banarsidass.

Multiple Authors:

Format: Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). *Title of book*. Publisher.

(For 3–20 authors, list all names separated by commas and use “&” before the last author.)

Example: Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R., & Murdoch, D. (1985). *The philosophical writings of Descartes: Vol. 1. The meditations on first philosophy*. Cambridge University Press

Edited book:

Format: Editor, A. A. (Ed.). (Year). *Title of book*. Publisher.

(If multiple editors: Editor, A. A., & Editor, B. B. (Eds.))

Example: Bhadra, M. K. (Ed.). (2004). *A critical survey of phenomenology and existentialism*. Indian Council of Philosophical Research.

Encyclopaedia (print or online)

Format: Author, A. A. (Year). Title of entry. In E. E. Editor (Ed.), *Title of encyclopedia* (Vol. xx, pp. xxx–xxx). Publisher.

(If online: add URL)

Example: Smith, J. M. (2010). Logic. In *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Vol. 19, pp. 123–135). Encyclopedia Britannica.

Kenny, A. (2023, August 15). Aristotle. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>.

Journal article

Format: Author, A. A. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, volume(issue), page range. <https://doi.org/xxxxx>.

Example: Handelman, S. (1990). Facing the other: Levinas, Perelman, and Rosenzweig. *Religious Studies and Theology*, 22(3–4), 61–84.

Online website

Format:

Author, A. A. (Year, Month Day). Title of page. *Website name*. URL

Example:

Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. (2022, March 15). Phenomenology. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Fall 2022 Edition)*.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology>

15. Sample Topics for BA Philosophy Dissertation

The following list of sample topics is intended to inspire and guide undergraduate learners in selecting a relevant, feasible, and meaningful research area. Topics are designed to reflect the scope of undergraduate-level inquiry. Learners may choose any topic in consultation with their supervisor and are encouraged to modify, narrow down, or combine themes as appropriate.

- “One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man”: A Study of Sree Narayana Guru’s Social Philosophy
- Gandhi’s Idea of Truth and Non-Violence: Its Relevance in the Contemporary World
- B.R. Ambedkar on Caste and Equality: A Philosophical Reflection
- Swami Vivekananda’s Vision of Education and Human Development
- Rabindranath Tagore’s Philosophy of Freedom and Creativity
- The Socratic Method and Its Relevance in Contemporary Ethical Inquiry
- Plato’s Theory of Ideas: A Philosophical Study
- Aristotle’s Concept of Causation: A Critical Examination
- Saint Augustine on Divine Illumination and the Problem of Evil
- Faith and Reason in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas
- Al-Farabi and Avicenna on Metaphysics and the Human Soul
- René Descartes and the Mind-Body Problem
- Spinoza’s Concept of God and Nature
- Leibniz’s Theory of Monads: A Philosophical Study
- David Hume on Causation and Skepticism
- Hegel’s Dialectical Method: A Philosophical Analysis
- Karl Marx’s Materialist View of History: A Critical Study
- Dependent Origination in Buddhist Philosophy
- The Jain Doctrine of Anekantavada: A Study in Pluralistic Thinking
- Ramanuja on Bhakti and the Nature of God
- Madhva’s Philosophy of Difference (Dvaita): A Philosophical Reflection
- Mystical Elements in the Writings of Sree Narayana Guru
- Knowledge and Self in *Atmopadesa Satakam*
- Sree Narayana Guru’s Philosophy of Education and Social Reform
- The Concept of Ananda (Bliss) in Sree Narayana Guru’s Philosophy
- Shankara and Sree Narayana Guru: A Comparative Study
- Symbolism and Meaning in *Daiva Dasakam*
- Feminism as a Philosophical Perspective
- Wittgenstein on Language and Meaning: An Analytical Study
- The Nyaya Theory of Knowledge: A Philosophical Examination
- Applied Ethics in the Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru

- Moral Dilemmas in Everyday Life: A Philosophical Approach
- The Role of Interpretation in Philosophy: A Hermeneutic Study
- Husserl on Consciousness and Intentionality: A Phenomenological Study
- The Value of Human Life: An Inquiry in Applied Ethics
- The Philosophy of Happiness: What It Means to Live Well
- Environment and Human Responsibility: An Ethical Inquiry
- Philosophy of Human Rights: A Study on the Value of Equality
- Derrida's Philosophy of Deconstruction: A Critical Analysis

Annexure I: Cover Page

DISSERTATION TITLE

*In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of the Undergraduate Programme in
Philosophy*

Submitted by:

FULL NAME OF THE LEARNER

Learner Enrolment Number

**UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME IN
PHILOSOPHY**

Under the Supervision of:

NAME OF THE SUPERVISOR



Name of the Learner Support Centre

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

KOLLAM

MONTH AND YEAR OF SUBMISSION

Annexure II:

Bio Data of the Project/Dissertation Supervisor

1. Name:

(As in service records):

2. Designation & Official Address:

.....
.....
.....

3. Communication Address:

.....
.....
.....

(a) Mobile No(s):

(b) E-mail id:

4. Category of the Supervisor:

Please put a tick mark (✓)

Faculty member of Sreenarayanaguru Open University	
Faculty members (permanent/guest/contractual) from government or aided colleges	
Retired faculty member of government/aided colleges or Universities	
Academic counsellors associated with SGOU	
Ph.D./ NET holders in the relevant subject/discipline	

5. Date of Regular Appointment in Academic/ Research Institute (Govt./Aided Colleges or University):

Date/Month/Year:/...../.....

Completed years of service:

Retired In Service

6. Educational & Professional Qualifications:

Sl. No.	Degree	Year of Passing	Subject/Discipline/ Specialisation	University
1				
2				
3				

7. Teaching Experience: As on the date of submission of Bio Data Cum Certificate

(a) Undergraduate Level: years months

(b) Postgraduate Level: years months

8. Field of Specialisation/Special Interest (if any):

I.

II.

Willingness to work as Project/Dissertation Supervisor

I am willing to serve as Project/Dissertation Supervisor for UG programme of Sreenarayanaguru Open University subject to the rules in force.

I hereby declare that the details furnished above are true and correct to the best of my knowledge. In case any of the above information is found to be false or misleading or misrepresenting, I am aware that I may be held liable for it and my empanelment as Project/Dissertation Supervisor may be immediately cancelled and necessary action, as deemed fit, may be taken against me.

Date: _____

Place: _____

Signature of the Supervisor

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Institution: _____

Annexure II:

Certificate by the Supervisor

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled: “ _____ ”

submitted by **Mr./Ms.** _____, Enrolment No. _____, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the **Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy**, has been carried out under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge, the work is original and has not been submitted previously for any degree, diploma, or other academic recognition.

Date: _____

Place: _____

Signature of the Supervisor

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Institution: _____

Annexure II:

Declaration by the Learner

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled: “_____”

submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the **Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy** to **Sreenarayanaguru Open University**, is my original work. It has not been submitted previously by me or any other person for any degree, diploma, or academic recognition. All sources used have been appropriately acknowledged.

Date: _____

Place: _____

Signature of the Learner

Name: _____

Enrolment Number: _____