



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

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

GUIDELINES FOR POSTGRADUATE DISSERTATION/PROJECT REPORT

MASTER OF ARTS IN ECONOMICS

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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

GUIDELINES FOR DISSERTATION / PROJECT REPORT - M23EC01DP

MASTER OF ARTS IN ECONOMICS

1. Introduction

As part of the postgraduate curriculum in Economics at Sreenarayanaguru Open University (SGOU), learners are required to submit an individual Dissertation/Project Report during their Fourth Semester. This course carries four credits and is a core component of the MA Economics programme. The dissertation provides learners with the opportunity to undertake independent and in-depth research in economics. Under the academic supervision of a qualified faculty member, learners develop a research question, conduct theoretical and/or empirical analysis, and produce a scholarly dissertation based on rigorous methodology. The aim is to apply advanced economic theories, models, and analytical techniques to real-world or conceptual problems. The dissertation must demonstrate academic originality, critical thinking, clarity of expression, and adherence to research ethics. Each dissertation will be unique in content and scope, but all must comply with the University's academic and formatting standards, and reflect the competencies expected at the postgraduate level.

2. General Guidelines

- a) Read these guidelines thoroughly to understand the requirements and timeline for submission.
- b) The dissertation may be prepared using MS Word or LaTeX, or be handwritten in a neat, legible format.
- c) Handwritten dissertations are permitted, but must be neat, legible, and follow the same structural and page limit requirements (minimum 35 pages).
- d) The content should be free from typographical and grammatical errors, with consistency in formatting, spacing, and citations.
- e) Personal information such as phone numbers or email addresses should not appear in the dissertation. Only the learner's name and enrolment number are to be included.
- f) Learners are required to maintain regular interaction with their supervisor, especially during topic finalisation, methodology development, and data analysis.
- g) Dissertations must be submitted to the Learner Support Centre by the deadline notified by the Controller of Examinations.
- h) Each dissertation must include a Certificate by the Supervisor and a Declaration by the Learner, duly signed and dated.
- i) A soft copy of the dissertation must be retained by the learner. The learner must also bring a hard copy during the Viva Voce examination.
- j) There will be no provision for revaluation of Dissertation/Project.

3. Selection of Topic for Dissertation / Project Report

Choosing an appropriate topic is a crucial first step in the research process. The quality, relevance, and timely completion of the dissertation heavily depend on the research question chosen.

The topic must:

- Be relevant to economics and aligned with the learner’s academic interest.
- Offer scope for inquiry using primary and/or secondary data.
- Be feasible to complete within the available time and resources.
- Allow scope for original contribution or critical analysis.

Suggested Steps:

- Identify Areas of Interest:** Reflect on courses, readings, or issues that personally interest you within the domain of economics (e.g., development, labour, environment, finance, public policy).
- Review Existing Research:** Use academic journals, economic surveys, and recent studies to identify gaps or current debates.
- Discuss with Supervisor:** Share your initial ideas with your guide, who can help assess its viability and academic relevance.
- Assess Feasibility:** Ensure you can access required data and literature within the given timeframe.
- Refine and Narrow:** Convert your area of interest into a clear research problem or question with defined scope.
- Develop a Working Title:** Draft a specific, descriptive title that reflects the research question and context.

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-written literature review demonstrates that the learner understands the context, trends, and gaps in their chosen topic.

Objectives:

- To provide background and theoretical framework for the study.
- To identify relevant debates, schools of thought, or models in the area of research.
- To highlight research gaps your study aims to address.
- To inform the choice of methodology and data sources.

Steps to Conduct a Literature Review:

- Define the Scope:** Set boundaries on the topic, time period, and nature of sources to be reviewed.
- Search Strategically:** Use academic journals, books, government reports, working papers, and databases like JSTOR, EconLit, Google Scholar, etc.
- Read and Note Critically:** Focus on theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and limitations of previous studies.
- Organise and Synthesise:** Group literature thematically or chronologically, compare arguments, and draw connections.
- Cite Appropriately:** Acknowledge all sources using APA 7th edition format as prescribed later in this guideline.

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

5. Research Design and Execution

Components of Research Design:

1. **Research Problem and Objectives:** Clearly state the research problem, hypotheses (if applicable), and specific objectives.
2. **Conceptual/Theoretical Framework:** Identify the economic theories/models underpinning your study.
3. **Type of Research:** Specify whether the study is exploratory, descriptive, analytical, or experimental.
4. **Methodology:**
 - **Quantitative:** Surveys, statistical analysis, econometric models
 - **Qualitative:** Interviews, focus groups, content analysis
 - **Mixed Methods:** Combining qualitative and quantitative techniques
5. **Data Sources:**
 - **Primary Data:** Field surveys, interviews, experiments
 - **Secondary Data:** Government databases, academic datasets, institutional reports
6. **Sampling:** Describe the sample design, size, selection method, and justification.
7. **Tools of Analysis:** Mention the software, statistical tools, or economic models used.
8. **Limitations:** Acknowledge potential constraints in design, data, or methodology.

Execution Tips:

- Prepare data collection tools in advance (e.g., questionnaires, interview guides).
- Ensure ethical standards, including consent and confidentiality.
- Maintain clear records of data and analysis steps.
- Keep your supervisor informed at each major stage.

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, apply economic reasoning, and present findings with academic precision.

Writing Guidelines:

- Use a formal academic tone throughout.
- Structure your content with appropriate headings and subheadings.
- Ensure logical flow between sections and chapters.
- Avoid plagiarism by paraphrasing appropriately and giving due credit to sources.
- Maintain clarity, objectivity, and consistency in terminology and citations.

Structure of the Dissertation:

A typical dissertation should be divided into at least four chapters, including:

1. **Chapter I:** Introduction – background, objectives, scope, significance, research methodology, and limitations of the study.

2. **Chapter II:** Literature Review and Theoretical Framework
3. **Chapter III:** Data Analysis, and Interpretation
4. **Chapter IV:** Conclusion and Suggestions

Final Checks:

- Revise and proofread your draft multiple times.
- Ensure page numbers, tables, and figures are labelled correctly.
- Verify that citations and bibliography are accurate and complete.
- Discuss your final draft with your supervisor before printing and submission.

Remember, a well-organised and well-written dissertation reflects not only your research skill but also your academic discipline.

7. Dissertation Supervisor

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

Eligibility Criteria for Supervisors:

A dissertation supervisor must belong to one of the following categories:

- a) Faculty members of Sreenarayanaguru Open University
- b) Faculty members (permanent/guest/contractual) from government or aided colleges
- c) Retired faculty members from government/aided colleges or universities
- d) Academic counsellors associated with SGOU
- e) Ph.D. holders

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

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 dissertation / 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/project.

The following actions constitute academic misconduct:

- a) **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.
- b) **Self-Plagiarism:** Reusing your own previously submitted academic work, in part or full, without appropriate disclosure and permission.
- c) **Fabrication:** Inventing, altering, or falsifying data or research findings.

- d) **Cheating:** Receiving or giving unauthorised help in the preparation of the dissertation / project.
- e) **Misrepresentation:** Providing incorrect or misleading information about your research.
- f) **Unauthorised Collaboration:** Working jointly on a dissertation / project that requires individual submission.

Institutional Policy:

All dissertations / projects will be subjected to academic scrutiny, including plagiarism checks. If misconduct is detected, the dissertation / project 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 / Project 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 / project must be spiral bound or hard bound. Use of plastic covers or lamination is not permitted.
- c) A printed dissertation / project should be of minimum 30 pages. If handwritten, it should be a minimum of 35 pages.
- d) The dissertation / project must include a Certificate by the Supervisor and a Declaration by the Learner, both duly signed (refer to Annexures II and III).
- e) The learner must retain one copy of the submitted dissertation / project 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 dissertations must adhere to the formatting and structural guidelines outlined below. Deviation from these standards may result in the return or rejection of the report.

Order of Contents:

1. **Cover Page** – Must include:
 - Title of the Dissertation/Project
 - Name of the Learner

- Enrolment Number
 - Programme Name (MA Economics)
 - Name of the University
 - Date, Month and Year of Submission
2. **Certificate by the Supervisor** (Annexure II)
 3. **Declaration by the Learner** (Annexure III)
 4. **Acknowledgement**
 5. **Table of Contents**
 6. **List of Tables and Figures (if any)**
 7. **Chapters (Minimum 4):**
 - Chapter I: Introduction
 - Chapter II: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework
 - Chapter III: Analysis of Data
 - Chapter IV: Findings, Conclusion, and Policy Suggestions
 8. **Bibliography / References** (APA 7th edition)
 9. **Appendices** (if applicable)

Formatting Specifications:

- Paper size: **A4**, one-side printing
- Font: **Times New Roman**
 - Title: Size 15, Bold
 - Sub-headings: Size 14, Bold
 - Body text: Size 12, Regular
- Line spacing: **Double spacing**
- Paragraph spacing: **No extra spacing** between paragraphs
- Margins: **1.5 inches on the left, 1 inch on all other sides**
- Page numbers: Bottom-right corner of each page
- Each chapter must begin on a **new page**

11. 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: Hiriyan, 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 Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (2022, March 15). Phenomenology. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2022 Edition)*.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology>

12. Viva Voce and Evaluation

The dissertation/project report carries a total of **100 marks**, divided as follows:

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

Dissertation/Project Evaluation Criteria (70 marks):

1. **Relevance and Originality of Topic** – 10 marks
2. **Quality of Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation** – 10 marks
3. **Clarity of Objectives and Hypotheses** – 10 marks
4. **Appropriateness of Methodology** – 15 marks
5. **Data Analysis and Interpretation** – 15 marks
6. **Language, Presentation and Organisation** – 10 marks

Viva Voce Evaluation Criteria (30 marks):

- Conceptual clarity and subject knowledge
- Justification of methodology and research design
- Interpretation of results and conclusions
- Presentation skills and logical reasoning
- Ability to respond to queries related to the research topic

The Viva Voce will be conducted by an external examiner appointed by the University, in the presence of the internal supervisor.

13. Sample Topics for MA Economics Dissertation

The following sample topics are intended to inspire and guide postgraduate learners in selecting a suitable dissertation area. Learners are encouraged to choose topics that align with their academic interests and supervisor's expertise.

1. Development Economics

- Evaluation of MGNREGA and its impact on rural employment
- Gender dimensions of poverty in Kerala
- Inclusive growth and social sector development in India
- Rural infrastructure and regional disparities
- Economic impact of land reforms in India
- Analysis of multidimensional poverty in tribal areas

2. Labour and Employment

- Unemployment and informal labour market dynamics in India
- The gig economy: Impacts on employment security and wages
- Female labour force participation trends in Kerala
- Role of education in wage differentials
- Labour market discrimination in urban India
- Impact of automation on employment in MSMEs

3. Public Finance and Fiscal Policy

- Effectiveness of state-level budgetary allocations on social welfare
- GST and fiscal federalism in India
- Trends in Kerala's public debt and fiscal sustainability
- Efficiency of public expenditure in health and education sectors
- Comparative study of fiscal decentralisation in Indian states
- Public sector borrowing and crowding out effect in India

4. Monetary and Financial Economics

- Digital payment systems and financial inclusion in rural India
- Performance of Regional Rural Banks in post-liberalisation period
- Role of NBFCs in credit distribution in India
- Monetary policy transmission and inflation targeting in India
- Cryptocurrencies and regulatory responses in emerging economies
- Credit risk and non-performing assets in Indian banks

5. Environmental Economics

- Climate change and agricultural productivity in Kerala
- Economics of solid waste management in urban municipalities
- Valuation of ecosystem services: A case study
- Policy instruments for environmental regulation in India
- Carbon trading and clean energy transitions
- Impact of floods and natural disasters on local economies

6. International Economics and Trade

- India's trade performance under WTO regimes
- Currency depreciation and its impact on imports and inflation
- Export performance of Kerala's marine sector
- Bilateral trade relations and FDI inflows
- Global value chains and India's manufacturing exports
- India's trade agreements and domestic industry competitiveness

7. Health, Education and Social Policy

- Economics of public health interventions during pandemics
- Efficiency analysis of higher education institutions in Kerala
- Social protection schemes and their economic impact
- Child malnutrition and food security policies
- Economic evaluation of mental health programmes
- Public-private partnership in primary education delivery

8. Gender and Economics

- Gender budgeting and public expenditure patterns
- Time-use patterns and unpaid work by women
- Impact of SHGs on women's empowerment in Kerala
- Gender gaps in access to formal credit
- Feminisation of agriculture and its implications

9. Urban and Regional Economics

- Urbanisation and housing affordability
- Spatial inequality and regional economic growth
- Migration and urban labour market transformation
- Economics of slum redevelopment and inclusive planning
- Infrastructure and economic performance in smart cities

10. Agricultural and Rural Economics

- Market integration of agricultural commodities
- Farmer distress and rural indebtedness in India
- Agricultural insurance schemes: A critical evaluation
- Organic farming and sustainable agriculture in Kerala
- Impact of climate change on crop yield and farmer income

11. Industry, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

- Role of MSMEs in local economic development
- Start-up ecosystem in Kerala: Challenges and opportunities
- Innovation and productivity in Indian manufacturing
- Industrial policies and regional development
- Labour productivity and wage trends in informal enterprises

12. Digital and Platform Economy

- Economic implications of platform-based labour markets
- Data as a factor of production: Valuation and policy challenges

- E-commerce growth and consumer welfare
- Digital divide and economic inequality in India

13. Political Economy and Institutions

- Economic implications of coalition politics in India
- Institutional reforms and ease of doing business
- Role of judiciary and economic growth
- Political economy of subsidies and electoral cycles

These topics are suggestive and not exhaustive. Learners may select or adopt topics in line with their own interests and data availability. The final title must be approved by the supervisor before proceeding with the research.

14. Supervision and Responsibilities

Role of the Supervisor

- Guide the learner in refining the research topic and objectives
- Recommend appropriate literature, frameworks, and methodology
- Review drafts and provide constructive academic feedback
- Ensure academic honesty and research ethics are maintained
- Approve the final draft before submission

Responsibilities of the Learner

- Initiate contact with the assigned supervisor and schedule regular meetings
- Prepare research proposal and collect relevant literature independently
- Maintain an academic log of meetings and progress
- Submit drafts and respond to feedback within agreed timelines
- 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.

15. Language of the Dissertation

- The dissertation must be written in English.
- 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.

Annexure I: Cover Page

DISSERTATION TITLE

*In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of the Postgraduate
Programme in Economics*

Submitted by:

FULL NAME OF THE LEARNER

Learner Enrolment Number

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME IN ECONOMICS

Under the Supervision of:

NAME OF THE SUPERVISOR



**SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY**

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. 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 PG 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 **Master of Arts in Economics**, 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 III:
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 **Master of Arts in Economics** 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: _____

Name of the LSC: _____