



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

BACHELOR OF ARTS SOCIOLOGY

Sreenarayanaguru Open University, Kollam

UG Dissertation Guidelines

Department of Sociology

1. Introduction As part of the Undergraduate Curriculum, students are required to submit a Dissertation/Project Report (Individual) to the University through the Learner Support Centre in their Sixth Semester which will be evaluated by the external examiner. The BA dissertation/project, offered in the sixth semester, is a core component of all undergraduate programmes at Sreenarayanaguru Open University (SGOU). This course carries six credits and is designed to give learners an opportunity to engage in independent research in the field of Sociology. Under the guidance of a faculty supervisor, each learner selects a topic and develops a project through a process that combines academic inquiry and research skills. Each thesis or dissertation is unique but all share several common elements. The following is not an exact guide but rather a general outline.

2. General Guidelines

- a) Carefully read these guidelines for a detailed understanding of the procedure.
- b) The dissertation should be prepared using standard text processing software such as MS Word or handwritten.
- c) The dissertation should be free from typographical errors. One should ensure uniformity in fonts, text, spacing, margins, figures, tables, etc.
- d) Please ensure that you remove all personal information from your dissertation e.g., email address, mailing or home address, etc. except your Enrollment Number and Name.
- e) The learners shall submit their Dissertation Project in consultation with their respective guides in the set format as described in these guidelines.
- f) The learners shall submit the dissertation to their respective Learner Support Centres before the last date notified by the University.
- g) The Controller of Examinations will announce the last date for the Dissertation/Project submission and the Viva -Voce examination.

3. Step-by-step approach to help you select a suitable topic:

1. Identify your areas of interest: Consider your academic background, previous knowledge and any specific areas within your field that you find particularly engaging. Selecting a topic you're passionate about keeps you motivated throughout the research process.

2. Explore existing research: Review recent dissertations, scholarly articles, and conference proceedings to understand current research trends and identify potential gaps in knowledge.

3. Consult with your Guide/Supervisor: Discuss potential topic ideas with your dissertation guide, who can provide guidance and insights based on their expertise.

4. Assess feasibility: Evaluate whether you have access to the necessary resources and data and ensure that the topic can be realistically researched within the allotted time.

5. Consider originality: While building upon existing research is important, aim for a topic that offers a novel perspective or addresses a previously unexplored aspect of the field.

6. Refine and define: Once you have a potential topic, further refine it by developing a clear research question and formulating a specific scope for your research.

7. Develop a title: A good dissertation title should be descriptive, precise, and accurately reflect the scope and focus of your research.

4. Literature Review:

a) Define Scope and Objectives: Clearly define the scope of your literature review and set specific objectives. Decide what aspects you want to focus on.

b) Search and Gather: Use academic databases, libraries, and reputable sources to gather relevant literature. Keep track of sources for citation purposes.

c) Read and Analyze: Read the selected literature critically, taking notes on key findings, methodologies, and any gaps or contradictions in the research.

d) Organize and Synthesize: Categorize the literature based on themes or topics. Synthesize the information to highlight key trends, debates, and gaps in the existing knowledge.

5. Research Methodology:

The research methodology for undergraduate dissertations should be simple, systematic, and feasible within the available time and resources. **Students are expected to clearly state the research objectives or research questions**, which define what the study aims to explore, understand, or analyze. Based on the nature of the topic, an appropriate research design such as **descriptive, exploratory, or analytical should be selected**. The **study area and universe** (total population under study) must be identified, followed by **the selection of a manageable sample** using basic sampling techniques such as random, convenience, or purposive sampling. **Data collection should include both primary data and secondary data**. Primary data may be collected through simple tools like structured or semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, or observation, depending on the topic. Secondary data can be gathered from books, journals, government reports, official websites, and reliable online sources. Students are encouraged to use basic methods of data analysis, such as classification, tabulation, and percentage analysis, supported by charts or graphs where necessary. The methodology should ensure clarity, reliability, and ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality of respondents.

6. Executing the Research Project: The execution of a research project involves various steps, which include collection of data, analysis and interpretation of data and formulation of conclusions, and generalizations. The range of research methods available for designing, carrying out and analyzing the results of research is wide and there are different ways of thinking about and categorizing them. Throughout the research process, remember to seek guidance from your supervisor. They can provide valuable feedback, relevant sources, and overall support.

7. Writing and Presentation: Writing your dissertation allows you to convey your research findings, analysis, and conclusions in a clear and organized manner. It demonstrates your ability to conduct independent research, analyze data, and present a cohesive argument. Sharing your work through presentation adds to the collective knowledge of your field. Developing presentation skills is valuable for future academic and professional endeavors. Successfully writing and presenting your dissertation marks a significant achievement in your academic journey. Outline your dissertation with clear sections for introduction, literature review, methodology, discussion, results and conclusion. Start writing each section methodically, ensuring each paragraph flows logically from one to the next. After completing a draft, take time to revise and edit for clarity, coherence, and grammatical accuracy.

8. Dissertation Supervisor Active supervision by an experienced teacher is the most important aspect of any project work. The candidates should finalise the topics in consultation with the Supervisor and seek his/her approval well in time.

Eligibility of Dissertation Supervisor: Dissertation/project supervisor should be an expert or adhered to the relevant subject/discipline and may be drawn from the following categories:

- a) Full-time faculty members of Sreenarayanaguru Open University
- b) Faculty members in government or aided colleges (guest/contract/ permanent faculty)
- c) Retired faculty members of government/aided colleges or Universities.
- d) Academic Counsellor associated with the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.
- e) Ph.D. holders in the relevant subject/discipline.

9. Bio Data cum Certificate of Supervisor Submit the Bio *Data cum Certificate* of your supervisor in the prescribed format (See Annexure I) along with your Dissertation/Project Report to the Learner Support Centre, before the last date notified by the University for Submission.

10. Academic Integrity: Learners should be aware of various forms of academic misconduct which are not encouraged

1. Plagiarism: Presenting work or ideas from another source as your own, with or without consent of the original author, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement is treated as plagiarism. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this. The use of material generated wholly or in part through use of artificial intelligence will also be considered as plagiarism. Plagiarism can also include

re-using your own work without citation. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence

2. Self-plagiarism: Self-plagiarism means reusing your own previously published work, whether text, data, or ideas, without proper acknowledgement or permission, as if it were new and it will be considered as a form of academic dishonesty.

3. Fabrication: Inventing or manipulating data or sources.

4. Cheating: Unauthorized assistance in academic work.

5. Misrepresentation: Providing false information about academic work.

6. Unauthorized collaboration: Working with others when individual work is required. These forms of misconduct will lead to cancellation of the report and punishments as per University Regulations.

CAUTION

The Dissertation Project Report must be the original work of the candidate. Every candidate is required to make his/her own study and findings. Two candidates can not submit a common Dissertation Project Report on the same topic. The presentation of material common with any report submitted in the same session or in the past in any Department/College/Institution will be considered as a case of copying and would lead to cancellation of Dissertation/Project Report apart from registration of unfair means case under the “Regulations for the Prevention of Malpractices in University Examinations 2023” against the candidate.

11. Dissertation Submission

- a) Learners must submit one hard copy of the completed dissertation/project before the last date notified by the University to their respective Learner Support Centre.
- b) The dissertation should be hard bound/spiral-bound with double-sided printing.
- c) Do not use plastics as cover, facing sheet or for lamination.
- d) Students may choose to submit either a printed or handwritten dissertation.
- e) The project must be submitted on or before the last date notified for submission with the certificate and signature of the Supervisor to the respective Learner Support Centre.
- f) The learner must attend a Viva Voce of the dissertation/project for the completion of the course on a date and venue notified by the University.
- g) One hard copy of the dissertation should be kept by the learner and bring it while appearing for the Viva Voce Examination.

h) It is advisable to retain a soft copy of the dissertation by the learners.

12. Format

The University recommends the following general format for B.A. Dissertation/Project in BA Sociology:

Structure of the Dissertation/Project

1. Cover Page

The cover page must include the following:

- Title of the dissertation/project
- Name of the learner
- Enrollment number
- Programme Name: BA Sociology
- Name of the university (Sreenarayanaguru Open University)
- Submission date

2. Certificate

Certificate from the Supervisor:

A certificate is to be attached with the report as page 2 signed by the supervisor certifying that the work is original and completed under their guidance (See Annexure II).

3. Declaration by the Learner:

A statement signed by the learner declaring that the dissertation/project is their original work (See Annexure III) is to be attached with the report as page 3.

4. Acknowledgment

A brief section where learners express gratitude to those who supported them in the completion of the project (page 4).

5. Table of Contents

A list of all sections and subsections of the dissertation with page numbers (page 5).

6. Dissertation Chapters

The structure of the dissertation should follow this format:

The Main Text includes 5 chapters, including introduction and conclusion.

1. Chapter I: Introduction
2. Chapter II: Review of Literature

3. Chapter III: Research Methodology
4. Chapter IV: Data Analysis and Interpretation
5. Chapter V: Conclusion

Conclusion should reflect the validation of research objectives/questions not as a summary of the chapters. Suggestions, recommendations and limitations may be added after conclusion. The questionnaire used for data collection should be attached in the end part after references and appendixes.

7. References: Include all sources cited in the Dissertation in APA 7th edition style as given below:

1. Book:

1) Single Author:

Author's Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Publisher. Year.

- Burgess, R. (2019). *Rethinking global health: Frameworks of power*. Routledge.

2) Multiple Authors:

First Author's Last Name, First Name, and Second Author's First Name Last Name. *Title of Book*. Publisher. Year.

- Kaufman, K. A., Glass, C. R., & Pineau, T. R. (2018). *Mindful sport performance enhancement: Mental training for athletes and coaches*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000048-000>

2. Articles from Journals:

Author Last Name, First Name. "Capitalised Title of Article." Capitalised and Italicized Journal Title, vol. #, no. #, season or month + year, page numbers. Capitalized, Italicized Name of Database if Applicable, URL OR DOI (in URL form).

- McCauley, S. M., & Christiansen, M. H. (2019). Language learning as language use: A cross-linguistic model of child language development. *Psychological Review*. 126(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000126>

3. Edited Book Chapter:

- Zeleke, W. A., Hughes, T. L., & Drozda, N. (2020). Home-school collaboration to promote mind-body health. In C. Maykel & M. A. Bray (Eds.), *Promoting mind-body health in schools: Interventions for mental health professionals*. (pp. 11-26). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000157-002>

4. Online Magazine Article

- Thomson, J. (2022, September 8). Massive, strange white structures appear on Utah's Great Salt Lake. Newsweek. [Massive, Strange White Structures Appear on Utah's Great Salt Lake - Newsweek](#)

13. Typographical Instructions

Recommended Total Pages:

A minimum of 25 pages

Handwritten dissertation:

A minimum of 30 pages

- Place all page numbers to the right of the page, "1" from the bottom right edge.
- The pagination on the first page should be hidden.
- Paper must be A4 size only
- The project needs to be spiral-bound or hard bound, and double-sided printing can be done.
- Paragraphs and line spacing: double space between lines [MLA format].
- Double space between paragraphs. No additional space between paragraphs.
- Start a new Chapter on a new page.
- Chapter headings (bold/centred) must be identical
- Chapter Headings: Times New Roman, Size 16, Bold, Double Spacing, Centre of Page
- Sub-headings: Times New Roman, Size 14, Bold, 1.5 Spacing, Justified alignment
- Body: Times New Roman, Size 12, 1.5 Spacing, Justified alignment.
- If the dissertation is typed in Malayalam, Font 'Meera' to be used with font size: 13.
- Page Margins of 2.5 cm on each side.

14. Assessment and Evaluation

The purpose of the dissertation/project report is to enable you to demonstrate your capacity to carry out a substantial piece of independent research work on a selected topic of your choice.

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

a. **70 Marks for dissertation/project report evaluation**

b. **30 Marks for Viva Voce Examination (based on the dissertation project/report)**

Your dissertation/project report will be assessed according to the following four criteria:

- 1) Novelty and originality
- 2) Quality and coherence
- 3) Inclusion of necessary components such as methodology and framework
- 4) Overall contribution to knowledge

Criteria of Evaluation:

1. Introduction - 5 marks
2. Review of literature - 5 marks
3. Research Methodology - 10 marks
4. Statement of Problem - 5 marks
5. Research objectives/questions - 5 marks
6. Data collection and analysis - 20 marks
7. Findings and conclusion - 15 marks
8. References - 5 marks

15. Sample Topics

The following is a spread of sample topics/themes/areas which can be chosen by the candidates for preparing the projects/dissertations:

UG Sociology

1) Society & Culture

- Changing family structures in Kerala (joint → nuclear families)
- Influence of social media on youth culture
- Changing marriage patterns (love vs arranged marriage)
- Inter-caste/inter-religious marriages: attitudes among youth

2) Technology & Society

- Impact of smartphones on student life
- Social media addiction among college students
- Online learning vs classroom learning: student perspectives
- Digital divide in rural vs urban Kerala
- Use of WhatsApp in family communication

3) Education

- Dropout reasons among school/college students

- Effectiveness of government education schemes in Kerala
- Gender differences in educational aspirations
- Private vs government school experiences
- Role of parents in students' academic success

4) Gender Studies

- Women's participation in the workforce in Kerala
- Gender roles in household work
- Awareness about gender equality among youth
- Women self-help groups (Kudumbashree) and empowerment
- Domestic violence awareness and reporting

5) Economy & Work

- Unemployment among educated youth in Kerala
- Migration (Gulf migration) and its impact on families
- Gig economy (delivery workers, drivers) – working conditions
- Small business challenges in local areas
- Impact of tourism on local livelihoods

6) Rural & Urban Life

- Rural vs urban lifestyle differences
- Waste management practices in local communities
- Urbanization and its impact on traditional life
- Housing conditions in low-income areas
- Role of local self-government (Panchayat)

7) Health & Society

- Mental health awareness among students
- Lifestyle diseases (diabetes, BP) in Kerala families
- Public vs private healthcare experiences
- Alcohol consumption and its social impact
- Health-seeking behavior in rural areas

9) Social Issues

- Substance abuse among youth
- Elderly care and loneliness
- Poverty and access to basic services
- Role of NGOs in community development
- Child labour awareness (even if rare locally)

10) Environment & Society

- Public awareness about climate change
- Plastic use and waste disposal habits
- Water scarcity or conservation practices

- Role of youth in environmental protection
- Impact of floods (Kerala context) on communities

Learners are encouraged to consult with their supervisors to refine their topics and ensure they align with both academic standards and the objectives of the dissertation/project course. This guidance applies to topics from all disciplines, encompassing a wide range of research areas beyond the specific disciplines. Learners are free to choose topics of dissertation/project on their own provided the same is approved by the supervising teacher.