



Guidelines for the Usage of the Terms Thesis, Treatise, Dissertation and Essay as Units of Study Within Coursework Programs

Approved by: Academic Board on 11 March 1998
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Amended by: Academic Board on 2 November 2005
Contact: Chair, Graduate Studies Committee

The Board endorsed the following recommendations of the Graduate Studies Committee:

That

1. There be a transparent hierarchical structure that determines when it is appropriate to use each term to describe the written output of a project undertaken by an individual postgraduate student. The distinction between the terms will be based on the type of degree in which it is undertaken and the length of the written output of the project.
2. The term "thesis" be reserved exclusively for use in research degrees in which it is the sole or major examinable assessment requirement of candidature. As such, it would apply to Doctor of Philosophy degrees, professional doctorates and Master of Philosophy programs (or equivalent), i.e., to programs in which the word length requirement is normally of the order of 40,000 to 80,000 words. The term "thesis" would therefore not be used at all in the context of units of study in coursework programs.
3. The term "long essay" will no longer be used.
4. The three terms "treatise", "dissertation" and "essay" would be used only in majority coursework programs in which there is more than one component of examinable assessment, i.e., either a second piece of research and/or one or more coursework units of study.
5. The distinction between the terms "treatise", "dissertation" and "essay" to be based on word length in the order listed below under "implementation".
6. Formal supervisory arrangements must be in place for any student project which has a written output in excess of 8,000 words. These projects should constitute a unique unit of study (or whole number multiples of units of study) within a postgraduate research or coursework program.
7. The usage of the terms "treatise" and "dissertation" be as listed below under "implementation" rather than following the dictionary definitions.

Implementation: The entire paragraph on page 4 of the 1997 Postgraduate Studies Handbook is replaced by the following:

Thesis The written output from a supervised student project that is the only or major examinable assessment requirement for a research degree. Word limit: should not normally exceed 80,000 words.

Treatise The written output from a supervised student project that is undertaken towards a majority coursework degree for which some coursework and some research work are examinable components. Word limit: should not normally exceed 40,000 words.

Dissertation The written output from a supervised student project that is undertaken as a unit of study (or multiples of units of study) within a coursework postgraduate program. Word limit: should not normally exceed 20,000 words.

Essay The written output from an unsupervised student project that is an assessment requirement for a unit of study within a coursework postgraduate program. Word limit: should not normally exceed 8,000 words.