SWM617/6171 Supervised Research Thesis – Guidelines for Students

**Background:** The Supervised Research Thesis is one of three options you have to complete the ‘capstone experience’ of SWMS Masters degrees, and the only one with advanced entry criteria. As such, thesis option is explicitly aimed at the academically higher-achieving students in any given cohort.

To enrol, a student must have:
- completed 24 credit points of their Masters, including all their core units;
- attained at least a Distinction grade average in their units;
- the approval of the Dean of the Sir Walter Murdoch School of Public Policy and International Affairs.

**Details:** The thesis can be done as either a 6-point (10,000-12,000 word) or 9-point (12,000-15,000 word) thesis on a relevant public policy or international affairs topic under the supervision of a member of academic staff. Students will need to display skills in research design, analysis and critique, together with high level written communication, organisation and time management, and the capacity for self-directed and independent learning. Note that under the Murdoch regulations, 1 point = 50 hours of study time.

**SWM618 Social Science Research Design:** Students must complete this 3-point unit, ideally before beginning the thesis or otherwise concurrently with it, and hence obtain permission to enrol in both units through their single request. The SWM618 Unit Coordinator will also help assess appropriate methodologies for investigating the subject and relevant scholarly literature.

**The process:** Students interested in this option should:
- Begin by discussing their proposed topic with the Capstone Coordinator, who will advise them on the practicality of their proposal and of which scholars within the School may be able to supervise the subject;
- After securing a suitable supervisor, students then apply in writing to the SWMS Dean, providing an academic transcript and stating supervisor details. Capstone Coordinator to be CC’d into this email and the Dean’s response.
Once admitted, the student, with the supervisor, will complete a Research Thesis Proposal Form and forward it to the Capstone Coordinator who shares with the Academic Chair.

By completing SWM618 Social Science Research Design, students will have already identified a proposed subject, prepared a literature review and chosen an appropriate methodology before beginning the Supervised Research Thesis. This will provide the student with the fundamental building blocks for framing their hypothesis/research questions and using an appropriate combination of theory, data and method to conduct their analysis.

**Supervision:** The supervisor’s responsibilities are: to guide the student, offer advice and constructive criticism along the way, and – in the case of the 6-point option – assess the success of the final product. Students should be encouraged to produce a publication-ready paper which could be submitted to a scholarly journal in their field, and to present the paper in a public forum if possible. Supervision will involve regular meetings for most students; for those who work fulltime it is likely to involve more email and phone discussions with meetings as needed.

**Thesis format:**

- A4 size paper (297 x 210 mm).
- The thesis will need to be typed or word processed in 12-point font. Please use 1.5 line spacing for the main text, single spacing for content footnotes, bibliography etc. and consider using recycled paper. Leave margins of 4.5 cm on the left and 2 cm top, bottom and right for comments. You may print on both sides of the paper.
- Figures and tables must have a title and legend, and should be referred to in the text to make their relevance clear. Bulky or extensive tables or lists of raw data are best placed in appendices.
- Use Chicago reference style and use it consistently throughout.

The setting out should be as follows:

- **Title page:** A good title should attract readers and be as short and specific as possible, while focusing on the problem posed. On the title page you should also include your name, student number and declaration (see below).

- **Declaration:** This should include the statement: “I declare that this thesis is my own account of my own research. It contains as its main content work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any university”, followed by your signature and the date of declaration. This can also go on the title page.
• Table of Contents: This can be as simple as listing the chapter titles with page numbers.

• Acknowledgements: These are optional.

• Abstract: This should give the flavour of your report and essential findings or main argument without the detail. An abstract should be around 200 words and provide a one-paragraph summation of your thesis.

• Introduction: This should provide a concise background to the problem under consideration. It should contain: a clear statement of the aim and scope of the thesis, i.e. what is the issue that needs to be addressed; a brief review of the relevant literature to place your work in context; a definition of any new and important technical term(s); a statement of how the rest of the thesis will be organised.

• Main Body: This will be in chapters, normally between two to three in number.

• Conclusion: This should set out your main findings and or argument. It is important that what you say in the conclusion is fully demonstrated in the main body of the thesis.

• Bibliography.

Submission: Students must submit their final thesis for assessment by the end of Week 14 of the semester in which they are enrolled in the unit. In exceptional circumstances, students needing an extension should request one from their supervisor, who should notify the Capstone Coordinator and Academic Support Officer if granted.

Prior to submission, students should have each copy of their thesis spiral bound. The Copy Centre in the main Library (Link Level 2) is able to do this quite quickly and can also produce your multiple copies. The cost of preparation of a thesis is essentially borne by the student, but the University provides up to $50 reimbursement with supporting receipts (see below).

Assessment: Assessment of the final product will be conducted by the supervisor and an additional examiner in the case of 6-point theses, and by two independent examiners in the case of the 9-point thesis.
The submission procedure is:

1. Student submits temporary bound hard copies (3 copies for 9 point; 2 copies for 6 point) to the School of Management and Governance Reception by 16:00 hours on Friday, Week 14, for the attention of the Academic Support Officer, Sir Walter Murdoch School. Students also submit an unlocked Word document to the LMS unit website by the same deadline. Students must hit the submit button and complete an electronic declaration of originality. An Urkund report will be generated at this time but not shared with students – it is for teaching staff only. Students are required to fill in a claim form for up to $50 production costs, providing receipts to show expenditure, and complete a submission form as declaration of copyright; these are available from Reception.

2. Academic Support Officer advises students unofficially of grades once theses have been examined and sends them their examiners’ reports.

3. Results provides official notification to the student of their grade in due course.

4. M&G Librarian emails student requesting e-submission (9 point thesis only).

5. Academic Support Officer forwards the clean hard copy to Library with the submission form.