



Masters of Philosophy (M Phil) in Marketing

Student Guidelines: Research Proposal and Report (DISS)

1. Introduction

The objective of the M Phil in Marketing is to provide you with the opportunity to experience a research project that relates to marketing management. You may study any relevant aspect of the broad marketing management field using research data specifically collected for the purpose of the research. The outcome of the research must be reported in a dissertation, which forms the core element of the degree.

Dissertation work must be original work and not merely a rehash of previously published research or dissertations completed. In all cases, the study itself must therefore be your own work and an original contribution is expected.

After registration you will be allocated a supervisor who will guide you (process wise) through the proposal stage to the final report stage. Once the supervisor has approved your proposal it will be submitted to the Research Committee for final approval.

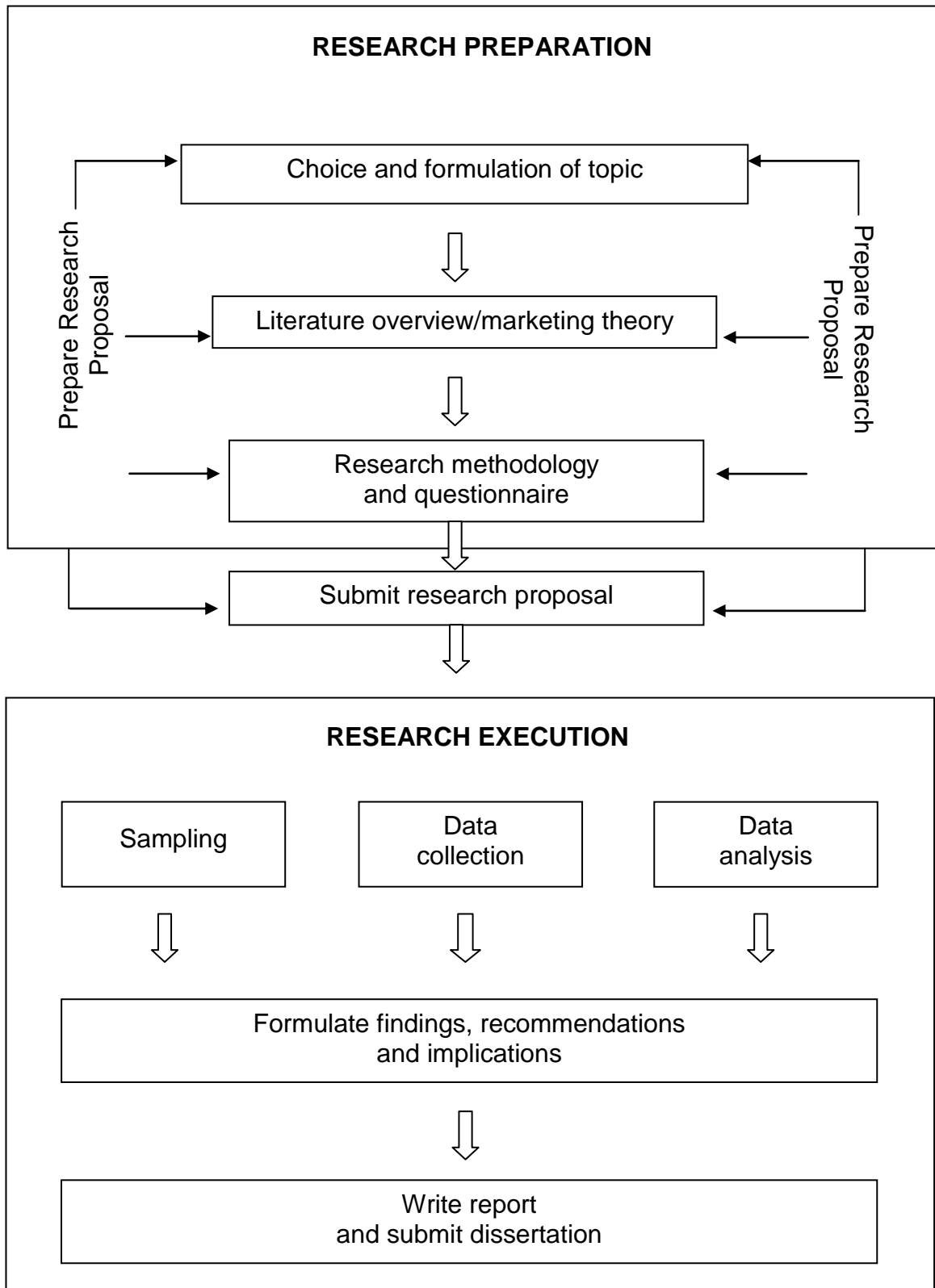
You must however, take full responsibility for the planning, execution and writing of the dissertation. This must be an individual effort and it is not the duty of the supervisor to ensure completion.

By following these guidelines, you will achieve your objectives in the most effective manner in the minimum time.

These guidelines address all relevant aspects of the dissertation with particular reference to the choice of topic, writing of the research proposal, technical guidelines and some practical tips.

As an introduction, please see Figure 1 below for an outline of the whole research process that should be followed.

Figure 1: Outline of the research process for a dissertation



2. Choosing a topic

The first challenge you will face – in many cases the most critical one – is the choice of a topic for your research. For many, this is the first time having to do their own research, and the choice of a topic can be problematic. The purpose of this section is to provide you with guidelines on choosing a topic that meets the requirements for a dissertation topic, as determined by the IMM GSM.

Two broad-thinking strategies should be used for the generation and formulation of research topics. The following outline provides the most common techniques, as well as the criteria used to evaluate the alternative topics.

Rational thinking strategies	Creative thinking strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relation to your own interests, knowledge and experience• Looking at previous research topics and dissertations• Discussion with peers and supervisor• Searching/reviewing the literature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping a notebook of your or others' ideas• Explore past topics that interested you for suggestions for 'future research'• Draw a relevance tree• Brainstorm with peers/colleagues.

Adapted from: Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A., 1997. *Research Methods for Business Students*. London: Pitman.

Be worthy of research

There should be a business and academic need for the research and it should address an existing problem worthy of a solution. The topic should not be trivial or merely a description of an existing situation. A 'case study', and therefore a pure literature review, is generally not accepted. On the other hand, a study that applies recent developments and advances in the marketing science is acceptable.

The topic should be amenable to research methods

Sufficient and relevant data should be available for analysis, since the absence of data on a topic would not be accepted as an excuse for the lack of data analysis. In addition, the methodologies to be used should be available and decided upon in advance (see Figure 1). The topic should not be so broad or wide as to be impractical from a data collection, technical, cost or time perspective.

Be achievable in reasonable time

As a measure of good time planning, candidates should submit a project time schedule with their research proposals. If a topic that involves an extended time horizon (longitudinal) is chosen, it should be done with the consequence of extended study duration. It is also important to realise that certain times of the year, such as December/January or a financial year end, are not convenient for empirical research and usually lead to poor response rates. Candidates must be realistic in their time-scheduling and allow sufficient time to reach each milestone, rather than procrastinating on deadlines. This is the most common reason for the late submission of dissertations.

Possess symmetry of possible outcomes

The findings of your research may have many implications. The relative benefits of each of these implied outcomes should be investigated. A mathematical modelling study is such an example. In this instance you may apply a model or algorithm and find that it 'works'. However it might not and in such a case, you will have to provide reasons why it did not work.

The topic should provide for professional development

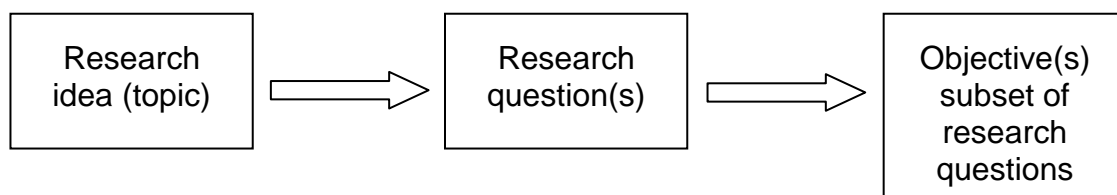
Dissertations should not be seen as yet another assignment or a chore to be completed with as little effort as possible, and then forgotten. If commitment and diligence is high, the topic well-chosen and the research issues properly formulated and analysed, the candidate should then have an advanced understanding of the issues investigated and thus develop both his/her business and marketing acumen. If there is a need for such research, the candidate will find that others have a continuing interest in the area and he/she will be able to make a contribution from a professional point of view. It is possible to make the dissertation a career stepping stone and a window to a world-class understanding of the marketing science.

3. The research proposal

With reference to Figure 1, candidates are reminded that the writing of a research proposal entails more than merely submitting a document called ‘the research proposal’. The process of choosing a dissertation topic is the first of a series of activities required in the formulation of a research proposal. An essential part of the research process is the research preparation phase, which consists of choosing the research topic, the literature review, the choice of appropriate data collection methodologies and finally, the research proposal.

In order to explain the relationship between the different activities involved in the writing of a research proposal, it is necessary to look at the process of turning research ideas into research projects. This process is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: From research ideas to research objectives



Much of the success of the research proposal, and for that matter the dissertation, relies on how well the research problem has been defined. The importance of well-formulated research objectives cannot be over-emphasised, as they are often the most important criteria used in evaluating research proposals and, eventually, also the dissertation.

The following guidelines will help you in formulating better research objectives:

- Avoid research questions that are too difficult.
- Do not ask research questions that do not offer any new insight into the problem.
- Begin with one general research question that flows from your topic, which can lead to several other more detailed research questions.
- Research questions may flow from reviewing relevant literature.
- Clues of research questions are found in 'suggestions for future research' from journal articles.

Writing the research proposal:

Writing a research proposal can be compared to the drawings of a plan of a house before building – it is a crucial part of the research process. By putting a great deal of effort into the preparation of your proposal, you will ensure careful attention to potential pitfalls and consider alternative methodologies, before choosing the best methodology for the context of your topic and control over the execution of the research plan.

The purpose of a research proposal is as follows:

- **Organising your thinking**

Writing the research proposal is a disciplined technique to ensure that your thinking strategy is linear in nature and does not leave important gaps in your

reasoning. It will help you to organise your ideas into coherent research plans. It will also establish a business case for your research work.

- **Blueprint for execution**

The research proposal directs your thinking through every aspect of the proposed research before execution of the actual dissertation. It is literally therefore the guide for conducting the study. Once approved, the research proposal will also act as a safeguard against unplanned research action or unrelated interference whilst in the research process.

- **Convincing your audience**

Since the research proposal must be completed before the study actually starts, it must be seen as an opportunity to convince the evaluators of the value of the proposed research. It will also act as an evaluation soundboard for you.

4. The layout of a research proposal

The following major headings must be used. An indication of the suggested page length for each section is given in brackets.

- **Title, name and date of proposal** (1 page)

- **Background** (2-3 pages)

The background paragraphs of the proposal contain a brief overview of the proposed research. It will mainly describe the context of the proposed study and will introduce the reader to the topic.

- The **problem review** (1-2 pages) translates this contextual background into theoretical and business issues (constructs) that need further elucidation. This

requires a high level of reflective thinking in identifying key constructs emanating from the problem in context (see Kolb, 2008, pp.36-44). Issues of this nature will be discussed in depth in the research workshops.

- **Problem statement** (1-2 pages)

A problem statement is a discussion of exactly what is to be studied or formulated into a research problem. The research problem could even be formulated as specific research questions. The statement of the research problem should include an explanation as to why the specified problem or area of research is worth investigating (i.e. both an academic and a business case).

- **Research questions** (simple bulleted list of at least 6-8 questions)

Brainstorm the problem statement and list a number of potential research questions that you consider appropriate to the research. These can be presented in bullet format.

- **Research objectives** (3-4 pages)

As stated in Figure 2, the research topic should be formulated into research questions and eventually, research objectives.

Research objectives are thus a subset of the research questions

Apply the SMART test to the research questions to end with Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Timeous objectives.

Objectives are written as (1-2 lines each)

To...

To...etc.

- **Statement and motivation of hypotheses or propositions** (1-2 pages)

This section of the research proposal deals with the statement of research hypotheses to be tested through research and is applicable in cases where a quantitative research methodology is to be followed. If appropriate, candidates are referred to relevant literature on research methodology for the technical requirements on the formulation of hypotheses (with specific reference to the statistical implications of stating and testing of hypotheses).

- **Marketing and business considerations** (1-2 pages)

Discuss possible marketing and business theory that will assist you in unravelling the underlying complexity of your research (see article on research complexity). In this section you need to establish a business and marketing case for your research. (See also Appendix A – Theoretical considerations for more details.)

- **Scope and limitations of proposed research** (not more than 1 page).

- **Literature review** (4-5 pages)

The literature review plays an important part in the inductive research process – namely, to understand the topic and related theory of which it forms a part. Candidates will have to display their ability to at least cover the significant body of literature that is relevant for the research topic. In the absence of a review of the literature, a research design is very shallow and does not make a contribution any more than the mere submission of yet another assignment. Attention must also be given to other significant research that has been conducted on the topic.

The approach here will be to identify 4-6 main themes or business issues opened up in the background discussions. Cover each heading with at least 1 page per heading and at least 5-6 different authors per heading.

- **The research plan (2-3 pages)**

Candidates may follow either a quantitative or qualitative model of research, or a combination of both.

In this section, the candidate specifies and justifies the proposed method of measurement. Attention should be given to the following:

- Describing the research subjects
- A description of the research design (exploratory, descriptive, casual, predictive)
- Addressing the sampling plan, if applicable
- Explaining the instruments of data collection that will be used
- A brief description of the research procedures that will be followed
- Use 3-4 different textbooks as supporting theory where appropriate.

Please note: Students should also provide a provisional questionnaire (data collection instrument); see explaining instruments of data collection above.

- **Proposed methods for processing, analysing and interpretation of data (1 page)**

It is necessary to anticipate which statistical methodologies (if applicable) will be used for the data analyses and specifically, how the stated hypotheses will be tested. The reason why students often struggle with this section is directly related to the lack of research problem definition, the improper formulation of research questions and objectives, and most importantly, the poor statement of hypotheses. The proper definition and formulation of a hypothesis will direct the student to the type of statistical analysis required.

In the case of qualitative research, the qualitative data analysis techniques must also be indicated.

- **Timing schedule with detailed deadlines for critical milestones** (1 page)

- **Potential outcomes and conclusion** (1 page)

In this section you must indicate the following:

- ✓ Possible findings
- ✓ Possible recommendations
- ✓ Possible implications of findings.

- **Reference List**

A reference list of all cited literature should be attached to the research proposal and should be in the correct technical format, as prescribed by the Harvard Referencing System.

5. The evaluation of research proposals

Frequently, students ask how a research proposal is evaluated. The following guidelines are offered as the typical criteria used to evaluate a research proposal:

- A research proposal is the only document that is used by both supervisors and students to evaluate the proposed research suggested in the proposal.
- The proposal is an opportunity to identify problems in the research design and to make suggestions as to how the research plan can be improved.
- A research proposal should have enough detail to allow the evaluator to approve the project and to not have further questions on how the research will be conducted.



Masters of Philosophy (M Phil) in Marketing
Guideline: Research Proposal Project
Supervisor Report – Proposal Stage

Please note:

This is a first stage of the report and the focus should be formative. No marks are therefore given for the proposal. The student will again be evaluated on some of the same issues in the final research report. The focus here however, will be summative.

No MARK ACCORDED	A mark will only be allocated for the final report
Student Name:	
Student No.	
Topic Title	

5.1 TOPIC, OBJECTIVES AND PROBLEM(S)

- Relevance of topic
- Background to the study
- Limitation of the field of study
- Clear objectives set
- Potential for achieving the objectives set
- Clear identification of problem(s).

Comments:	

5.2 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Relevant marketing theory exploited
- Knowledge of the subject
- Exploitation of appropriate marketing and business models and source citation
- Coverage of the subject
- Establishing a marketing and business case
- Relevance to objectives.

Comments:	

5.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

- Recent relevant sources used
- Knowledge of the subject
- Reference technique
- Coverage of the subject
- Relevance of literature to objectives.

Comments:	

5.4 RESEARCH THEORY AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Clear research objectives
- Appropriate research methodology
- Provisional questionnaire (data collection instrument)
- Well-structured practical applications in line with theory
- Sample size and sampling procedure
- Ability to conduct research
- Statistical analyses.

Comments:	

5.5 TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Language
- Style
- Structure of the dissertation (e.g. title page, contents page, etc.)
- Typing and or spelling errors
- Tables, figures, graphs, etc.
- Bibliography
- Appendix.

Comments:	

5.6 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

5.7 Recommendation

Indicate with an 'X'

Repeat	
Continue with changes	
Continue – no changes	
Fail	

Name of Supervisor:	
Signature of Examiner:	
Date:	

5.8 Recommendation of Research Committee

Repeat	
Continue with changes	
Continue – no changes	
Fail	

Name of Chairperson:	
Signature:	
Date:	

6. Outline of the final dissertation (see Appendix A for full details)

The last section of this guideline document deals with the technical details in the layout, structure and content of the dissertation.

▪ The length

The length of the dissertation is normally 25 000 to 30 000 words. Use Arial 12 font with 1.5 spacing.

The structure of the dissertation is as follows:

- ✓ Title page
- ✓ An index of contents with page numbers
- ✓ Chapters.

➤ **Chapter 1 – Introduction and background**

A cut and paste version of the research proposal becomes the first chapter of the dissertation. Specific focus should be on establishing the underlying research postulate that will be developed and researched. (See Appendix A for specific headings for Chapter 1.)

➤ **Chapter 2 – Theoretical marketing and business considerations**

The requirement here is to develop a strong business and marketing case for the research. (See Appendix A for more detail.)

➤ **Chapter 3 – Literature review**

This chapter will be devoted to a full discussion of the relevant literature surrounding the research topic. Students should liberally draw on literature from more recent publications (last 5 years).

➤ **Chapter 4 – Research methodology**

In this chapter, the student must provide a detailed discussion of all relevant methodologies undertaken. Whereas Chapter 1 introduced the methodology to the reader, this chapter will provide details on the methods used in the dissertation research. Further aspects that will require detailed attention include the discussion of the research objectives, research questions, research hypotheses, questionnaire design, sampling design, data capture, analysis and interpretation.

➤ **Chapter 5 – Findings and results**

In Chapter 5, all the research findings must be reported in a well-structured layout, together with the tables, graphs and charts used to substantiate the findings. The findings should be related to the objectives of the study stated in Chapter 1.

➤ **Chapter 6 – Conclusions and recommendations**

The conclusions should come from the substantiated findings reported in the previous chapter. Specific recommendations that address the stated research problem must be made.

➤ **References**

All cited references should be listed in alphabetical order. Do not include references in the bibliography that have not been cited in the chapters and vice versa. Ensure that sources referred to within the dissertation are listed in full in the reference list.

7. Evaluation of the final research report



Masters of Philosophy (M Phil) in Marketing Supervisor and External Marker Evaluation Final Report

Please note:

The proposal or formative section (with no marks) of this report has been completed at the proposal stage.

This is the summative section and marks have accordingly been allocated.

FINAL MARK (%)	
Student Name:	
Student No.	
Topic Title	

7.1 TOPIC, OBJECTIVES AND PROBLEM(S)

- Relevance of topic
- Background to the research problem
- Limitation of the field of study
- Clear objectives set
- Achieving the objectives set
- Clear identification of problem(s).

Maximum Mark	15
Mark Awarded:	

7.2 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Recent marketing theory exploited
- Knowledge of the subject
- Exploitation of marketing and business models with referenced sources
- Coverage of the subject
- Establishing a marketing and business case
- Relevance of marketing theory to objectives.

Maximum Mark	20
Mark Awarded:	

7.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

- Recent relevant sources used
- Knowledge of the subject
- Reference technique
- Coverage of the subject
- Relevance of literature to objectives.

Maximum Mark	20
Mark Awarded:	

7.4 RESEARCH AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Clear research objectives
- Appropriate research methodology
- Questionnaire (data collection instrument)
- Well-structured practical application of research theory
- Sample size and sampling procedure
- Ability to conduct research
- Statistical analyses.

Maximum Mark	15
Mark Awarded:	

7.5 FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Findings
- Conclusions (clear and substantiated)
- Sound recommendations.

Maximum Mark	20
Mark Awarded:	

7.6 TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Language
- Style
- Structure of the dissertation (e.g. title page, contents page, etc.)
- Typing/spelling errors
- Tables, figures, graphs, etc.
- Bibliography
- Appendix.

Maximum Mark	10
Mark Awarded:	
Total Available Marks	100

7.7 Additional comments:

7.8 Final Recommendation

FEEDBACK FROM SUPERVISOR AND EXTERNAL EXAMINER

Please indicate which one of the following you recommend:

No corrections need to be made to the research paper	
Minor corrections should be made	
Further work should be done to revise and then submit for a re-examination	
Further work should be done to extend the research and then resubmit for a re-examination	

Should corrections, revisions or extensions be required, please indicate if they should be done to the satisfaction of the:

Supervisor / Internal Examiner	
Head of Department	
External Examiner	

Indicate with an 'X'

Distinction	
Good	
Average	
Fail	

Name of Supervisor / External:	
Signature:	
Date:	

7.9 Recommendation of Research Committee

No corrections need to be made to the research paper	
Minor corrections should be made	
Further work should be done to revise and then submit for a re-examination	
Further work should be done to extend the research and then resubmit for a re-examination	

Should corrections, revisions or extensions be required, please indicate if they should be done to the satisfaction of the:

Supervisor / Internal Examiner	
Head of Department	
External Examiner	

Indicate with an 'X'

Distinction	
Good	
Average	
Fail	

Signed: Chairperson: IMM GSM Research Committee

Name of Chairperson:	
Signature:	
Date:	

APPENDIX A:



Addendum A: (Supplement to Masters of Philosophy (M Phil) in Marketing Student guidelines)

Masters of Philosophy (M Phil) in Marketing: Proposal and Final Report

1. Introduction

This manual provides an overview of the aim and objectives of IMM GSM as well as establishing the requirements for the M Phil Research Proposal and Final Research Report.

2. Aim and Objectives of the IMM GSM

The IMM GSM Research Committee is committed to initiating and maintaining a high standard of marketing research in an African context. The dual focus of the IMM GSM and thus also inherent in the research report context, are high standards and cutting edge development of both marketing and research practice and theory.

The **marketing focus** is developed through directing students to explore and exploit cutting edge marketing theory and is covered in Chapter 2 of the research report (theoretical considerations). Students are therefore encouraged to explore the newest marketing theory and practice within the framework of their research.

The **research focus** is developed through ensuring that students demonstrate a clear understanding of the theoretical and academic demands of research as well as to gain practical experience in initiating and completing meaningful marketing research outcomes.

A further objective of the IMM GSM is to ensure that the research project follows a well-managed process and time scale. Furthermore **critical analytical reflective analysis** is considered an integral, even basic, component of business and marketing management. The IMM GSM Research Committee thus supports the development of this approach at all stages of the research process.

3. IMM GSM research approach

The research approach taken here is that at the masters level students need to demonstrate a high level of self responsibility.

The approach is also dual focused, i.e. on both demonstration of a high level of marketing research expertise, coupled with the development of a strong business case based on the application of marketing theory (theoretical considerations).

4. Responsibilities of supervisors and students

- A research workshop will be held at the start of the semester. These workshops will review issues such as initiating the research project and the standards demanded of a masters study.
- Although a supervisor will be allocated to every student at the commencement of the study it will be incumbent of the student to document a personally challenging timetable and then to meet the deadlines given in the timetable.
- While good communication between student and supervisor is encouraged it is also accepted that the student will demonstrate a high level of independent study.
- The IMM GSM supports forging closer ties and cooperation with marketing organisations. In support of this development students are encouraged to develop their research in the context of the business and marketing demands of their own organisations. It is however, understood that this will not always be possible.
- The quality of the research report content is the responsibility of the student. The supervisor focus will be the development of the logical flow and structure of the

report. The supervisor may however, recommend content issues but the final content is the responsibility of the student.

- Students are encouraged to publish in appropriate journals. Supervisors must be co-authors and if need be first authors where additional supervisor input is needed to bring the article to publication standards.

5. Marketing research textbook

The recommended textbook for the research module is:

Kolb, B. 2008. *Marketing Research. A Practical Approach*. London: SAGE.

As stated above the IMM GSM Research Committee wishes to direct students to modern approaches to marketing research and Kolb supports this approach (see Table 1.1 in Kolb, 2008, p.11). In getting to grips with what to research read also pp.20-22 in Kolb (2008).

6. The research proposal and report

The following must be read as a supplement to the research proposal and report above.

The research report has two milestones:

Research proposal: Within 6-8 months of commencement of the study.

The research proposal forms the formative stage of the study and no marks are accorded.

The final research report: Within 18-36 months of commencement of the study.

See below for more details of these two milestones.

6.1 The research proposal

The proposal will be a 5 000 to 6 000 word document and cover the following:

The **problem in context** (2–3 pages) provides a contextual background for the research.

The **problem review** (1-2 pages) translates this contextual background into theoretical and business issues (constructs) that need further elucidation. This requires a high level of reflective thinking in identifying key constructs emanating from the problem in context (see Kolb, 2008, pp.36-44). Issues of this nature will be discussed in depth in the research workshops.

The **problem statement** or hypothesis, presents the key focus area for the research. What is required here is firstly a preamble (1-2 pages) setting out the underlying postulates for the research, followed by a definitive or thesis type statement (2 lines) around which the final research conclusions will be made (see Kolb, 2008, p.33 for a definition of hypothesis).

In developing the problem statement the student will be expected to make a clear statement of the academic and business marketing contribution the study will make.

The potential research questions (minimum of 6-8) can simply be a bulleted list of potential questions that could add value to the subject matter.

The research **objectives** are a subset of the above research questions selected after subjecting each research question to a SMART analysis (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timeous). Select 3-4 SMART questions and write them as objectives, i.e.:

To identify

To...etc.

The **theoretical considerations** (2-3 pages) form a vital role in meeting IMM GSM requirements for the development of marketing theory and practice. For this reason students are encouraged to explore marketing theory and considerations in depth. Where practical, develop ideas through discussions with colleagues within your own organisation or if appropriate other external marketing organisations. Students are also directed to exploring the general marketing theory that underpins the research (see your marketing theory textbook for more on this). The exploitation of theoretical considerations (marketing theory) should be used to establish a strong business case for the research. For example the use of marketing models would illustrate far more effectively than words alone the relationship between strategic marketing components and the variables that need to be in place for an effective marketing strategy. Students are therefore encouraged to explore textbooks and lecture notes for a broad view of theoretical considerations. The focus throughout the theoretical considerations must be business focused, i.e. specific to the actual organisation and contextual setting of the research.

Theoretical considerations are differentiated from the literature review through the exploitation or application of appropriate marketing models to the specific marketing issues as opposed to the citation of appropriate literature on the broader academic issues of the research..

Another valuable role in developing an understanding of the theoretical considerations pertinent to the research is that in the process the research questionnaire (data collection instrument) is informed. In other words as you progress with this section, questions pertinent to the objectives will arise that need to be carried over to your questionnaire (see also role of matrices Section 8).

The **literature review** (4-6 pages) should be developed around the constructs or themes identified in the problem review and theoretical considerations. The literature review should provide a wide and diverse view of the underlying academic issues

around the constructs or themes. It should also provide diverse views on issues as opposed to the citation of a single author as the individual 'expert' in the field.

Research theory and design (3-4 pages) including a **provisional questionnaire**. The questionnaire should be informed from both the theoretical considerations and the literature review. You are encouraged to develop matrices of specific theoretical considerations, articles and related questions in the questionnaire as this will assist you in cross referencing your results to your cited literature (see matrix examples Appendix 2).

Provisional questionnaire (data collection instrument)

A **timetable** (1 page) should be documented to the student's own resource and time restraints but should be challenging and achievable within a masters research project timeframe (10-12 months).

The proposal must be in the format of a professional presentation. An Arial 12 font with 1.5 spacing and right justification is recommended. The Harvard citation format is essential. The proposal will be reviewed by the supervisor and presented to the IMM GSM Research Committee for final approval. The marking criteria are as already given.

6.2 The research report

The word count of the final research report should be within the range of 25 000 to 30 000 words.

The proposal will form a good starting point for the final report or more specifically the first 4 chapters of the report.

Once the proposal is accepted the first step will be to review the questionnaire and ensure that the potential response to the questionnaire will allow an in depth analysis of the research objectives.

The questionnaire will then be distributed or the interviews initiated, i.e. the data collection process will be initiated.

The response rate of questionnaires needs to be carefully monitored to ensure that a sufficient number of responses are received (at least 50 in the case of survey questionnaires).

While waiting for the return of the questionnaires Chapters 1-4 can be fine tuned.

Depending on the data analysis techniques to be used the data will be collected and analysed.

Results must be presented per objective (see Chapter 5 of the final report).

Three hard bound copies of the final report must be submitted after all corrections have been made.

The final report and chapter outline is as follows:

The Final Research Report

General outline:

Title page

Declaration of own work/plagiarism

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Table of contents

Glossary

List of tables

List of abbreviations

The research report

Title page as below should be a full page.

TITLE

Presented to

The IMM Graduate School of Marketing

In partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the

M Phil Marketing degree

By

Jonathan Buthelezi

November 2008

Supervisor: Dr Stephen Jones

Tip:

Do not use excessively large letters (font) for the title page as it can look unprofessional; you should view your front page as the window of what is inside, thus a professional view is a good start.

Declaration (separate page):

Own work – this must specifically state the dangers of plagiarism.

Please note we take this matter very seriously and any form of plagiarism will be dealt with severely.

Executive summary: (2 pages maximum). Will include:

What (problem in context)

Why (importance)

Where (scope)

How (methodology)

Aim and objectives (research problem and objectives)

Limitations

Results

Conclusions

Recommendations

The chapters are as follows:

Chapter 1: The problem in context, problem statement, and objectives

Chapter 2: Theoretical considerations

Chapter 3: Literature review

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

Chapter 5: Results and discussion

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

7. References

8. Appendices

The chapter breakdowns with possible subheadings are as follows:

Chapter 1: The problem in context, problem statement and objectives

1.1 Introduction (half a page maximum)

This is an introduction not an executive summary. For example open this section with:

This study will investigate (say what will be investigated) then add 5-6 lines plus why.

Get the reader immediately into what you are going to be reporting on.

1.2 Problem in context (3-5 pages)

In short what you need to do in this section is to provide a wide background to the issues and events leading up to the recognition of the need for this research.

It is recommended that you first do a brainstorming around the provisional topic you intend to research. Weave a logical story around these ideas, i.e. discuss developments within the company that provide a contextual review of the research problem (topic). This generally takes the form of an historic review. Also consider marketing issues of the past and how they might have changed.

Open up the issues in an unbiased manner, i.e. **do not make conclusions, recommendations** or state unsubstantiated personal opinions, etc., etc., i.e. leave all options open.

1.3 Problem review (3-4 pages)

The problem in context has provided a contextual background for the research. The problem review translates this contextual background into a theoretical framework. This requires a high level of reflective thinking by the student in identifying key constructs emanating from the problem in context. Issues of this nature will be developed in depth through appropriate workshops. The problem review is also a key section in that it provides through the identified constructs, the theoretical and academic framework for the research.

1.4 Problem statement (2-3 pages plus thesis statement)

Having explored a range of possible research questions above you now need to select what you consider to be a main question and write this as your thesis or research statement. This is where you make a specific statement as to what you are going to research. This must take the form of a testable (thesis) statement or hypothesis (null hypothesis and alternate hypothesis). Open with a preamble (4-6 lines) as to how the problem statement has arisen from a reflective view of the research questions and then conclude with the problem statement that will be at most 2-3 lines. An example could be:

The problem statement is:

The current marketing strategy is not aligned to brand value enhancement.

or if you chose to go the quantitative research route then state the hypothesis, e.g.

Ho:

Ha:

Do the statement in bold and give it space to make it clearly visible as this also helps the reader or marker to refer back to it from time to time (see example above).

1.5 Research questions:

Bullet list as many logical research questions (8-15) that emanate from a review of your research title or from your brainstorming session.

1.6 Objectives:

- Subject your list of research questions to a SMART analysis (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timeous). Select 3-4 of the questions that meet the SMART criteria and write them as research objectives.
- Your objectives must be a breakdown of your research statement, i.e. if you meet your objectives you will be able to make conclusions on your research statement

- State the objectives as follows; The objectives of this research are:

Objective 1: To identify current market strategies

Objective 2: To review brand enhancement theories

Objective 3: To identify gaps in current strategies and brand value enhancement theories

Reflect shortly on the implications of each objective. In this reflection, e.g. measurability, reflect on what you will measure (unit of analysis) and whether this measurement will be qualitative or quantitative based.

1.7 Importance of the research (2-3 pages)

- Think of this as convincing your CEO of the value of this project
- Include who will benefit, etc.
- You should demonstrate importance not just say it
- Add new thoughts, i.e. do not simply repeat your earlier pages
- Anybody reading should feel inclined to support its funding or at least want to support the project.
- Keep in mind this is a marketing research project thus specific marketing benefits should be explored.

1.8 Assumptions, limitations (weaknesses) and delimitations (scope) (2-3 pages)

Although this area will be more fully explored in Chapter 4 – Research Theory and Design, you need to demonstrate to the reader that you are aware of potential weaknesses in the research, e.g. sample size and sampling technique. Here practical considerations for such weaknesses can be opened up.

1.9 Summary

- Reflect on the major issues identified around the problem
- Use this summary to continue the golden thread into Chapter 2.

Each chapter will start on a new page:

Chapter 2: Theoretical considerations (10-15 pages)

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Theoretical considerations

It is in this chapter that the marketing theory and considerations must be explored in depth. It is especially important in that it establishes the importance of one aspect of the IMM GSM approach, i.e. development of marketing theory and practice. For example open up with an outline of the general marketing theory that underpins the research. Use the theoretical considerations to establish a strong business case for the research. The use of a marketing model should play an important role here, e.g. relating strategic management models with branding. Other theory might include the 4P's, etc.

This chapter is differentiated from Chapter 3 (literature review) through the exploitation of appropriate marketing models as opposed to the citation of appropriate literature.

Chapter 3: Literature review (15-20 pages)

The literature provides the opportunity to read widely (get the bigger picture).

Possible subheadings for Chapter 3:

3.1 Introduction

- Few lines of theory around a literature review
- Re-statement of the golden thread from previous chapter
- Re-statement of the major themes

Chapter 3 will have a further 3-5 subheadings depending on the number of themes identified:

3.2-3.6 Subheadings as defined by the themes

3.7 Summary

- Highlight the most important aspects of the review
- Lead into Chapter 3 – Research design.

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology (10-15 pages)

The demands of this chapter are twofold.

Firstly you must demonstrate a broad grasp of the essential theory underlying a research approach. This theory must be supported by appropriate references.

Secondly the practical application of the research must meet the theoretical requirements presented above. **Thus for every heading there will be 20-25 lines of theory followed by 20-25 lines of application of how the research was done, i.e. theory first followed by what you have done in line with the theory.** Make sure you demonstrate an in depth understanding of the research theory and where appropriate acknowledge shortcomings (weaknesses) due to time restraints, etc.

The what, why, where, how, who, when, etc., must be fully covered.

In this chapter a full exposition of your own investigation must be given. The following aspects require special attention:

The sample(s): You must clearly indicate how the sample or samples were selected. If you used an experimental design, the details of the design of the experiment should be clearly given. The population from which the sample(s) were selected must be clearly

described and characterised. Aspects such as size, age, language, socio-economic status, educational level, must be explicitly mentioned.

Give the sampling frame used to select the sample. Also provide details of how the sampling turned out, by giving the data collection method (personal interview/postal survey) and what the response rate was.

Measuring instruments: You must fully account for the choice of your measuring instruments. The metrical properties of each measuring instrument must be clearly specified. If you are going to determine the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument, you must give the results here.

Data analysis: You must give a full account of the analysis techniques that you apply in your research. If you have used statistical techniques/procedures, you must justify the use of each technique/procedure. Elementary statistical techniques/procedures need not be described in detail and formulas are not necessary. A reference to an authoritative textbook is sufficient. More information should be given if the technique/procedure is not well-known.

Also indicate the **statistical techniques** that you have used for testing each hypothesis and/or proposition. If you use qualitative research methods, your procedure for analysing your qualitative data should also be discussed.

The **limitations** of the study could be given here, since the limitations of a study are very often the result of the chosen research design, or response rates.

Possible subheadings for Chapter 4:

4.1 Introduction

Give 8-10 lines of theory around research design and methodology. The textbook offers great material for this.

4.2 Research design and approach

4.3 Population and sample/sampling method

- Describe the population
- Describe the sample size and sampling technique
- Inclusion/exclusion criteria.

4.4 Data types/unit of analysis

4.5 Data collection techniques

- Measuring instrument must be included (appendix)
- Relationship of questionnaire to objectives (i.e. 1:1 Relationship)
- Time and duration, issues, etc.
- Resources used, etc.

4.6 Validity, reliability, generalisability

Discuss and demonstrate understanding. Also discuss issues such as threats to validity and reliability.

4.7 Bias

Give definition (theory) and discuss possible ways for bias to creep into your research.

4.8 Data analysis techniques

Where appropriate (quantitative study) give theory of statistical analysis and issues around the underlying relationships between the data.

4.9 Limitations and delimitations

Must be briefly discussed and an understanding of the concepts demonstrated.

4.10 Ethical issues/confidentiality

Discuss and demonstrate your understanding and how it might influence your research.

4.11 Pilot study

Give an outline of what you have done in your pilot study and why it was done, i.e. to enhance validity, reliability, etc.

4.12 Summary

- What has been done in this chapter, and
- golden thread to next chapter.

Chapter 5: Results and discussion (20-25 pages)

- Results should be linked to appropriate objectives, i.e. give the objective and then discuss the corresponding results appropriate for that objective.
- Link discussion with related literature review.

Possible headings for Chapter 5:

5.1 Introduction

- Short (3-5 lines theory) plus golden thread
- List research objectives for convenience to the reader.

5.2 Demographics

Provide background information such as response rate, and relevant demographics of the participants, e.g. position, marketing experience, etc.

5.3 Individual headings as per objectives, i.e. 5.3-5.5.

- Presentation and discussion of all results pertaining to specific objective
- Use of golden thread matrix or mind map to relate to appropriate literature.

5.6 Summary

- What has been done in this chapter, and
- golden thread to next chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations (10-15 pages)

Possible headings:

6.1 Introduction – theory and golden thread

Where appropriate provide the research statement and direct conclusions to this. Cut and paste the research statement from Chapter 1 as an easy reference.

6.2 Conclusions

Provide an integrated view of all the objectives then focus on the research statement and direct your conclusions to this statement. This will also be a good time to refer back to your discussion of generalisability in your research design chapter. Reflect on the generalisability of your results to your original population (this will include some reflection on validity). In short:

- Discuss directly with respect to problem statement or hypothesis
- Give implications of the results
- Strategic ramifications of the study
- Must be in line with what was found in the study (i.e. not own conclusions).

6.3 Recommendations

- Practical and theoretical
- In line with research results
- Further research, etc.

6.4 Summary

7. References

8. Appendices

The evaluation format for the research report is outlined in the guidelines above.

End of report