**THE EMIRATES ACADEMY OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT**

**MBA THESIS HANDBOOK**

**Course: DISS901**

**Revised March 2019**

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# Introduction

The Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management (EAHM) thesis handbook provides guidelines for the preparation and submission of the DISS 901 thesis and should be read in conjunction with the DISS 901 syllabus. Before beginning the thesis research, a plan of the proposed research must be prepared, submitted, and assessed as a pass; this plan is called a Research Proposal. Once the research Proposal has been passed, the research for the thesis may proceed as planned.

This handbook provides information on the research proposal requirements followed by the requirements for the structure, preparation and submission of a thesis. Students are expected to familiarise themselves with the handbook and use the handbook as their first point of reference. The handbook is not intended to be an exhaustive document and students should consult with their course supervisor for additional references as required.

# Research Proposal

In preparing for your research, you must submit a research proposal. Your research proposal should have a length of 4000 to 5000 words and be prepared using the Harvard referencing format. The topic of the research should be related to any area of relevance to the tourism or hospitality industries. It is important to ensure that your proposal is realistic to achieve given the time and resource constraints for completing your thesis. The purpose of a research proposal is to convince your target audience (your thesis supervisor and other examiners) that your thesis research is: doable, relevant, and worthy of satisfying the DISS 901 thesis requirement.

To continue in the DISS 901 course a Pass is required for the Research Proposal. Your proposal will be assessed, using the rubric outlined in the course syllabus, by your supervisor and a second marker.

Formative feedback on your proposal will be given within one week after the proposal submission date. In the event that your proposal is assessed as a fail, you will have one opportunity to submit a revised proposal. If a revision is required, the resubmitted proposal must be completed and submitted within two weeks of receiving the formative feedback. Failure on a revised proposal will result in failure of MBA post graduate thesis.

Once a proposal is passed, the proposal is your plan for the research. Any substantive change to the research plan, such as a change in research objectives or method, must have prior approval from your supervisor. The criteria for the research proposal follow.

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| --- | --- |
| **Research Proposal Format** | |
| 1. Title | The title should concisely summarise what the research study is about. |
| 2. Introduction | The introduction should include a general statement of the subject of study, placed in the context of the current knowledge of the field. Two key areas to consider are 1) context that is based on the proposed research and 2) background that is based on the general topic area. In summary, the introduction should:   * introduce the subject of study and define the terms of reference * elaborate on the context and importance of the research problem * identify that, based on current research, certain issues need further investigation, often referred to as the “gap” in knowledge * articulate the purpose of the study * state the research question. |
| 3.Literature review | The literature review should be based on current and classic research relevant to your subject area. Based on your literature review, you should show that you understand the key concepts involved in the research proposed. The literature review should finally identify why it is important to conduct additional research.  For a proposal, at least **twenty** (20) refereed articles from peer reviewed journals should be referenced in your review. (Articles older than 10 years should have prior approval from the supervisor.)  In summary the literature should:   * **critically analyses literature topic relevant to industry practice** * **critically analyse historical and contemporary literature relevant to the topic (including theories as appropriate)** * **evaluates a range of data collection methods used to research the topic in the literature and supports the use of the appropriate methodology for a research question** * present literature that supports and that differs from the researcher's position * be written critically (giving strengths and weaknesses of previous work) and compare and contrast different authors views * **summarizes the key potential limitations of the literature study and the importance of the work for the industry** * clearly link to and inform the hypothesis/research question. |
| 4. Research objectives and question/s | Based on the literature review you will be able to set your overall research objectives and formulate your hypotheses or research questions. Your objectives should be unambiguous. Your objectives are not to compare or measure, but to determine whether and why things happen in certain circumstances. If you have more than one objective/ question you should state them sequentially. |
| 5. Ethical considerations | An ethics application is submitted separate to the research proposal. Please outline in your proposal that an ethics application will be submitted and must be approved prior to any research commencing. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 6. Research method | **Method:** The method you will use to complete your research should be stated explicitly and provide sufficient detail so that the reader could follow the instructions and conduct the research.  **Research questions/sub questions/hypotheses:** These should be clearly stated.  **Study setting:** The study setting for the proposed research should be stated and access issues should be discussed.  **Population and sample**: The proposal must discuss the population, type of sample, sample size, method of selecting the sample and criteria for including and/or excluding people or items from the sample.  For a literature review this will be replaced with “Literature Sources”.  **Proposed data measurement and collection procedures:** The planned data measurement and collection instruments will vary depending on the research method used. The proposal should include a draft of the collection instruments to be used in the study and discuss how these will be piloted.  *Quantitative study*   * *Operational definitions of variables are stated.* * *Draft data collection instruments are included.* * *Reliability and validity of instruments is addressed.* * *Pilot study discussed and results provided if completed.*   *Qualitative study*   * *The data collection methods are described.* * *Draft questions are documented.*   *Literature review*   * *Literature sources* * *Databases and Search strings*   **Proposed data analysis:** The process to analyse data is documented and supported.  *Quantitative study*   * *Appropriate statistical tests to be used to analyse quantitative data are described.*   *Qualitative study*   * *Data analysis strategies are described.*   *Literature review*   * *Literature analysis strategy is described.* |
| 7. Timeline | A timeline for thesis tasks is proposed. The proposal timeline tasks will be monitored during the program and should be reflected in the student activity log. |
| 8. Conclusion | The conclusion should confirm why your proposed research is important to consider. Your conclusion should elaborate on how your results will help answer the questions/ hypotheses asked and confirm the potential implications of your research beyond the justification specified in the introduction. Your conclusion should also highlight the potential limitations that will impact your research. In summary, the conclusion should discuss likely outcomes, identify potential limitations and confirm the anticipated significance of the study to industry. |
| 8. Appendices | Appendices should include the following documentation as appropriate:   * Copy of instruments to be used * Results of pilot data (if applicable) |

# Thesis

A thesis is an academic product that is distinguished from other products, such as a consulting report, in the following ways. First, a thesis sets the context of the research problem by thoroughly reviewing relevant related literature and demonstrating that a “knowledge gap” exists and therefore justifying that the piece of research is needed. Second, the thesis demonstrates a process of deliberation and rationale choice in making decisions related to the research method. Third, a thesis frames the research findings in the context of the literature, highlighting the contribution that it makes to the area, articulating the extent to which the “knowledge gap” has been filled. Fourth, a thesis reflects on what was done, often highlighting what could have been done better, what has been learned and what more could be done, in terms of future research, in this topic area. In comparing the thesis to a consultancy project, you should note that a consultancy project is results oriented while a thesis is process oriented; in completing the thesis you must demonstrate your abilities as a researcher.

In the following sections of the handbook, the structure and content of a thesis are described followed by a description of how the thesis should be prepared and submitted. A thesis is written in chapters. Although the content of chapters may vary depending on the thesis topic, the following general descriptions should provide guidance for the content of each chapter. Given the thesis will have **20,000** words a suggested word count is provided along with each chapter’s description.

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### Pre-Chapter One

Before you begin the body of the thesis, you should have the following items:

* a title page indicating the title of your thesis, your name and student number, the name of the institution, the degree for which the thesis is a requirement, and the date on which you will submit your thesis (see sample in Appendix A);
* a signed declaration page that attests to the originality of the thesis being submitted (see sample in Appendix B);
* an abstract that summarises the entire content of the thesis, approximately **500 words**, and up to five keywords that reflect the topical content of the thesis;
* a page with acknowledgements recognising persons who have supported you (through providing supervision, financial or other resources, or encouragement) and without whom you likely would not have completed the thesis; you may also recognise persons who have helped you in any facet of the research process such as in making subjects available for data collection.
* a separate page with the Table of Contents listing the chapters, all section and sub-section headings, and all tables and figures.

### Chapter One: Introduction (approximately 2000 words)

In Chapter One it is very important to introduce the reader to the context in which the research takes place. For example, if the research investigates the dining habits of the Dubai expatriate community, introduce the reader to the number and diversity of the Dubai expatriate community and the dining possibilities in terms of the numbers and variety of eating facilities. If the research is limited to the patronage of fine dining restaurants, first define ‘fine dining’ and then provide data about Dubai’s fine dining establishments. This forms the context of the research.

Next, you should make it clear why the study is needed, focusing on the lack of understanding or information about your chosen topic, the industry’s need for the research while clearly explaining the usefulness of the findings. (Note: there should be a greater need than simply you have a thesis requirement to complete your degree programme.)

Third, clearly articulate the purpose of the study, and then identify any hypotheses that will be tested or research questions that will be answered. Finally, explain the structure of the thesis by briefly describing the chapter by chapter content for the remaining chapters. If the thesis has terminology that may be unfamiliar to the reader, these terms should be briefly explained in the first chapter. This chapter is critically important to grasp the attention and interest of the reader in the thesis topic.

### Chapter Two: Literature Review (approximately 6000-6500 words)

Academic research is intended and designed to add to the body of knowledge about the topic being studied. A literature chapter provides the reader with the current knowledge base in the topic. Often research overlaps several topic areas, in which case literature will be discussed for each of the topic areas that provide a foundation for the thesis. For example, suppose a research study is designed to investigate the relationship between training and employees’ job satisfaction. The literature areas that may be pertinent to review in such a study would include: training, job satisfaction, employee differences based on demographics, and literature that discusses any relationship among these factors. Within each topic area there may be several sub-sections. Each area of literature or each major topic should be conceptually similar to a funnel, beginning with broad general literature and culminating with specific focused literature.

In general, theoretical literature should be presented in reverse chronological order, oldest to most recent. This enables a reader to understand the evolution of the theory/theories related to the topic area. Particular emphasis should be given to literature where the theory and/or concepts are critical to the proposed study, perhaps providing assumptions or the basis of the method used.

Next, prior empirical studies should be discussed, providing the reader with details about the context of such studies, the research methods used, and the findings from the studies. The discussion should emphasise empirical studies using methods similar to the method you will use or when a study’s findings form the basis for your hypotheses or research questions.

To conclude the literature chapter, present a brief summary of the most important theories and/or concepts for your research foundation. Also, present a summary of prior research and the related findings. The literature review should clearly lead to your hypotheses or research questions. Ideally, the empirical literature used should be from the hospitality industry. If there is a lack of empirical studies in these industry sectors, then search for studies in other service sectors or other industries. If no relevant empirical studies are found, reflect on and discuss why this may be the case. If it is because the topic area is new, or if the topic is unique in the context of your study, your research may make a contribution. If not, then perhaps reconsider the worthiness of the research.

### Chapter Three: Research Method (approximately 2000 - 2500 words)

Chapter 3 has three (3) purposes. Firstly, it presents a detailed description of the method used to complete the research. In addition to a detailed description of the methods used, it also presents justification(s) for the decisions taken pertaining to the method. Literature and textbooks pertaining to research methods provide the basis for this justification. Finally, the ethics of the research are addressed.

The research method should include: descriptions of the population being studied, the sampling method or methods used, significant detail about the data gathering approach, and the approach used for data analysis. For example, if a non-probability sampling approach was used, such as purposive sampling, you should provide support as to why purposive sampling is more appropriate for this research than probability sampling. Similarly, if focus groups were selected for data gathering rather than using a survey approach, explain why focus groups were selected as a data gathering method and provide evidence to show that the decision is appropriate given your circumstances. In addition to using research method literature to support research method decisions, empirical literature can help justify these decisions. This is especially true if findings will be compared to prior studies. If you want to investigate yield management practices in Dubai hotels and there is an empirical study in the literature investigating yield management practices in Hong Kong hotels, you may use the latter study’s research method to justify your method and this would also enable you to compare your research findings to those of the prior study.

If your data gathering involves people, then you MUST include a section in the method chapter that discusses ethical issues and considerations in human subject research. The consenting process and how ethical considerations were handled during the completion of the research must be discussed.

### Chapter Four: Research Findings (approximately 4000 words)

In the findings chapter, the results of the research are presented. Organisation is an important aspect of this chapter. An effective way to structure this chapter is to use the hypotheses or the research questions and present the findings as they pertain to each hypothesis or research question. Usually there is a brief introduction to the chapter that, if sampling was used, includes descriptive statistics and a discussion of the characteristics of the sample. Then each hypothesis/research question is stated along with the data that were gathered and methods of analysis to test/answer the research question. Data tables and charts are presented as supporting evidence along with output from software, such as SPSS, that was used for data analysis. Avoid a discussion of/or interpretation of your findings, simply present the findings factually and leave the interpretation and/or discussion to chapter 5. A summary of the findings concludes the chapter.

### Chapter Five: Discussion (approximately 3000 words)

In the discussion chapter the results are interpreted. Where appropriate, the findings should be compared and/or contrasted to the findings from prior studies. The findings may be related in detail to theory and to other empirical studies in terms of the similarities and differences. In addition, reasons why there may be differences from the findings of other studies may be suggested. In this chapter the research findings are shown to add to the body of knowledge about your topic from both an academic perspective and an industry perspective, highlighting the practical contributions.

### Chapter Six: Conclusion (approximately 2000 words)

Chapter 6 provides a summation of the contributions of the research undertaken. The conclusion should identify any limitations of the research and present recommendations for further research. Identification of the study limitations is often used to demonstrate that a deeper understanding of research methods has been gained through following the research process. Any recommendations should stem directly from the findings of the study, rather than be based on generic concepts or findings from prior studies. Since research will often highlight as many new issues or questions as it addresses, recommendations for future research is based on the new insight gained and the issues that these insights raise.

### Referencing

A reference section follows the final chapter of the thesis. All material used should be acknowledged with citations appropriately placed within the text of each chapter and a complete reference list on a separate page after the conclusion. Referencing should follow the HARVARD style guidelines.

### Appendices

Appendices, if any, should follow the references. Examples of information included in the appendices include items such as: tables that are lengthy, samples of a cover letter and the survey instrument (this could also be included in the methods chapter), script for structured interviews, raw data, and analysed data such as SPSS output. Appendices complete the thesis with materials that support the research and that often allow the reader to assess the correctness of such areas as the interpretation of output from a statistical test or the wording and scales used for survey questions.

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# Submission of the Thesis

The submission requirements of the DISS901 thesis include all of the following:

|  |
| --- |
| ***Submission Requirement*** |
| 1. Two (2) bound thesis copies *(These can be printed double sided)* |
| 1. One (1) de-identified bound thesis copy *(This can be printed double sided)* |
| 1. Two (2) loose thesis copies (Please include the loose copies of the thesis in the envelopes provided by the library staff). These MUST be printed single sided |
| 1. Two (2) copies of the extended abstract |
| 1. One (1) CD or USB with a softcopy of the thesis, extended abstract and data files |
| 1. Data gathering materials (for example questionnaires, interview transcripts, consents) |
| 1. Thesis log book |
| 1. One softcopy of the thesis and extended abstract is to be emailed to the DISS 901 coordinator. The files should be called:  Your name\_ DISS 901\_Spring 2019 |
| 1. One copy of the thesis is to be submitted into TURNITIN (refer to code in DISS901 syllabus) |
| 1. Ethics clearance form completed (library to provide when submitting) |
| 1. Academic integrity form is completed (library to provide when submitting) |

# Formatting requirements

The formatting requirements of the thesis should be consistent with the **HARVARD guidelines**. Additional information is provided in table 1:

Table 1

*Formatting requirements*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Preparation Requirements** |
| Language | English, UK spelling |
| Paper Size | A4 paper |
| Font Type/Size | Always Times New Roman 12 points |
| Page Margins | Top, Bottom and Right side margins of 1” (2.5cm)  Left margin 1.5” (4.00cm) |
| Cover Page | This is the title page of the thesis (discussed above) |
| Chapter Heading  Section heading and sub-section headings | Follow HARVARD guidelines  NOTE: Same level headings MUST be consistently formatted |
| In-Text tables and Figures | Follow HARVARD guidelines  Note: single spacing and/or 10-point font size may be used for tables or figures either to fit on one page or for appearance |
| Spacing | 1.5 spacing for all content except Table of Contents and References  Table of Contents single spacing, references correct Harvard style |
| Page Numbering | Chapter 1, the first page of text of the thesis, should be numbered page 1, and thereafter pages should be consecutively numbered.  Use lower case Roman numerals (i, ii, …) to number the pages that contain the Abstract, Table of Content and other non-text pages |

# Appendices

### Appendix A: Cover Page

The Emirates Academy

Place the thesis title here

A Thesis submitted on

*Place the submission date here*

by:

*Place you name here*

Student Number: *place your student id number here*

Submitted to:

*Place your thesis supervisor’s name here*

In partial fulfilment for the requirements of the Degree of

Master of Business Administration

# Appendix B: Declaration

##### DECLARATION

I, *place you name here*, declare that this is an original piece of work, produced entirely by me, and that all source material has been appropriately referenced. In addition, I attest that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of any other course, degree, or qualification at this or any other university or institute of learning.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student’s signature