

# Advanced Higher Economics Dissertation Guidance

The dissertation accounts for 25% of the final mark awarded for the Course.

## Aim of the dissertation

The aim of the dissertation is to encourage candidates to independently research a current issue in macro or micro economics and critically apply economic principles and theories to real events. The **economic** issue must have been topical within the preceding 18 months.

## Structure

The dissertation should be between 3500–4000 words (excluding contents page, bibliography, footnotes and appendices).

If a dissertation is either 10% below the minimum word count or 10% above the maximum word count it will be subject to a marking penalty. Candidates should provide a word count as part of good practice, however there is no penalty for failing to include one.

The dissertation must be submitted to SQA at the end of April and should include the date when the dissertation was completed. The date helps the Examiner to understand why certain topics or events have been included or excluded.

## Useful information

When preparing the dissertation it is best to frame the title as a question rather than a statement. For example: ‘What are the reasons for the credit crunch and what effects has it had on the UK economy?’

All direct quotes and unaltered graphs and data must be properly referenced.

A bibliography should be included at the end of the dissertation. It must cover every source of information used — whether directly or indirectly.

## **Marking**

Candidates should be aware of the broad aspects of the dissertation that will be examined and their associated weightings.

### **Introduction and terms of reference (5 marks)**

The introduction should include a clear statement of the aims of the dissertation and the research methods used.

The terms of reference may define the terms used in the title question and therefore the scope of the dissertation.

The introduction may also include background material to justify the choice of title and briefly explain its significance.

### **Layout and presentation (5 marks)**

#### **Layout**

The dissertation should have:

- ◆ a front cover that includes the candidate's name, the dissertation title, and word count
- ◆ a contents page
- ◆ an introduction
- ◆ a body of work with headings and subheadings
- ◆ a conclusion
- ◆ a bibliography
- ◆ appendices — if required

Footnotes should be used where appropriate.

#### **Presentation**

Presentation should be helpful to the reader. The following will be credited:

- ◆ use of a minimum 12 point type size
- ◆ double-line spacing
- ◆ wide margins
- ◆ appropriate headings and page breaks
- ◆ relevant diagrams and text together
- ◆ clear page numbering

## **Quantity and quality of research (10 marks)**

### **Number and range of sources**

In general, the greater the range of sources the better — but the Examiner is aware that some titles may have few resources or might require one or two larger pieces of reading.

Candidates may consult textbooks, economic journals, newspapers, television documentaries and the internet — and carry out primary research, if appropriate.

### **Relevance of sources**

All sources should be relevant to the title of the dissertation and be as up-to-date as possible. Candidates may fail to gain all the available marks if their information is too historic or has been superseded by significant developments within the relevant time frame.

### **Adequacy of sources**

This refers to the extent to which the data/evidence collected is sufficient to support the economic arguments put forward in the dissertation.

## **Structure and coherence (10 marks)**

### **Explanation of the issue**

This refers to the extent to which the issue is clearly identified and its economic significance to economic agents and the national, and possibly global, economy is fully explained.

### **Logical structure**

The organisation of the dissertation should be clear. There should be a coherent line of argument from introduction to conclusion. Headings are useful to enable the reader to follow the line of thought of the candidate and should be used where appropriate.

### **Use of economic terminology**

The language used to describe economic concepts must be appropriate and accurate. Any unusual terms used must be fully explained so as to allow a lay person to understand the use of the term.

## **Analysis and evaluation of information (10 marks)**

Candidates will be awarded marks when they show evidence of:

- ◆ use of relevant economic theory in a manner which clarifies/explains the data
- ◆ application of economic theory to predict the behaviour of individuals, firms, or markets or the outcome of decisions on the whole economy
- ◆ inclusion of alternative economic theories, where relevant, to explain differing interpretations or policy decisions
- ◆ analysis of the reasons why the relevant economic theory may be of only partial/limited use when explaining the data or 'real world' situation
- ◆ evaluation of the significance of the data gathered and a critical appreciation of any limitations either in scope or quality
- ◆ weighting factors in order of importance

Candidates will not need to attempt all of the above to gain top marks, but the overall depth and quality of analysis and evaluation will be given credit in the light of each dissertation title.

## **Conclusion (10 marks)**

The conclusion to the dissertation should not be a re-statement of the contents but an attempt to use the data gathered to answer the question set in the title, appreciating that there may be no simple answer to economic questions.

The conclusion reached should be consistent with the data, analysis and economic theory presented in the dissertation. The conclusion should demonstrate that the candidate has reached a valid judgement, having weighed up the evidence gathered. The reasoning behind the conclusion reached should therefore be fully explained.

Where relevant, candidates might also explore the limitations of their research, conclusions and possible areas for further research or improvement if they had greater time etc.

## **Suggested mark allocations**

The following will be applied by the Marking Team when marking the dissertation.

<b>Area</b>	<b>Marks available</b>
Introduction and terms of reference	5
Quantity and quality of research	10
Structure and coherence	10
Analysis and evaluation	10
Layout and presentation	5
Conclusion	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>50 marks</b>

While the dissertation is initially marked out of 50, the total is then halved to give a final mark out of 25.