



RESEARCH PROJECT HANDBOOK

MSc in Accounting

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1-How to use this handbook

This handbook has been written to guide you through the key stages of the process of writing your research project. Guidance may vary depending on your study and topic you choose and instructions from your supervisors on how to complete and submit your project.

2-Objectives of the Research Project

The Research Project is an extended 15000-word assignment based on an independent study of a topic of your choosing. Essentially, the research project is a test of your ability to create, on your own initiative, a text which demonstrates a master's level understanding of a particular issue. You will be assigned a supervisor to advise you on how to approach the Research Project work, and it is your responsibility to manage and undertake the necessary work independently. In your Research Project you should draw on concepts, techniques and frameworks from your previous studies to:

- Identify a suitable topic for study
- Plan and manage an appropriate schedule of work
- Design and undertake an appropriate investigation strategy
- Identify and access useful sources of information
- Write a well-presented Research Project with a logical structure and formatting

3- How will your Research Project be assessed?

Research Projects are assessed according to the indicative criteria set out below:

- 1. Purpose & objectives:** (15 marks) Is the research problem clearly defined and appropriate for the study? Are the research objectives clearly stated and aligned with the research problem? Is the topic relevant to the accounting field and does it contribute to the discipline? Is the proposed methodology feasible and appropriate to achieve the research objectives? Is academic writing clear, coherent, and of an acceptable scholarly standard? Does the research demonstrate originality and innovative thinking?
- 2. Literature Review:** (10 marks) Does the literature review demonstrate sufficient depth and breadth, including both foundational and recent studies? Is there clear evidence of critical engagement with the literature (comparison, evaluation, and synthesis rather than description)? Does the literature effectively contribute to

understanding the research problem, theoretical framework, or case study? Are research gaps, limitations, or inconsistencies in the existing literature clearly identified and justified? Are the selected sources relevant, credible, and up to date in relation to the research topic?

- 3. Research Methodology:** (10 marks) Is the research design justified and suitable for achieving the study objectives? Are the data collection tools and methods appropriate, valid, and reliable? Are the research procedures clearly described and logically organized? Are ethical considerations clearly addressed and properly applied?
- 4. Analysis, Discussion, and Findings:** (15 marks) Is the data analysis accurate and correctly applied? Are the results interpreted validly and logically based on the data? Do the findings clearly address the research questions or hypotheses? Are tables and figures clearly presented, correctly labeled, and appropriately used to support the analysis? Are the results presented clearly and consistently, without errors or misrepresentation?
- 5. Structure & Language of the final research report:** (20 marks) Is it written in correct and clear English? Is the final research report well structured, coherent, and logically organized? Does the research demonstrate sufficient depth and richness of scientific content? Does the research make a clear and meaningful contribution to the field of accounting? Does the report adhere to academic integrity standards, including originality and proper citation of sources?

Are the abstract, introduction, and conclusion written in an appropriate manner? Does the conclusion demonstrate how the findings answered the research questions, and clarify the extent to which the results align with or differ from previous studies while linking them to the theoretical framework? Does the conclusion highlight the added value of the research? Does it briefly present the limitations encountered in the study? Does it provide recommendations for future research that future researchers can build upon? Are the research sources original, diverse, and up to date?
- 6. Presentation and Discussion:**(30 marks) Is your presentation distinguished and logically sequenced? Does your presentation clearly highlight the research problem, objectives, and findings? Does your presentation demonstrate your deep understanding of the theoretical framework and your ability to interpret the results? Are your answers clear and accurate? Do you exhibit confidence during the presentation and a strong ability to convey the information?

The following table outlines the criteria for presentation evaluation:

Criterion	Max Score
Organization and Design of the Presentation	4
Mastery of Scientific Content	4
Critical Thinking and Analysis of Results	4
Responses to Questions	15
Presentation and Communication Skills	3
Total	30

Important Notes:

- Your supervisor will mark and evaluate your research project, including the extent to which you used AI.
- The similarity rate must not exceed 20%.

4- Choosing a topic and Research Project title

Your Research Project topic should be based on a particular organizational context or related to a generic ‘accounting’ or ‘business’ issue (for example, this could include accounting, Finance, financial reporting, financial analysis, auditing, and all accounting and business issues related to accounting). Your project should be clearly relevant to some aspect of the accounting program. It might also be relevant to your career plans, which can be very advantageous in enhancing your employability. In general, research projects that attempt an in-depth study of a focused topic, are more successful than a wide-ranging study, which lacks depth.

You may find the following tips helpful when choosing your research topic:

- Identify which broad topics you are interested in, then think about more specific questions within that topic
- Think about particular modules which you found enjoyable
- Think about topics that relate to your strengths
- Think about topics that relate to your career plans
- Read review articles or quality news sources in the broad topic area that you want to study to find out what has already been researched and if there are any unknowns that might make good topics

A parallel consideration is what kind of Research Project work you want to undertake. Research projects can take a number of forms, for example:

- An in-depth critical review of an area of literature
- Development of a technique or issues

- Empirical work involving quantitative and/or qualitative analysis of collected data
- A survey of business practice in a particular context
- A case-study of a particular firm or industry
- Study of a particular problem in an organization or industry

Each of these types of Research Project requires a slightly different approach and advice should be sought from your supervisor on the most appropriate way to proceed in particular cases.

You should consider a number of factors when deciding on your topic:

- Is the topic original, or has it already been researched by somebody else?
- Is the topic relevant to your field of study?
- Does the topic have value to organizations or other researchers in your field?
- Is the topic achievable with the time and resources you have available?
- Does the topic require access (for example to company information) and if so do you have that access?

5-Planning your work

Students are expected to complete their Research Project following the academic calendar.

Give yourself as much time as possible to complete your Research Project by starting early. No two research projects are the same and different projects will progress at different rates. The table below therefore shows indicative key stages in a generic Research Project process with suggested dates for full-time students. The dates here are for guidance, and you should plan target dates for your Research Project with your supervisor.

6-Research Proposal / Topic Registration

After you have chosen your topic, you will be required to produce a short, proposal or topic outline for your research project. Your Research Project proposal will; form the basis of your early discussion with your supervisor and you will expand this as you read more about your topic and develop your research.

- The main items to include in your research outline are:

- A topic and tentative title, its background and a justification for its choice
- A question for the focus of the study relates to, builds on, or differs from, previous work in the field
- A description of how and what data will be collected, plus the means of collection
- An explanation of how data will be analyzed and interpreted and how this will relate back to the initial questions posed
- Comments on the practical value of the study (a brief description of the value of your work to either yourself, managers, business or wider academic community), and any problems that may be relevant to its conduct
- A plan outlining proposed timescale

Any delays in the submission of your proposal will delay the progress of your Research Project and grade

7-Supervision

The role of your supervisor is to:

- Advise on the suitability of the title and scope of your Research Project
- Advise on an appropriate Research Project structure
- Advise on the suitability of your methodology
- Advise you on your work timetable
- Provide formative feedback on your proposal and two chapters of your Research Project (once only and providing these are submitted by the dates agreed with your supervisor)

Duties and responsibilities of the academic supervisor:

- Ensure that the student is fully aware of what pertains to him in the postgraduate studies regulations.
- Ensure that the thesis topic is characterized by seriousness, originality, and contribution to the completion of knowledge in the student's specialization.
- Guide the student in all scientific and practical ways related to scientific research, regarding the suitability of the title and scope, the research project, the structure of the research project, the suitability of the methodology, and the work schedule.
- Warning the student in cases that require this, including:
 - Increasing the percentage of absences beyond the permissible limit

- If he does not respond to the scientific instructions of the supervisor.
- If he is unable to write scientifically in a way that suits the stage in which he is studying.
- Review the thesis upon receiving its draft accurately and inform the student of the most important amendments.
- Ensure that the student adheres to scientific integrity when writing the thesis, especially the percentages of plagiarism, which can be verified through the Blackboard system in effect at the university.

Supervisors will not normally provide specific advice or guidance on sources of information or literature for your particular topic.

The time available for supervision is six hours in total. This time includes group and individual meetings, approving your research progress and reading/advising on chapters. You should not expect your supervisor to be available for frequent and lengthy guidance.

To get the most from meeting with your supervisor:

- Be proactive about contacting your supervisor for meetings, it is up to you to drive the process
- Attend all meetings or reschedule them if you are not able to attend
- Prepare for your meetings by reading your notes from the previous meeting and completing any actions that you have agreed
- Use a range of available communication methods (e.g. email, phone etc.)

8-Ethical approval and risk assessment

Guidelines for ethical research are based on the belief that all research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for persons, respect for knowledge, respect for the quality of research, and respect for justice and within the law.

In any research study, participants will have to establish precise ethical principles of procedure taking the specific context into account. Read more <https://units.imamu.edu.sa/deanships/admission/Pages/plans.aspx>

9-Structuring your Research Project

A key feature of any Research Project is the way in which it is structured or organized. Structure is important because it dictates the topics discussed and the

order in which they are discussed. A good structure can considerably enhance the finished quality of a research project.

Characteristics of a good Research Project structure include:

- Chapters and sections that are ordered in a logical way
- A contents page that clearly differentiates chapter titles and major sub-headings
- Chapter and section headings that are informative, concise and accurate
- Discussion and analysis that develops logically – from general principles or concepts to more specific or detailed analysis and discussion
- Repetition of points is minimal.

The structure of your Research Project **will vary depending** on whether it is primarily literature based (e.g. a systematic literature review), empirical research (e.g. a survey of company employees), or action research (e.g. an application of theory or concept in a real-world setting).

Example Chapters for a Research Project

(this may vary depending on the type of the research project)

Introduction

All research projects should have an effective introduction which may include the following:

- A brief explanation of the nature and significance of the Research Project topic, and the problems or issues implicit in the Research Project title. Some contextual statistics/general information may be useful here
- What your interest/motivation for working on this topic is (for example, relevant previous work experience, or personal links with a company or issue)
- The objectives of your Research Project
- An outline of the approach/methodology you have adopted
- An overview of the line of argument your Research Project will follow (not simply a list of what each chapter contains)

Literature review

Discusses prior research to identify relevant theories and concepts; describe the extent of current understanding and identify outstanding problems/issues.

An effective review will critically analyze the literature to support the rationale for your Research Project research by:

- Comparing and contrasting different perspectives in the literature
- Evaluating the relevance, reliability and validity of the sources
- Identifying any limitations or biases that may have affected the research
- Identifying connections between the literature and how knowledge of the subject is structured
- Identifying how the literature is relevant to the topic of your Research Project

Methodology

Expands on the literature review to provide a rationale for the research and its objectives and describe the research method that has been used. For example, if you have used a questionnaire, your methodology may:

- Identify the pros and cons of questionnaires to explain your reasons for choosing this methodology
- Explain the rationale for the questions asked, relating this to your literature review, and giving reasons for the questionnaire structure adopted (e.g. multiple choice, Likert scales etc.)
- Provide a complete list of questions either in the text or in an appendix
- Explain who was involved, how and why they were selected (i.e. Your sampling)
- Explain how the questionnaire was delivered and why (e.g. online or face-to-face)

Results and analysis

Present results in as complete, clear and helpful way as possible, analyze results in a useful way, critically comment on the quality of responses and the reliability/limitations of the findings.

Discussion of implications

Relate your findings back to the literature review, discuss similarities and differences. Explain the implications of your findings for managers and decision makers.

Conclusion

All research projects need a useful, conclusion chapter that adds value, rather than merely summarizing previous chapters. An effective conclusion should include:

- A brief summary of key points made in the Research Project
- A section which discusses the implications of the Research Project for: (a) a given organization context, (b) organizations in general and (c)

concept/theory/technique development. There may also be implications for Government policy

- Limitations of the scope, quality, and validity of the analysis undertaken in the Research Project
- Suggestions for further research
- Personal reflections on any challenges in designing and carrying out your research (if any) and what you have learnt

10-Presentation

Good presentation is important because it ensures that all your hard work is efficiently and effectively communicated to the reader. It implies neatly set out work; a well-organized, clear and logical structure; and clear, understandable analysis. In particular, it is important to ensure that you:

- Write good, clear, grammatically correct English without spelling mistakes.
- Make use of chapters, helpful headings, and subheadings to structure your work clearly. Number your chapters and number sections within each chapter. Don't forget page numbering throughout.
- Format pages, headings and paragraphs to make the text easy to read.
- Clearly cite ALL sources of information and list FULL details of ALL cited sources in a list of references.
- Logically order material across and within individual chapters.
- Tables, graphs and figures are effective ways of presenting data, especially in the results and analysis sections of your research project. You should label tables and figures clearly and refer to them consistently in the table of contents and text of your research project. Be sure to cite the source of any figures or tables (if you have not developed them yourself).
- If possible, try not to split tables over two pages. You may need to use a slightly smaller font in tables, or format column headings to read vertically to do this.
- The word limit for your Research Project is 15,000 words. The relevant word count includes items such as cover page, executive summary, title page, table of contents, tables, figures, in-text citations and section headings, if used.

- The relevant word count excludes your list of references and any appendices at the end of your research project submission. Appendices are not always needed or expected, but they can be a useful way of providing supplementary material which your research project draws on but which is not essential for reading the research project. Beyond the above points, if you are not sure about whether something is included or not in the relevant word count, then assume it is included. You should always include the word count (from Microsoft Word), below the table of contents at the beginning of your research project.
- Double spacing may be used at a candidate's discretion for parts involving formulae. The paper should be A4 size (210 x 297 mm).
- Pages should be numbered consecutively. Tables and diagrams must be numbered serially in typescript.
- Any diagrams, tables, or exhibits on oversize sheets should be folded so that they are at least 7 mm (0.25") from the right-hand edge of the text sheets.

11-Research Project Format

The Research Project should be put together in the following order:

- Title page (including: the name of university, academic year, the name of college, department, program, Research Project title, student name and ID, and declaration that this Research Project is the student own work, and that where material is obtained from published or unpublished works, this has been fully acknowledged in references.
- Abstract (Max. 300 words)
- Acknowledgements page
- Contents page. This should be a list, chapter by chapter, of the contents of the Research Project including Appendices and References, followed by a list of illustrations, figure by figure. Each listed item should have a page reference number in the research project.
- The body of the report (pages numbered).
- References. A single list of ALL sources used in your research project.

12-Academic Integrity

It is your responsibility to ensure that your Research Project meets academic research ethical guidelines. In extreme cases, these may result in failure of the Research Project module or your overall program:

- **Plagiarism:** is the use of ideas, intellectual property or work of others without acknowledgement or permission, as appropriate.
- **Cheating/Collusion** is any action before, during or after an assessment or examination or assessment by which the student seeks to gain unfair advantage or assists another student to do so.
- **Falsification:** is any attempt to present fictitious or distorted data, evidence, references, experimental results or other material and/or knowingly to make use of such material.
- **Recycling:** is where a piece of work which has already been used in one context is used again (without declaration and without the University's permission) in another context.
- **Breaching ethical standards:** is failing to comply with your ethical obligations when carrying out your Academic Work as set out in the University Ethics Policy and the applicable ethical requirements for your subject area, such as failing to obtain free and informed consent.
- **Misconduct in Research** includes any of the above examples in relation to research and/or other factors including a failure to comply with regulatory, legal and professional obligations such as a breach of confidentiality, infringement of intellectual property rights, failure to take due care for participants in research or of personal data, and abuse of research subjects or materials (including artefacts).

13-Referencing

It is essential that you indicate clearly throughout your Research Project the source of any material you refer to including papers, textbooks, websites, interviews, newspapers, questionnaires, etc. This applies to all text, diagrams, data, tables, and appendices in your research project.

14-Extension Requests

If you are having trouble meeting the deadline for submission you must discuss this matter with your supervisor and chair of department (program coordinator) **BEFORE** the deadline and complete the extension request form. You should discuss

the length of any extension requested with your supervisor. There are strict criteria for granting extensions. Neither your supervisor nor department chair can approve an extension request. This can only be done by the department board.

15-Special Considerations

If you believe that illness or other circumstances have adversely affected your academic performance you must notify your supervisor, chair department (program coordinator) and complete related form. All claims must be substantiated by written documentary evidence, for example a medical certificate or consultant letter, self-certification or a statement from your supervisor. The purpose of asking for supporting documentation is for you to be able to corroborate the facts of your submission. All claims will be reviewed by the department board.