MODULE SPECIFICATION

KEY FACTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module name</th>
<th>Dissertation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module code</td>
<td>APM002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>School of Health Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department or equivalent</td>
<td>Health service Research and Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK credits</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECTS</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

MODULE SUMMARY

Module outline and aims

The dissertation is the element of your programme that provides you with the opportunity to undertake a piece of original, independent research, building on and focussed on the topic or topics that are of particular interest to you and which you wish to explore in greater depth or from different angles.

The aims of the module are to:

- Engage in appropriate research planning at a post-graduate level (i.e. develop your ability to design and conduct high quality, publishable research)
- Apply an established process of research to produce a dissertation on a specific research topic related to your programme of study and work place
- Develop a deeper understanding of the existing research literature in your chosen research area
- Encourage a critical appraisal of the research literature in your field
- Familiarise you with the task of structuring your research ideas in a logical order: i.e. progression of ideas from initial research questions, through methods used to obtain answers, to presentation of results and discussion and interpretation of findings.
- Develop a reflective approach to utilising research findings.

Content outline

Drawing on the skills and knowledge developed during Research Methods and Data Analysis modules (HRM001 and HRM020, their online equivalents or suitable alternatives) and the theoretical knowledge from other core modules, you have the opportunity to develop your abilities in research design, data collection, analysis and critical interpretation, and to apply these to the investigation of a particular problem or issue within your specialist area. Completing the Dissertation allows you to be awarded an MSc degree.
The MSc Dissertation will consist of original work in ONE of the following forms:

- An empirical research project
- Secondary analysis of an existing dataset
- Set-up and analysis of a Quality Improvement (QI) programme
- A systematic review of the literature, or
- A critical-interpretative analysis of existing knowledge within the student’s specialist field.

You have the option to choose in which form you prepare your dissertation, but the choice should be made in consultation with your module leader and/or programme director.

Thus for the dissertation, you may (i) design and conduct a piece of empirical research with human participants, analyse the resulting data and write up the study for the Dissertation. The research can be either quantitative or qualitative. This is often the most satisfying part of a course for many students, but requires project registration and ethical approval from either the NHS (via NRES/IRAS) or the School of Health Sciences (via Research Governance).

Alternatively, you may (ii) undertake secondary data-analysis on an existing dataset, available either in the public domain, data-centres or via a lecturer/researcher. This will provide you the opportunity to apply your research methods and data analysis skills in a practical manner; and address questions that have not previously been generated from the dataset. Project registration and ethical approval will be required from the School of Health Sciences. As you are not collecting your own data, you are expected to address and conduct more complex multivariate analyses.

With a (iii) Quality Improvement (QI) project you would undertake a systematic analysis of an area practice performance and efforts to improve performance in the clinical setting. There are a variety of approaches or QI models that exist to help you collect and analyse data and test change. Use these to define what the QI programme may be trying to achieve, how changes/improvements may be measured and what changes may be undertaken to achieve the set goals. A Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle is an example of an engine for developing, testing and implementing changes, in a Qi project.

If you decide to undertake (iv) a systematic review of the literature you will be required to produce an overview of primary studies. The review would have explicit statements of its objectives, materials, and methods utilised. They are conducted according to explicit and reproducible methodologies (including methods used to identify, evaluate, and combine studies based on quality criteria) recommended by organisation such as The Centre for Reviews and Dissemination or The Cochrane Collaboration.

The final option (v) is a critical-interpretative analysis of existing knowledge, where it is neither possible nor desirable to specify in advance the precise review question, a priori definitions, or categories under which the data could be summarised. The analysis aims to allow the definition of the phenomenon under scrutiny to emerge from the analysis of
the literature within the areas of interest. This type of project would be best suited for research on organisational, policy or work-based analyses of systems. Although the process may be organic, it still requires explicit exposition of the methodology to allow replication and for identified literature to be critically evaluated and interpretative syntheses justified (e.g. using strategies such as reciprocal translational analysis, refutational synthesis, lines of argument synthesis).

Project titles can be suggested by you or chosen from a list provided by members of staff across the Research Centres, Divisions and School. A broad range of subjects are offered reflecting the wide range of research interests within the School of Health Sciences. Your module leader and programme director will give you more information about your topic choice.

The dissertation options available to you will be explained by the Programme Director and/or module leader and issues such as the required format for the research report, research methodology and suitable routes for information retrieval via directed reading are detailed in the MSc Handbook and/or from your dissertation seminar/s.

WHAT WILL I BE EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE?

On successful completion of this module, you will be expected to be able to:

Knowledge and understanding:

- Demonstrate in-depth understanding and insight of the topic of your research following a critical analysis of the available literature
- Demonstrate an ability to formulate researchable questions and design an appropriate strategy to investigate those questions
- Evidence an awareness of new areas for investigation, new problems and/or new or alternative applications or methodological approaches
- Identify and propose modifications to existing knowledge structures and theoretical frameworks
- Demonstrate expertise in your topic of study following a critical analysis of the available literature

Skills:

- Demonstrate self-direction and originality in completing an advanced level research project contributing to the forefront of a particular field, with minimal supervision
- Demonstrate a logical and scientific approach to problem resolution as required for effective completion of a research based project at the forefront of knowledge in your chosen topic of research
- Work independently to research the relevant literature
- Utilise established research techniques, methodologies and sources to create or interpret knowledge at the forefront of knowledge in the chosen topic of your research
- Synthesise, enhance and apply the learning outcomes from the previous elements covered in the taught part of your programme in performing advanced level research
- Absorb, critically evaluate, apply and build on existing knowledge in a systematic manner within the chosen topic to maximise the benefits derived from a research project at the forefront of knowledge
- Apply IT skills to obtain and organise research data and in the analysis of data as applicable
- Conduct research/analyses to produce a high quality dissertation
- Communicate and defend the rationale, methods, findings and conclusions of the project, through the production of a comprehensive, clearly written report accessible to both specialist and non-specialist audiences
- Critically evaluate the processes utilised for the project and propose further areas of research generated from the work conducted in the dissertation

**Values and attitudes:**
- Recognise the in-depth relationships between research findings, evidence-based practice and decision-making within your field of practice
- Demonstrate awareness of and the ability to manage the implications of ethical research practice and research governance issues and procedures (working actively with others to formulate solutions)
- Practise with respect towards the privacy of participants, collaborators and colleagues to ensure that personal data remain confidential
- Use an appropriate professional attitude during interpersonal communication skills with participants, collaborators and colleagues
- Correctly reference the work of others and adhere to University regulations regarding plagiarism and academic misconduct
- Develop a reflective approach to the research process and findings.

**HOW WILL I LEARN?**

A seminar will provide guidance on conducting and writing up your dissertation, and address any queries you may have. You will be assigned a Dissertation Supervisor and have approximately four-to-five individual supervision meetings with him or her (these may be conducted face-to-face or virtually). These meetings will be supplemented with email communications which will encompass feedback on your draft submissions. You will be expected to undertake a substantial volume of self-directed learning. Cross-disciplinary research may require that you are assigned a secondary supervisor to advise on specific aspects of the research.

Teaching and learning are facilitated by Moodle, the University's online Virtual Learning Environment. In the independent study time you will be encouraged and supported by lecturers, to read widely and in depth around particular topics and to critically share your understanding and experience with others using the online forum on Moodle.

*Teaching pattern:*
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<th>Teaching component</th>
<th>Teaching type</th>
<th>Contact hours (scheduled)</th>
<th>Self-directed study hours (independent)</th>
<th>Placement hours</th>
<th>Total student learning hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation seminar</td>
<td>Lecture &amp; Practical classes and workshops</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact with supervisor for project development</td>
<td>Tutorial</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>430</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback from supervisor/s</td>
<td>Tutorial</td>
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<td>97</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>105</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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<td>570</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><strong>600</strong></td>
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**WHAT TYPES OF ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK CAN I EXPECT?**

**Assessments**

The MSc dissertation has **two** parts:

1. **Formative:** a written research proposal, length and hand-in date to be negotiated with your supervisor. Feedback can be expected within 3 weeks of submission.

2. **Summative:** a final dissertation of between **12-15,000 words** (excluding references and appendices); or a **manuscript** in the format of a research paper (**7-8,000 words**), with word length to include counts for additional rationales and supplementary analyses over and above the word length of the target Journal selected). The dissertation format options will be explained by the Programme Director and/or module leader.

The word limit can only be exceeded with the approval of the programme director and board of examiners.
Assessment pattern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment component</th>
<th>Assessment type</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Minimum qualifying mark</th>
<th>Pass/Fail?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written research report (12,000 -15,000 words)</td>
<td>Dissertation</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper manuscript (word length dependent on journal chosen)</td>
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Assessment criteria

The purpose of the above assessments is to measure what you have learned from the programme. You need to achieve 50% or above in order to pass.

Feedback on assessment

Following an assessment marks and feedback will be provided in line with the Assessment Regulations and Policy. More information on the timing and type of feedback that will be provided for each assessment will be available from the module leader.

Assessment Regulations

The Pass mark for the module is 50%. Any minimum qualifying marks for specific assessments are listed in the table above. The weighting of the different components can also be found above. The Programme Specification contains information on what happens if you fail an assessment component or the module.
## INDICATIVE READING LIST


Wright, D.B. (2003) Making friends with your data: improving how statistics are conducted and reported, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 73 (1); 123-136

### Websites:

- [https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/](https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/) - Integrated Research Application System
- [http://www.city.ac.uk/health/research/research-governance](http://www.city.ac.uk/health/research/research-governance) - City University London Research Governance portal
- [http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/sections/ir/links](http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/sections/ir/links) - Resources for undertaking literature based studies
Appendix: see http://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/option,com_studrec/task,show_file/Itemid,233/mnl,12051/href,JACS3.html/ for the full list of JACS codes and descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HESA Cost Centre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Subjects Allied to Medicine</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JACS Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Social studies not elsewhere classified</td>
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