



## DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE Honours Research Assignment (2019)

### A. Purpose and characteristics

The Bachelor Honours Degree is a postgraduate specialisation qualification, characterised by the fact that it prepares students for research-based postgraduate study. This qualification typically follows a Bachelor's Degree, and serves to consolidate and deepen the student's expertise in a particular discipline, and to develop research capacity in the methodology and techniques of that discipline. This qualification demands a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence.

According to the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework, Bachelor Honours Degree programmes must include conducting and reporting research under supervision, worth at least 30 credits, in the form of a discrete research component that is appropriate to the discipline or field of study.

### B. The nature of the research assignment

The research assignment is a small-scale investigation on a political topic of research and concerns research undertaken with the intention of investigating an existing and clearly formulated problem. The title of the assignment must be concise but informative.

#### A small-scale investigation on a topic of research interest

The primary aim of the research assignment is to help you to develop a grasp of the principles of intellectual rigour. To this end, undertaking the research assignment should develop your ability to represent the contents of the prescribed texts (from your core academic modules) and the vast array of academic literature on your topic of interest as accurately, clearly and systematically as possible in a critically reasoned way.

The following elements should be included in the research assignment:

- 1. Introduction:** In this section, a background to the proposed study is given as well as an explanation of why the study is being undertaken.
- 2. Problem statement and research question:** The precise nature of the political problem should be clearly formulated, taking into account, the meaning of the central concepts posed in the problem statement. The problem statement should be stated in not more than a single paragraph. The research question should formulate the focal point of the research assignment concisely, intelligibly and clearly.
- 3. Overview of the literature:** A literature survey includes a review of existing scholarly literature around your specific topic. The literature review should provide the reader with a theory base, an overview of published works that pertain to your topic and an analysis of that work. Moreover, the literature review is a critical overview of what has been done before, thus the research assignment should only contain secondary sources.
- 4. Research design and methods:** This section must clearly state what approach(es) and methods will be utilised to investigate the proposed problem. The research assignment will take the form of desktop research and can be qualitative or quantitative depending on the research question.
- 5. Analysis of the literature surveyed and discussion:** This section should include the presentation of evidence to investigate the research question followed by a thorough

analysis and interrogation of the evidence. This section should also address how the findings from the analysis relate to the literature review.

- 6. Conclusion:** A summary of the problem under investigation and main findings from the analysis. Reference should also be made to the rationale and impact of the study.

### **Technical requirements**

The title page of the research assignment must consist of a title, name of student and student number, and name of the academic advisor. The assignment must also have a contents page and a fully listed bibliography.

The research assignment should be typed in 12 font (Times New Roman or Arial) with 1.5 line spacing and 0 pt spacing before and after each paragraph. The research assignment content should be 10 000 words (excluding the cover page, table of contents and bibliography). You are allowed to go 10% over or under the word count (i.e. 9000 – 11000 words); however, a word count beyond these parameters will be penalised.

Referencing (in-text and bibliography) should follow the Harvard-method. The bibliography only includes the sources actually referenced or cited in the research assignment.

All instances of plagiarism will be referred for disciplinary action.

### **General written work standards**

The research assignment is designed to help you to develop research and analytical skills and to acquire a specific kind of perspective on academic work. These skills include, amongst others:

- the ability to read with precision;
- the ability to represent other people's views, theories, arguments, etc. with a high degree of conceptual and terminological precision;
- the ability to defend a point of view and to reason in a logically coherent way;
- the ability to distinguish between what is relevant, what is peripheral and what is completely irrelevant;
- the ability to formulate clearly and unambiguously; and
- the ability to produce a technically well-finished text.

Along with the technical requirements, when writing your research assignment, you should take care to:

- define any basic concept or technical term clearly;
- illustrate any theoretical statement with appropriate examples;
- document any statement of familiar, standard subject matter properly with a reference to the relevant literature;
- substantiate any new statement properly;
- convey any point of content or information by means of direct, perspicuous statements; and
- convey any point of content or information by means of short, grammatical sentences.

### **C. Academic support programme**

An information session on the writing of the research assignment as well as various other academic support seminars will be offered to all Honours students in the first semester. These seminars are supplementary to your academic programme and attendance is compulsory.

Students will also be required to present their research proposal at the Honours Colloquium during the last week of the second term. The presentation is compulsory and the mark awarded will be considered when calculating the final mark for the research assignment.

**Provisional programme:**

Date	Seminar	Presenter(s)
15 February	The Honours research assignment	Dr Cindy Steenekamp
08 March	Argumentative writing skills and the writing process	Dr Nicola de Jager and Prof Janis van der Westhuizen
15 March	Avoiding plagiarism and writing support at SU	PG Skills Development and SU Language Centre
12 April	Guidelines for research proposal	Dr Cindy Steenekamp
17 May	Honours colloquium	Students and advisors

All seminars will begin at 10h00 and take place in the Political Science seminar room (648) in the Arts and Social Sciences building.

**D. Allocation of academic advisors**

Students must consult the departmental website or the list of research themes listed under the names of academic members of staff on the notice board and (preferably) decide on a topic within these themes.

Academic advisors will be distributed equitably within the department. The names of academic advisors and number of available slots for each advisor will be placed on the notice board outside seminar room 648 in early March 2019. Students will then have the opportunity to select their academic advisor. If the number of available slots for your preferred advisor is full, students will have to select a different advisor. No academic advisor may be over-subscribed and no switching between advisors will be permitted.

The advisor will assist and advise through either one-on-one meetings, group meetings or a combination of both. Some advisors may limit the number of these meetings and/or expect students to commit to milestones over the course of the writing and research process (i.e. discrete submission dates for theme or reading list or preliminary bibliography etc.).

**E. Procedural matters****Submission date and protocol: Research proposal**

The submission date for the Honours Research Proposal is **10 May 2019**.

An electronic version (either Word (.docx) or PDF (.pdf) format) must be uploaded via SUNLearn. Submission closes strictly at 16h00 on 10 May. Late submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances.

**Assessment of the research proposal**

The advisor does not grade the research proposal. Research proposals will be distributed to the panel of academic advisors that have been assigned to review the proposals. The panel will provide oral feedback on the research proposal after the student's presentation at the Honours Colloquium. Internal grading will consist of the average of the marks awarded by the panel for the research proposal and oral presentation by the student.

**Submission date and protocol: Research assignment**

The submission date for the Honours Research Assignment is **2 September 2019**.

A ring-bound hard copy must be submitted to Ms Rachel Adams in room 647 AND an electronic version (either Word (.docx) or PDF (.pdf) format) must be uploaded via SUNLearn (Turnitin). The submission date for the research assignment has the status of an examination submission date. Submission (both hard copy and electronic) closes strictly at 16h00 on 2 September. Late submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances.

**Assessment of the research assignment**

The advisor does not grade the research assignment. Research assignments will be distributed for double blind internal grading (i.e. blind review by two academic staff

members). Internal grading of the research assignments will consist of the average of the two marks awarded as well as the research proposal and oral presentation and will be completed by the end of October.

Where there is a substantial difference between the marks of the two internal examiners, the Chair of the Department will constitute an examination panel in an attempt to reach a consensus on the final mark. A 'substantial difference' may be one of (i) a difference of 15% or more between the marks; (ii) where the examiners disagree as to whether or not the thesis should be passed; and (iii) where the examiners differ on whether or not a distinction should be awarded to the candidate. Where no consensus can be reached, an independent assessor will be appointed.

Once the internal grading is complete, the research assignments will undergo external moderation. The grades earned for the research assignments will be made available to students, after the external moderation process for the November examination has been completed, together with second semester course work grades.

#### **F. Important dates and deadlines**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Seminar / activity</b>
15 February	The Honours research assignment seminar
Early March (Dates tbc)	List of academic advisors available on departmental noticeboard
	Final day to select academic advisor
08 March	Argumentative writing skills and the writing process seminar
15 March	Avoiding plagiarism and writing support at SU seminar
12 April	Guidelines for research proposal seminar
10 May	Submission deadline for research proposal by 16h00
17 May	Honours Colloquium
02 September	Submission deadline for examination by 16h00

#### **G. Bibliography and recommended resources**

- Hofstee, E. (2006). *Constructing a good dissertation*. Johannesburg: EPE. Chapter two: 91 – 105.
- Mouton, J. (2001). *How to succeed in your Master's & Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. Chapter 6: 86 – 97.

#### **H. Honours research assignment co-ordinator**

All enquires relating the research assignment for the Honours programme should be directed to Dr Cindy Steenekamp via email ([cindylee@sun.ac.za](mailto:cindylee@sun.ac.za)) or during consultation hours.