**Master of Business Administration (Executive)**

**DISSERTATION GUIDELINES**

**1.0. Overview**

The dissertation aims at providing an opportunity to EMBA participants to *integrate* and apply knowledge gained in their EMBA program in addressing the senior management’s anxiety in a company. The Dissertation will focus on a chosen business issue in the area of specialization, to be researched and analyzed by the participant with a solution offered in a manner appropriate for presentation to top management of the organization. The dissertation carries 4 credits and it is carried out in 2 stages. The first stage (1 credit) entails submitting the synopsis/proposal and successfully presenting/defending it with the mentors. The second stage (3 credits) requires one to carry out a comprehensive study, as agreed in the proposal, and defended to the mentors. The mentors here refer to a panel of 2 experts, one from the faculty to ensure rigor in concepts/ frameworks being applied, and the second a mentor from the industry to ensure that the problem being studied is realistic and is addressing corporate anxiety.

**2.0. The Dissertation Concept**

The Dissertation experience is the comprehensive application of the learning done in individual courses in the EMBA curriculum—in a strategic context. Working along with a faculty advisor, each participant is asked to frame and analyze a problem posed by a business enterprise or an organization in terms of a strategic business perspective. The participant develops a) an enterprise level understanding of the organization's industry and business model, b) an appropriate analytical framework for addressing the client's functional concerns, c) recommendations for the client, and d) a report to the EMBA faculty that explains the situation and its strategic analysis.

**3.0. Nature of projects**

It is important that the project when finished be broadly *integrative*. This is not an assignment specific to an individual class or course. Rather, it should integrate concepts learned throughout the program, with particular emphasis on the area of specialization, and demonstrate how those can be applied to real business issues. This is a graded assignment with 4.0 credits toward the participants’ completion of the EMBA program. It is graded on the A to F scale and not pass/fail.

The product of the Dissertation Project is a major report in good scholarly form with sound technical analysis, references, and bibliography. The report must reflect a learning process that involves the following components:

* *Problem Identification*: Identification and definition of a management problem or issue
* *Informed Foundation*: Reliance on, and reference to, a theory, a conceptual framework, a model, a body of knowledge, or something similar to provide an informed foundation for addressing the problem/issue
* *Gathering Data*: Collection of the appropriate and relevant data or information that bears on the problem/issue through both qualitative and quantitative research.
* *Data Analysis*: Analysis of the data using methods appropriate to the problem/issue/situation
* *Final Analysis*: An end result – *findings, recommendations, a solution to a problem, a design for a process* – something that represents the conclusion of the “problem identification – foundation – data – analysis” process
* *Documentation*: A documentation of the process and result, appropriate to the setting.

**5.0. Protocol of Execution**

**Projects**

Dissertation Projects should represent the strategic analysis of a substantial issue faced by an actual organization. The development of an adequate analysis should require tapping diverse expertise and perspectives and demonstrate the application of concepts, expertise and skills that are imparted in the EMBA Program.

A Dissertation could address a task, project or problem that is related to the current organizational responsibilities of the participant.

**Timeframe**

The Dissertation experience is the culmination of the EMBA program and must be taken during the participant's fourth semester. It will begin after the commencement of electives/specialization and successful completion of courses on Research Methodology/Business Analytics.

***SCHEDULE FOR THOSE WISHING TO COMPLETE IN JUNE 2016:***

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| --- | --- |
| **Timeline** | **To Be Done** |
| **16th December 2015** | Orientation by Dr. Grandhi and Academic mentors |
| **29th December 2015** | Submission of Statement of Purpose (SOP) with Industry Mentor’s complete profile. *(1 page Dissertation proposal – template provided)* |
| **15th – 25th January 2016** | Submission of Draft Dissertation Proposal / Synopsis *(Soft Copy submission with email approval from both mentors)* |
| **5th – 15th February 2016**  **Timings: from 11:00 AM – 7:00 PM**  \*Please arrange your schedule to ensure the presence of your industry mentor. \* | **Presentation Week (Proposal Presentation)**:  \*\*30 minutes (20 min. presentation + 10 min. Q&A) will be allocated to each student for the presentation using 8 –10 slides only.\*\*  *This evaluation will carry 25% weightage* |
| **28th February 2016** | Submission of the updated Dissertation Proposal / Synopsis (Softcopy), signed by both the Industry Mentor and Faculty Guide. |
|  | |
| **10th – 15th March 2016** | Research design documents –approved by mentors. |
| **7th May 2016** | Last day of submission of Soft Copy (Entire/Complete Report) duly approved by both the Industry Mentor and Faculty Guide including data collection and analysis.  Note: For Plagiarism Check, a result of 10% or less is allowed. However all results, irrespective of whether they are above or below 10%, are subject to the written approval (soft/hard copy) of your Faculty Guide. |
| **15th – 30th May 2016**  **Timings: from 11:00 AM – 7:00 PM**  \*Please arrange your schedule to ensure the presence of your industry mentor. \* | **Presentation Week (Final Presentation)**:  Presentation of the Dissertation before the Panel. The EMBA Office will confirm the presentation schedule 7 days prior to the presentation.  \*\*45 minutes (30 min. presentation + 15 min. Q&A) will be allocated to each student for the presentation using 10 – 12 slides only.\*\* |
| **7th June 2016** | Last day of submission of Final Hard Copy (after making the changes if any)  This evaluation will carry 75% weightage. |

**Please note that in case a deadline is not met, the participant will have to plan to graduate six months later.**

**Supervision**

Each participant is assigned a **faculty advisor** based on the expertise required for overseeing the completion of the project. In addition, each student should also identify an **industry mentor** (preferably from his / her organization). The faculty advisor in conjunction with the industry mentor will bear the responsibility for overseeing each participant’s project.

**Getting Started**

First, assess your interests, talents, and future opportunities in your area of specialization. Then explore the research opportunities available and search for a good match. This is usually an iterative process, and in the interest of time, you are encouraged to explore many opportunities in parallel. **Completion of courses in Research Methodologies is a must.**

**Before starting the Dissertation Project**

* Begin discussing your dissertation project proposal with the faculty advisor as well as industry mentor prior to the start of the Dissertation project. This should include at least two meetings with your industry and faculty advisors to develop your project plan. Kindly ensure that you will get fullest co-operation from the organization you plan to work with. Experience suggests that the researcher should re-confirm the kind of co-operation that he/she can expect from the company as it is a vital area of success in completing the dissertation.
* Turn in your written proposal to your faculty advisor well ahead as per the timelines specified. (See the outline given below for writing the proposal). The proposal must concretely describe the project you are proposing, where and with whom you will be working, how the project will improve your experience and insights, any theories and models to be used, estimated timelines, intended outcomes, and how the competencies you select will complement your future goals. Your faculty advisor must approve the proposal before you commence your study.

**Dissertation Topic**

Your project should combine skills and knowledge from management and the chosen area of specialization to explore a strategic (enduring) solution to a problem, contribute to applied research in management, or propose, create or evaluate a new technique or methodology. It should be based on interviews, data collection, analysis, library research and other methods under guidance from your industry advisor, faculty guide, and others. Project topics must be approved in advance by the mentor/faculty advisor.

**Project Proposal /Synopsis**

Before registering for credit, you must have a Dissertation project proposal (12 pt font, single-spaced, roughly

10 - 15 pages) approved by the faculty advisor. In some cases, revisions will be required before a project is approved. The proposal must contain the following information:

1. Objectives – a concise paragraph describing what you plan to accomplish.

2. Background – a few paragraphs that put your project in context. What is the important question, problem, issue, or need, and why is it important? What has already been done or is currently being done by others? How will your contribution fit together with and contribute to previous efforts? A few literature citations may be appropriate.

3. Research Design and Strategy – several paragraphs that describe what you plan to accomplish in detail and how you plan to do it. Include a brief timeline.

4. Resources – a paragraph that describes any resources that are essential to your project and how you plan to obtain or gain access to them.

SPJSGM will identify ***faculty advisors*** for Operations, Marketing, and Finance areas.

**Faculty Advisor/Mentor’s Roles and Obligations**

The faculty mentor will do the following:

* Provide the academic structure for the project.
* May assist the participant in developing a project plan, in conjunction with the industry contact and the participant.
* Advise the participant regarding preparation of an appropriate written product for his/her project.
* Turn in feedback on the topic, proposal, interim report and end-of-project evaluation.
* Provide a grade for the participant on the Dissertation Project Evaluation Form to the Dissertation

Coordinator.

A potential advisor should be willing to discuss ideas with you and let you casually explore them for a time without a commitment to pursue them. However, most research advisors will only be willing to invest significant time and effort after you are sure that you have looked around and settled on a project that you are committed to pursuing. Respect the valuable time and resources of advisors, while also remembering that you owe it to yourself to choose the project that best suits you and in which you are able progress independently.

**Time/Effort**

The SPJSGM Dissertation Project consists of 4 credits of academic effort. Most participants become deeply involved in the creative aspects of their dissertation projects and devote more than the minimum effort, often continuing their research after the requirements have been completed. This depends on you, your advisor, and the project you choose. The research, analysis and writing themselves often take a hundreds of hours. Be sure to discuss these matters in depth with your advisor to make sure both of you have realistic expectations about your project.

***At the End of Dissertation Project***

* Submit the written report at the end of the academic session after the plagiarism check. Make sure the coordinator has a copy of the written and electronic version.

**6.0 The Project Report**

More than anything else, effective communication (sometimes referred to as persuasion) skills will dictate your future career opportunities in management. Recognizing this fact, your final letter grade will be weighted heavily on the quality and substance of your written final Dissertation Report.

While this document is tailored towards a formal Thesis, it provides an excellent example of the style and format generally accepted by professionals in the scientific community. While there is no specific length requirement, 50 pages of 12 pt double-spaced text is typical, not including any tables, figures, and appendices needed.

Your report should include a title page, an abstract, and sections for, acknowledgements, introduction, methods, results and discussion, conclusions and references. Figures and tables should have captions and should be integrated into the body of the report. The abstract serves as a concise description of your principal results or accomplishments. As with the initial project proposal, the introduction section is designed to place your work in context. The methods section allows you to place the most technical details of your work together in one place so that they can be readily reviewed by experts in your field and so that they do not distract the reader in later sections. Some prefer to separate the results and discussion sections while some prefer to integrate them. In any case, be sure that the reader can readily differentiate your results from their interpretation.

The conclusion allows you to summarize the main points together with their context or significance. One can also use this section to point to future research directions. The format of the reference section, or bibliography, should be consistent with the Report writing guidelines included in the EMBA Participant Guidelines. Appendices may be added as needed for extensive tables, program code, etc.

You are encouraged to seek feedback from your faculty advisor while preparing your Dissertation Report. However, you should not submit your report for final evaluation until you have reviewed it carefully with your mentor/advisor and seriously considered any feedback that they provide to you.

All the sources should be referred to in the document and the references should be listed as per the APA 6TH Edison format.

**7.0 Grades/Deadlines**

A letter grade only will be assigned to the dissertation. Dissertations not submitted on the due date will not be entertained for evaluation. The dissertation grades would be split as 1 credit for synopsis and 3 credits for final submission. This would be determined by a viva-voce at both stages. **Note that incomplete projects or those awarded F grades do not count towards graduation!**

*Criteria for assessment: dissertations must*

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the literature and published research through application of rigorous analysis, critical enquiry, clear expression and independent judgment.

2. Show methodological competence by demonstrating application of the appropriate understanding, skills, techniques and critical awareness acquired during the study of the Research Methods Unit

3. Analyze data and problem(s) in a context of a substantial and demanding piece of work designed to develop a participant’s ability and capacity to work in a managerial environment relative to their named route.

4. Show an appreciation of managerial issues inherent in the research and show that the participants objective of improving their abilities as managers has been furthered

5. Be well presented following accepted academic convention

**The following grades are awarded depending upon the merits of the report:**

A-, A: The participant has completed a research project and a report, both of the highest quality, clearly above average. An A or A- grade indicates that the advisor would be proud to show this work to external reviewers.

B-, B: The participant has completed a research project and a report, but the quality is close to average.

C-, C: The participant has completed a research project and a report, but the quality is below average.

D-, D: The participant has not been involved in any meaningful research, appropriate for the number of credit hours. The participant has failed to produce a report. Or, the participant has completed a report, but the quality is well below average.

F-, F: The participant has not understood the project requirements, not done the work in a systematic way and falling short of efforts and minimum academic standards and therefore declared fail.

**8.0. Evaluation Scheme.**

**8.1. Parameters for evaluating the EMBA Dissertation Synopsis (25%)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Parameters** | **Max**  **Marks** | **Marks**  **Obtained** | **Comments** |
| **1. Research Objectives**  -Research Objectives and milestones clearly defined and agreed with mentor | 10% |  |  |
| **2. Literature review**  -Relevant and critical review of a range of secondary data pertaining to the above topic with reference list. Need to review both industry data and academic literature. | 25% |  |  |
| **3. Research Design**  - Clear articulation of the research design & details of proposed methodology with rationale for chosen approach  - Draft questionnaire design / discussion  guide - reviewed and approved by the mentor | 25% |  |  |
| **4. Data Analysis**  - Specific techniques proposed for analysis and interpretation with rationale for chosen approach  - Quality of preliminary data analysis  -Sample size & design proposed. | 10% |  |  |
| **5. Key milestones & timelines**  Clearly articulated, specific milestones with timelines with target date of completion. | 10% |  |  |
| **6. Presentation & Communication**  -Clear appropriate & logical presentation of:  data / findings; summary of expected findings  & managerial implications.  Use of appropriate referencing (Harvardian format) | 10% |  |  |
| **7. Intensity of Engagement**  -Demonstrates a consistent, focused effort and takes ownership for the project | 10% |  |  |
| **8. Total** | 100% |  |  |

**8.2 Parameters for evaluating the EMBA Dissertation Final Evaluation (75%)**

**Final Dissertation Evaluation**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Internal Mentor Assessment** | | | |
| Parameter | Max. Marks | Marks  Obtained | Comments |
| **RECOMMENDATIONS:** | | | |
| **I. Quality Of Analysis** |  | | |
| a. Industry Perspective & Trends  Literature review. | 15 |  |  |
| b. Frameworks or Concepts  application | 15 |  |  |
| **II. Research Methodology Qualitative Analysis & Quantitative Analysis of Data and Interpretation.** | 25 |  |  |
| **III. Project Outcomes, Managerial Implications and business recommendations etc.** | 20 |  |  |
| **IV. Presentation** | 15 |  |  |
| **Quality of Report- professional & academic and compliance to format and guidelines.** | 10 |  |  |
| **Total** | **100** |  |  |

Dean- Executive MBA and Professor & Head- Marketing Area