

**MML Tripos**  
**The Optional Dissertation, Part II 2016-17**

**Guidelines as agreed by the Faculty's**  
**Undergraduate Studies Committee, May 2016**

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## THE OPTIONAL DISSERTATION

### Summary of key dates/deadlines for Optional Dissertations, Tripos 2017

Submission of proposed title	Friday 21 October 2016
Change to proposed title	Friday 27 January 2017
Submission of Optional Dissertation	Monday 13 March 2017 (4.00 pm)

In Part II you may, in addition to the compulsory Year Abroad Project, offer an Optional Dissertation instead of sitting one of the scheduled Part II written examination papers. You may also offer an Optional Dissertation in place of a Part II scheduled paper that has been suspended, providing that supervision and examining is available for your chosen area. In this case, please check with the relevant department to ensure that the suspended paper you wish to replace is available as an Optional Dissertation.

If you are considering an Optional Dissertation you should consult your Director of Studies and, if possible, the potential supervisor at the start of the Easter Term in your second year. They will advise you on the kind of topic that you might choose and on the timetable for submission of the dissertations.

Much of the work for an Optional Dissertation can be done during your fourth year. You will, however, be at a disadvantage if you have not planned and read extensively for the piece during your Year Abroad.

You are advised that it is inappropriate to put work produced for an examination, but not yet assessed, in the public domain; this includes the presentation of ideas in progress via online blogs.

### DISSERTATION TITLE

You must apply to the Faculty Board for permission to submit an Optional Dissertation through your Director of Studies. Applications must be received by **Friday 21 October 2016**. You will be contacted by the Faculty Secretary at the start of term. You will be asked to provide the proposed title of your dissertation via an online Moodle survey. We will ask you to provide the following information:

- Your personal details (name, college, email address);
- The name and email addresses of your DoS and dissertation supervisor;
- The paper you wish to submit your dissertation in place of;
- The paper you will take by written examination in the event of non-submission;
- The proposed title of your dissertation;
- The title of your Year Abroad Project;
- The scheduled papers you took at Part IB.

We will ask you to confirm that you have discussed the application with both your DoS and supervisor. We will contact them after the deadline and ask them to confirm their approval.

If you wish to change your proposal, the revised title must be submitted to the Faculty Board

via the Faculty Secretary for approval not later than the second Friday of the Full Lent Term preceding the examination (i.e. **Friday 28 January 2017**). You will be contacted by the Faculty Secretary in advance of this deadline to ask for any such changes.

You may not offer an Optional Dissertation in place of a paper that you have previously offered for examination in another part of the Tripos.

You may not offer an Optional Dissertation on a subject that overlaps substantially with the subject of your Year Abroad Project.

You may not offer an Optional Dissertation on a subject that was a specific topic or set text in any paper which you offered at Part IB NOR a subject from any paper which is available solely at Part IB.

You may not offer an Optional Dissertation in place of a 'borrowed' paper (a paper from Schedule D) or an Optional Dissertation on a subject from any paper available as a 'borrowed' paper.

You may not offer a dissertation in place of an "Introduction to the language and culture paper" (Gr.3, Gr6A, Gr6I, Pg.3. Sl.9, Sl.13, Sp.10).

If you are taking two 'borrowed' papers AND you plan to submit coursework<sup>1</sup> in place of the examination for both of these papers you MUST apply to the Faculty Board for special permission if you also want to submit an Optional Dissertation in place of an MML paper.

You should formulate your title as precisely as possible, where appropriate including the principal author(s) and/or books to be discussed and, a word or two of elaboration. Vague topics, such as 'Four Dutch Novelists', or unrealistically large topics, such as 'The Renaissance in France', are not acceptable.

A dissertation within the field of comparative literature or comparative linguistics must follow the rubric of the relevant paper that it is replacing and its title must reflect this. This may mean referring to two or three languages depending on the paper being replaced. The Undergraduate Studies Committee, on behalf of the Faculty Board, will make a decision for each individual case.

If the subject of the Optional Dissertation lies within the field of more than one paper, the Undergraduate Studies Committee will stipulate which paper the dissertation will fall under for examination purposes.

If your proposed title is not approved, or if you fail to submit the dissertation by the due date, you must replace it by taking a written examination in a scheduled paper. This paper will normally cover the area of your dissertation topic but in the case of a topic for which the paper is suspended you must sit the examination of another paper of your choice that is offered that year.

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<sup>1</sup> Some 'borrowed' papers (papers from Schedule D) permit students to offer coursework in place of an examination. This is strictly subject to the rules and regulations of the lending Faculty and students taking such papers should make themselves aware of the related requirements and procedures.

## LANGUAGE OF DISSERTATION

Dissertations are normally in English, but quotations from primary sources must be in the language of the original (with an English translation only where this is deemed necessary to the examination process).

An Optional Dissertation may, however, be written in a modern foreign language instead of English if the Undergraduate Studies Committee, in or after approving the subject, so agree.

## CONTACT WITH THE FACULTY

Enquiries concerning the optional dissertation may be sent to the Faculty Secretary (e-mail: [mml-dissertations@lists.cam.ac.uk](mailto:mml-dissertations@lists.cam.ac.uk)). **However, all academic queries relating to the subject and presentation of your Optional Dissertation should be addressed to your supervisor and/or Director of Studies.**

## SUPERVISION

The dissertation must be your own work. It is obviously desirable that the topic of the dissertation should be discussed in advance with a supervisor and that consultation should be continued during the preparation of the dissertation. The final content and formal wording of the dissertation, however, is your responsibility alone. Supervisors are not allowed to comment on the final draft of a dissertation.

The amount of supervision is comparable to that for a scheduled paper.

## ASSESSMENT

In assessing dissertations, examiners will take into account a good style, informed, clear and cogent argument, thorough and systematic treatment of the subject, original ideas or information, and critical acumen. See also the marking criteria at the end of this booklet.

## PRESENTATION

The dissertation should be typed in double spacing, preferably on A4 paper, with a left-hand margin of at least 2.5 cm, and should be bound. In cases where a non-Roman or symbolic typeface is necessary and cannot be provided hand-written or photocopied extracts may be inserted. Audio or visual data, such as recorded interviews or film, should be presented in **CD ROM** format.

Pages should be numbered and quotations of more than one or two lines should normally be separated from the main text.

## THE WORD COUNT

The dissertation must normally be not less than 8,000 words and in any case not more than 10,000 words in length, **inclusive of notes (should they be required) but exclusive of the bibliography and any appendices.**

Students should seek advice from their supervisor about the appropriate use of appendices.

The word count shall include:

- i. Main body of text;
- ii. Footnotes;
- iii. Chapter and section headings;
- iv. Captions for any illustrations and maps;

The word count shall exclude:

- i. Bibliography;
- ii. Preliminary material: title page, (optional) table of contents;
- iii. Illustrations and maps;
- iv. Statistical graphs, charts, and tables;
- v. English translation of passages quoted in foreign language (where deemed necessary to the examination process);
- vi. Appendices

The electronic submission of the dissertation may be used to ascertain the exact word count. If you are using a computer or word-processor to calculate word length, you should note that most computer programs count as a 'word' anything with a space on either side of it. When typing, therefore, do not enter spaces between multiple initials in an author's name (e.g., J.A.W. Bennett), or between numbers in line references (26-27).

### **Word count penalties**

Optional Dissertations will be penalized for excessive length or brevity according to the following scheme: one mark to be deducted for every 100 words, or part thereof, above the maximum or below the minimum set out above.

### **SUBMISSION OF THE OPTIONAL DISSERTATION**

#### **Deadline and penalties for late submission**

An Optional Dissertation must reach the Faculty Office **not later than 4.00 pm** on Monday of the last week of the Full Lent Term preceding the examination (i.e. **Monday 13 March 2017**). You are required to submit your work both in hard-copy and electronically by the same deadline. Please be aware that the Faculty Office will close at 4.00 pm on the day of the deadline.

Extensions will not normally be granted, except for serious medical reasons (failure of computer equipment, for example, is not a valid excuse). All applications for extensions must be directed to the Secretary of the Applications Committee via your college Tutor. Neither the examiners nor staff in the Faculty Office are able to deal with these requests.

Optional Dissertations submitted after 4.00 pm on Monday 13 March but before 4.00 pm on Tuesday 14 March (in both hard copy and electronic format) will be penalized by a deduction of 10 marks. If you fail to submit the Optional Dissertation within these deadlines then you must sit the examination for a further Tripos paper.

If you change your mind about doing an Optional Dissertation and decide to withdraw your application, you must ensure that either your Tutor or your Director of Studies informs BOTH the Board of Examinations AND the Faculty Office immediately.

If you have applied to do an Optional Dissertation and have failed to submit it or to withdraw by the deadline, then you must sit the examination for a further Tripos paper.

### **What to submit and how**

You must submit two hard copies of your Optional Dissertation to the Faculty Office. Each copy of the dissertation must bear your candidate number, which will be issued by the Board of Examinations, but not your name. An accurate word count must be given. The two copies must be accompanied by a Declaration Form, which you must download from the Faculty webpage.

The following information should be included on the front cover of your project:

- i. University of Cambridge
- ii. Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages
- iii. Tripos Part II 2017
- iv. Optional Dissertation in place of paper xxxx (e.g. Fr3)
- v. Title
- vi. Candidate number (the same as for your YAP. If you do not have a candidate number please contact the Faculty Secretary on [mml-dissertations@lists.cam.ac.uk](mailto:mml-dissertations@lists.cam.ac.uk)).

You must submit electronically all elements of the dissertation including those parts that are not counted in the overall word count (see WORD COUNT section above).

The electronic submission should consist of a single PDF or Word file. However, extra files will be accepted when a single file is not practicable. Please give your candidate number as the file name, as detailed in the naming conventions below. Please also ensure that any details of authorship of the file are anonymised.

Your work may be checked for word-count and for plagiarism using anti-plagiarism software. Before submitting electronically please ensure you have read the University Policy on the use of Plagiarism Detection Software (Turnitin).

### **Please follow these instructions in order to submit your Optional Dissertation electronically:**

1. Go to the Moodle website <https://www.vle.cam.ac.uk/>
2. Login using your Raven account
3. Navigate to the 'MML Part II – General Information' course page
4. Click on 'Electronic Submission of Optional Dissertation' in the 'Optional Dissertation Tripos 2017' section
5. Click on 'Add submission'
6. Drag your dissertation file into the upload box and wait for it to upload
7. Click 'Save changes'

If you cannot see the relevant section on the Moodle course page, and think you should be able to, contact the Faculty Secretary ([mml-dissertations@lists.cam.ac.uk](mailto:mml-dissertations@lists.cam.ac.uk)) **as soon as possible**.

### **RETURN OF SUBMITTED WORK**

Students are strongly advised to keep a hard copy of their Optional Dissertation in their possession: the Faculty cannot be responsible for loss or damage.

One hard copy of the Optional Dissertation will be available for collection from the Department Secretaries within six months following the publication of the Class List with your exam results.

For further information please see the undergraduate examinations data retention policy, as published on the Faculty website.