

UGCF 2022 | 4th Year Research Track

Dissertation Writing & Academic Project

A student guide to the Semester VII research journey



TRACK 1 • DISSERTATION WRITING

- Individual work
- A sustained research study under supervision

TRACK 2 • ACADEMIC PROJECT

- Individual or group of 2–3 students
- Individual contributions must be clearly defined

Why is there a Research Track?

The UGCF 2022 framework treats research as a vital component of the 4th year.

- Research is intended to nurture creativity, problem-solving and evidence-based reasoning.
- Students gain practical experience in problem identification, data collection, analysis and presentation.
- Your project should be self-conceived and carried out under faculty supervision.
- Academic integrity and research ethics are part of the learning—not an afterthought.
- By Semester VII, you should move from an idea → a defensible research design → initial evidence of work.

Two Tracks — One Research Standard

The nature of the work may differ, but both tracks are assessed through research-oriented outcomes.

DISSERTATION WRITING

- Must be done individually.
- One topic is selected and approved.
- Designed as a sustained, scholarly research study.
- Strong emphasis on research problem, literature, design and preliminary work.
- Best suited to students who want an individual research experience.

ACADEMIC PROJECT

- May be conducted individually or in groups of 2–3.
- If in a group, individual contributions must be explicitly defined.
- Can be research-oriented and discipline-specific.
- Assessment remains focused on clarity, originality, methodology, progress and presentation.
- Best suited to a focused, manageable project with clearly defined outputs.

What changes—and what does not?

Use this slide when choosing your track.

FORMAT

- Dissertation: individual
- Project: individual OR 2–3 students

COMMON EXPECTATIONS

- Approved topic
- Research problem
- Literature review
- Research design
- Initial work / evidence
- Presentation + viva

NON-NEGOTIABLES

- Original work
- Proper citations
- Ethical conduct
- Methodological rigour
- Documented progress
- Defend your choices

Rules You Should Know Before You Start

These are structural requirements in the University guidelines.

- All research topics/projects must be approved by the Advisory Committee for Research (ACR) / Subject Research Committee (SRC).
- Dissertation writing is individual; Academic Projects may be individual or in groups of 2–3.
- An ACR consisting of 3 faculties (Supervisor, Subject Expert & Expert from different discipline) is constituted for every student.
- Faculty supervisors provide regular guidance; students present progress to the ACR once every month and submit a Monthly Progress Report (MPR).

The Research Journey: Semester VII

Think of Semester VII as the design-and-launch phase.



The goal is not to “finish a dissertation” in Semester VII. The goal is to build a credible research foundation.

Semester VII Learning Outcomes

By the end of Semester VII, you should be able to demonstrate four core outcomes.

01

- Identify the research problem

Show potential contribution / novelty and contemporary relevance.

02

- Review literature

Use appropriate databases, cover landmark + recent work, and identify the gap.

03

- Formulate research design

Problem, scope, objectives, questions, hypothesis (if applicable), methodology and limitations.

04

- Commence the work

Begin data collection, experiment, fieldwork or equivalent activity.

Assessment at a Glance — Semester VII

Total Credit: 6 | Marks per Credit: 40 | Total Marks: 240

Identification of Research Problem	20	• Novelty / potential contribution (15) + contemporary relevance / originality(5)
Review of Literature	30	• Databases & keywords (5) + range/balance, at least 50 sources (15) +research gap (10)
Formulation of Research Design	120	• Problem (10), scope (10), aims/objectives (20), resarch questions (20), hypothesis (10), methodology (40), limitations (10)
Commencement of data / fieldwork / equivalent	30	• Evidence of preliminary work or plot results
End-term assessment	40	• Presentation (20) + Viva voce (20)

1. Identification of the Research Problem

Ask: What is the problem, why does it matter, and what could my work add?

- Potential contribution to existing knowledge OR novelty / innovation in approach.
- Contemporary relevance of the research / originality of the topic in the domain.
- A good problem is specific enough to investigate and significant enough to justify the effort.
- Your title, problem statement, scope, objectives and research questions must ultimately tell the same story.

Do not start with “What topic can I do?” — start with “What problem can I investigate?”

2. Literature Review — Build the Case

The literature review is not a list of summaries. It is the route to your research gap.

SEARCH

- Use appropriate databases (examples in the guideline: PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus).
- Choose relevant search keywords / phrases.

SELECT

- Cover landmark and recent research.
- Maintain a balance of primary research articles and reviews.
- Guideline assessment expects at least 50 sources.

SYNTHESIZE

- Compare findings, approaches and limitations.
- Identify what is missing / unresolved.
- State the research gap clearly.

3. Formulation of Research Design

This is the largest component of the Semester VII assessment: 120 / 240 marks.

Problem Statement	Aligned with the identified research gap
Scope	Clear boundaries + justification + rationale
Aims & Objectives	3–5 coherent objectives
Research Questions	3–7 concise questions aligned with objectives
Hypothesis	If applicable: variables, measurability, null hypothesis, operational definitions
Methodology	Justified methods aligned with objectives / hypotheses
Limitations	State them clearly; do not hide them

Choose the Research Methodology Pathway

The guideline allows students to choose the pathway appropriate to their study.

A | Empirical Research

- Population, area of study, sampling, sample size, data collection & analysis tools, outliers

B | Experimental Research

- Materials/methods, justification, controls, replicates, reproducibility, safety/ethics, analysis

C | Doctrinal Research

- Theoretical/legal issues, primary & secondary sources, comparative/theoretical analysis

D | Language Research

- Linguistic/cultural problem, sources, theoretical framework, stylistic approach

E | Systematic Review & Meta-analysis

- Protocol/research question, reproducible search, inclusion/exclusion, PRISMA, quality assessment, synthesis

4. Commence the Actual Research

Semester VII requires evidence that the work has begun—not only a proposal.

EMPIRICAL

- Minimum 10–20% data collection completed.
- Tools/questionnaires operationalized and pilot-tested.
- Preliminary data presented in tables/figures.

SCIENTIFIC / EXPERIMENTAL

- At least one experiment, assay or methodology standardized/optimized.
- Preliminary results or pilot data demonstrated.
- Use figures/tables where appropriate.

OTHER PATHWAYS

- Doctrinal: draft of at least two chapters.
- Language: topic + framework + tools + at least one chapter.
- Systematic review/meta-analysis: search in 2–3 databases + PRISMA flowchart + pilot extraction tables.

End-Term Assessment: Presentation + Viva

Your Semester VII evaluation asks you to communicate and defend the research you have built.

PRESENTATION • 20 MARKS

- Research problem
- Objectives
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Scope & limitations
- Hypothesis, where applicable
- Tentative chapterisation
- For science disciplines: preliminary results / pilot data
- Clarity, accuracy, logical flow and effective use of ICT

VIVA VOCE • 20 MARKS

- Understanding of the research problem
- Methodological approach
- Preliminary findings and overall progress
- Theoretical framework / data interpretation
- Originality and significance
- Limitations and future scope
- Work done and future implications
- Be ready to defend and justify your choices and findings

Who evaluates you?

The guideline creates a multi-perspective assessment of your research communication.

EXTERNAL EXPERT

- One external subject / domain expert

SUPERVISION

- Supervisor + co-supervisor, if any

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY VIEW

- One member from the Student Advisory Committee or College Research Committee; preferably from a different discipline

Monitoring: Your Research Is a Process

Do not wait until the final presentation to show progress.

- Meet your supervisor regularly; the guideline expects regular mentoring.
- Appear before the ACR once every month and present the progress of your work.
- Submit a Monthly Progress Report (MPR), endorsed by the ACR, to the SRC.
- Maintain a logbook documenting timelines, challenges and achievements.
- Research outcomes will be evaluated against your stated objectives and research questions.

Research Ethics & Academic Integrity

Originality is a continuous responsibility of both student and supervisor.

DO

- Cite every source appropriately.
- Keep accurate records of data and analysis.
- Follow discipline-specific ethical guidelines.
- Use plagiarism detection as required.
- Acknowledge contributions and sources honestly.

DON'T

- Copy or patch-write.
- Manipulate or fabricate data.
- Misrepresent someone else's ideas as your own.
- Ignore consent, privacy, safety or other ethical requirements.
- Wait until submission to check originality.

REPOSITORY

- College research repository should contain:
 - Title
 - Abstract
 - Keywords
 - Plagiarism report verifying originality
 - Supervisor's remarks on quality and process

Funding & Institutional Support

A strong proposal may open doors to support.

- Student research projects may be supported through institutional funding mechanisms.
- Possible sources listed include the College Student Welfare Fund, college facilities/services, industry–academic collaborations, CSR initiatives and alumni contributions or other college mechanisms.
- Funding should be awarded on the merit of student proposals.
- Students should submit well-justified proposals; a proforma may be developed by the college.
- If funding is provided, proper utilization documentation is required.

A Practical Checklist for Students

Use this as your Semester VII working checklist.

- Choose a problem—not just a broad topic.
- Discuss feasibility and scope with your prospective supervisor.
- Get the topic approved through the prescribed research mechanism.
- Prepare a focused literature-search strategy and build your reference library.
- Write the research gap in 2–4 clear sentences.
- Align title → problem → objectives → questions → methodology.
- Decide what evidence can realistically be generated in Semester VII.
- Start the work early and document every milestone.
- Prepare for monthly ACR progress presentations and MPRs.
- Keep your citations, data, drafts and ethics documentation organized.
- Rehearse the final presentation and viva: be ready to justify every major choice.

Your Research Track Starts With One Good Question

Choose a meaningful problem.
Build the evidence. Design carefully. Document honestly. Defend confidently.

DISSERTATION

- Individual • sustained research study

ACADEMIC PROJECT

- Individual or 2–3 • defined contributions

Questions? Discuss your idea, scope and feasibility with your supervisor / department.