Global Learning Semesters
Course Syllabus
Course: MBA-799 Thesis (Final Project)
Department: MBA
Host Institution: University of Nicosia, Nicosia, Cyprus

Course Summary		
Course Code	**Course Title**	**Recommended Credit Hours**
MBA-799	Thesis (Final Project)	4
Semester Offered	**Contact Hours**	**Prerequisites**
Please contact us	42-45	Graduate Standing
Department	**Level of Course**	**Language of Instruction**
MBA	Upper Division	English

Prerequisites

Graduate Standing

Topic Areas

1. Thesis requirements

MBA Candidates have to demonstrate through their Thesis the capacity to present:

1. A clear formulation of a business problem/issue.
2. A review analysis of the problem through the relevant literature.
3. An adequate structure for the research and related analysis.
4. Answers to the relevant problem research questions.
5. A logical presentation of the research results and recommendations emanating from the overall work undertaken for the Thesis.
6. A well-structured and concisely formulated report in the writing style prescribed in: “A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Thesis”, by K. L. Turabian.

1.1 Letter type requirements

- Font Times New Roman
- Style Normal
- Size 14 for Headings, 12 for others
- Left Margin 3.0 cm
- Right Margin 2.0 cm
- Top Margin 2.5 cm
- Bottom Margin 2.5 cm
- Header 1.3 cm
- Footer 1.3 cm
- Spacing 1.5 lines

1.2 Front page

- The front page has to contain the title of the paper, the registered name of the MBA Candidate, which has to fit in the box as shown in the attached Appendix 1 typed with the same letter types as given above, and the following paragraph:

- "This paper was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degree at INTERCOLLEGE, School of Business Administration – Graduate Business Programs, Nicosia, CYPRUS, ………………… (date)."

- It is recommended to insert a blank page after the front page. This un-numbered sheet will prevent the text of the following page from showing through the white space on the title page.

1.3 The text

The main text of the paper has to be separated into well-defined divisions, such as chapters, subchapters, sections, and subsections. The text may also include parenthetical references, footnotes, or subscript numbers keyed to a reference list or list of endnotes. The words CHAPTER, SECTION, etc should be written in bold, capital letters. The generic heading of a chapter consists of the word CHAPTER followed by a number. The number is shown in the form of a numeral (Arabic). The regular text has to be written in "fully justified" lines. All Chapters start on a new page. Subchapters, subsections, etc have to be placed one tab to the inside, and so forth.
Example:

Chapter 1
    1.1
        1.1.1

Page numbers have to be centered at the bottom of each page starting with the Table of Contents. It is preferred not to use abbreviations, other than those that are most commonly accepted. When using abbreviations, a list of abbreviations should be arranged alphabetically by the abbreviation itself, not the spelled-out term, as an appendix (see instructions for appendices).

1.4 Appendices

An appendix is a distinct group of related items such as, a questionnaire, a group of tables, or a group of graphs. It is a useful device to make available to the reader such material that is related to the text but not suitable for inclusion in the text. All appendices go at the end of the paper, never at the end of the chapter to which they may pertain. Materials of different categories should be placed in separate appendices. Where there is more than one appendix, each appendix should be given a capital letter starting with "A". The word APPENDIX should be written in bold capital letters and should not be abbreviated.

1.5 Tables & Graphs

Tables and graphs efficiently organize and compress data into standardized form. The use of spreadsheets for the creation and presentation of Tables and Graphs is necessary. Tables and graphs should be given a sequential Arabic numeral and a title. All text references to tables/graphs should be by number and not by an introductory phrase. A table may occupy the full width of the page or, if the number and width of columns permit, less than the full width. In either case, each table must be centered horizontally in the page. When a table is long and narrow, then double it up in equal parts and place them side by side. Separate the two parts by a vertical double line. If a table is too wide for the page, it should be turned lengthwise. No text should be placed on a page containing a broadside table. In the list of tables, the table numbers should be placed in a column flush left under the heading "Table", and the page numbers should be listed flush right under the heading "Page". All tables and graphs should have their source information identified at the bottom of the page.

1.6 Footnotes

The place in the text at which a footnote is introduced should be marked with an Arabic numeral typed slightly above the line (superscript). The footnote number should always follow the passage to which it refers. Footnotes should be arranged in numerical order at the foot of the page (footnote).

1.7 References

A list of references or works consulted (alphabetical, by author's last name, but including first names) should be included at the end of the paper. You should make certain that there is a complete reference for every citation in the text and that the cited dates and the spelling of authors' names in the text and references are in agreement. Typically, references within the text should follow the form (Author's last name, Year of publication). Unlike footnotes that should be numbered as indicated in 1.6 above, you do not number the references. Citing of references through a single number in the text is not permitted.

1.8 Personal Comments on Content

In your introduction chapter, clearly state your objective; state why you have chosen this topic, the methodology that you plan to use and the limitations of the study, and conclude with a brief description of the following chapters.

During your research and data processing, you will be faced with many problems. When you identify problems, be sure that you address the underlying causes rather than wash them over.

The most important chapter of a Thesis is the chapter of recommendations. It is best if you assign priorities to your recommendations to show relative importance. Make these recommendations as specific and powerful as possible. State the logic behind your recommendation.

Always finish with a summary/conclusion chapter. In this chapter, you should restate your objective and briefly summarize your recommendations. The purpose of this is to add a good finish to the Thesis by tying it together. It is also a good idea to have a paragraph at the end of each chapter summarizing what the chapter accomplished.

It is very important that you stay focused on your objective in the preparation of the paper. The goal is not to write all that you know about the topic or subject of your choice, nor to produce the thickest set of typed materials. The goal is to analyze the subject in an organized manner and to derive meaningful conclusions and/or recommendations. Do no plagiarize extracts from the Internet, other authors, articles and books. When you use an idea or words from another author, it is necessary to provide the proper citation, notation or quotation marks.

1.9 Presentation

Final draft copies of the Thesis are given to the three members of the Thesis Committee for their review at least two weeks before the scheduled date for presentation and defense. This draft version should be as complete as possible with all pages and sections as required above and described throughout this guide. MBA Candidates are encouraged to seek advice from the MBA Office at all times.

The oral presentation (defense of the Thesis) takes approximately 60 minutes. The first 20-25 minutes will require the participant to briefly and concisely state the following:

- The title and objective of the study
- The motives or reasons for the study
- The approach taken in the investigations and/or research
- The most important conclusions/recommendations

The supervisor and the other two Committee members use the next 15-20 minutes for in-depth questioning of the Thesis. These questions may relate to the following:

- The content of the study and writing style
- The quality and logic of the analysis
- The literature used
- The quality of the oral presentation

Overheads, or preferably a PowerPoint presentation, must be used for the presentation (approximately 7-10 slides). These should be clear, readable and concise. Do not copy pages of the paper. Do not write text for you to read. Use bullets to help you talk freely. Have the overhead separated from the paper backing before the presentation. Practice the presentation before the actual presentation. Watch for misspellings. Do not constantly look at the screen but look at your audience. Stand up while presenting, look smart and confident.

After the presentation, the MBA Candidate will be requested to leave the room. During this time, the Supervisor and the Committee Members will discuss the merits of the Thesis and evaluate both the written and oral parts as shown in the next section. They may agree on a final mark or, they may recommend additional work or further changes to the text. The candidate will then be called back into the examination room and will be informed the Committee's decision accordingly.

1.10 Grading of the Thesis

In order to assist you in understanding the grading of your Thesis, the following areas of the oral and written presentation are evaluated:

Oral presentation

- Organization of presentation
- Content (quality and thoroughness)
- Quality of Visual Aids
- Speaking voice (delivery)
- Courtesy to audience
- Ability to answer questions
- Posture, pose
- Ability to defend position
- Persuasive impact
- Mannerisms
- Practicality of recommendations

Written presentation

- Clear statement of objective
- Statement of Problems/Limitations of study
- Analysis and presentation of pertinent material
- Use of relevant literature on subject
- Research methodology and results
- Measurement of results, interpretation and presentation
- Recommendations/conclusions – test of logical inference
- Proper format (grammar, spelling, etc.)
- Use of footnotes/endnotes
- List of References used in citations and footnotes
- Appendices (tables, graphs)
- Bibliography

2. Planning your research

2.1 Time

The amount of time spent on research activities compared with time spent on other matters should be regularly checked to determine whether your time is being used to its full potential.

2.2 The Research Plan

This process identifies and schedules the various activities to be completed and allows many potential pitfalls to be identified. The plan can then be used as a measure against which the project progress can be measured.

There is no one correct way to plan a research project. One approach is to use network planning in some form. The basic steps for a network plan are as follows:

- Determine the objectives.
- Identify and list the activities that need to be carried out.

- Order the activities. Establish for every activity those activities that precede it, those that follow it, and those which may be undertaken concurrently.
- Draw the network.
- Estimate the time needed to complete each activity.
- Analyze the network using the completion times.
- Check the availability of the resources and draw a schedule.

2.3 How to do a Time Estimate

There are clearly no precise times that can be allocated to specific activities but the following categories may be helpful.

Research Activities

Some of the different research activities are:

- Selecting a topic
- Literature search
- Liaising with client organization
- Preparing the outline
- Collecting data (interviews, questionnaires, etc.)
- Data analysis
- Developing concepts and theories
- Analysis of results
- Conclusions, recommendations, limitations
- Other

You should define the major research tasks connected with your project and estimate the time required for each.

Literature Search: The time needed to research the literature chosen should be estimated according to each individual's capabilities, and adhered to.

Writing, Editing, Rewriting and Proof-reading: MBA Candidates often underestimate the time needed to document the research. The important concept is realistic planning and this depends on realistic time estimates.

The standard estimate is four hours per double-spaced, typewritten page of the final manuscript, but many MBA Candidates require more than that.

2.4 Developing a Coding and Filing System

Once all the information has been collected, it needs to be systematically organized. A logical system of coding and filing is by major sub-titles within the report. For example, if the report consists of six chapters and there are twenty-four major sub-titles within these chapters, each of these sub-titles can be the basis for classification of references, ideas and other information as it is collected. Each idea, quotation, data analysis, etc. may then be coded according to the sub-title under which it falls. It is advisable to have a general section for each chapter to which information that does not seem to fall into any of the clearly labeled sections as to the source and the date it was obtained may be coded for later reference and re-classification.

It is very important to settle on a standard bibliographic and reference style. Putting bibliographic references in a standard format will ensure that all reference information is properly obtained and listed.

A copy of every draft chapter should be kept in a location separate from the rest of your work (backup), in order to avoid losing your entire work should anything unforeseen happen.

3. Conducting a literature search

Two reasons for conducting a literature search are:

I. it forms part of the process of topic selection, and
II. it usually is part of the main investigation and research plan.

When conducting a literature search, you should generate a number of alternative subjects/key words, decide which subjects to pursue, which subjects to abandon, and decide when sufficient effort has been expended for your purposes so that the process can be concluded.

4. Gathering, generating and processing data for your research

It is important to recognize the two categories of data. Primary data is collected first-hand through observation, interviews etc., and secondary data are reports of data that have been collected by others. Both types of data are useful and necessary.

For the successful collection of data, the following two points should be noted:

A. Gathering data usually requires a good deal of time and effort. The following sequence will help you get organized. The data must be:
   - Located if available as secondary data, in printed form or, on the Internet.
   - Sourced if required as primary data.
   - Collected by retrieval or through questionnaire
   - Recorded in a form suitable for the analysis
   - Checked for suitability to your research plan

   Adjustments then have to be made for any errors or omissions or for any data that is unusable. Limitations to the thesis as a result of inadequate data must be recognized and reported in the Conclusion.

B. It is difficult to collect data if the organization(s) or group(s) you wish to study is unwilling to co-operate for reasons of confidentiality or lack of time. If access to information proves difficult, attempt to negotiate. Co-operation is more likely if the organization is getting something in return for providing access, e.g. your research report.

4.1 Checking data

It is important that you establish from the very beginning of your investigation, that the data you are gathering are reliable. Ensure that the data actually measure what is supposed to be measured, ensure that proper attention is paid to measurement error and the reduction of its effects, and ensure that a suitable sample is used so that a basis for generalization is provided and, also, that the sample is large enough so as to be able to draw meaningful conclusions. Lastly, ensure that the data are properly recorded, in particular that the conditions under which the data are gathered are properly noted, that suitable data recording methods are used, and that efforts are made to detect and eliminate errors during recording.

4.2 Points for your attention

Measuring the data
Quantitative data is often subject to measurement error. Error may take the form of bias, intentional lie, or distortion due to measurement techniques, which results in information being lost and the data not fully representing the subject of the study.

Recording the data
The way the data are recorded is extremely important for the successful completion of your project. Ways of recording data include questionnaires, notes, logbooks, journals, and interviews.

Interviewing/Sampling
You may use an interview schedule listing topics to be covered or, a questionnaire with specific questions. When using this method for data collection, beware of the pitfalls of “open-questions”; preference should be given to closed

questions that may be answered specifically and not vaguely; answers to questionnaires should be measured on specific scales e.g. 1 – 5 or, 1 – 10 etc. so as to tabulate in a process sheet (table) for further statistical analysis. To ease your data collection, you may develop your own shorthand, or, if acceptable, use a tape-recorder.

Organizing the data

It is important that notes are kept on all the data gathered, i.e., the source, the way it was gathered etc.

4.3 Analyzing Your Data

The key functions of an analysis are to communicate the value of your findings and to convince the reader that, through the knowledge gained, the project work is significant and measures up to the appropriate academic standards.

There are many aspects to analysis. An adequate analysis is one of the key aspects of the acceptability of any research study and, if you wish to manage your research effectively, you must ensure that your analysis is adequate. This applies to qualitative as well as quantitative analysis. The following points may be helpful in analyzing your data:

a. Plan the analysis very early in the project so that data gathering can be organized around it and any necessary skills can be acquired (studied).

b. Make sure that you are thoroughly familiar with the methods of analysis usually employed in your field of study, especially if you wish to deviate from them.

c. Decide on the methods to be used and master the relevant literature, particularly those aspects that deal with possible problems.

d. Where possible, make the analysis quantitative. Do not avoid using an appropriate method just because it will require time to learn. Also, avoid using sophisticated techniques on poor data.

e. Make sure that your analysis respects the rules of logical inference.

f. Test your conclusions wherever possible.

g. Write down your conclusions as they are achieved, to ensure that what you are claiming is clearly conveyed. Ask your friends to read them as you proceed to ensure the test of logical inference.

h. Take note if there is doubt as to the clarity or logic of your conclusions, as it indicates that the reader will remain unconvinced about an important aspect of your investigation.

i. Try and do more than is necessary. An analysis that aims at minimum standards runs the risk of being rejected by the Supervisory Committee.

4.4 Some Common Problems

Some of the problems that MBA Candidates encounter are:

a. Failure to use the Research Plan.

b. A common difficulty arises when a MBA Candidate has collected large volumes of data but is unable to analyze it in sufficient depth. This reinforces the argument that the type of analysis to be used should be anticipated as much as possible in the Research Plan before the data are collected.

c. Failure to recognize your difficulties.

d. Any difficulties must be acknowledged as early as possible and an appointment should be made to see your Thesis Supervisor.

e. Relationship with the client organization.

f. You must strive towards good relationships with your client organizations and thereby secure adequate support for your work. You should aim to develop a continuing working relationship with your Thesis Supervisor throughout the duration of your project. In this way, problems can be dealt with promptly or even avoided completely.

5. Writing of the report

A MBA Candidate seldom stops collecting data one day and begins writing the report the next day. However, you should attempt a formal start and try to follow a specific timetable for the completion of draft chapters.

The preparation of a complete draft has to be given priority over other tasks, even though the process of writing up reports often reveals gaps in information. Such problems should be noted in passing and marked down for future attention, but the task of pressing on with the draft should not be interrupted.

It takes time to settle down to writing a report after a lengthy period of investigation. The general pattern is to proceed slowly and to speed up as the final chapters are reached.

Clear writing is one of the most important features of a good report. The report should be such that as many people as possible can understand its contents, although it may be that some concepts can only be expressed accurately in technical language. The MBA Candidate should follow the style manual consistently throughout the report.

A MBA Candidate should be consistent in the use of language, i.e., select either American or British style English and use it consistently throughout the paper.

When typing the final version of the report, the MBA Candidate should follow standard conventions concerning presentation. The MBA Candidate is referred back to the section marked “REQUIREMENTS” at the beginning of this guide.

6. Construction of the thesis

6.1 The Thesis should be presented in the following required sequence of content parts, addendums etc:

Title Page
Abstract (Synopsis)
Preface (Optional)
Acknowledgement (Optional but Recommended)
Dedication (Optional)
Table of Contents
List of tables
List of figures
List of other types of material: maps, photographs etc.
Body of text: (by chapter)
Introduction /Theoretical Background
    Literature review
    Research design
    Results
    Discussion and conclusions
Appendix or Appendices
Bibliography/References

Title page - The title and subtitle must be agreed previously with the MBA Director and the Thesis Supervisor.

Abstract – A one-page single space abstract giving a brief summary of the contents of the report should be included.

Preface (Optional) – The preface may be used primarily to relate any information which is necessary for a better understanding of the report, but does not logically fit into the text. It should include a summary of the sources from which you derived your material, and the extent to which you have used the work of other people. It is customary to include a brief expression of your appreciation of help and guidance received during your investigation. The preface is not the same as an introduction, which is part of the main body of the report.

Acknowledgements (Optional but Recommended) – This is the part where specific mention and expressions of gratitude toward certain individuals whose help and assistance given to the writer during preparation of the Thesis is deemed to be substantial. It is generally recommended that they be acknowledged.

Dedication (Optional) – The Thesis may be dedicated to anyone the writer feels that s/he deserves it.

Table of Contents – The table of contents contains the headings and sub-headings of the chapters and sections of the report, with the number of the pages on which these chapters and sections begin; page numbering starts with the first page of the Table of Contents. The title page, abstract, preface, acknowledgements and dedication pages are not entered in the table of contents; they are numbered with small Latin numbers starting with the Abstract page.

The minimum content of the table of contents should be each chapter or main division title, each appendix and the bibliography. All headings should correspond exactly with the headings as they appear in the body of the report.

The following are details of the recommended layout for a table of contents. The MBA Candidate may also refer to the first Section above titled “REQUIREMENTS”. A main heading or chapter title is given entirely in capitals and begins at the left-hand margin of the page. A main sub-heading is indented one tab-stop from the initial letter of the heading under which it falls, and is typed in upper and lower courses. If used, a subordinate sub-heading is indented an additional tab-stop from the first letter of the main sub-heading under which it falls. Chapters, sections of chapters and sub-sections etc. are numbered in sequence. For example, the third sub-section of the second sub-heading of Chapter 7 is numbered 7.2.3. The number of the page on which the relevant section of the report begins is given at the right-hand margin of the page. Double spacing is used except for over-run lines, which are single-spaced.

Lists of tables, figures or other materials – If the report contains charts, figures, maps, tables, or other types of materials, each grouping of these should be listed separately on the page(s) immediately following the table of contents. A list of charts should appear on one page; a list of figures on the next etc. Such lists should follow the general style of the table of margin of the page. Tables, figures etc. should be numbered sequentially in Arabic numerals starting from number 1 in each corresponding group.

Body of the text – The report begins with the first page of the first chapter. Each section or chapter should represent an important division of the report. Special care should be taken to dividing the text into paragraphs and the use of sub-headings to help the reader. Each chapter should have a title identifying the subject contained therein and it should begin on a new page.

Appendices – The purpose of an appendix is to keep the body of the Thesis from being interrupted or cluttered with supplementary materials. Appendices should appear immediately following the body of the text. Each appendix should start on a separate page, and should appear in the order that they are referred to in the Table of Contents. The source of the material in each appendix should be written on each page/table/figure etc.

References/Bibliography – In general, the bibliography should contain only the works that you consulted, cited and, in general, found to be relevant. These references should be arranged alphabetically by the author’s second name (family/surname). In the case of more than one title by the same author, they should be arranged by date or publication. Each entry in the bibliography begins at the left-hand margin, and the second and succeeding lines of the entry are indented one tab stop. Lines are single spaced, with double spaces between entries. Various style manuals have detailed discussions on how to prepare a bibliography. A style manual that fits the bibliography guidelines above is available in the library and at the MBA Office.

6.2 Binding and Submission of approved Thesis

Three bound copies of the Thesis that was successfully defended in front of the Thesis Committee must be prepared by each MBA Candidate at their expense, and submitted to the MBA Office for grading purposes. The required binding style, color and other details are available from the MBA Office. Candidates are strongly advised to seek final approval of the original and final copy of their Thesis from both their Supervisor for content, and the MBA Administrator for proper assembly prior to binding. Upon inspection of the three bound copies by the MBA Administrator, the MBA Candidate is responsible to obtain all three signatures from the Thesis Committee members for the required copies; more copies may be signed if personal copies of the Thesis are desired.