

*Not all advice applies to every dissertation – please interpret liberally.*

## **Part 2 dissertations – The good**

**When included, considering these points made positive contribution** (not all these points apply to every dissertation.)

Following the advice of the PINK BOOK, for it is good (always appropriate)

Software engineering approach

Lessons, conclusions and future

Uses the tools CST teaches – from FSM to UML

Testing approach described

Evidence of coherent design decisions

Clear narrative

Clear HCI study

Relevant background material

Evaluations using some sort of metrics

Scope/Motivation/Goals

Related work

Source-control/backup

Requirements analysis

Clear exposition of the difficulty (not oversold)

Clear exposition of the methods/toolboxes

Clearly thought-out (extensive) evaluation

Clear description of actual work when extending a current system

Demonstrating depth and breadth in CS concepts

Clear understanding (evidence) of principles of any approach taken

Clear evidence of approach, decisions, understanding, and the following of good practice – important, this becomes critical when things don't pan-out as hoped

Extensive (relevant) empirical evaluations

Literature review

Review of past work

Clear statement of acquired knowledge

Evidence of new research contributions (rarely appropriate)

A new UI invites a usage-based evaluation (user study etc.)

Ambitious but well-grounded dissertations (clearly defined foundations and extensions)

Clear evidence that the project goals were met (or not – and why)

Honesty

## Part 2 dissertations – The bad

Poor background material: incomplete, or too little or at the wrong level (consider your target audience)

Graphs without x/y labels or units or captions or in-text references

Tables and figures without interpretation

Failure to cover (or reference) core concepts (e.g. ...*machine-learning was done...*)

Summary given when a conclusion is asked for

Under-defined problem

Unclear student contribution (perhaps unspecified or the project has been seen sufficiently many times in the past that the uniqueness of the students' approach was not clear)

Poor (or missing) justification for design decisions (vs. a poor design decision well justified which will not lose you marks.)

Poorly defined (inappropriate, unclear explanation) metrics in performance studies

Dense heavy turgid prose (no story, inconsistent English (tense, *person*, ...), bug-by-bug narratives)

Statistics issues, this ranges from unstated sample sizes, to unstated confidence intervals

Subjective statements

Misunderstanding the audience (varying backgrounds of examiners leads to a need to provide more background material in some cases)

Unclear/unstated tools (what and why was a language used?)

Typographical mistakes

Peculiar formats (e.g. ones without section/subsection numbering)

Poor Fo(u)nt selection (pink book stipulates 12pt, 8pt will lose marks)

No cover proforma

Unreadable figures (image aliasing/rendering)

All or nothing work projects

Excessive footnotes

Buzzwords as substitute for content – particularly dangerous for projects in faddish topics

Poorly planned work (incomplete often by the admission of the candidate because it was not sized or left until the last minute)

Ambition beyond ability without sufficient *first/early phase*

Code snippets without purpose (should it/could it be in appendix?)

A strong motivation demonstrably carried-through can carry a weaker project – the inverse is also true