AIMS
This is a compulsory course for MSc students which aims to equip them with the necessary skills required for research and assist in the conception of a dissertation at the end of the academic year. Conducting research at post-graduate level is sometimes fraught with certain difficulties; this course aims to assist in avoiding these traps so that the student can conduct an efficient piece of research at the end of the taught semesters. Therefore, it equips students with generic research skills such as how to organise a project and also economics specific skills.

The course is divided into two separate stages. The first stage of the dissertation process includes a compulsory component made up of a set of preparatory classes which aims to equip students with the necessary skills required for research. The course consists of a series of lectures on dissertation writing, major sources of data and Matlab training. In particular, it lays emphasis on gaining proficiency in using Matlab, by teaching basic tasks such as transferring of data, to the production of graphs and tables that can be included in a word document (however this is not an econometric course).

The second stage is the writing up of the dissertation. A dissertation in Finance is expected to be either empirical using econometric or statistical techniques. Students are expected to apply their knowledge and skills from the quantitative methods and theory courses. It presents masters students with an opportunity to undertake a piece of individual research work and examine an aspect of the subject that is being closely studied. Most dissertations involve the spectrum of activities common to research: conceptualization and planning, literature review, theoretical modeling, data collection, statistical and econometric analysis, and writing. Each student works under supervision of a member of the Department’s staff.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of this course students should:

- Have mastered generic skills in how to organise a project in Financial Economics or Finance
- Be proficient in using Matlab as a statistical package and handling raw data
- Be able to pick a research topic and write a brief proposal
- Confidently present research work to peers
- Produce an original 10,000 word-dissertation on a specific topic in Financial Economics or Finance

COURSE DELIVERY
Five 2-hour workshops on Stata at the beginning of the first term.
Five 2-hour lectures during the second half of the first term. It is mandatory for MSc students to attend the workshops and classes otherwise they cannot proceed to dissertation. Courtse outline, lecture notes, problem sets, and readings will appear on Moodle.

ASSESSMENT
The grades for this course are broken down as follows:
• One 1-hour unseen practical exam in Matlab taken early in the first term, contributing 25% towards the final marks.
• A 10,000 word dissertation submitted in the last week of the academic year in summer, contributing 75% of the final marks.

Deadlines and dates of tests will be confirmed in the Departmental Student Handbook and on the Economics Department Website.

READING
The main textbooks for the course is:
Matlab web site: uk.mathworks.com/help/matlab/
Further reading materials such as journal articles will be posted in Moodle.

TOPICS to be covered:
The Research Process (research design, strategy and management) academic writing, presentation and disseminating of research)
Dissertation topic and supervision
Data Sources (Data Archives, Internet Sources)
Getting your data into Matlab
Applied Econometrics with Matlab