Writing the ug4/MInf Dissertation
structure and style

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“like taking a walk with a good friend, and having them tell you a story”

A story with *background*, *definitions* and *clear conclusions*.

As the writer of a dissertation, you should pitch the level of your material to a member of your own class. Someone good!
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Common Mistakes and Oversights

- Assuming too much from the reader. Insufficient background chapter, definitions but no examples, writing “clearly” (for something that needs justification).

- Lack of clarity about “who did what”. If you are using Matlab resources, the reader needs to be told what functions you wrote, and which other parts were written by `matlab-expert@online-resource` (say). Same for someone writing Android software and making use of code available online (on the many forae, blogs) for standard layouts, etc.

`SPELL IT OUT` - “written by myself”, “taken from resource x”, “adapted from resource y”.

`Dissertation style and structure (2017/18) – slide 3`
Common Mistakes and Oversights

- Weak evaluations.
  “I got my friends to try it out and they said they liked it.” Not sufficient. Even having a Questionnaire for the person testing the software is not enough - need to design questions carefully, and think about other ways of Evaluating (Don will speak).

- Poor Structuring/Guiding.
  Poor decomposition into chapters, background (work by others) drifting into later chapters, insufficient “guiding" of the reader.
Guidance from our project webpages

The top-level of the project webpages (not 2016-17 specific, the overall page) has a link to pointers on how to write the dissertation.
The guidance page (“Report requirements ...”) is at

http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/courses/proj/report.html

Don also has organised pages containing the best dissertations from 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17. These pages are here:

http://project-archive.inf.ed.ac.uk/ug4
Setting out *your* Contributions

Directly from the recommendation of our External Examiners

This Introduction chapter should include a clear and concise summary of your contributions (examples: adapting a suite of existing code; interpreting a theoretical algorithm; coding; testing; conducting an experiment) preferably as a bulleted list.

This advice was missed even by many of our excellent dissertations. Some examples of dissertations which did it well are: Veselin Blagoev (2015), Sean Coyle (2014), Euan Maciver (2014), Andre Tamm (2015).
Informal Guidelines for writing the report

http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/courses/proj/guide.html

- Adrian Velicu (2014) has very nice presentation of Algorithms, and other Graphical information.