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# Guidelines for Master's dissertations <sup>1</sup>

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## 1. General principles

### 1.1. Purpose

The Master's dissertation is a long essay which tests the candidate's ability to apply a certain methodology or approach to the analysis of a given problem, and to argue a reasonably original hypothesis.

### 1.2. Submission

The Master's dissertation can be submitted only after the credits indicated in the study plan have been obtained and any learning shortfall has been recovered.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.3. Supervision

1. During the research and writing-up stages, the candidate is guided by a Supervisor, usually a tutor on the Master's course.
2. The Supervisor is supported by a Second Reader, designated by the former, with the approval of the Master's Director. The Second Reader must have academic status (a university teacher). Alternatively he/she shall be an expert in the specific field(s) of interest investigated in the dissertation, with the approval of the Master's Director.

### 1.4. Scope

1. The subject of the Master's dissertation is chosen by the candidate in agreement with the Supervisor, in an area of interest and competence of both.
2. The time and effort devoted to researching and drafting the thesis must be compatible with the credit value indicated in the *Study Plan*.

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<sup>1</sup> This document was approved by the Faculty Council at its meeting of 19.12.2007.

<sup>2</sup> This new Clause was formally approved by the Faculty on 15 November 2023 and came into force on that date.

## 1.5. Defence and evaluation

1. The Master's dissertation is examined orally (*viva examination*) before a panel comprising the Supervisor and Second Reader.
2. After the *viva*, the panel deliberates and agrees on the grade, which is expressed on a scale of 1 (minimum) to 10 (maximum), half-points included, 6 being the pass mark.
3. The given grade is added to the calculation of the average final mark of the Master's degree proportionately to the ECTS value recognised to it in the appropriate *Study Plan*.
4. The Supervisor communicates the grade to the Study Administration Office, using the appropriate form, which will be sent before the defence by the Master's Coordinator.
5. In the case of failure, a candidate is authorised to present a second piece of work, on a different topic.

## 2. Form and content of the dissertation

### 2.1. Scope

1. Recommended length: approximately 40-50 pages for a Master's dissertation of an analytical or quantitative nature; 50-80 pages (maximum) for a review dissertation, a discursive essay or theoretical synthesis. This indicative total is exclusive of any additional material and documentation, such as tables and figures, appendices, etc.
2. The page format is based on the use of 12 point-size character and 1.5 line-spacing.

### 2.2. Title page

The title page must contain the following items of information: a header, the title of the thesis; the indication: "Master's dissertation"; name and surname of the candidate (author); name and surname of the Supervisor (Prof. XY:); name and surname of the Second Reader (Prof. WZ); the academic year; the date (month-year).

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Università della Svizzera italiana  
Faculty of Economics

Title

Master's dissertation

Author: Name Surname  
Supervisor: Prof. Name Surname  
Second Reader: Prof. Name Surname  
Academic year:

Submission Date

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## 2.3. Structure of the dissertation

### 2.3.1. Table of contents

Immediately after the title page, insert a table of Contents, which lists the elements that compose the dissertation: parts, chapters and sections numbers consecutively. Parts are numbered by Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc), chapters by Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.), and sections as follows: 1.1, 1.2, and so on. Further subdivisions behave similarly: 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.2.3, and so on.

### 2.3.2. Figures and tables

Each figure and table must bear an individual title and reference to its source. Figures and tables used in the text must also be numbered consecutively; the sequence is reflected in the List.

### 2.3.3. Other components

The preliminaries may also include: a Dedication, a Foreword, a List of abbreviations/acronyms or conventions used in the texts, and Acknowledgements.

### 2.3.4. Introduction

According to established usage, the Introduction usually consists of:

- the objectives of the thesis
- description of the methodology used
- an outline of the dissertation (the main points presented in each chapter)

### 2.3.5. Conclusion(s)

The concluding chapter generally comprises three parts:

- the findings of the research
- personal assessment of the methodology applied
- the author's suggestions for possible future research lines (or follow-up)

## 2.4. Style Sheet

Candidates are expected to comply with matters of editorial style with rigour and coherence. To this end, the Faculty's *Style Sheet* sets out basic rules on lay-out, quotations, and bibliographical references (see Appendix 1).

## 3. Notification and Submission procedure

### 3.1. Registration form

1. Each student must complete a registration form (see Appendix 2) as soon as they have been accepted by a Supervisor and work begins.
2. The candidate must complete the form, and submit it to be dated and signed by the Supervisor **as soon as the latter has accepted** to supervise the candidate's work.
3. The title recorded on first completing the registration form (see: Dissertation title) is a provisional title, which the candidate has agreed with the Supervisor. Subsequently, when the first draft is complete, the student will communicate the definitive title to the Study

Administration Office, with the approval of the Supervisor. This is the title that appears on the title page as well as on the cover or front page of the PDF versions.<sup>3</sup>

4. The original of this form must be uploaded to ICorsi at the link <https://www.icorsi.ch/course/view.php?id=13399>. One copy goes to the Supervisor, another to the Master's Director (if different from the Supervisor).
5. A detailed plan (or synopsis) of the dissertation must be shown to, and approved by the Supervisor some reasonable time in advance of the expected completion and submission date.

## 3.2. Submission procedure

1. The candidate will hand in the first draft of the dissertation to the Supervisor according to arrangements previously agreed with the latter.
2. At this stage the candidate presents a complete and final version (as distinguished from the **PDF** one as required according to Art. 4.3. of the present Guidelines).<sup>4</sup>
3. One copy must be delivered to the Supervisor, one to the Second Reader, if necessary through the Master's Coordinator.
4. The Master's Director shall be sent an electronic copy of the dissertation **at least two weeks** ahead of the set defence date.
5. To be entitled to be examined orally on the dissertation ('defence'), the candidate must make sure that the Supervisor is kept regularly informed of the work in progress. To this end, the candidate should supply the Supervisor with early and successive drafts, chapter by chapter for example. Failure to comply with this good practice -- e.g. the Supervisor is not shown (any parts of) the dissertation before the submission date -- may result in the postponement of the examination date.

## 4. Important dates and further requirements

### 4.1. The task of the Supervisor and the Second Reader

In the two weeks preceding the defence, the Supervisor and the Second Reader will read the full, final version; they will request corrections, amendments or additions, and provide comments and suggestions.

### 4.2. Defence

The Supervisor sets the date for the defence, in agreement with the Second Reader. The defence must take place within three months (maximum) of the date the dissertation was submitted. The Master's Coordinator will inform the candidate, by email, of the date, time and place appointed for the thesis defence.

### 4.3. Deposit of copies

The candidate is expected to supply **two PDF versions**. One goes to the Supervisor, the second to the USI archive (to be uploaded to ICorsi at the link <https://www.icorsi.ch/course/view.php?id=13399>), which the Study Administration Office will

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<sup>3</sup> This new Clause was formally approved by the Faculty on 14 April 2021 and came into force on that date.

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also transfer to the University Library if the dissertation has been awarded a mark equal or higher than 9. It is worth pointing out that the supply of the PDF versions as stated above is the last stage, after the candidate has gone through the defence exam. Indeed the Supervisor and/or the Second Reader may demand further revisions during the oral examination.

The two PDF versions must be delivered to the Supervisor and the Study Administration Office **no later than three weeks** after the defence. At the same time, the student must upload at the same link mentioned above the 'Clearance Statement' ([https://it.bul.sbu.usi.ch/tools/clearance\\_statement\\_request](https://it.bul.sbu.usi.ch/tools/clearance_statement_request)), thereby confirming that he/she has returned any material borrowed from the Library. The Study Administration Office shall issue the official documents only when in receipt of the full documentation detailed above.<sup>5</sup>

## 4.4. Confidential information

In some cases, a Master's degree dissertation may contain or refer to confidential information. If this is the case, the candidate must attach a letter stating that it is not for public consultation.

## 5. Misconduct

### 5.1. Plagiarism

A student who submits a dissertation that was not written by him/herself, or who presents as original (his/her own) any research findings (ideas, words, work) of a third party, is guilty of plagiarism. Any text, passage, excerpt, etc. from a source other than one's own must be duly and fully identified and acknowledged, following recommended practice as set out in the attached Style Sheet. Plagiarism - for instance the so-called 'copy-and-paste' technique - will attract the appropriate penalties provided for in the Study Regulations of the Faculty.

### 5.2. Assessment and detection

The Faculty has acquired a new software enabling the prevention of plagiarism in students' written work. Any academic paper (be it report, term paper, or a Master's dissertation) will undergo scrutiny by means of this new electronic tool.

### 5.3. Declaration of Academic Honesty

Each student/candidate is expected to **complete and sign** a form called 'Declaration of Academic Honesty' (Appendix 3) and upload it to ICorsi at the link: <https://www.icorsi.ch/course/view.php?id=13399>.

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## Appendix 1

# Style sheet

This is a compendium of rules and recommendations providing editorial guidance for students writing a Master's thesis or dissertation or a term paper. It draws attention to the importance of adopting a certain editorial policy, covering basic stylistic conventions on how to organise a substantial study, how to present the bibliography and other evidence and references in the text.

Publishers and scientific journals all have their own 'house style'; so instructions for authors vary from press to press on how to prepare a text for publication. What we propose may be seen as a reasoned digest of some among the best-known practices and has, we believe, the merit of simplicity.

Students presenting written work as part of the requirements of a degree programme of the Faculty of Economics are expected to comply with this set of instructions. Whether all our rules are adhered to, *the principle* of coherence must in any case be respected: mixing styles is not recommended.

## 1. General guidelines

1. Page lay-out. The student (author) may, within reasonable limits, choose the font he prefers. Some frequently used fonts are: Times New Roman, Garamond, Helvetica, Bookman Old Style, Verdana, and Arial.
2. Preferred character point size: 12 pt. Line-spacing: 1.5. A decent margin should be allowed on both sides.
3. Start each chapter on a new page.
4. A dissertation is usually composed of parts, as indicated (in their sequence) below:

Title page

Contents

Dedication

*Not obligatory*

Acknowledgements

*Not obligatory*

List of abbreviations

*If applicable*

Figures and tables

(List of figures and tables) *If applicable*

Preface

*Not obligatory*: separate from introduction, usually more personal or 'autobiographical'

Introduction  
Chapter 1  
Chapter 2, etc  
Conclusions  
Appendices  
Bibliography

## 2. References in text

This part concerns, on the one hand, straightforward references to an author or paraphrasing of an author's words and, on the other hand, the use of quoted material, text, etc.

1. Whenever an author or his work, a theory, survey, or other are *referred to* (by way of illustration, etc.) or *paraphrased*, they must be identified with a printed source.
  - 1.1. Place the surname of the author and the publication year, either separated by a comma or without, within parentheses. This reference must be inserted directly after the statement or the paraphrase it relates to.
  - 1.2. If the author or authors are explicitly named in the passage, only the year of publication will appear in parentheses, possibly followed by page number(s).
  - 1.3. Should the work you are referring be anonymous, or not have been signed, place title and date in parentheses instead.

It is important that the in-text reference may be easily identified or matched up with the entries in the References or Bibliography section.

### Thus:

- a. By this time industry had come to play a leading role (World Bank, 1993).
  - b. The problem of efficient instrumentation, in a more general framework (when the regressors are partially correlated with the individual random effect), has been addressed by Arellano and Bover (1995).
  - c. Goldman (1993) constructs very careful linguistic arguments based on an analysis of the legal discourse to show that the concept of accidentality is used in this Customary Law setting.
2. Quotations

When quoting directly from a source or direct speech, always reproduce the words of the original faithfully. Quotations can be *run on* in the body of your essay or broken off from it. If the length of the text you are quoting is under 20-25 words (some 2 or 3 lines of text), then generally you would 'run it on' (or *embed it*) and enclose these words in quotation marks. For a passage that exceeds this length you would normally break it off and drop the quotation marks. The distinction between long and short tends to vary, however, and it does depend on editorial preference, aesthetic appearance of the lay-out.

In sum, a distinction must be made between *run-on (embedded)* and display quotations:

- 2.1. *run-on* or embedded quotations. Relatively short, these do not interrupt the normal paragraph lay-out. Here, the author's *surname*, or authors' surnames, must be followed by the year of publication and page reference immediately, year and page numbers placed in parentheses — Author (1999: p. 234).

**Thus:**

Tiersma (1999: pp. 139-41) provides a helpful characterisation of legal written texts, dividing them into three types. He proposes (Tiersma, 1999: p. 139) that operative documents 'create or modify legal relations', in other words they establish the legal framework itself.

2.2. *display* quotations, generally longer ones, which are graphically separated, possibly indented from the normal margin. In this case, the author's surname (or authors' surnames) follows immediately after the long quoted passage, outside the quotation marks or the appropriate punctuation. The name is followed by indication of the publication year and page references in parentheses.

3. When an author or editor has published more than one article or volume in the same year, indicate the sequence by the letters *a/b/c/etc.* after the publication year.

**Thus:**

'Other GLS instrumental variable estimators have appeared in the literature: see, for instance, Sevestre and Trognon (1966b: p. 134), but etc.'

4. If your reference to an author includes more than one of his/her works (volumes, papers, etc.), you must add all the relevant years of publication.

**Thus:**

Keynes (1929, 1930)

5. Footnotes should be used sparingly: avoid using them to signal a source or bibliographical data. Instead, consider a footnote as a means of providing background or complementary information that, albeit important and interesting, may risk disrupting the flow and continuity of the argument.

### 3. Bibliographical sources

1. General principles.

For each work, article, report, or author quoted you will need to provide precise and full details of their sources in the Bibliography.

A Bibliography will contain books in print as well as electronic publications (Internet).

Detailed instructions on how to refer to electronic publications may be found in the *Guida alle citazioni bibliografiche* mentioned in this section (III), in paragraph 2.4.6 below ('Additional remarks').

Bibliographical references will:

- a. be listed in alphabetical order by author, then in chronological order by year of publication;
- b. carefully reproduce the information appearing on the published volume's title page (not the book cover);
- c. use only two typeface styles: roman and *italics* (for the sake of simplicity, avoid using **bold**, SMALL CAPITALS, and underlining);
- d. each end with a full stop.

The style we recommend is close to the *author-date*, known as the 'Harvard system'.

2. Let us examine the three essential constituent of a bibliographical entry.

### 3.1. Author

1. For each author (up to three), indicate in the order: Surname, initial(s) of first OR Christian name (each followed by a dot), year of publication in parentheses. When there are more than three authors / editors, indicate only the first, namely the one that is relevant to the context, adding: et al. after the name (et alii = Latin, meaning 'and others').

**Thus:**

Cencini, A. (1995) *Monetary Theory: National and International*, London and New York: Routledge.

Fabbri, D., Fazioli, R., and Filippini, M. (1996) *Intervento pubblico e l'efficienza possibile*, Bologna: Il Mulino.

Tonella, G. et al. (1997) 'Simulation of Structural Change', in A. Bruzzone and E. Kerchkoffs (eds), *Simulations in Industry*, San Diego: Simulation Computer Society.

2. In the case of a collection of articles (e.g. edited book, conference proceedings) with one or more editors, their names must be followed by:

(a cura di); if the publication is Italian; (ed. / eds) if English; (Hrsg.) if German; and (éd. / éds) if French.

**Thus:**

Quadrio Curzio, A. and Scazzieri, R. (a cura di) (1977) *Tradizione e rivoluzione in economia politica*, Bologna: Il Mulino.

Glyn, A. and Miliband, D. (eds) (1994) *Paying for Inequality. The Economic Cost of Social Injustice*, London: IPPR/Rivers Oram Press.

### 3.2. Title

1. The title of a volume (e.g., author's study, edited book, proceedings) as well as the title of a journal, periodical, etc. should appear in italics. Should there be a sub-title, separate this from the main title by a full stop. If you are reporting a publication in a language other than the one of your paper or dissertation, our advice is to conform to the editorial conventions in use in the language. Reproduce upper and lower case initials exactly.

**Thus:**

Padoa-Schioppa, T. (1987) *Efficiency, Stability and Equity: a Strategy for the Evolution of the Economic System of the European Community*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Archinard, G. et Guerrien, B. (1988) *Analyse mathématique pour économistes*, Paris: Economica.

Ratti, R. et al. (eds) (1997) *The Dynamics of Innovative Regions. The GREMI Approach*, Aldershot (UK): Ashgate.

IMF (1984) *International Capital Markets: Developments, Prospects, and Policy Issues*, Washington, DC: IMF.

Parri, L. (1999) 'L'involontaria sociologia economica di Hayek alla luce di Pareto e Weber', *Rassegna italiana di sociologia*, XL, n. 3, luglio-settembre, pp. 409-33.

2. The title of a chapter or of a single contribution to a miscellany must be enclosed in single inverted commas or 'quotation marks'. Handle in the same way the title of an article within a periodical, journal or review, or the title of an entry in dictionary or encyclopaedia, etc.

**Thus:**

Scazzieri, R. (1997) 'Reddito', in *Enciclopedia delle Scienze Sociali*, vol. VII, Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana.

- In the case of an edited book, the article's title is followed by a comma, followed by in + the initial(s) of the first name and the surname of the author(s) or editor(s), then the title of the book in italics, and so on

**Thus:**

Baranzini, M. and Scazzieri, R. (1997) 'Profit and Rent in a Model of Capital Accumulation and Structural Dynamics', in P. Arestis, G. Palma and M. Sawyer (eds) *Essays in Honour of G.C. Harcourt*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 121-32.

Balzani, R. e Varni, A. (1992) 'Le aziende elettriche municipalizzate', in G. Mori (a cura di) *Storia dell'industria elettrica: le origini 1882-1914*, Bari: Laterza.

- When on the other hand the publication is a periodical, scientific or academic journal, etc., the 'title of the contribution' is followed by the title of the periodical and separated simply by a comma. It is good practice to complete this sort of entry by an indication of the exact page numbers (as may be seen in the examples provided).

**Thus:**

Ronchetti, E. (1997) 'Robustness Aspects of Model Choice', *Statistica sinica*, vol. 7, pp. 327-38.

Pettenati, P. (1967) 'Il teorema di Pasinetti in un diverso quadro di riferimento', *Studi economici*, pp. 581-8.

### 3.3. Publisher

- The place of publication (sometimes completed by the abbreviated name of the country, when necessary) is followed by the name of the publisher (in its briefest denomination) and the two are separated by a colon (:).
- In this final part of the citation other information may be added or provided, for instance: the volume consecutive number (vol.) and/or the issue number (n.) and/or the month or other (quarter, etc.) depending on the frequency of publication, and the page numbers (p./pp.) corresponding to the article or contribution (in fact, with periodical publications (reviews, journals), publisher and place of publication are, as a rule, omitted).

**Thus:**

Sen. A. (1987) *On Ethics and Economics*, Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell.

Miglio, G.F. (a cura di) (1997) *Federalismi falsi e degenerati*, Milano: Sperling & Kupfer.

Cline, W.R. (1984) *International Debt: Systemic Risk and Policy Response*, Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.

de Nardi, S. e Traù, F. (1999) 'Specializzazione settoriale e qualità dei prodotti: misure della pressione competitiva sull'industria italiana', *Rivista italiana degli economisti*, IV, n. 2, agosto, pp. 177-212.

Ronchetti, E. and Gatto, R. (1996) 'General Saddlepoint Approximations of Marginal Densities and Tail Probabilities', *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, vol. 91, pp. 666-73.

### 3.4. Additional remarks

1. For book or article reviews, please follow the model provided by this example:  
Baranzini, M. (1996) Review of A. Cencini, *Monetary Theory. National and International*, in *Kyklos*, vol. 49, pp. 650-2.
2. Preface, introduction, post-face to a volume may be considered as technically in the same category as a chapter proper, and hence shall also be enclosed within 'single quotation marks'.

3. When listing several works or publications of one author, please follow the chronological order (first the oldest, and the latest, last).
4. Should there be, as is often the case, more than one edition and/or reprint, we advise to include both the original year of publication and the date of the most recent edition. At any rate, please make clear which edition you have been using for the purposes of your research, if nothing else in order to facilitate your reader's double-checking.
5. Depending on the topic and the kind of research undertaken, some students may end up using particular (less conventional) forms of documentation and other means of information. In particular, students may make use of audio-visual material; they may record interviews with individuals or personalities, as a means of conducting a survey or other); or again illustration (photographs, reproductions), and so on. If this is the case please consult (on line) the Editorial Guide mentioned here below (paragraph 4.6).
6. Finally, we want to remind students that the University Library has compiled and made available on its website a *Guide to citing references*. This is a useful and rigorous tool for academic writing, which we see as a valid complement to our own Style Sheet.

Please go to: [https://en.bul.sbu.usi.ch/learning/guide\\_to\\_citing\\_references](https://en.bul.sbu.usi.ch/learning/guide_to_citing_references)

## Appendix 2

# Master's thesis registration form

### Student

Surname and Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student no.: \_\_\_\_\_

### Master's Programme

- Master in Economia e Politiche internazionali
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Master in Economics
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Master in Finance
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Master in International Tourism
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Master in Management
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Master in Public Management and Policy
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Master MPhil in Finance
- \_\_\_\_\_

Dissertation Title (temporary):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

(surname and name) \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Second Reader

(surname and name) **if**  
**already known** \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student's signature \_\_\_\_\_

The present document must be uploaded to ICorsi at the link <https://www.icorsi.ch/course/view.php?id=13399>.



### Appendix 3

# Declaration of Academic Honesty<sup>6</sup>

I declare on my honour that what is written in this work has been written exclusively by me and that, excluding quotations, no part has been copied from scientific publications, Internet (any type of programs, set of tools and others included) or research works - or, more generally, any other source - already presented in the academic field (but not only) by me, other students or third parties.

In the case of parts taken from scientific publications, the Internet or any other document, I have expressly and directly indicated the source at the end of the quotation or at the foot of the page as well as having duly marked them in the text by quotation marks where indicated verbatim.

I also declare that I have taken note of the sanctions with regards to plagiarism and any other illicit behavior as provided for in the current Study Regulations as well as described in *Academic Integrity*, a mandatory on-line test designed to prevent any instances of student misconduct (among others: plagiarism, cheating, collusion, fabrication/falsification and personation) according to Art. 28 para. 6 and 41 para. 1 of the Study Regulations.

In the case of work written by several students - where this is allowed and/or provided for - I have also clearly and unequivocally indicated which student has written each part.

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Surname and Name:

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Student No.:

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Date

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Signature

The present document must be uploaded to ICorsi at the link <https://www.icorsi.ch/course/view.php?id=13399>.

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<sup>6</sup> The Declaration of Academic Honesty was modified by the Faculty Council at its meeting of 22.5.2019

