
Guidelines for Master's Theses

I. General Principles

1.1 Purpose

The Master's thesis is a formal document whose purpose is to demonstrate the candidate's ability to make an original contribution to knowledge. To this end, it must show that with some guidance the candidate can identify, analyze and solve a problem, and apply the tools, techniques and concepts learned in the courses.

1.2 Submission

1. A student can only submit his/her thesis after having acquired at least 60 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) points.
2. The Master's thesis should be submitted at least two weeks before the defence.

1.3 Supervision

During the research and writing-up stages, the candidate is guided by a supervisor, usually a tutor of a Master's course. Exceptionally, and with the approval of the Master's director, the internal supervisor may be replaced by an outside expert.

1.4 Defence and evaluation

1. The Master's thesis is examined orally before a panel comprising the supervisor, another Faculty member (the co-examiner) and the Master director (or her/his delegate).
2. After the defence, 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. The evaluation must follow the 'Guidelines for Master thesis grading' (see Appendix). The grade determined after the defence is final.
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 Master's Study Regulations

II. Form and content of the thesis

2.1 Form

1. The recommended length for a Master's thesis is approximately 80-100 pages (30 ECTS thesis) / 50-60 pages (18 ECTS thesis), excluding additional material such as program listings and appendices.
2. The title page must contain the following items of information: the title of the thesis; the indication: Master's thesis; the name and surname of the candidate (author); the name and surname of the supervisor; the name and surname of the co-supervisor, if any; and the date (month and year).

2.2 Structure of the thesis

1. The abstract, one- or two-page long, should summarize the contents of the thesis.
2. The table of contents lists the elements that compose the thesis: parts, chapters and sections, numbered consecutively.
3. The preliminaries may also include a dedication, a foreword, a list of abbreviations and acronyms or conventions used in the texts, and acknowledgements.
4. Figures and tables must bear an individual title and must also be numbered consecutively.
5. According to established usage, the Introduction usually consists of the objectives of the thesis, the description of the problem tackled and the methodology used to solve it, and an outline of the thesis with the main points presented in each chapter.
6. The literature reviewed should provide a strong enough theoretical and empirical foundation to support the thesis and to set the tone of the study. The literature review should provide the basis for the gap that you intend to fill with your study.
7. The concluding chapter generally comprises the findings of the research, personal assessment of the methodology applied and the author's suggestions for possible future research lines.

2.3 Style class

In order to ensure uniformity, Master's thesis should be formatted using Latex's style class `usiinfthesis`, available at the Faculty's web site.

III. Notification and submission deadlines

3.1 Registration form

1. Each student must complete a registration form as soon as they have been accepted by a supervisor.
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 original of this form must be handed in to the Dean's Office at the latest on the first day of the semester.
4. The title recorded on the registration form is provisional. Subsequently, when the first draft of the thesis is complete, the student should communicate the definitive title to the Dean's 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 bound original.
5. A detailed plan (or synopsis) of the thesis must be shown to, and approved by, the supervisor some reasonable time in advance of the expected completion and submission date.

IV. Subsequent stages

4.1 Final reading and revision

The supervisor has two weeks to read the full and final version, correct it, write any comments, and provide suggestions or request amendments or additions

4.2 Defence

1. Master defences will be scheduled for the oral examination (viva) by the Master's director during one of the three exam sessions.
2. The Master's director will assign co-examiners.
3. The oral examination comprises a student presentation of up to 30 minutes (30 ECTS thesis) / 20 minutes (18 ECTS thesis), followed by questions by the panel.

4.3 Deposit of copies

1. The candidate is expected to deliver 1 hard-bound original and a PDF version. The PDF version will be deposited by the Dean's Office to the University Library (if the dissertation has been awarded a mark equal to or higher than 9). It is worth pointing out that binding is the last stage, after the candidate has gone through the defence exam.
2. Students are requested to hand in 1 hard-bound original to the Dean's Office no later than three weeks after the viva examination, together with
 - a. the thesis deposit form with all the signatures required ([link](#)),
 - b. the library's clearance statement ([link](#)), and
 - c. the agreement for the electronic circulation of Master theses ([link](#)).

4.4 Confidential information

In some cases, a Master's thesis may contain or refer to confidential information. If this is the case, the candidate must attach a letter stating that the thesis deposited with the University Library is not for public consultation.

V. Misconduct and disciplinary measures

5.1 Plagiarism

A student who submits a thesis that was not written by himself/herself or who presents as 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. Plagiarism will attract the appropriate penalties as provided in the Faculty's Study Regulations.

Appendix

Guidelines for Master's thesis grading

These guidelines are intended to render the grading of Master theses more homogeneous. It distinguishes between two styles of Master theses: a research-oriented Master thesis and an engineering Master thesis. While the former aims at initiating students into a research topic, the latter has a more applied character. The following guidelines apply to both thesis styles, unless stated explicitly otherwise.

The student...

- Is the student capable of doing independent work?
- Does the student understand the scope of the work?
- Is the student familiar with the state-of-the-art in the field?

The work...

- Are the goals of the work well defined and motivated?
- Are the limitations of the developed ideas discussed?
- Has the contribution been validated (if applicable)?
- Is the contribution minimally original? [research thesis]
- Is there a solid experimental part? [engineering thesis]

The document...

- Are the methods and techniques used properly described?
- Is the text scientifically correct, clearly understandable and grammatically sound?
- Are there references and discussion to related work?
- Does the text follow an acceptable format (i.e., identifiable objectives, methodology description, results, and conclusions)?

The defence...

- Does the presentation follow an acceptable format?
- Is the student capable of defending his/her ideas?
- Did the student respect the allocated time slot?

Each item above weights 25% of the final grade. To get a full grade in an item all questions must be answered positively.