

# Guidelines for writing a Master's thesis

A Master's thesis is a piece of scientific work that addresses a specific research question, builds on the existing academic literature and adopts the appropriate methodology. A Master's thesis must demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the relevant scientific and/or academic literature and the ability to critically engage with it.

## Choice of the thesis supervisor and the discussant

Students can contact faculty members from the School of International Studies, the University of Trento and, for MISS students only, the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies to ask for their availability to act as the supervisor of their thesis. Students can also contact a professor appointed by the University of Trento or, for MISS students only, the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, who has taught the student in at least one teaching unit within the degree. For double degree programs, students can also contact faculty members of the partner university.

The supervisor can propose the appointment of an available co-supervisor if additional specific expertise is required.

The Director of the SIS appoints the discussant for the final exam before the graduation session.

## Registration of the Thesis Title

As soon as students have agreed on a thesis topic with a supervisor, they are required to register the thesis title by filling out the online form available at the following [link](#). This should take place at least 4 months before the thesis is discussed. The title to be indicated in the form is not final and only serves to identify the broad topic of the thesis. If the title indicated in the application form is modified, students must inform the SIS Secretariat, after reaching an agreement with their supervisor. No communication is required in case the graduation session is postponed from the date originally indicated on the application form. If the supervisor (and consequently the title) is changed, students must inform the SIS Secretariat.

## Layout of the Master's thesis

**Length:** A Master's thesis should amount to 25,000 words  $\pm 10\%$  (approximately 62 pages).

Note that the title page, abstract, table of contents, bibliography, tables and figures are excluded from the word count. The word count **MUST** be reported on the first page.

**Language:** The Master's thesis is written in English.

**Layout:** The thesis must be laid out vertically on A4 paper, with margins of 2.5cm, a line spacing of 1.5 and typeset in 12pt font.

- Title page:** The title page must include the name of the University of Trento and of the School of International Studies, the Master's program, the thesis title, the name of the student and that of the supervisor, a word count and the academic year. A template is available at the following links: [student MEIS](#) e [student MISS](#).
- Binding:** No physical copy of the thesis is required by the SIS.
- Structure:** No specific structure is mandated, but the thesis **must include** an abstract (200-400 words), a table of contents and a bibliography
- References:** Different disciplines follow different rules and habits. Students are advised to consult their supervisor. Well-accepted standards are APA, Chicago style and OSCOLA. All works cited in the thesis have to appear in the reference list (bibliography) only cited works should be listed in the bibliography.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Students are hereby informed that the SIS will subject all Master's theses to anti-plagiarism checks using appropriate software. This also applies to text written by AI chat boxes such as chatGPT. These measures are in line with the [University's Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence](#).

## Thesis Submission

Information regarding graduation sessions, deadlines, and registration procedures for the final exam, as well as details about the composition of examination boards, can be found on the "graduation section" on the webpage [MEIS](#) e [MISS](#).

## Final Exam

The final exam consists of a presentation and discussion of the Master's thesis in front of a committee comprising five members, among which the supervisor and the discussant. The exam lasts approximately 30-35 minutes. Students are asked to summarize the main tenets of their thesis within a 10-12 minute timeframe. A slideshow can be used for this purpose. In this case, the use of **PDF files** on a USB stick (rather than other file formats) is strongly recommended.

Following the presentation, the discussant asks some questions and the candidate is required to defend her/his thesis before the committee. Other members of the committee may also participate in the debate. At the end of the examination, the committee decides the final mark on the basis of both the quality of the thesis and the performance of the student in the oral defense. The final mark is communicated to the student after the oral examination when the graduation is officially announced.