Master Thesis Guidelines

Introduction

Candidates for Master of Research in Management Sciences are, according to Real Decreto 1393/2007 29th October, article 15.3, required to write and defend a Master Thesis. The Master Thesis is a key component and the last academic requirement that the participants in the Master of Research in Management Sciences Programme have to fulfil before they are conferred their degree.

According to the Master of Research Programme Regulations for the academic year 2010-2011, the Master Thesis corresponds to 15 ECTS and its development and defence will take place during the months of June, July and September, in the fifth and final module of the program. Upon successfully completing the Master Thesis, participants will be awarded 15 ECTS. It is a required condition to have successfully completed the first 4 modules of the programme, thus obtaining a minimum of 45 ECTS.

The tutor, assigned to each participant at the beginning of the academic year, is the person responsible for supervising the Master Thesis. The MRes Master Thesis permits the students to conduct an individual research study by using concepts and methods learned during the academic year. The elaboration of the MRes Master Thesis will help the candidates acquire the following competencies:

- The skills needed to develop a research paper from a rigorous qualitative and/or quantitative perspective.
- The ability to structure the research paper, from the justification/motivation of the research question to the writing of the paper.
- The ability to use suitable strategies to search for information.
- The ability to communicate effectively, especially in writing, when practicing the pre-writing processes and writing up the paper.
No limitations are imposed on the topic selected for the Masters Thesis research, except that it should be relevant to the field of study selected. The nature of the research may be one of the following three types:

1. **Theoretical research**, which advances our state of knowledge or understanding in a certain field.

2. **Applied research**, which typically involves the use of existing knowledge and methods to investigate a new application or to solve a real-world problem.

3. **Literature review**, which analyses in depth the state of the art within a specific line or interest of research.

A research paper is the outcome of a research process and, in this sense, it provides evidence of your work. Therefore, as this is your first experience in research, it is advisable to make all your decisions explicit on the paper (why your topic is relevant, why you chose a given methodological approach, why you chose a measuring instrument and not another...).

However, we must not forget it is a text as well, and the main objective of a text is to facilitate the readers’ comprehension. In the case of this academic genre, because of its argumentative nature, there is still another objective to fulfil and that has to do with ensuring the readers’ adherence to our own perspectives. This involves that, besides the need to ensure accuracy in our explanation (i.e., that the text reflects what we did and why), we need to ensure its degree of readability and persuasion. In order to do that, please pay attention to:

- the way information is organized in your text
- whether any information gaps can be identified
- the clarity of your argumentation
- the way the different parts of the text connect
- the degree of formality of the language used
- whether you are using the necessary domain-specific terms
- whether the reader may find a word or expression ‘surprising’
- whether you are appealing to the readers’ knowledge universe
- the discursive resources you can use to include the reader in the conceptual dialogue set by your work

As you can tell, writing your Master Thesis is one of the key processes in your formation as a researcher. It is the MRes Program Direction’s wish to help you enter the research path in as fruitful and joyful a way as possible. With this objective the
MRes provides you with the *Writing your Master Thesis* elective consisting of four face-to-face sessions, complemented with autonomous supervised work, and the possibility to receive feedback on your work in individual coaching sessions. This subject is highly recommended, especially for those with little or no experience in the research field. For information regarding this elective please contact Dr. Anna Iñesta (ana.inesta@esade.edu).

**Registration and Deadlines**

Students must submit to the Registrars’ Office the Master Thesis Extended Abstract before February 11th. To do so please use the form included at the end of this document.

The defence of the Master Thesis will be held at the end of September in an open session (September 28th and 29th, 2011). To reach this date, students must hand in the final document at the Registrar’s Office on Friday, July 25th, 2011.

Having these final deadlines in mind, the suggested working schedule is as follows:

- **End of September**: Presentation of research lines and research groups.
- **October 6**: **First session** of the *Writing your Master Thesis* elective course.
- **Meeting with the MRes Director**: Only the MRes Director can propose the tutors for every student.
- **November-December**: First meeting with tutors.
- **End December**: Research line decided.
- **January 11**: **Second session** *Writing your Master Thesis* elective course.
- **February 11**: Submission of an extended abstract (see appendix 1 for information regarding the characteristics of this abstract) and name of possible revisors proposed by the tutor. (See document attached).
- **April 14**: **Third session** *Writing your Master Thesis* elective course.
- **June 16**: **Fourth session** *Writing your Master Thesis* elective course.
- **July 25**: Due date of the final version of the Master Thesis at the Registrar’s Office.

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1 Please note that matters related with research domain should be addressed to your tutor.
Be aware that the content of the Master Thesis has to be developed closely with the tutor, and in the framework of one of ESADE research groups, for this reason it is compulsory to make a presentation of the research done in your Master Thesis within the academic year before the process is finished. This will allow you to get feedback from the members of the research group and improve the research done.

**Formal Requirements**

The Master Thesis must be written in English, on plain white A4 paper (i.e. 21.0 centimetres [8.27 inches] by 29.69 centimetres [11.69 inches]) and the margins should be set to Word's default: top and bottom 2.54 centimetres (1.00 inches), right and left 3.17 centimetres (1.25 inches). Letter font should be Arial or Times New Roman, 12-point.

Please ensure that pages are numbered. Be sure to spell check the manuscript. It is recommended a min length of 5000 words, excluding abstract and bibliography. If preferred you can use the formatting and bibliography requirements defined in a recognised publication on your specific field of research.

One black and white, two sided printed copy of the Master Thesis should be handed in. The Registrar's Office will make copies and bind them. One copy will be for the participant, one for the tutor, three copies for the members of the Board of Examiners and the original copy will be sent to the Library for public consultation. Six cover pages colour- printed and signed by the student and tutor must be also handed in (you should ask for it at the Registrar's Office).

A digital copy in Adobe Acrobat (pdf format) should also be sent to the Registrar's Office by e-mail together with a scanned pdf version of the signed Master Thesis cover.

**Assessment of the Master Thesis**

In terms of outcome, the Master Thesis consists of a formal or practical research on a topic approved by an academic department or a research group. For this reason, each student has to present their proposal to the research group or department (recommended during June or July), and two professors will grade the written document. In addition, a written report by the tutor will be required.

The MRes Master Thesis requires a written paper and an oral defence evaluated by an academic committee convened for that purpose. The student will be evaluated upon both:

a) the overall quality and significance of his or her master thesis (70%),
b) the participation in the elective course *Writing your Master Thesis* (only for those students participating in it) (20%),

and

c) the oral defence of his or her findings (10% or 30%, depending on point b)

A Committee, proposed and approved by the Doctorate Committee, consisting of 3 doctors will be responsible for giving the final evaluation. The objective of this committee is to assess the scientific and intellectual maturity of students, as the result of their learning throughout the academic year.

The participant will be given 30 minutes to present his or her Master Thesis. During this time, the Committee cannot interrupt the presentation. The Committee will ask a series of questions about the Master Thesis to the participant and will discuss the submitted Thesis. Total presentation and defence time cannot exceed an hour.

Grades will follow the grading scale to be applied in all official higher education degrees in Spain (Real Decreto 1125/2003 of 5 September, published in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (BOE) num. 224, 18 September 2003, p. 24997). Dates of the public defence will be announced at the beginning of each academic year.
MRes Master Thesis Proposal Extended Abstract

Student
Name and Family Name: ......................................... Code: ......................................
Address: ..................................................................................................................................
Town/City: .............................................................. Country: ........................................
E-mail: ................................................................. Tel: ..............................................

Tutor
Name and Family Name: ........................................................................................................

Research Group/ Department
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Master Thesis Proposed Title:
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Evaluators proposed (must be in the Research Area)

1. .............................................................................................................................................

2. .............................................................................................................................................

Barcelona, ......................................................... 2010

Approval
Tutor

Approval
Programme director

(Reserved for use by the Registrar's Office)
REGISTER
Number: .................. Date: .........................

2 Extended Abstract must be attached in a separate sheet (two pages minimum including bibliography)
Appendix. Requirements of the Master Thesis Extended Abstract.

The submission of the extended abstract is a requirement that allows Program Direction to check the stage of development of your Master Thesis. When elaborating it, please have the following in mind:

**The title**

This is one of the most essential components of your work. When choosing the words to be included in the title, they need to belong to the adequate conceptual universe so that the reader can situate our work in the corresponding research field and research line. Finally, we need to consider that the words we choose to include in the title become key when we think about the search of information through Internet.

**The extended abstract**

Given the early stage in the development of your paper, please note that you are expected to submit a descriptive abstract. It needs to present the problem or gap found in the corresponding research field as well as the line/s of thought or approach/es you will follow to find an answer to the problem (or a methodology that can help you find it). When doing so, you are expected to support the selected line of thought/approach by referring, in your text, to relevant literature of the field.

Finally, if you have already thought about this, you may want to describe the kind of study that would help you obtain the necessary data for you to confirm your hypothesis and which you expect to conduct in the future. In any case, if you want to refer to the study, you do not need to refer to the method, results or conclusions at this stage.

In terms of formal requirements, the length of the extended abstract may vary between 500 and 800 words.

**List of references**

You are expected to include a list of references at the end of the extended abstract. Please note that you are not asked to include the list of papers you may have read, but only those which are fully relevant to your work and thus appear cited in your extended abstract.
Also, please find a more detailed structure of the questions that an extended abstract corresponding to a literature review Master Thesis should attempt to answer.

**Basic structure of an extended abstract for a Research Master Thesis**

1. Why are certain concepts/constructs relevant for your research/practitioner’s field?
2. What do we know about these constructs?
3. What is it that we still do not know about them? And why is it important for us to know about it?
4. (why is it relevant?)
5. Specifically among these, what do we want to focus on in our Master Thesis? Why do we think it is relevant for us to do so?
6. How have we worked on the literature review?
   - Kinds of papers revised:
     - practitioners’ papers/reports
     - research papers/reports
   - criteria for the selection of papers revised
     - year of publication
     - most cited articles
     - published in high impact factor journals
7. What kind of Master Thesis (a.theoretical research, b. applied research, c.literature review) would you like to elaborate?
8. List of references