

## THESIS REGULATIONS MASTER INFORMATION STUDIES

University of Amsterdam - Faculty of Science October 2016

These regulations specify the conditions that apply to the Master Theses of the Information Studies program. In all cases in which these regulations do not provide, the Board of Examiners decides.

In the Master Information Studies both terms dissertation, thesis, and in Dutch 'scriptie' are being used synonymously.

MSc IS BIS: Master Information Studies, track Business Information Systems

MSc IS HCM: Master Information Studies, track Human Centered Multimedia`

MSc IS GS: Master Information Studies, track Game Studies

MSc IS DC: Master Information Studies, track DataScience

OER: The education and examination regulations of the program

### 1. THESIS PROCESS

The thesis project is a mandatory part of the MSc program Information Studies. The thesis (18 EC) is to be performed in a two-stage process.

The first part is covered by the Thesis Design in which the students describe the problem, research question, methodology followed to answer the research question, and a planning of the work.

The second part is then the actual Thesis Project. This project has to be conducted as an individual project under the supervision of a recognized supervisor about a topic within the realm of Information Studies, approved by the master thesis coordinator.

### 2. THESIS OBJECTIVES

The focus of the thesis project will be the scientific study of a question oriented towards actual research themes in academia and society. The thesis project provides students with first-hand experience in working with established scientists or industry experts during a prolonged period of time. The research project's objective is to give the student an opportunity to acquire practical experience of quantitative and qualitative scientific research methods and to learn to work independently.

The learning objectives of the thesis project are such that after completion of the thesis project the student:

- is able to formulate a clear research question in the field of Information Studies and able to design a plan (addressing both methodology and time planning) to answer that question
- can demonstrate state-of-the-art knowledge about the subject of the thesis project by applying relevant literature to a practical situation
- is able to process the research data and to critically judge the obtained results
- is able to write down and critically discuss the above activities in a written report in which the methodology is accounted for, the original research question is well-addressed and conclusions are properly substantiated

- is able to present and discuss the results to a scientific audience
- is able to function in a professional environment.

### 3. THESIS TOPIC

The project will be carried out in The Netherlands or abroad in an IS setting, such as trade, industry, governmental or non-profit organizations, or within the university on an IS related topic. In cases where the topic is beyond the IS field or if students wish to work on a thesis project jointly, it is at the Board of Examiners to approve the proposed project before the start of the thesis project.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the Information Studies program, the types of thesis projects vary. The most common research formats are:

- Empirical research, as used in social and economic science
- Analysis of existing theories regarding an Information Studies issue
- Design/Prototype/Evaluation of a complex information, knowledge or media system, or a new design approach or new algorithm for such a system
- Report with policy recommendations regarding a complex organizational issue, where the recommendations are explicitly based on theories of the Information Studies domain
- Experimental evaluation and/or specialization of a design approach or algorithm for a specific application domain.

### 4. THESIS DESIGN

The Thesis Design is performed by the student as individual work but supported by the supervisor. Students are expected to find and propose a supervisor to the master thesis coordinator. The thesis coordinator may approve or reject the proposed supervisor according to the rules of practice within the track. If needed the thesis coordinator may provide assistance in finding a suitable supervisor.

Students have to write a report of max. 2,000 words all inclusive, in which she or he has to describe the issue to be addressed in the thesis project, the relevance of the problem based on a literature survey, the resulting research question and potential sub questions, the methodological approach to answer the research question and sub questions, and a schedule that emphasizes how the different pieces of the thesis work can be achieved within the given time frame until the end of the program. The report needs to be written in English. The final electronic version of the Thesis Design will be submitted to and approved by the supervisor and uploaded to Blackboard.

Students will start working on their thesis proposal during the course in block 3. The study load for the preparation of the Thesis Design is included in the thesis work (18 EC). The Thesis Design has to be finished at the end of block 4, before starting the thesis in block 5.

Students from the tracks HCM, GS and DS have to present the Thesis Design in a joint presentation session in the form of a pitch presentation (3 minutes). The pitch presentation has to be given at the end of block 4.

### 5. THESIS PROJECT

A master thesis is defined as ‘an individually written record of the student’s performed original research or design of a scientific nature’. It is an original, independent piece of work especially composed for this occasion containing the creative ideas of the student. Claims, hypotheses, policy recommendations and design choices need to be supported with arguments based on existing theory or empirical evidence.

## 5.1 EXAMINATION AUTHORITY

The master thesis will be subject to examination by two *examiners*. One of the two examiners may also take the role of *supervisor* throughout the thesis project. The other examiner will then be called the *second examiner*. The supervisor can be from within the university or from an organization outside where the research is conducted. A supervisor qualifies generally by either a PhD degree or by proven work experience. The appointment/approval of an examiner/supervisor is to the judgment of the Board of Examiners.

The second examiner has to be member of the UvA academic staff, and must be qualified for examination by the Board of Examiners.

Exceptions to this article can be made by the Board of Examiners only.

## 5.2 START CONDITIONS AND DURATION

A student can only start working on the master thesis when the following requirements have been met:

- At least 30 EC of the master program has been obtained.
- The course ‘Interdisciplinary Research Methodology for Information Sciences’ has been successfully finished.
- The Thesis Design has been approved by the supervisor.
- The Thesis Design has been approved within the given deadline.

The duration for a MSc Information Studies thesis between its starting date and its end date on which the thesis needs to be submitted, is 12 weeks for full-time students.

## 5.3 THESIS SUPERVISION

In order to improve the effectiveness of the learning process and provide the means to complete the thesis project within the time given, each student has access to a supervisor (approximately one hour per week) to receive individual feedback on work progress, work planning and work process.

#### 5.4 MID-TERM EVALUATION

In week 6 a mid-term evaluation will be performed. The student has to present in a public setting the current status of the thesis project. Feedback will be given using the appropriate evaluation form.

#### 5.5 THESIS REPORT LANGUAGE, DESIGN, AND SIZE

The master thesis has to be written in English. It is according to the template that is provided on the BlackBoard page.

The size of a 18 EC master thesis may not exceed 15 pages, excluding cover page, table of content, bibliography and appendices.

## 5.6 THESIS DEFENSE

Within the program, students must present and defend their thesis. The presentation and defense will be held after the thesis has been approved by the supervisor(s). The presentation and defense will be public and cannot be held later than the last week of August of an academic year. Seven days before the defense date, the final version of the thesis has to be submitted via Blackboard to allow for plagiarism check. Students will also send a copy by e-mail to their supervisor(s) and examiner(s). Furthermore, students will take at least two hard copies to the defense sessions or as many more as requested by the supervisor.

All thesis defenses are scheduled by the thesis coordinator only. He will make sure that all conditions for a thesis defense are met and that a second examiner has been appointed. The procedure is as follows:

1. Discuss with your supervisor at which date and time you will graduate. Make sure the supervisor is available at that day and time.
2. Find a second examiner who is available at the same day. Book a room if no room has been planned in advance.
3. Send an email to the thesis coordinator at least two weeks in advance of the defense date with proposed day, time, supervisor and second examiner.
4. Make sure you upload your thesis on Blackboard at least SEVEN DAYS before the defense in order to allow the second examiner to read it. Also we will then check the thesis for plagiarism.

Take two printed copies of the thesis with you at the defense.

The presentation lasts 20 minutes and has to be performed in English. Then a Question and Answering session follows (20 minutes), where first the audience is allowed to ask questions, then the second examiner, and finally the first examiner. Once this part is concluded, the examiners retreat to discuss the grade. When the decision has been made, manifested in the Thesis Assessment Form (see Appendix), the examiners return to inform the student and audience about the outcome. It is here that the student also has to sign the Thesis Assessment Form.

The Thesis Assessment Form needs to be submitted by the examiner to the Education Service Centre and the final version of the thesis report needs to be submitted to the UvA thesis repository.

## 5.7 THESIS ASSESSMENT

The supervisor will determine whether the thesis is good enough to be publicly defended. When the master thesis is thus allowed, it will be submitted by the student via Blackboard. Theses that have been submitted too late (i.e. later than seven days before the defense date) will cause the delay of the thesis defense to a later date unless the examiners decide otherwise. If this new defense date lies beyond the ultimate date of the academic year (i.e.: August 31), then the student needs to re-enroll for the next academic year in order to graduate.

The grading of the thesis project will take place by the examiners according to the criteria laid out in the assessment form in the Appendix.

If the master thesis does not meet the requirements sufficiently, the student is offered a one-time opportunity to improve the thesis according to the feedback given during the thesis defense. The maximum period assigned to a student to improve an insufficient thesis is:

- 3 weeks for a student, enrolled full-time
- 6 weeks for a student, enrolled part-time.

During this period the student is entitled the usual amount of supervision. After the period for improvement the thesis project will be graded by the examiners without a new defense session taking place. The work will be graded no more than '6' unless the examiners have good reason to decide otherwise. Should the improved thesis version again be of insufficient quality the thesis project is considered to have failed. The student will then have to start the thesis project from the beginning in a second attempt to graduate.

In accordance with the Student Charter of the University of Amsterdam a master thesis will be graded within 20 working days after submission to the examiners. If the time needed to grade the thesis exceeds the ultimate date of the academic year (i.e.: August 31), then the student needs to re-enroll for the next academic year in order to graduate.

## 5.8 FRAUD AND PLAGIARISM

The university's fraud and plagiarism regulations apply, see: <http://student.uva.nl/en/az/content/plagiarism-and-fraud/plagiarism-and-fraud.html>.

The master thesis cannot consist of copied resources (internet, books, and journals) or material already submitted elsewhere (other courses, study programs, universities) with the aim to receive study credits for this, unless properly quoted. The master thesis can however, elaborate on previously submitted work, as long as it is clear which contribution of the student has been submitted for which study program component.

## 6. STORAGE REGULATIONS AND BLACKBOARD

The following milestone deliverables all have to be uploaded timely to Blackboard in order to qualify for the thesis defense and the grading of the thesis project:

- Preliminary Thesis Design (deadline February 1<sup>st</sup>)
- Thesis Design (deadline April 1<sup>st</sup>)
- Final Thesis.

Without these uploads there is no grading of the project.

When the final thesis is submitted via blackboard a plagiarism check will be performed. A copy of each MSc IS thesis has to be included in UvA's digital library. The master thesis is basically public. The student can only gain the diploma once the thesis has been uploaded.

If the student believes that certain information used in the Master Thesis should remain confidential, she/he should make a request for exemption at the Board of Examiners.

A written request must be made, properly motivated and countersigned by the supervisor. The student should submit the application once it is known that the information is confidential, but no later than two weeks before the final date of the thesis.

The student can opt for one of the following three options: a limited confidentiality (up to three years) or an extension thereof (up to six years, but only in exceptional cases), or a parallel version of the thesis, i.e. a thesis where confidential information has been removed or anonymized. In all cases, approval by the Board of Examiners is required.

If a Master Thesis is confidential (with the permission of the Board of Examiners), the Master Thesis will be stored in the library, but cannot be viewed during the applicable period. The Master Thesis, in that case, can only be seen by the writer, the supervisor, the examiner and the Examination Board. If requested, confidential papers may also be viewed by external visitation committees or accreditation bodies, who nationally assess the quality of the master program.

## 7. OBJECTIONS AND APPEALS

Try to solve complaints or conflicts with the person in question, if necessary with the student advisor present as an independent third party. Problems that cannot be solved in this manner may be submitted to the Board of Examiners. Judgments of the Board of Examiners can be appealed at the Examination Appeals Board. The student advisor can help you find your way when serious problems occur.

The thesis coordinator and the Board of Examiners may decide to deviate from the regulations above if they have good reasons to do so.



# Thesis Assessment Form

Master Information Studies

ECTS: .....

Student's name	:	.....	Student ID:	.....
Title thesis	:	.....		
Supervisor	:	.....		
Examiner	:	.....		
Ephorus check	:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track:	BIS / HCM / GS / DS

<b>Knowledge (40%)</b>	excellent	good	satisfactory	sufficient	insufficient
1 Clear and relevant formulation of the problem statement and research questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Clear and adequate research design and selection of methods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Theoretical underpinning and use and selection of suitable literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Scientific originality / relevancy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Clarity of conclusions and recommendations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Critical reflections on the research performed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Understanding and reviewing the subject matter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Process (20%)</b>	excellent	good	satisfactory	sufficient	insufficient
1 Use of methods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Adequately responding to supervisor's comments /feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Creating and adjusting a realistic planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Keeping to delivery dates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Attitude (10%)</b>	excellent	good	satisfactory	sufficient	insufficient
1 Commitment and perseverance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Initiative and creativity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Independence and learning skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Self assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Reporting (20%)</b>	excellent	good	satisfactory	sufficient	insufficient
1 Readability/accessibility / use of language in the thesis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Structure / composition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Presenting (10%)</b>	excellent	good	satisfactory	sufficient	insufficient
1 Presentation of the context and content of the research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Media use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Quality of narrative style	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Discussion/defense	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Grade**

Final grade Master Thesis
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Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Signatures**

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor/examiner \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> examiner \_\_\_\_\_

**This form has to be dispatched to the Servicedesk ESC at the following address: *University of Amsterdam, Servicedesk ESC, P.O.box 94214, 1090 GE AMSTERDAM***

*Remarks:*