

Curriculum Financial and Business Management (FINMA)

Rimini Campus, Bologna University

Guidelines for writing the final thesis

This document aims to guide graduating students in preparing the final thesis.

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1. Procedural aspects

The graduating student must adhere to what is published on the dedicated page: <https://corsi.unibo.it/1cycle/FinancialBusinessManagement/final-examination>. Specifically, the procedure is the following:

1. The student contacts the teacher asking for his/her supervision and together they define the title of the thesis. Then the student submits the graduation application.
2. The Supervisor advises the student, suggesting specific bibliography related to the chosen topic.
3. The Program Director ensures the fair distribution of the workload of the theses among the professors and, if necessary, prepares procedures to guarantee it.
4. The student writes the final thesis under the supervision of the Supervisor and uploads the paper online within the specified deadline.
5. The Supervisor approves/not approves the paper within the deadline.
6. The graduation Committee (composed of 3 members) determines the final evaluation of the paper (a score ranging from zero to 3 points) based on the proposal of the Supervisor.
7. The score will be communicated to students during the final proclamation, which will take place at a later time.

2. The final thesis

The final thesis represents the conclusion of the three-year study program and consists of preparing a **written paper**, aimed at investigating a topic of significant theoretical or practical interest. The topic is agreed upon with the Supervisor and may be connected to internship activities if applicable.

- The Supervisor supports the student in defining the title, topic, bibliographic references, and finally in reviewing the final paper before submission. Both the choice of the topic and the drafting of the paper must be addressed by the student in consultation with the Supervisor.

- The graduating students must demonstrate the ability to address and argue a topic related to their chosen study path with scientific rigor and professional competence. They must demonstrate autonomous analytical skills and familiarity with the technical tools learned during the three years of study and be able to investigate a given business-economic, economic, legal, historical, or mathematical and statistical phenomenon. The final paper should consist of a document that is suitable for analyzing a given phenomenon synthetically. Students are not required to orally discuss their paper.

3. Choosing the topic

For choosing the topic, the student can use the following questions as a simple guide:

- What subjects or topics interested me the most during my studies? Do I want to delve deeper into these issues?
- Is there a particular issue being discussed in the media or scientific publications that deserves further exploration?
- Is there a topic of practical significance related to my past, current, or future professional experience that I believe is important to delve into?
- Is there a topic that could be useful to explore in preparation for applying to a specific master's degree or other programs?

4. Structure of the thesis

- **Introductory part:** it helps the reader understand your research project, therefore the introduction should state what the topic is about, explain why it needs to be further researched and describes your research question(s) or objectives.
- **Literature review:** it consists of a collection of key sources on the topic chosen and discusses the existing knowledge about the topic (see section 6 for details).
- **Central part:** it is the core of the paper. It should present and investigate the chosen topic, answering the research question posed by the student. Under the supervision of the Supervisor, this central part may be: i) a deeper literature review, including novel sources and/or using specific tools for literature review; OR ii) the analysis of a case study; OR iii) a quantitative study investigating a sample of subject/companies or other data. It is therefore important for the student to structure an index of the main points along which the paper develops.

If the paper concerns a **detailed investigation of the literature** on the chosen topic, in constructing their arguments, the student may also use additional sources¹. For example,

- newspaper articles if the topic is related to current economic and financial issues;
- white papers or grey literature (e.g. reports from associations, accountancy companies);
- reports or reports from national or international institutions (OECD, ISTAT, Eurostat, etc.) if macroeconomic information is needed, etc.

¹ With the same specifications for Almamawi or proxy server as mentioned above, you can access Il Sole 24 Ore Online (and other bibliographic resources) from the library websites.

If the paper concerns a specific **company case**, it is desirable to have an adequate presentation of the company under study, even when the question is limited to specific detailed aspects. The student must be aware of the legal form, size, economic-financial performance of the company, etc. It should also be clarified how the student obtained certain information (through an interview with a managerial figure, from a database, from document analysis, etc.).

- **Final part:** the conclusion of the paper, with a discussion of the empirical evidence and/or presentation of personal critical reflections, should be summarized in a paragraph titled "Conclusion".

5. Graphs and tables

Graphs and tables intended to describe a phenomenon should always be accompanied by **brief self-explanatory captions**. This means that it should not be necessary to search within the body of the text for the description of the graph or table to understand what it represents. In graphs, pay attention to labeling the axes. In tables, pay attention to row and column headers.

6. Literature review

The literature helps contextualize the investigated phenomenon in a **theoretical framework**. The Supervisor could help the student for an assessment of the chosen title and may suggest a brief bibliography. The student may also conduct personal complementary bibliographic research. However, only **academic sources** or those of recognized scientific value should be considered. These include:

- **Academic articles**

These are papers published in academic journals (national or international) that innovate the literature on a topic (in theoretical or empirical terms). Many of the journals in which these articles are published are not freely accessible online. However, Unibo has a subscription for many of them and the student can access them by using the university PC stations or at least be connected to Unibo's wifi network (Almawifi) with the institutional credentials. Alternatively, students can also connect from elsewhere by accessing the proxy server (instructions are available at <http://www.biblioteche.unibo.it/portale/strumenti/proxy>). The simplest way to search for keywords in published academic papers is to use Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com>) or Elsevier Scopus (<http://www.scopus.com>).

- **Working papers**

These are academic articles that have not yet been published in the specialized journals. Nevertheless, many researchers make them available online. The most well-known site collecting them (in the field of social sciences) is SSRN (<http://www.ssrn.com>). Many articles on SSRN are freely downloadable. It is always good practice to check if an article found on SSRN in a preliminary version has been published in an academic journal. If this is the case, the latter is preferred.

- **Articles from National/International Institutions**

These are articles published by institutions and research centers with solid national or international scientific reputation. For example, in various fields, individual national central banks (e.g., the Bank of Italy), stock exchanges (e.g., Borsa Italiana), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Bank for International Settlements, etc. The websites of these institutions have a section dedicated to working papers, and they are often freely downloadable.

- **Monographs/books**
- **University textbooks**

7. References

Any material read by the student and referenced in the paper (e.g., articles, working papers, newspaper articles, etc.) must always be adequately cited and it is essential to clearly indicate the source to which one is referring. Even if the student reports ideas or opinions that are not their own but are taken from elsewhere, it must be made clear in the text that it is not original material.

Be careful because it is possible to unintentionally engage in **plagiarism**. Plagiarism is a forbidden, unethical, and sanctioned practice that can be defined as the act of reproducing identical or slightly paraphrased parts of someone else's writing. Simply listing the source in the bibliography does not protect against plagiarism. Note that the use of plagiarism detection software is increasing, allowing for the rapid recognition of the originality of a text.

To cite correctly, **quotation marks** must be used whenever (and it should not be a frequent practice) one wishes to reproduce someone else's sentence or part of their writing verbatim. It is also advisable to use **italics** in these cases.

8. Editorial rules

- The paper should be **no more than 50 pages**, with each page containing about 25-30 lines.
- The structure should be divided into paragraphs/subparagraphs for clarity of reading. Paragraphs and subparagraphs should be numbered (subparagraphs should be numbered in relation to the paragraph they belong to, e.g., 1.1, 1.2, etc., to refer to the first, second, etc., subparagraph of the first paragraph).
Paragraph titles should be written in **bold**.
Subparagraph titles should be written in *italics*.
- The font should be clear and legible. The suggestion is to use
Times New Roman
Size 12
Double line spacing (2.0) or one and a half (1.5)
Justified alignment.
- **Footnotes** should be numbered progressively. Since footnotes relegate information to the margin that is not deemed worthy of the main text, it is advisable to minimize their number (after all, if information is important, it should be included in the main text, while if it is not important, it may be omitted).