

How to write a RILM thesis – Guidelines

Version 3.0 – October 25, 2017

0	Purpose	1
1	Planning.....	1
1.1	When to start.....	1
2	The topic.....	1
2.1	What? The topic	1
2.2	Why? Reasons to select a topic	2
2.3	How? Method and structure.....	2
3	Formulating a proposal	2
4	Format.....	2
4.1	How long should the thesis be?	2
4.2	A typical structure.....	2
5	Sources	3
6	Style.....	3
6.1	References – How	3
7	Note on Grading.....	4
8	Appendix.....	4

0 Purpose

The text below provides some guidelines to support students in planning and writing a RILM thesis. The rules outlined are not mandatory. However, the RILM faculty believes that following them will provide great benefit to students in the challenging process of compiling the thesis.

1 Planning

1.1 When to start

While it might take a few months to write the thesis itself, a careful and timely preparation of the writing process is key to a successful endeavor. Thus, you should not wait to finish the exams to start thinking about the supervisor (“relatore”) and the topic. Rather, as you start having ideas on what you would like to write about, set up a meeting with your potential supervisor. Before contacting a faculty member, check on the website if her/his research interests and recent publications overlap with your potential interests. The first meeting offers the possibility to elaborate your idea and to clearly understand what the supervisor’s specific requirements are. It is strongly recommended that students contact their supervisors **well in advance** of the session in which they intend to graduate: contacting a supervisor 8 to 10 months before expected graduation would plan all activities in due time.

2 The topic

2.1 What? The topic

It is important to define clearly the topic. It is often a good sign if you can formulate rather early in the process a clear research question or a well-defined objective of the project.

A good topic should be circumscribed: Although your interests might span across very vast themes, it is important to narrow down the topic so that you have enough time, space to provide well-researched answers that are grounded in theoretical and/or empirical terms.

2.2 Why? Reasons to select a topic

You should be able to discuss the relevance of the topic that you choose. To say that a theme is interesting is NOT enough. A topic might be interesting because it addresses **an important topic in the academic literature**: the students should have a basic idea of what the state-of-the-art in the literature is (hint: the student should receive a few key reading suggestions from the supervisor in their first meeting). Also, the relevance of the topic might derive from its being **at the center of the public and/or policy debate**. In this latter case, it is still important to identify how existing academic literature can contribute to frame the discussion.

2.3 How? Method and structure

These are in fact two separate questions.

1. You should address how you intend to deal with the topic (the “methodology” of your research), briefly discussing the following issues:
 - a. Case selection (see above, why is a case relevant?).
 - b. (if appropriate for the subject) Qualitative, quantitative method, or mixed-method: Specify what you mean by referring to the techniques you intend to use and why it is appropriate for your research topic.
 - c. Sources: where do your data and information come from? This is of utmost importance because it determines much of the feasibility of your research project. For qualitative theses, you might draw from secondary literature, primary and archival documents, interviews, databases (such as those in the <http://www.sba.unibo.it/it/almare/risorse-elettroniche/banche-dati>), etc. For quantitative theses, you might rely on existing databases. Be specific, if you can: It really helps to know which and where your sources are from the beginning, as it is essential to assess the feasibility of your undertaking.
2. You should briefly describe the structure of your thesis, detailing what each following chapter is about.

3 Formulating a proposal

Once you are able to answer the 3 aforementioned questions, you should write a short statement (2-3 pages) which contains the “what, why & how” of your thesis and basic bibliography (listing ten scientific monographs, volumes or articles, at least), and then submit the thesis statement to your supervisor. The statement should include a draft list of the Chapters and the Sections in which the thesis will be organized. The proposal can certainly be modified afterward, but it serves the purpose of verifying the feasibility of your undertaking.

4 Format

4.1 How long should the thesis be?

Clearly, this can vary according to the type of thesis, so please always check with your supervisor.

4.2 A typical structure

- Introduction (Chapter 1) – This should contain a response to the three questions mentioned above (What? Why? How?). In other words, the introduction should state the research question, describe the significance of the research, define its key

terms, assumptions, exact borders and limitations and present the structure of the thesis.

- Main Body – The main body is composed by different chapters. The number and content of the chapters can vary according to the type of thesis.
- Conclusions/Final Remarks – this should contain a brief wrap up of the major findings and arguments of the thesis, a careful self-assessment of the limits of your own work, and indications on (a) how research on the topic could be further advanced and (b) what are your comments and suggestions about.

See below (7 Appendix) for further details.

5 Sources

Monographs and academic journals' articles generally provide the bulk of material for Master's level theses. You can find that on some topics, so-called Working papers can provide useful insights for your work. A thesis is also **an important occasion to learn how to distinguish different sources and their value for the academic community**. Different indicators can help you identifying the "right" source: the reputation of a journal or a publisher, the number of citations of an article/book are standard ones, but because of the extreme difficulty of assessing "value" in most social science-related disciplines, you should also double-check with your advisor when in doubt.

Other sources include, official documents, case law, archival documents, newspapers and – where appropriate – websites. When citing, please make sure that the references you find are correct. When possible, always quote the primary sources for your reference, that is make direct reference to the original text.

6 Style

6.1 References – How

The section may be titled "Bibliography", "Literature Cited" or "References". Please consult your thesis advisor for correct citation style and formatting. Some of the most common styles are listed below. The words in blue are clickable and they direct you to some tutorials and samples.

APA (American Psychological Association) - used in the social sciences

- **For further information - [Purdue OWL APA Style](#)** - Includes a tutorial for citing in APA style as well as sample papers and bibliographies.

Chicago Manual of Style - used in the humanities and social sciences

- **For further information - [Purdue OWL Chicago Style](#)** - Includes a tutorial for citing in Chicago style as well as sample papers and bibliographies.

You can use citation generators like [BibMe](#), [Son of a Citation Machine](#), or [EasyBib](#), but you **must ALWAYS check the style with your thesis advisor**.

Important note: When you cite a specific passage, please remember to display the citation in quotation marks and to indicate the exact page(s) to which you make reference.

7 Note on Grading

Currently, please consult the 2016/2017 rules on grading. Updates will be posted in this document when available.

<http://corsi.unibo.it/magistrale/relazioniinternazionali/Pagine/informazioni-generaliprova-finale-magistrali.aspx>

8 Appendix

STRUCTURAL FORMAT OF THE THESIS

The thesis should be in English and organized essentially as indicated below, with modifications as necessary depending on the work being presented, and according to the specific instructions provided by your thesis advisor.

Each section MUST begin on a new page.

- **Title/Cover Page**
- **Dedication Page (optional)**
- **Abstract**
- **Table of Contents**
- **List of Abbreviations and / or Glossary of Terms**
- **List of Charts, Graphs, Illustrations**
- **Introduction**
- **Major Portion of the Paper (Body)**
 - example of structure:
 - Chapter 1
 - Section 1.1
 - Section 1.2
 - ...
 - Chapter 2:
 - Section 2.1
 - Section 2.2
 - ...
 - Chapter 3
 - Section 3.1
 - Section 3.2
 - ...
 - ...
- **Conclusion**
- **References**
- **Figures w/ Figure Legends, Tables, Graphical Material**
- **Appendices (if any)**

FORMAT AND STYLE

Margins:

All four margins of the page must be at least one inch (2.5 cm), and the left and right margins should be equal. All material, including figures, tables, headers/footers, footnotes/endnotes, and images, must appear within the margins of the manuscript. Charts, graphs, and illustrations may be placed horizontally in order to conform to the margin requirements as long as they remain clear and legible.

Spacing:

The text, abstract, dedication, acknowledgments, and table of contents are 1.5 spaced and justified. Normally, quotations of five lines or more are indented, in italics and single-spaced. Footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographic entries should be single-spaced with double spacing between each entry.

Required order and page numbering:

The dissertations may be structured according to the table below. The three broad sections (cover pages, prefatory pages, and the main body and other pages) each have a different convention for page numbering; please see the more specific notes below the table.

Please pay careful attention to the requirements for page numbering, as they are necessary to ensure that your dissertation is properly formatted and prepared for possible printing.

Font:

10-point Arial or 12-point Times New Roman are the preferred fonts. Script or ornamental fonts should not be used. The font should be uniform throughout the text, although a slightly smaller size may be used for footnotes, tables, graphs or appendices, pagination, the abstract, and the table of contents. Normally, quotations are in italics. Quotations of five lines or more should be indented, in italics and single-spaced.

Title page:

In the title of your dissertation, use full proper names of people, organisms, places, etc. For example: "Maria Rossi", not "M.Rossi. Be sure to include all appropriate accent and diacritical marks. The title should not contain any type of abbreviations. The facsimile of the title page is available online ([click here!](#))

N.B. Do NOT use the logo of the University of Bologna on your title page /cover page or on any other page!

<i>Required Order</i>		<i>Page Numbering</i>
Cover pages and abstract	1. Title Page	No page numbers; pages are not counted
	2. Dedication Page (optional)	
	3. Abstract	
Prefatory pages	1. Table of Contents	Lower case Roman numerals beginning with "i" centered at the bottom of each page
	2. List of Abbreviations and/or Glossary of Terms	
	3. List of Charts, Graphs, Illustrations	
	4. Preface (optional)	
Main body and all other pages	1. Main body of the dissertation (including all introduction and chapter pages, graphs, photos, figures, and tables)	Arabic numerals beginning with "1" centered at the bottom of each page
	2. References and/or Bibliography	
	3. Appendices (if any)	