

# **Guidelines for Final Thesis of Master's Degree Programs**

## **Department of Political and Social Sciences**

(Updated on July 10, 2023)

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### **Date of Entry into Force**

These Guidelines enter into force starting from the October 2022 session.

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## **PART ONE**

### **1. Composition of the Exam Commission**

The reference criterion for the composition of the Exam Commission is to concentrate, as much as possible, the time commitment of each individual examiner, forming commissions with a number of members that corresponds—as much as possible—to the legal minimum number. It is recalled that the legal minimum for a Degree Commission is three members among tenured professors and researchers employed at Unibo, of which at least two must be professors. It will be the responsibility of the offices organizing the

schedule of degree sessions, in concert with the course coordinator, to avoid forming overabundant Commissions.

In order to promote the presence of the legal number necessary to compose the Commission, as well as to promote a more equitable distribution of workload among teaching staff, all stable faculty members may be convened even regardless of their actual involvement as advisors or co-advisors. The composition of the Commissions will therefore take place, also involving those who have not (or have followed a very limited number—below median) of thesis students. This calculation will take into account the commitment of each faculty member with respect to theses for both the three-year and master's degrees. Those who, while not exceeding the median threshold with respect to the number of theses followed, hold institutional positions (course coordinators, Rector's delegates, holders of university-level assignments) may be excluded from this involvement.

All members of the Commission are required to download and review the theses that will be discussed in their own session from the AlmaLauree portal in order to actively contribute to the discussion with candidates.

In order to facilitate the work of the Commission, as well as to avoid the formation of crowds of candidates and their relatives, each Commission will have the task of evaluating the thesis and the related discussion of—approximately—6 candidates within a maximum time period of 2 hours. Examiners are invited to comply with these times to encourage the rotation of the various Commissions.

It is recalled that participation in Degree Commissions is among the obligations provided for under Article 6 of Law No. 311 of March 18, 1958.

## **2. Chair of the Commission**

The Chair of the Commission is, as a rule, the person with the greatest seniority based in the Department of Political and Social Sciences; the appointment will be defined by the course coordinator (as a delegate of the Course Council, taking into account the professors directly involved as examiners) in concert with the offices.

The Chair of the Commission will, thanks to collaboration with the offices, convene candidates every 2 hours (approximately), thus providing a specific order for the thesis discussion (see point 4 "Procedures for Thesis Discussion"). It is indeed essential to avoid convening all candidates and relatives at the same time so as not to create crowding of people in common areas and unnecessarily prolong the waiting time of graduates.

## **3. Co-Advisor**

With regard to co-advisors, there are cases in which the candidate, during thesis work, was actually followed by a second professor/expert: in these cases, the co-advisor will be indicated directly in the degree application on the recommendation of the advisor.

In all other cases, the co-advisor will be assigned *ex officio*—by the Chair of the Commission—from among the professors included in the respective Degree Commission. The co-advisor does not necessarily have to be a professor of the same subject or related subjects to that of the advisor.

The co-advisor is called upon to actively participate in the discussion and thus to express a judgment on the thesis, as well as to formulate at least one question to the candidate.

## **4. Procedures for Thesis Discussion**

Convocations of candidates occur at different times, typically 6 every 2 hours, providing approximately 15 minutes for each, including presentation, discussion, and proclamation.

Examiners may also be convened by the Chair of the Commission at different times, depending on the needs of the examiners themselves, while maintaining the need to constantly guarantee the presence of the legal number. However, the presence of the Chair and the Secretary remains mandatory for the entire session.

Candidates may use, with prior authorization from their advisor, a PowerPoint presentation as an aid to their oral presentation. All rooms in which discussions are held must therefore be equipped with a PC and projector. To avoid delays or complications, candidates are required to send their PowerPoint presentations to the Chair of the Commission and the advisor on the day before the discussion, and in any case before the entire degree session begins.

Candidates who attend a course or curriculum entirely in the English language write the thesis in English and discuss it in English.

Candidates who attend an Italian-language course of study also have the possibility—in agreement with their advisor—to write and discuss the thesis in English. Degree Commissions cannot refuse a graduate who wrote the thesis in English to discuss it in English.

## **5. Attribution of Scores**

For all Master's programs in the department, the score for the thesis can range from a minimum of 0 (zero) points to a maximum of 6 (six) points.

The score refers to the thesis and its discussion, not to the student's previous academic record.

Admissible theses of minimum quality should be assigned 0 points.

We propose to classify the remaining theses into three ranges:

**Range 1-2 points:** Theses that are stylistically and formally appropriate and limited to a review of the literature on the subject.

**Range 3-4 points:** Theses that have conducted fieldwork (collecting data from primary sources) or very thorough research of secondary sources, but that are not fully successful and/or lack original and mature theoretical interpretation.

**Range 5-6 points:** Theses characterized by solid research work, the use of appropriate methods, and theoretical and interpretative originality.

Within each range, the higher or lower score is assigned depending on the quality of the oral presentation and the discussion.

The final degree score is determined by the simple sum of the average of exam grades and the final thesis score. All degree scores must be assigned (including 99 or 109), without discretionary adjustments or rounding by the Commission.

Starting from students enrolled in the academic year 2019/20, honors (lodi) obtained in individual exams are not considered in calculating the score with which students present themselves to the degree exam.

The 110 cum laude aims to reward candidates who present a thesis and have a particularly meritorious academic career. The Commission will evaluate these elements and, for example, may consider the number of honors obtained in exams as an indicator.

In deciding the score for each individual degree exam, the Commission therefore has as evaluation elements: the discussion by the candidate, the judgment of the advisor, the independent judgment of the co-advisor, and the thesis of the candidate.

## **6. Standards of Conduct for Examiners**

Examiners are required to maintain appropriate conduct, which means paying attention during the discussion. This means not speaking among examiners, not using mobile phones or computers for other activities during the discussion.

The thesis discussion must also take place with maximum respect for the candidate.

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# **PART TWO**

## **1. Standards of Conduct for Candidates and Their Guests**

Candidates and their guests are required to maintain sober and appropriate conduct for the setting and to avoid any excess.

Recording during the proceedings is not permitted, but only at the moment of proclamation.

## **2. Letter to Candidates**

The administrative office sends candidates a text containing the standards of conduct to be observed during the degree session. Candidates commit to respecting and ensuring that their guests respect these standards of conduct.

The text of the communication may be one of the following:

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**Dear Graduate,**

Below are the standards of conduct to be observed during the degree sessions of...

We ask candidates to comply scrupulously with the indicated standards.

Candidates are informed that, in case of damages, responsibility for damages is governed by Article 2043 of the Civil Code and Article 635 of the Criminal Code.

Thank you for your cooperation

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## **Standards of Conduct During Degree Sessions**

Graduates and their guests are required to comply with the following standards of conduct during the proceedings of degree sessions:

- Recording during discussion is prohibited;
- Celebrations must take place exclusively outside the building, taking care to maintain sober and appropriate conduct for the location and to avoid any excess;
- It is strictly forbidden to soil the internal premises and external spaces of the University with food, beverages, confetti, and similar items;
- It is strictly forbidden to post signs inside and outside the building.

The provisions of Article 2043 of the Civil Code regarding responsibility for damages and Article 635 of the Criminal Code regarding the crime of vandalism are fully recalled.

The Chair of the Degree Commission reserves the right in any case not to sign the degree report and to report any problems to the Rector.

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## **PART THREE**

### **1. General Characteristics of the Final Thesis**

The final examination for obtaining a master's degree consists of the preparation and public discussion of a thesis written in an original manner by the student on a subject coherent with the objectives of the course of study, under the guidance of an advisor.

The dissertation must demonstrate mastery of the subject matter, critical thinking ability, aptitude to work independently, and good-level communication skills.

The topic and structure of the final thesis must be defined and agreed upon between the candidate and the advisor.

The general objectives of the master's degree final thesis are:

- **Clarity:** It is essential that the candidate's arguments are expressed with sentences of linear structure, without redundancies and organized in sentences as brief as possible; grammar and syntax are correct. The linguistic style is appropriate for academic-scientific writing;
- **Completeness:** It is necessary that all information useful for understanding the candidate's thinking is presented with accuracy;
- **Theoretical Soundness:** It is essential that the subject matter under discussion is developed through solid bibliographic research;
- **Methodological Rigor:** In the case of empirical study, it is necessary to specify the methodological framework of the research and describe the tools and research techniques used. The results are discussed in relation to reference literature and bring elements of new conceptual and/or applied understanding.

## 2. Structure of the Final Thesis

The Advisor—depending on the theme, research questions, method, and techniques expected to be used in the final examination—may propose that the final thesis be structured in the form of a monograph or an article. The latter is characterized by having a more compact form compared to the monograph and may better respond to the needs of certain disciplines or themes. The structure of the final thesis in the form of an article requires the candidate to have marked synthesis skills in order to present the subject of analysis in a manner that is nevertheless clear, convincing, and exhaustive. For example, the article should be characterized by: research based on original sources, the presentation of innovative empirical material (through, for example, conducting interviews and questionnaires), or the development of quantitative and/or qualitative data through the use of dedicated software. Furthermore, it is emphasized that, regardless of structure, the final thesis must pursue the general objectives indicated in point 1 of Part Three: "General Characteristics of the Final Thesis." In any case, it is recalled that the workload for research and writing of the final thesis must be appropriate to the number of credits provided by the Course of Studies for the final examination (25 hours per credit) and that each thesis must be evaluated by assigning a score ranging from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 6 points.

### Monograph

Approximately, the final examination may assume the following structure:

- **Title Page**

- **Table of Contents.** The table of contents lists the chapters, sections, and subsections in which the final examination is structured and the corresponding page number;
- **Introduction.** The introduction provides, in a synthetic manner, the reader with the key to reading the entire work. What is the subject of the final examination? What were the initial hypotheses? What methodology and analytical tools or theoretical references were adopted? What difficulties were encountered (if any)? What were the confirmations (or refutations of hypotheses)? What do the individual chapters deal with? What conclusions were reached?
- **Main Body:** This part is divided into chapters in which the chosen subject will be addressed, organizing the bibliographic materials found and one's reflections on them in an organic and coherent manner, and any relevant findings from the investigation conducted.
- **Conclusions.** The Conclusions contain elements of synthesis on the work carried out, especially with regard to what was initially intended and any possibilities for future development of the research.
- **Bibliography.** The Bibliography contains a list of all products (books, edited collections, journal articles, other essays) consulted to write the final thesis and cited within the main text. Complete bibliographic references should be reported exclusively in the bibliography.

For the writing of the final thesis, the student must download the template made available on the Course of Study website.

## Article

Approximately, the final examination may assume the following structure:

- **Title Page**
- **Abstract in Italian and English** (only in English if the thesis is written in English) **and a maximum of 5 keywords** (maximum one page)
- **Introduction.** The introduction must always contain the following elements in the indicated order:
  - a. Brief literature review, that is, detailed and exhaustive exposition of the results (the most recent, at least) achieved by scholars dealing with the subject to which the graduate wishes to contribute;
  - b. Synthetic exposition of the graduate's original contribution to the knowledge of the phenomenon explored;
  - c. Exposition of the content of the individual sections of the article.

- **Sections.** The body of the article consists of sections (excluding introduction and conclusions). It is recommended to give equal length to the various sections of the article and to include in footnotes only strictly necessary references. The original contribution of the work should be only one to prevent the work from becoming too long and potentially dispersive. In this perspective, the final thesis should be between 10,000 and 20,000 words.
- **Conclusions.** The Conclusions contain elements of synthesis on the work carried out, especially with regard to what was initially intended and any possibilities for future development of the research.
- **Bibliography.** The Bibliography contains a list of all products (books, edited collections, journal articles, other essays) consulted to write the final thesis and cited within the main text. Complete bibliographic references should be reported exclusively in the bibliography.

For the writing of the final thesis, the student must download the template made available on the Course of Study website.