

The last mile: How to write your MS dissertation



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Today

- When does one start approaching the end?
- What is an MS dissertation?
- The alternatives available
- Innovativeness, empirical content, learning and objectives; what are the key obstacles?
- Assessment process: range of marks, actors: super-visor, co-supervisor and examiner; risks and opportunities;
- *Viva voce* exam: How to effectively present your work
- Good Luck !

When does one start approaching the end?

- **At the beginning of the second year** or at the **end of the first year**, it is important to start thinking about the subjects you might want to investigate further.
- This **does not mean fixing** an appointment with several teachers. Instead, it means reading academic articles, articles published in the business press and, identifying and/or contacting firms that might represent interesting case studies.
- After these initial investigations you should contact the teachers who cover the subjects you are interesting in for a first conversation.
- Bottom line: the selection of a supervisor should be anticipated by some readings on your part.



What is a final MS dissertation

A document 40 to 120 pages long
examining a subject in an **innovative way**.

Length can be a poor proxy of quality

What is a final MS dissertation

- What are they key chapters:

Introduction: what are you studying, why it is interesting, what is the reader learning from your document he/she did not know before starting (2-7 pages)

Literature Review: what is the state of the art, what are the key questions that remain open and why, how do you plan to contribute to this debate (10-25 pages)

Empirical section: a) institutional context, data/firm description; b) empirical approach: methodology; c) data/case analysis; d) results discussion

Conclusion: what did you learn from this analysis, how is it relevant from both academics and practitioners. How can its insights be used by managers, policy makers.

Your MS dissertation

Who writes it? >> **The candidate**

The **supervisor** advises the candidate. He is not in charge of the project, its management and, he does not write or drafts the document, the candidate does.

The candidate is responsible of what is written in the document (*Compilatio* – *software for plagiarism check*: <https://www.compilatio.net/it>)

The **supervisor** must receive the material early in advance to be able to read it. One should ask the supervisor what “early in advance” means to .

The available alternatives: Pros and Cons

Literature Review

- Easier
- Possibly faster
- Lower mark

Original Thesis

- More complex
- The student provides his original contribution
- More time
- Higher expected mark

Based on Internship

- Based on a unique and direct experience
- Need to integrate experience
- Average mark

Based on studying abroad

- Difficult to pursue
- More time
- Higher mark, depending on the output

Innovativeness, empirical content, learning and objectives

- Your dissertation must be **original** work. Be careful with sources!
- Original data and original results make the work more original.
- A dissertation is empirical when it uses and discusses original data or existing data in a new way.
- A final dissertation is unlikely to win the Nobel prize...
- Writing the dissertation gives a student the opportunity to qualify his profile, do not miss this opportunity!

Difficulties

- Identifying a supervisor
- Choosing a subject
- Finding original data
- Put your work in perspective

Practical information: Sources

Where can you find academic articles

- You can certainly start with **Google Scholar**. If you follow an article's thread you can see what are the most cited articles on a subject. Google Scholar indexes books and journal articles that are freely available on the web or have been granted to Google by authors or publishers, while other articles are accessible on the basis of access requirements (less selective than the other two).
- What are the most important journals: check the SJR or the FT list
- If you can not open the articles please use: <https://sba.unibo.it/it/almare/servizi-e-strumenti-almare/connessione-da-remoto>
- What I mean by Business Press: Il sole24ore, Financial times, Les Echos, The Economist, Wall Street Journal, Milano Finanza, Marketing week, etc.

Search engines

- Scopus: produced by the publisher Elsevier, it has been on the market since 2004. It is also a bibliographical database and, like Web of Science, offers its users the possibility of carrying out bibliographical research and citation evaluations by providing a wide range of specific indices. The citation data provided by Scopus are processed by the scientific society SCImago.
 - Tutorial: https://service.elsevier.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/14799/c/10545/supporthub/scopus/
 - Specific: <https://tutorials.scopus.com/EN/BasicSearch/index.html>
- Web of Science: produced by the publisher Thomson Reuter, who acquired and incorporated ISI (Institute for Scientific Citation) in 1992. It is the sole holder of the rights to process the Impact Factor, which it produces along with many other citation indices. It allows simultaneous querying of three databases: Science Citation Index (SCI), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI).
 - Tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/user/WoSTraining>

Practical information: Data

Nowadays it is quite easy to find data for your dissertation

- Examples ? Electronic sources: Bureau Van Dijk; Amadeus, etc;
- Available on the Internet: *scraping*?
- Provided by firms: *Basement*
- Based on surveys: *Qualtrics*
- Based on personal network, *firms*
- Obtained during the *internship*

Assessment

- Your final mark will be based on the suggestion of the supervisor and the examiner (if present) and, a discussion with the committee.
- The committee will learn about your project during your **presentation.**

Practical information: Assessment

- From 0 to 5 points for a project without a second reader (“controrelatore”)
- From 0 to 7 points for a project with a second reader (“controrelatore”)
 - The second reader (“controrelatore”) may be called for by the supervisor if the student’s final average is below 106
 - It is not necessary to request a second reader (“controrelatore”) if the student’s final average is above 106

Practical information: the second reader (“controrelatore”)

- Your **supervisor** will decide if your dissertation is worth it appointing a second reader (“controrelatore”) when you upload your thesis.
- The second reader (“controrelatore”) may **negatively** assess your thesis and this will be considered by the committee.

Viva voce presentation

- It is crucial to effectively present your work, given the limited time (max 15 minutes) you are granted.
- Use your available time to present the novel aspects of your work.
- Please avoid teaching the committee what it already knows.
- Please place good care in the quality and effectiveness of your material (for example power point).

Q&A

Good luck!!!!

