Master's Project Syllabus

Faculty BMS

Master Public Administration

Master European Studies

Academic year 2018-2019

Contents
Introduction

Introduction

Describing the Master's project and the relevant assessment criteria, the Master's Project Syllabus is intended as a guide for graduate students and supervisors to facilitate the project's successful and timely completion.

This syllabus applies to the final project of:
- the master programme in European Studies (ES), including the double degree programme Comparative Public Governance (CPG) that is offered with the University of Münster and
- the master programme in Public Administration (PA).

The specific content of a Master's project may vary according to programme track and be determined by the supervisors involved.

The first section of this document addresses the prerequisites and objectives of the Master's project. The second section deals with the structure and organisation of the Master's project, highlighting such aspects as formal procedures, project types/phases, methodology (i.e. formulating a problem statement and drafting a research plan), types of Master's theses and supervision. The third section addresses how the project is graded. The fourth section describes the colloquium and the awarding of the Master's diploma.

1. Objectives and prerequisites

The final assessment unit of the Master's project comprises 25 ECs for the ES and PA programmes.

Objectives:
In completing the Master's project, the student:
- independently applies theory to the relevant socio-academic field
- independently conducts research/generates a solution to a practical problem
- acquires more in-depth knowledge and applies it to his field of study
- demonstrates the skills (including verbal and written communication skills) acquired in completing the Master's programme curriculum
- reflects on his own work
- finishes the assignment (i.e. conducts research/generates a design solution) within the time permitted

To this end, the student independently develops and implements a research-oriented and/or design-oriented project. He completes the project within the time permitted; justifies the models, theories, methodology and techniques used, as well as the research/design process as a whole; analyses the work completed; and makes both an oral and written report of his work.

2. Structure and organization

2.1 Introduction

The Master's project is viewed as the final assessment component of the Master's programme. Project supervision is conducted individually and takes the form of supervisory meetings.

In addition to developing and implementing the Master's project and writing the Master's thesis, the student is expected to make a public presentation during which he presents and defends his research results. When a student completes all the degree course subjects and the Master's project, he is eligible to sit the end-of-course examination.

2.2 Registering for the Master's project

The student generally finds a project initiator on his own, but always enrols at the Canvas site to find the latest assignments. The course Academic Research acts as a start point and helps the student to finds it way. After finding a subject and writing a short proposal during the course academic research, the student approaches the contact of the academic staff from the appropriate Master's programme or programme track to serve as project supervisor. Once a supervisor has been found, the student may begin work on the Master's project.. When a student has found an assignment and a first supervisor he needs to enter the information within the web application *Mobility Online*.

Students have to fill in the proposal form through the link to *Mobility Online* at the Canvas site of the course 'Master Thesis' as soon as they have found an assignment. The proposal form needs to be signed by the supervisor(s). This signed proposal form must not be uploaded at Mobility Online, but must be handed in at the Educational Affairs Office (BOZ) Citadel H436 (Mrs. Olga Boers-Ekelmans) or by e-mail: BOZ-MST-CES@utwente.nl.

There are different pipelines in Mobility Online for external and internal projects:
- For external projects the pipeline graduation extended applies.
- For internal projects the pipeline graduation standard applies.

Students from the Double Diploma Master ES (and the new two year double degree Comparative Public Governance) need supervisors from both universities: Twente and Muenster. So in practice both supervisors act as first supervisor for their respective universities, although the supervisor from Twente must always be registered in the Mobility Online-system as first supervisor.

2.3 Types of projects

The Master's project may involve the development and implementation of a solution for a theoretical or design problem. Methodological knowledge and skills play a vital role in the Master's project, both in developing and conducting research- and/or design-oriented (empirical) research.
Although Master's projects generally address a practical research/design problem and its background, they can also focus specifically on an academic research question.

There are two types of projects:

1)   *External project*
     Commissioned by a national or international company/organisation, this type of Master's project
     is completed off campus. The project addresses a practical research/design problem and its
     background. In addition to the university supervisors, external projects involve an external
     (i.e. company-based) supervisor. All of the supervisors share responsibility for the project's
     academic quality.

2)   *Internal project*
     Commissioned by the University of Twente, internal projects are completed on campus. The
     project involves academic research of an issue relevant to the Master's programme/track. It is also
     possible for the student to suggest a project of his own. For more information, please contact a
     potential supervisor.

Internal supervisors will assess the appropriateness of the proposed Master's project in terms of:
-    academic relevance
-    relevance to the student's Master's programme/track
-    practical relevance
-    academic level
-    level and scope of the research/design component
-    project scope and the potential to complete the project independently and within the time
     permitted

Each student completes his own Master's project.
The student finds a project initiator on his own.

2.4   Master's project phases

The Master's project can be divided into four phases:
1. preparation
    * identifying the practical problem and elaborating a plan of approach, and/or
    * formulating the research/design problem statement and elaborating a plan of approach
2. implementation (i.e. executing the plan of approach)
3. completion (i.e. writing the Master's thesis)
4. colloquium

A detailed explanation of the phases is presented below.

2.4.1   Preparation

Once the student has found a project initiator and two internal supervisors, an initial meeting will be held
with the internal supervisors.

During this meeting, the following topics will be discussed:
●   the student's ideas regarding the project and the research/design topic
●   the student's project schedule
●   the supervisory meeting schedule
●   the assessment method

After the first meeting, the student will gather the relevant (empirical) information, complete a literature
search and formulate – by means of an iterative process and under the guidance of supervisors – a plan of

approach. Identifying an actual problem demands thorough research and careful thought. During this project phase, the aim is to identify and outline: a) the practical problem, i.e. effecting change to an existing situation and/or b) the research problem, i.e. analysing the existing situation. Although each type of problem requires a different approach, they can be combined if necessary.

During this phase, the supervisory meetings focus on identifying the key issue of a practical problem and/or on formulating objectives, the problem statement and the research/design questions. During these meetings, the student and the supervisors will work to:

- characterise the problem
- identify the core issue
- determine the best approach
- identify the causes of the problem
- determine what is required to generate a solution
    1. clearly formulated objectives: Will the knowledge generated solve the issue/practical problem?
    2. clearly formulated problem statement: Will the research/design model effectively incorporate the variables and/or interrelations involved? Is the research/design goal feasible?
    3. research/design questions: Do the answers to the research/design questions respond sufficiently to the problem statement?
    4. context and ability to research the problem statement

Addressing the issues identified above should give the student a better understanding of the research problem. In the plan of approach, the student lays down how he plans to implement the research/design project to address the practical problem.

The plan of approach generally includes an outline of:
- the practical situation
- the possible causes of the problem
- the methodology
- the research/design problem
    1. the research/design approach; explaining how the necessary information/data will be obtained
    2. the methods and techniques; explaining how the research/design information/data will be obtained, analysed and processed
- the project schedule (i.e. a timeline of the research/design project, taking into account the development of (alternative) solutions, implementation and evaluation in so far as applicable)

During the supervisory meetings, the plan of approach will be assessed using the following criteria:
- the quality of the proposed plan of approach (as indicated above)
- the feasibility of the project schedule

Finally, the student establishes personal learning objectives.
The Master's thesis must address the degree to which these learning objectives are achieved.

Although the supervisors are closely involved in the student's project preparations by means of supervisory meetings, the student is responsible for managing the process, including its form and content.

The supervisors sign the proposed research/design problem and/or the formulated research problem statement, and the plan of approach after approval. Once all of the relevant conditions have been satisfied, the student may begin implementing the plan of approach.

2.4.2 Implementation

The plan of approach guides the implementation and completion of the Master's project. The student operationalises the key research/design concepts and the manner in which these will be measured. Students are recommended to make note of all relevant information throughout the implementation phase. This includes:

- work/activities completed
- sources of information consulted
- problems/difficulties experienced
- decisions taken
- project schedule adjustments
- explanation/justification of decisions taken and project schedule adjustments
- thoughts with regard to the learning objectives

The student can refer to the recorded information during supervisory meetings and in writing the thesis.

During this phase, the regularly scheduled supervisory meetings will focus on:

- project progress
- thoughts with regard to the work/activities completed
- quality of the work/activities completed
- Master's project progress
- feasibility of completing the Master's project

2.4.3 Completion

After implementing the plan of approach, the student focuses on the information/data obtained and the conclusions that can be drawn from this evidence. Depending on the type of problem researched, alternatives may be formulated, discussed and possibly implemented, or a recommendation to do so may be put forward. Finally, the student writes the Master's thesis and submits it to the supervisors. The student schedules a supervisory meeting. The internal supervisors assess the thesis, taking into consideration any recommendations from the external supervisor. Once the thesis has been approved, the student may register for the colloquium with the Educational Affairs Office (BOZ).

If the draft is approved, the student can begin preparing the definitive version of the Master's thesis. Ultimately ONE WEEK (which means 5 working days) before the colloquium you have to hand in paper copies of the final report to your supervisors. You also have to upload a digital version of your thesis at the UT-Library: http://essay.utwente.nl/upload.html

2.4.4 Colloquium

The student may sit the colloquium (i.e. end-of-course examination) once he has successfully completed all the degree course subjects[1], has obtained approval of the thesis. The student registers for the colloquium at the Educational Affairs Office (BOZ), which ascertains whether all colloquium prerequisites have been satisfied.

During the colloquium, the student presents his Master's project and – by responding to questions posed by the supervisors or others in the audience – defends the project results. The colloquium lasts about one hour. Family and friends are welcome to attend.

---

[1] It is the student's responsibility to complete all Master's subjects on time.

2.5   Size and language of reports

The student reports on the Master's project by means of a thesis. Thesis[2] guidelines state that the size of the report is 40 pages (16,000 words). The report is written in English[3].

2.6   Supervision

Internal supervision
Two internal supervisors, preferably from different subject groups, monitor the progress of the Master's project. The lead supervisor is a member of the group of the Master's programme the student is completing. Internal supervisors are members of the academic staff and are experts in the field addressed by the Master's project. The students of the double degree master ES, need to find one supervisor from Twente and one from Muenster.
The student discusses all aspects of the project with the supervisors and takes the lead in making agreements with regard to such issues as the division of supervisory tasks, frequency of meetings and meeting format.

If, after several intensive supervisory sessions, the supervisors feel the student has failed to sufficiently prepare and implement the project, whether in terms of substance or process, the supervisors may – after consulting with the external supervisor – discontinue providing assistance for the project. In some instances, the student will have to restart the Master's project with new supervisors.

External supervision
When completing an external Master's project, it is essential that the student has a point of contact within the project initiator's organisation (i.e. an external supervisor). This supervisor must have sufficient knowledge and experience to supervise the project. Although the external supervisor is involved in the project's implementation, the internal supervisors monitor and grade the Master's project.

The external supervisor serves as:
-   a 'sparring partner' with regard to project content
-   a source of information with regard to project implementation
-   an organisational gatekeeper in so far as relevant to project implementation
-   a process supervisor during project implementation
-   an adviser with regard to the assessment of the project results, the thesis and the student's performance

2.7   Insurance

The faculty assumes that all students have sufficient insurance. The University of Twente has concluded a collective free (international) travel insurance. Students can apply online: https://webapps.utwente.nl/reisverzekeringen/en/rvservlet if they have to travel for the thesis work. The faculty will not take care of other costs students have to make to fulfil all requirements.

---

[2] In this context, the term 'thesis' is understood to mean the substantive sections of this document, excluding the abstract, table of contents, appendices, etc.
[3] An exception is made for the track Lokaal en regionaal bestuur in the master Public Administration, where a Dutch thesis may be allowed when necessary.

3. Grading

The internal supervisors base their assessment of the Master's project primarily on the thesis submitted. The student must earn at least a 6 for the thesis.

The final mark for the Master's project will be expressed as a number. This is an individual assessment. Only internal supervisors are authorised to grade the project. External supervisors will be able to make recommendations as to the mark to be awarded.

The final mark will be based on:
- content and form of the Master's thesis
- contribution to the practical or research design problem
- contribution to the relevant academic field
- the student's performance including the length of period the student needed
- oral presentation of the project results

The thesis, contribution to the research/design problem and contribution to the relevant academic field weigh more heavily than the student's performance and the oral presentation. If the two internal supervisors cannot reach an agreement as to the mark to be awarded, the average of the mark will be taken, in which the lead supervisor's mark will weigh more heavily in the event of rounding off.

4. Awarding of the Master's diploma

After the student sits the colloquium, the supervisors grade the Master's project. A Master's diploma and a provisional list of marks (i.e. without the final mark for the Master's project) will also be presented. After the colloquium a diploma supplement including the definitive list of marks will be sent to the student at home.