

Appendix E: Combined final thesis projects in PSTS Link trajectories

The requirements for final thesis projects in PSTS Link trajectories are based on two starting points.

1. Since the aim of the double degree programmes (labelled PSTS-Link) is to create synergy between the MSc PSTS and another MSc programme, the final project for both programmes should be combined, resulting in one thesis. This means that the joint programme student chooses a thesis topic that fits with and can be investigated from both a PSTS- and the partner programme's (BA/PA/) perspective. Ideally, the research leads not only to overlapping, but also to integrated insights and results, showing the added value of a combined final thesis project, rather than two separate projects on the same topic.
2. To safeguard and check that students doing a combined final thesis project ultimately satisfy the final qualifications of the MSc PSTS, as well as the final qualifications of the partner programme, the combined project (or the relevant parts, see below) will be assessed using the assessment criteria and rubrics that are also used for 'regular' final projects in each of the two programmes. This implies the thesis (or the relevant parts) receives two grades and that these may differ.

At this moment, the study load of the combined final project and the exact requirements for preparative courses (research skills training) vary among the different joint educational programmes. Regardless of these differences, however, similar requirements and procedures apply to all PSTS-Link trajectories.

Project requirements:

- The student formulates one research proposal with an overarching question for the project as a whole, and different sub questions for the different parts of the project. These sub questions can be clearly related to one of the two programmes, or may integrate the different approaches, as student and supervisors see fit.
- The student produces one thesis. This thesis should (at minimum) contain a joint introduction and an overall conclusion, answering the overarching question and reflecting on the added value of the combined perspectives and methods.
- In the research proposal, the student specifies the planned thesis outline and, with the help of the supervisors, indicates which parts of the thesis are relevant to which programme. This subsequently determines which parts will be assessed by which criteria. NB: this implies that it is possible, but not necessary, that all chapters are relevant for both programmes.
- The length of the thesis can (but need not) be increased to 1,5 x the length of a single master thesis (16000-24000 words in the case of a 30 EC PSTS thesis, implying a combined thesis would be 24000-36000 words).

Supervision:

- The combined final project is supervised by two staff members from PSTS (one being the supervisor, and in the role of second reader) and (at least) one from the partner programme.. The supervisors from both programmes are involved in developing, and have to approve the thesis proposal before the student can start working on the project. Ideally, they function as examiner for the other programme at the final examination. This implies that the Examination Board of each programme needs to approve the supervisor(s) of the partner programme as examiner in their own programme. If one or both of the Exam Board(s) does/do not allow this, an additional examiner from one or both programmes is involved. (Please note that an additional examiner from each programme will always be involved in a quality check of the draft thesis, see under 'Assessment' below)

- If parts of the final project and the resulting thesis have been assigned to one of the two master programmes only, the supervisor(s) from that programme takes care of the supervision for that part in the same way s/he would supervise single degree final thesis projects.
- To safeguard sufficient alignment of expectations and a clear direction for the final thesis project, the supervisors have regular joint meetings with the student. Preferably they are all present during the supervision meetings, but if this is not feasible the supervisors jointly meet with the student *at least* at the following moments:
 - Before starting to develop the final thesis proposal, to discuss the feasibility and direction of the combined thesis project;
 - Before the thesis proposal is approved, also arranging who will be responsible for which thesis part(s);
 - Halfway the thesis writing (or more frequently as they see fit) to monitor progress and align and where possible integrate intermediary results;
 - Near the end, to discuss possibilities for integration of the different parts and to indicate what should be done before a green light can be given.

Assessment:

- The standard PSTS assessment criteria (and form), as well as the assessment criteria and form of the partner programme will be applied to those parts of the thesis that were indicated as relevant for PSTS and/or the partner programme in the research proposal. This implies that the standard rubrics of both programmes will be used in parallel. The level of integration of the two programme perspectives will be assessed as part of the content-oriented criteria of the rubrics of each programme; if the integration is quite successful this is a plus when assessing these criteria.
- Before the green light meeting, the supervisors informally (and separately) grade the *draft* thesis, using the format of their own programme. If the two informal grades differ 2 points or more, additional examiners (see bullet point below) are asked to assess not only the draft, but to also grade the *final* thesis.
- A second examiner from PSTS and possibly from the partner programme will be involved in marginally assessing the *draft* thesis, to safeguard the quality of the work from each programme's perspective. This examiner does not grade, but checks whether the draft thesis satisfies the minimum standards for a sufficient thesis; his/her approval is a requirement to receive green light for graduation. Only in case of a substantial divergence in grades of the two first supervisors, these additional examiners will be involved in the grading of the final thesis. *Note that, from 2024-2025 onward and in adherence to the recommendations of the 2023 PSTS accreditation, the second examiner from PSTS does not attend the green light meeting in person but submit their independent report to the PSTS supervisor at least one day before the green light meeting.*
- The final assessment of the thesis project will thus be done by the two supervisors, unless (1) one or both of them is/are not approved as an examiner for the other programme, or (2) the informal grade assigned for the draft thesis diverges 2 points or more.

Graduation:

- For the graduation, joint education students have to do both an oral exam, and a colloquium (as any other PSTS student). If the other master programme has similar procedures, these can be combined. The time available for the exam can, if necessary, be extended to 90 instead of 60 minutes, to make sure all parts can be sufficiently examined.
- The combined final project is assessed with two grades, one for each programme. This implies that a student can receive different final project grades for the two programmes. The assessment form of each programme is used to determine the grade for that programme.

- Cum laude: the requirements of each programme apply to determine whether a student receives the label 'cum laude' for that programme. In the calculation, the grade of the thesis will have the same weight it has for single degree students. This implies that a student can receive a cum laude for one, or for both diplomas.

Requests for exemption, programme adjustments etc.:

- If a PSTS Link student wants to submit a request for exemption, this has to be discussed with the study adviser of the programme that provides the course, and the request should be submitted to the Exam Board of that MSc programme. If the student wants to submit a request for a curriculum change that could affect realization of the final requirements of both programmes, the request needs to be approved by both Exam Boards.