

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT THESIS GUIDELINES

GENERAL INFORMATION

To graduate, students must have completed and registered all exam grades as in their study plans (including internship, language courses, seminars, etc.) at least 15 days prior to the start date of the final exam/graduation session.

Students are expected to choose a supervisor (normally a permanent member of the LD teaching staff), proposing a subject among those included in the Welcome Book. A research proposal (see the details below) could be helpful to focus on the subject and development of the thesis. Upon agreeing with the supervisor(s) on the topic and deadlines, students must [register for the final exam/graduation via Uniweb](#).

Students will be required to write an original dissertation, preferably based on their internship, under the guidance of the chosen supervisor. The dissertation shall be written in English. An extended summary, in Italian and English, of the student's work or activity must be included (see further information on the thesis structure and format below).

The dissertation shall be discussed before a Committee. The discussion will be held in English.

We recommend students who fail to finish their theses on time, to promptly cancel the registration (see <https://www.unipd.it/en/graduation> "How to change your application" section).

ETHICAL ISSUES

Should the graduating student be provided with any knowledge, information or material that is confidential or not publicly available to write the thesis or take any other final examination, then they will be required to sign a "Confidentiality Agreement" approved by the Academic Senate.

A "declaration of originality", where the candidate states that the dissertation is the outcome of an original work, never wholly or partly used to obtain a degree in Italy or abroad, must be included in the thesis ([a template is available on Moodle](#)).

All written material used must be cited in the main text and in the bibliography section; quotations must be easily identified by reference to the original publication.

STRUCTURE OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The purpose of the proposal is to show how you intend to tackle the study and whether or not you have thought through the practicalities.

The thesis proposal to the supervisor should contain the following information:

- An introduction to your topic
- A clear statement of what you intend to argue (thesis statement) and possibly obtain (expected outcome)
- A clear sense of how you intend to accomplish your goal, which most often includes a preliminary outline of your essay or final product
- Any information that is crucial to understanding the significance of the topic
- A preliminary bibliography that you intend to consult (optional)

Once your thesis supervisor approves your proposal (topic, content, objectives, methods, goals, etc.), stay in touch, as they will continue to help you sharpen your argument.

FURTHER DETAILS

AIM: A research proposal is a basic document that helps to define how and where to start. Write it and consult it regularly, as it helps you keep focus on your final objective and your research questions. The preliminary table of contents represents a kind of guideline that gives you the different topics to handle in a logical order. If your literature study produces ideas for new and unforeseen topics, then add them to the table of contents and if you decide to leave some issues or topics behind, remove them. It is important to keep track of the structure of your thesis as a consistent entity.

If the change you are considering differs substantially from the original proposal, please refer to your supervisor for approval.

TIME MANAGEMENT: Time management is certainly an important skill to develop during the writing process. Keeping a timetable is warmly suggested. An easy tool to substantiate this planning is the GANTT chart (<http://www.gantt.com/>). Consult this document regularly to check if you are on schedule. If not, assess the situation with your supervisor to find a solution and modify your GANTT chart accordingly.

Define precisely what you have to do in terms of tasks. **Be realistic.** You cannot achieve the exploration of a subject matter and make a whole series of interviews and/ or a survey in 1 or 2 weeks; take enough time for the literature review too.

STRUCTURE: The proposal (ca. 2-5 pages + title page) should include the following:

- Title page: Preliminary title (+ eventually subtitle) / Supervisor (+ eventually co-supervisor);
- Purpose: What is the topic? What is the purpose of your work? What exactly do you hope to show?
- Objective: What do you want to achieve with this thesis? Eventually: is there a particular hypothesis you want to test? Eventually: is there a particular problem/ problematic situation you want to tackle (contribute to a solution)?
- Research questions. What is the core question? Specific secondary questions does this core question imply? (these can be adjusted afterwards)
- Justification. Why is the research important? An argument as to why that topic is important, and what issue still need to be solved
- Outline the (spatial) research area: scale (local, regional...); research units; arguments for this/these choice(s); give pros and cons of the different options, if a choice has still to be made

METHOD: How will the research be conducted? Provide a description of the proposed research methodology. Specify why it is important to make a distinction between quantitative and qualitative research and which do you choose, what kind of fieldwork you intend to do, what kind of analytical techniques you are going to use.

A timeline as well as a space frame are also required: provide a description of your time and space options.

FRAMEWORK: Describe the framework that embraces your chosen topics; these will be analysed based on international literature. Tell the supervisor what you already know about this topic, whether you have an idea of theories and/or models you may want to use, if there is a link with existing research projects/cases. The proposal should state clearly the background of the subject in which the research is situated. It will describe the important theoretical and practical issues it plans to address. This should be supported by some reference to recent literature. The proposal should also mention the problem that your research will solve: give examples of existing

research, single out the results and assess them; identify any possible gap and describe how you are going to fill them.

PRELIMINARY TABLE OF CONTENTS: Try to imagine how theoretical framework and empirical data gathering and analysis can be caught into a logical entity of chapters and sections; the more thought through and the better the initial specification, the easier will be your job.

RESOURCES: Detail what resources will be needed with regard to equipment, library resources & case study limitations/opportunities, etc. Describe advantages and disadvantages of different resource sets, and how you intend to use available resources.

DISSEMINATION: Tell if and how the findings will be exposed to the public. A description of how the research findings will be used or communicated to others may be an important aspect.

PRELIMINARY READINGS & other sources list: Give some idea of the readings you have already done and what you think you will need to do (list of references plus other sources you might find useful).

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES: approximately 2 pages (the list will continuously extend; some references will disappear while not useful); the selection is based on a combination of keywords that in turn, are based on your objective and research questions (see also the titles of your sections in the preliminary table of contents); analyse the list of references of a number of useful articles, in this stage there is no need to read all the documents on the reference; in general, reading the abstract is enough.

OTHER SOURCES: (List of) statistics/databases, maps, websites, contact persons and/or institution (eventually with names and addresses).

THESIS STRUCTURE

COVER PAGE

A template is available on Moodle

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

A template is available on Moodle

INDEX

ABSTRACT (250 words, in English)

EXTENDED SUMMARY (1 page, in Italian)

PREFACE (1/2 pages)

The topic of the thesis (what): present a clear argument to your reader. What is the motivation for exploring this topic (why for you)?

INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH GOALS (2/4 pages)

The topic of the thesis (who, where, how, when → to be contextualised).

Data and/or proofs (i.e.: scientific bases) which show the relevance of the topic and why it makes sense to study it.

Main aspects you want to focus on.

What is the goal you are pursuing (decide what your position is and provide reasons and evidence to support it).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS/OBJECTIVES (1 page)

It is the research argument/assumption/hypothesis from which you want to start and the guideline for questions through which you will try to develop the topic (what you already know and what you hope to reach through the study).

To be noticed: the research question(s) is/are related to your empirical research, not to the theoretical part, which is the framework. Describe your research problem.

THEORETICAL FRAME & LITERATURE REVIEW (10/20 pages)

The state of the art about the topic: past and present debates, theoretical approaches, methodological approaches (choose a point of view). You will consider other points of view and evaluate them critically.

In this section, you need to demonstrate two things:

- the familiarity you have with the research topic, thus your capacity to explain the most important aspects to people who are not familiar with it
- missing information you may have noticed in the existing literature (one aspect not developed or not developed enough) about which it is possible to intervene through either a theoretical or a methodological approach

METHODOLOGY/RESEARCH DESIGN (5/10 pages)

- Definition of the time-space frame
- Presentation of subjects/territories involved
- Give reasons why/how did you choose, involve and define them; definition of the sample (in case of quantitative research); which methodology did you choose?
- Quantitative analysis: to describe, to measure, to test, to compare and correlate
- Qualitative analysis: to present, to explore, to create, to compare and contrast. (How did you come across the chosen methodology? How many and which cases are included? How did you choose the cases? How long did the research take? How did you gather and record the data
- Observations: did you acquire the data or did you create them? Did you follow either a deductive approach (following other pieces of research or codified data) or an inductive one (with new data to

codify and to connect to the theory)? Which are the parameters to consider the data as credible and reliable?)

- Ethical considerations: What are the set of principles that guide your research designs and practices.? These principles include voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, potential for harm, and results communication.

DELIMITATIONS, LIMITATIONS, ASSUMPTIONS (1/2 pages)

What factors/elements (knowledge/skills/practices) have you been able to control? What factors/elements have been out of your control? What assumptions have you taken (premises, doubts, beliefs, standpoints)?

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH CONTENT OR OF THE CASE STUDY (10/20 pages)

- Introduction to situation
- Why the case was undertaken
- Description of the case

RESULTS & FINDINGS (8/10 pages)

Provide description or /and data about the topic, statistical or/and qualitative data/information (without conclusive and interpretative observations).

DISCUSSION (10/15 pages)

Evaluation of the findings (what the findings might mean, why they matter).

Presentation and explanation of the analyses results, which should confirm or reject what has been declared in the research hypothesis.

Presentation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunity and limits/constraints related to the topic in its territorial manifestation.

Presentation of the inferences and implications brought by the research: which contribution does the research offer to the topic's discussion? (Comparison and contrast of the findings with previous research/ other cases).

CONCLUSIONS (2/6 pages)

Summarise the findings. What is the answer to your research question?

Which is the position of the research in relation to the situation in terms of theories and practices?

Is the research affected by other influences?

Which are links with other pieces of research?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH (1/2 pages)

Indicate which parts of the research could be studied more in-depth and eventually with which other aspects.

GLOSSARY

Explanations of uncommon terms.

REFERENCES (BIBLIOGRAPHY)

ANNEXES

THESIS FORMAT

- Paper: A4
- Printing: front/back
- Length: around 80-120 pages
- Font: Times New Roman or Arial 12
- Line spacing: 1.5
- Margins: 3cm (internal), 2cm (external), 2cm (upper), 2cm (lower)
- Page numbering: centre bottom
- Chapters numbering: 1 (chapter), 1.1 (section), 1.1.1 (subsection) Referencing: Harvard style (in text: name, year, page)

DETAILS ON REFERENCES

EXAMPLES OF REFERENCING IN MAIN TEXT

- as Pallino (2012) puts it...
- as Pallino (2012, p.38) puts it, «....» *if the author is explicitly quoted*
- as Pallino et al. (2013) put it... *when multiple authors are cited or quoted*
- it may be suggested (Pallino 2012) that...

EXAMPLES OF REFERENCING IN THE FINAL SECTION (BIBLIOGRAPHY, in alphabetical order)

- Books

Surname, Name initials (year), *Book title*, City of publication: Publisher. Number of pages (only if a section is quoted)

Pallino, P. (2012), *A hard life*, Timbuktu: Brousse édit.

- Articles

Surname, Name initials (year), 'Article title,' Journal title, issue/volume/section, number of pages

Pallino, P. (2012), 'Life is Beautiful,' *Cahiers du Sahel*, LX, p. 12-18.

- Webliography

Insert it separate from the final bibliography; include access dates and DOI if available.

THESIS DISCUSSION

You will have to prepare a 12 minute presentation of your work. This can be supported by slides (PowerPoint or Prezi, or any other kind of presentation program). Videos under 3 minutes are accepted with the supervisor's authorisation.

After your presentation, the discussant of your work and your supervisor will probably ask you a couple of questions. Any other member of the committee is entitled to pose questions. The discussion will last 10 to 15 minutes.

As this part is finished, you will be asked to exit the room so that the jury will be able to discuss your grade.