

Social Sciences and Digital Data Master's Degree

Thesis Guidelines

General Information

To be eligible for graduation, students must have completed and recorded all exam grades required by their study plan (including internship, language courses, laboratories, etc.) in accordance with the key dates and deadlines published in the Graduation Calendar (available on the degree program's Moodle page).

Students are expected to select a supervisor—normally a permanent member of the teaching staff—by proposing a thesis topic related to the subjects covered in the Master's Degree Program. To better define the scope and direction of the work, it is recommended that students prepare a brief research proposal outlining the subject and planned development of the thesis. Once the topic and deadlines have been agreed upon with the supervisor, students must formally register for the final examination/graduation through Uniweb www.unipd.it/en/graduation

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. 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 www.unipd.it/en/graduation

Ethical Issues

A “declaration of originality” (see below) must be included in the thesis, certifying that the dissertation is the result of the student's own independent work. Any written material, data, or ideas drawn from other sources must be properly cited both in the main text and in the bibliography. Direct quotations must be clearly marked and explicitly referenced to the original publication.

Students are strictly required to avoid any form of plagiarism, including the unacknowledged use of material produced by Large Language Models (LLMs) or other generative AI tools. While such tools may be used to support the research process (for example, to refine writing, explore alternative formulations, or generate preliminary ideas), they cannot substitute for the student's critical thinking and independent work. Any text or content produced with the assistance of AI must be appropriately revised, verified, and, where relevant, acknowledged, in accordance with academic integrity standards. Failure to comply with these requirements constitutes academic misconduct and may lead to the rejection of the thesis or disciplinary action.

Structure Of A Research Proposal

The research proposal to the supervisor should contain:

- Introduction to the topic
- Clear statement of thesis and expected outcomes
- Methodology to achieve goals
- Crucial information to understand the topic's significance
- Preliminary bibliography (optional)

Once approved, maintain contact with the supervisor to refine the argument.

Aim

The research proposal is a basic document that helps define how and where to start. Consult it regularly to maintain focus on the final objective and research questions.

Time Management

Keeping a timetable is strongly suggested, e.g., using a Gantt chart.

Proposal Structure 2–5 pages + title page

- Title page: Preliminary title, supervisor, co-supervisor (if any)
- Purpose: Topic, work objective
- Objective: Expected achievement, hypotheses to test
- Research questions: Core question and secondary questions
- Justification: Research relevance
- Research area: Scale, research units, rationale
- Methodology: Quantitative/qualitative approach, analytical techniques
- Theoretical framework: Context, theories/models, links to existing projects
- Preliminary table of contents
- Required resources
- Preliminary readings and other sources

Thesis Structure

Please note: the number of pages is approximate

- Cover page (template on Moodle)
- Declaration of originality (see below)
- Index
- Abstract (250 words, in English)
- Extended summary (1 page, in Italian)
- Preface (1–2 pages): Topic presentation and motivation
- Introduction (2–4 pages): Topic contextualization and relevance, main aspects, goals
- Research questions/objectives (1 page)
- Theoretical frame & literature review (10–20 pages)
- Methodology (5–10 pages): Time-space frame, subjects/territories involved, methodological approach, ethical considerations
- Delimitations, limitations, assumptions (1–2 pages)
- Presentation of research content or case study (10–20 pages)
- Results & findings (8–10 pages): Data/information description without interpretations
- Discussion (10–15 pages): Evaluation of findings, strengths/weaknesses analysis, contribution to topic discussion
- Conclusions (2–6 pages): Findings summary, research positioning, links with other studies
- Recommendations for future research (1–2 pages)
- Glossary
- References

Thesis Format

FORMAT	A4 paper, double-sided
LENGTH	around 80–120 pages
FONT	Times New Roman or Arial 12
LINE SPACING	1.5
MARGINS	3 cm (internal), 2 cm (external), 2 cm (upper/lower)
PAGE NUM.	center bottom
CHAPTERS NUM.	1 (chapter), 1.1 (section), 1.1.1 (subsection)
REFERENCING	Harvard style

Citation And Referencing Guidelines

APA 7th Edition

General Rules

Arrange entries alphabetically by the author's last name. For multiple works by the same author, arrange by publication date (oldest first). Use a hanging indent for each entry (first line flush left, subsequent lines indented). Italicize book and journal titles. Include DOIs when available for online sources. For online sources without a date, use (n.d.) for "no date."

IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Single author:

(Smith, 2020) or Smith (2020) argues...

TWO AUTHORS:

(Smith & Jones, 2020) or Smith and Jones (2020) suggest...

THREE OR MORE AUTHORS:

(Smith et al., 2020) or Smith et al. (2020) found...

DIRECT QUOTE:

(Smith, 2020, p. 45) or Smith (2020) states, "... " (p. 45).

MULTIPLE SOURCES:

(Smith, 2020; Jones, 2019)

SECONDARY SOURCE:

Brown (as cited in Smith, 2020)

Bibliography/Reference List

BOOK

Author, A. A. (Year). Title of book. Publisher.

CHAPTER IN AN EDITED BOOK

Author, A. A. (Year). Title of chapter. In E. E. Editor (Ed.), Title of book (pp. xx-xx). Publisher.

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). Title of article. Title of Journal, Volume(Issue), page range. DOI or URL

ONLINE ARTICLE

Author, A. A. (Year, Month Day). Title of article. Website Name. URL

WEBPAGE

Organization Name. (Year, Month Day). Title of page. URL

THESIS/DISSERTATION

Author, A. A. (Year). Title of thesis [Unpublished doctoral dissertation/master's thesis]. Institution Name.

CONFERENCE PAPER

Presenter, A. A. (Year, Month). Title of paper [Paper presentation]. Conference Name, Location.

REPORT

Organization Name. (Year). Title of report (Report No. xxx). URL

Thesis Discussion

Prepare a 12-minute presentation, optionally supported by slides. Questions from the discussant, supervisor, and committee will follow for 10–15 minutes. The committee will then convene to determine the grade.

Declaration Of Originality

ITALIANO

Il/La sottoscritto/a dichiara che il presente elaborato è frutto di lavoro originale e non è stato presentato, in tutto o in parte, per il conseguimento di un titolo accademico presso altre Università, italiane o straniere.

Dichiara inoltre che tutte le fonti e i materiali utilizzati per la redazione della tesi sono stati correttamente indicati nel testo e riportati nella sezione Riferimenti bibliografici, e che le eventuali citazioni testuali sono chiaramente riconoscibili tramite esplicito richiamo alla pubblicazione originale.

Il/La sottoscritto/a si impegna altresì a non aver fatto uso improprio di strumenti di intelligenza artificiale generativa (Large Language Models o simili) per la redazione della tesi. L'eventuale utilizzo di tali strumenti, a supporto della stesura o dell'elaborazione, è stato limitato ad attività ausiliarie e viene dichiarato in modo trasparente all'interno del testo, nel rispetto degli standard di integrità accademica.

ENGLISH

The undersigned hereby declares that this thesis is the result of original work and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for the attainment of an academic degree at any other Italian or foreign university.

The candidate further declares that all sources and materials used in the preparation of the thesis have been duly acknowledged in the text and listed in the Bibliographical References section, and that any direct quotations are clearly identifiable through explicit reference to the original publication.

The undersigned also confirms that no improper use has been made of generative artificial intelligence tools (Large Language Models or similar) in the writing of this thesis. Any use of such tools, when employed as auxiliary support, has been transparently acknowledged within the text, in full compliance with academic integrity standards.

Firma dello studente / Student's signature