

Master of Arts in “Public Opinion and Survey Methodology”
Maîtrise universitaire en « Méthodologie d’enquête et opinion publique »

Guidelines for Master thesis

Step by step guide

The validation of the Master thesis includes the following steps:

1. Finding a topic and approaching a potential supervisor.
2. Writing the thesis under an organised supervision.
3. Agreeing on jury members with supervisor.
4. Thesis defence.

The Master thesis for POSM

All students have to undertake and write a Master thesis to qualify for a Master’s degree. The thesis represents an individual effort. It is realized under supervision and is defended orally. The Master students demonstrate in the thesis that they have acquired the content of the Master and are able to apply their understanding critically to answer a research question through an analytical and empirical approach in an autonomous manner.

There are two types of Master theses:

- A stand alone thesis equivalent to 30 ECTS.
- A thesis in relation with an internship equivalent to 30 ECTS.

In principle, the formal modalities of the faculty of enrolment will have to be followed for registering and submitting the thesis.

Topics of a Master thesis in the framework of POSM

A Master thesis in the framework of the POSM program is related to the program’s core content and can either cover a methodological topic related to survey methodology, data analysis or a topic related to a process of opinion formation. The subject of the Master dissertation is chosen by the candidate in agreement with the supervisor, in an area of interest and competence of both. The thesis treats a problem and a research question on the basis of quantitative data and reflects critically its usage and production.

Supervisor(s)

Students choose one of the teachers in the POSM core modules as their main supervisor from any of the three universities involved. The main supervisor should hold at least a doctoral degree. The scientific council can approve a co-supervisor upon the request of the student who is not a teacher in the POSM core program.

In case a student requires a co-supervision with an external supervisor, he/she has to address the request for approval to the Scientific Council *before* the registration to the Master thesis. The request has to be sent to the coordinator of the POSM program by e-mail in mentioning the name and profile of the requested co-supervisor in arguing why the suggested co-supervision is beneficial for the execution of the Master thesis.

The supervisor(s) and the student agree on the research question, the methodological and theoretical framework, which are outlined in a proposal of 2000-2500 words (5-7 pages). For the execution of the thesis the supervision is organised between the student and the supervisors.

Structure of thesis

The Master thesis should be structured and argued according to common academic standards including: Title page and abstract; Introduction that outlines problem and research question; Theoretical framework; Methodological framework, Presentation and interpretation of results and a conclusion that highlights main findings and discusses them towards a broader outlook and finally a comprehensive bibliography. The annex may include additional material for the purpose of clarification on data and methods.

The thesis follows a coherent style guide (e.g. Chicago Style) that may be suggested by the faculty of enrolment and contains at the end a declaration of authorship. The recommended length is approximately 25'000-35'000 words (including tables, figures, footnotes, references) but no longer than 40'000 words.

Defence

The Master thesis has to be submitted to the faculty of enrolment and is defended orally. Organisation and reporting about the defence is according to the modalities of the faculty of enrolment. The jury is composed of two members, those having a co-supervision of three members. The defence of 60 minutes takes place at the faculty of the main supervisor.

The date of the defence is set by the main supervisor(s) in agreement with the other members of the jury and the student. At the beginning of the defence, the student presents in about 15 minutes key findings and puts them into a broader framework, followed by questions and a general critique by the jury.

The thesis is validated if the student acquires a grade equal to or higher than 4. A grade inferior to 4 means that the thesis was not validated and the jury can ask the student to submit a revised version

within the deadlines prescribed by the faculty of enrolment. If the revised version is again graded inferior to 4, then the student is considered to have failed the POSM program.