

# MASTER OF ARTS (MA) IN COGNITIVE SCIENCE

## GUIDELINES FOR THE MASTER'S THESIS

Steps to write a thesis:

### **I. Supervisor Contact and Topic Selection**

The student contacts the prospective supervisor (who must be professor F. Clément, D. Mazzarella, L. de Saussure) from the Institute of Communication and Cognition Sciences (FLSH), and a topic, preferably based on the student's proposal, is established during a first meeting or possibly via email or remotely. Co-supervision by external collaborators (e.g. PhD students or researchers from other institutions) is possible but must be approved by the primary supervisor.

### **II. Research Plan Submission**

The student then submits a research plan that includes:

1. A working title
2. A summary of about half a page that explains the research problem and the research question(s)
3. A preliminary bibliography

### **III. Supervisor Feedback**

Feedback is then provided to the student by the supervisor. The student is expected to work independently while benefiting from regular supervision.



#### **IV. Research and Writing Phase**

The student conducts the research and writes the thesis independently. Meetings with the supervisor may be arranged as needed. If the research is carried out in a laboratory other than that of the UNINE supervisor, day-to-day supervision is primarily provided by the project leader in that laboratory. Even when the research is part of a broader laboratory project, it is important that the student defines their own research topic and, where applicable, collects their own data.

#### **V. Draft Submission and Revisions**

The student may submit a first draft of the thesis to the supervisor, who can request revisions before approving a final version. If the student's research is mainly co-supervised by an external researcher, that researcher is responsible for determining when the work is ready for defense; however, the final decision rests with the UNINE supervisor.

#### **VI. Thesis Defense**

Once the supervisor/co-supervisor considers the thesis complete, the UNINE supervisor organizes the defense. If it is a co-supervision, no external expert is required. The defense can take place at any time, depending on availability, but no earlier than three weeks after the thesis is accepted as the final version to be defended.

#### **VII. Formal Requirements**

1. The thesis must be written entirely in English. It may be reviewed and edited by an English speaker or using software to ensure excellent readability.
2. The length of a thesis is typically 60 to 80 pages, excluding the bibliography and appendices, in Times New Roman 12 pt, with 1.5 line spacing, 2 cm margins, and pages numbered in the top right corner.
3. The thesis is automatically checked by specialized software for plagiarism and the use of artificial intelligence. The use of AI is permitted or not at the discretion of the supervisor; if permitted for specific tasks, the relevant sections and reasons for its use must be clearly indicated. Students remain fully responsible for the scientific accuracy and integrity of the submitted work.



## VIII. Structure of the Thesis

1. Title page
2. Acknowledgments
3. Abstract (1/2 page)
4. Table of contents
5. Introduction, including the research problem and research question(s)
6. Literature review
7. Main analysis (including methods when it is not a theoretical thesis)
8. Discussion/conclusions
9. References
10. Appendices, if applicable
11. A declaration of honor (mandatory), available at:  
[https://www.unine.ch/files/live/sites/systemsite/files/General/Plagiat/Declaration\\_honneur\\_fr.pdf](https://www.unine.ch/files/live/sites/systemsite/files/General/Plagiat/Declaration_honneur_fr.pdf)

## IX. Defense Procedure

Before the defense, the supervisor informs the student about the planned proceedings, which typically include:

1. **A 15-20-minute presentation** by the student on their main findings, what they gained from the work, the reasons for choosing the research problem, the limitations of the work, and future perspectives.
2. The examiner and the supervisor each have **15-20 minutes** for their comments and questions.
3. The student withdraws for the deliberation of the supervisor and examiner, after which the result is announced; the defense form is transferred to the institute's secretariate for processing.
4. A grade below 4 is considered a failure and requires rewriting the thesis and holding a new defense. The student is allowed two attempts in total.

## X. Final Submission

After a successful defense, and after incorporating any modifications requested during the defense, the student submits **two** copies of the thesis (one bound copy and one electronic copy (PDF)) to the library of the Institute of Cognitive Science (*Pierre-à-Mazel 7, 2000 Neuchâtel*).

