

University of Neuchâtel
Faculty of Economics and Business

Master of Science in General Management (MScGeM)

Guidelines for the Research Master Thesis

Version: 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

The research master thesis represents the final and integrative academic work of the Master of Science in General Management (MScGeM). It consists of an independent scientific research project that aims to answer a clearly formulated research question by mobilizing relevant theories, methods, and data. The thesis must demonstrate the student's ability to design, conduct, and report a rigorous piece of research, and to position the contribution with respect to existing academic literature.

The research master thesis is not an internship report and not a purely descriptive work. It must include a well-defined problem statement, a structured literature review, a transparent methodology, a systematic analysis of data or materials, and a critical discussion of results.

Each student is supervised by an academic supervisor from the Faculty of Economics and Business. The topic, scope, objectives, and methodological orientation of the thesis must be defined in advance and validated by the academic supervisor.

2. Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Through the research master thesis, students are expected to demonstrate their ability to:

- Formulate a clear, relevant, and feasible research question;
- Review and synthesize the relevant academic literature;
- Design and justify an appropriate research methodology (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed);
- Collect, process, and analyze data or sources in a rigorous way;
- Interpret results in a critical and reflective manner;
- Clearly communicate methods, results, and implications in a well-structured academic document.

3. Supervision and Responsibilities

Each student must find a Faculty teaching member who agrees to supervise the thesis. The topic and the approach are defined jointly by the student and the academic supervisor and must be approved before the student formally starts the thesis.

Note: For management-related subjects, supervised by a member of Management Institute, a list of suggested topics is available through the MScGeM coordinator.

The student is responsible for the content, quality, and timely completion of the thesis. The supervisor provides scientific guidance, methodological advice, and feedback at key stages of the project, but the thesis must remain the student's own independent work.

4. Recommended Structure of the Research Master Thesis

A standard structure for a research master thesis is the following:

1. Cover page
2. Abstract
3. Table of contents (and, if applicable, lists of figures and tables)

4. Introduction (context, motivation, problem statement, research question(s), contribution)
5. Literature review (and conceptual framework or hypotheses, if applicable)
6. Methodology
7. Results / Analysis
8. Discussion
9. Conclusion (implications, limitations, suggestions for future research)
10. References
11. Appendices

The exact structure may be adapted to the nature of the project, but it must remain logical, coherent, and consistent with academic standards.

5. Content of the Main Sections

Abstract: The abstract is a concise summary of the thesis (typically not more than 100–150 words). It presents the research question, the method, the main results, and the key implications.

Introduction: The introduction motivates the topic, explains why it is relevant, and clearly states the research question(s). It positions the contribution with respect to existing literature and announces the structure of the thesis.

Literature Review: This section synthesizes the most relevant academic literature and identifies gaps or limitations in existing knowledge. It must not be a simple list of summaries but a structured and critical discussion. On this basis, the conceptual framework and, where relevant, hypotheses are developed.

Methodology: The methodology section explains and justifies the chosen research design, data sources, data collection procedures, and analysis methods. It must be sufficiently precise to allow replication of the study.

Results / Analysis: This section presents the results of the analyses in a clear and structured way. In quantitative work, this typically includes statistical results; in qualitative work, it may include case descriptions, thematic analyses, or interview syntheses.

Discussion and Conclusion: The discussion interprets the results in light of the research question and the literature. The conclusion summarizes the main findings, highlights theoretical and/or managerial implications, discusses limitations, and proposes avenues for future research.

6. Data, Information, and Methods

Depending on the research design, the thesis may rely on primary data (e.g., surveys, interviews, experiments) and/or secondary data (e.g., databases, archival sources). The student must clearly explain what data or material was used, how it was collected, how it was processed, and what limitations affect the analysis.

The chosen methods must be appropriate to the research question and must be executed rigorously.

7. Formatting and Presentation Rules

Unless specified otherwise by the supervisor, the following rules apply:

- Font size: 11 pt
- Line spacing: 1.5
- Margins: approximately 2.5 cm
- Main section starting on a new page
- Text justified
- Pages numbered
- Tables and figures must be numbered, titled, and referred to in the text
- Tables and figures must be self-explanatory and include sources when applicable

Indicative length: typically, up to 20 pages (excluding cover page, abstract, list of tables and figures, references and appendices). The quality of analysis and clarity of argumentation are more important than the number of pages.

8. References and Use of Sources

All sources cited in the text must appear in the reference list, and all items in the reference list must be cited in the text. A consistent citation style must be used throughout the document (e.g., APA or another style required by the supervisor). Original academic sources should be preferred over secondary or non-academic sources.

9. Plagiarism, Ethics, and Use of AI Tools

Plagiarism is strictly forbidden and leads to failure and possible disciplinary sanctions. Any borrowed idea, text, figure, table, or data must be properly cited. A pledge of honor must be signed and submitted with the master thesis.

The use of AI tools (for example for language improvement, formatting, or brainstorming) must respect academic integrity. Such use must be transparent and declared according to faculty rules. The student remains fully responsible for the content, correctness, and originality of the work.

To be included at the end of the master thesis

Disclaimer on the Use of AI

I hereby declare that, in the preparation of the thesis "<TITLE> ", AI tools were used in a responsible manner, especially for assisting with spelling and grammatical checks. These tools were employed to make sure that the clarity, coherence, and correctness of the written content. It is important to note that AI was not involved in any part of the research process, data analysis, or formulation of conclusions. All intellectual work, including the analysis, results, and discussions, were conducted independently. The use of AI was limited to enhancing the quality of the written language without influencing the academic integrity or the originality of the research.

Name:

Date:

10. Evaluation Criteria

The research master thesis is typically evaluated based on:

- The clarity and coherence of structure;
- The relevance and precision of the research question;
- The quality of the literature review and conceptual framework;
- The appropriateness and rigor of the methodology;
- The quality of analysis and interpretation of results;
- The originality and contribution of the work;
- The quality of writing, presentation, and formal aspects;
- The student's autonomy, rigor, and engagement.

11. Program-Specific Notes within the MScGeM

Management-oriented research theses often rely on a combination of theoretical frameworks and empirical material such as case studies, interviews, or surveys. Particular attention is paid to the clarity of managerial implications and the articulation between theory and organizational practice.

Finance-oriented research theses are frequently quantitative and may involve econometric analyses, financial databases, and formal modeling. Strong emphasis is placed on methodological rigor, data quality, and reproducibility of results.

Economics-oriented research theses may be empirical, theoretical, or a combination of both. Typical approaches include econometric analysis, theoretical modeling, or systematic literature reviews. Clear identification of the contribution to existing research is essential.

12. Submission, Defense, and Archiving

The final version of the thesis must be submitted according to the official procedures of the MScGeM program. After successful completion, the thesis may be archived by the Faculty or the relevant Institute. Non confidential master theses are published at the library of Economics and Business of the university of Neuchâtel.

13. MScGeM Research Master Thesis Website

<https://www.unine.ch/seco/formations/mscgem/research-master-thesis/>