MASTER DEGREE THESIS: A COMPREHENSIVE WRITING GUIDE

This guide is intended to provide useful information for students who need to write their master's degree thesis. In addition to this document, students are invited to read carefully the "Regolamento prove finali laurea magistrale", and all the deadlines which can be downloaded in the Department of Management website (Dipartimento di Scienze Aziendali).

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1. Introduction

1.1. Objectives

The purpose of a master degree thesis is to demonstrate your understanding and mastery of a particular subject area and your ability to develop new scientific knowledge independently. For these reasons, writing a thesis is different from studying for exams.

First, writing a **thesis requires you to focus on a particular topic** that is interesting and important to you, based on your previous studies, personal knowledge, experience, skills and attitudes. You will consider different perspectives and points of view regarding the chosen topic, and acquire some synthesis skills. To do so, you will need to make use of all the knowledge and expertise you have acquired during your academic career, as well as choose, collect, study and analyze new materials. This is different from studying the pre-assigned materials required for an exam.

Second, to demonstrate your ability to create new and original scientific knowledge, **your thesis should answer a specific research question** concerning the topic of your choice, providing solid and well-developed argumentations.

In approaching your thesis project, you should be aware that this work will help you **to develop and strengthen some essential skills** for your working career, such as: information retrieval, critical and analytical thinking, research skills, communication and argumentation, problem solving and project management.

1.2. The steps to writing a thesis

The process of writing a thesis is generally characterized by the following main steps:

1) Choose a topic of your interest and a possible supervisor.
2) Collect, gather, study, analyze and synthesize the relevant academic literature regarding the topic, to delineate the state-of-the-art and identify research gaps.
3) Develop your research question/s.
4) Define the process to answer the research question/s and the structure of your thesis (develop an outline/table of contents of the topics to be discussed, as well as their logical and temporal sequence).
5) Collect material and, if necessary, empirical data to answer your research question/s.
6) Write the thesis in compliance with the academic requirements.

In the evaluation of a thesis, **the most important aspect is the novelty of its content, and not its length**. The innovative element depends on the subject area, the main topic of the thesis, and on the perspective adopted (institutional, historical, empirical, theoretical or the systematization of the literature) to answer the research question and present a new and fresh perspective on the chosen topic.

2. Organization and content of the thesis

2.1. Choice of the topic and the supervisor

The first step of your thesis project is to choose a topic and a supervisor. Choosing a clear, specific and well-defined topic is the most important phase since it will influence all the following steps. Therefore, this choice takes time and patience, as well as intense research activities, serious consideration, and an interaction with the supervisor.

The topic of the thesis can be motivated by:

- *Personal interests*: the thesis can be an opportunity for students to deepen their knowledge of / investigate topics they have become passionate about during their academic career.
- *Personal inclinations*: writing the thesis gives students an opportunity to put into practice a natural propensity for a particular research method (e.g., quantitative or qualitative).
- *Personal skills*: students need to consider the main subject areas of their academic career (e.g., accounting, management, economics, finance, law, etc), their personal abilities to conduct qualitative and/or quantitative research, and their linguistic competence.
- *Availability of material and data*: students need to consider which literature and business databases they have access to, as well as whether the data for the empirical analysis can be collected.

The relationship between the student and the supervisor is based on transparency, trust and collaboration. The first meetings are intended to define the topic of the thesis and a preliminary structure/index.

A good place to start is to find a preliminary focus and a research question (RQ hereafter). The focus defines which particular scientific literature your work is contributing to, and the RQ defines what specific aspect you are going to investigate. The RQ will guide the overall work.

The following step is to focus on how to develop your analysis. To do so, it is useful to structure a hypothetical index to show your supervisor the coherence of your ideas and the necessary steps to address your research question. This index will guide your research, even if it must be modified as your project develops.

Generally, the student is asked to keep the supervisor constantly updated on the development of the thesis, informing him/her of every choice and sending him/her one chapter at a time. Students are advised to read their texts carefully before sending them to the supervisor, to correct typing and punctuation errors and to review the terminology used. During the whole process, the supervisor provides students with suggestions, comments, and critiques to allow them to develop and improve their work.

Finally, students should bear in mind that the supervisor forms a judgement about the thesis from the beginning of the process and not only during the oral defence.

2.2. Structure of the thesis

The structure of a thesis mainly depends on the topic of choice and whether it is theoretical or empirical. However, these parts are generally included.

Title/cover page Acknowledgements (optional) Index Introduction Chapter 1: Literature review Chapter 2: Methodology and research method (for an empirical thesis) Chapter 3: Analysis and discussion of findings (for an empirical thesis) ……. Conclusion Bibliography

The template of the title/cover page ('frontespizio') is available at Frontespizi. The title of your thesis must express the theme of your work in a clear, concise, and precise manner. This page is not numbered.

In the acknowledgements section you can thank people who have contributed to your project and/or to your academic career.

2.3. Introduction

The introduction should be written after the thesis has been completed. However, you can prepare a preliminary draft at the beginning of your project. The introduction is usually structured in two main sections. The first section presents the chosen topic and states the purpose and the motivations for your thesis. The motivation refers to the origins of your thesis and explains

why your topic is relevant and why your work is important. Additionally, the first section explicitly outlines the main objectives that you aim to achieve by writing your thesis. This section must also include the research question guiding your project.

The second section usually provides a clear, synthetic brief summary of the structure of the thesis referring to the content of each chapter. This section helps readers to understand how you have developed your project to answer the research question. Furthermore, this section generally provides a summary of the main findings and conclusions of your thesis.

2.4. Literature review and use of bibliographic databases

Writing a well-conducted literature review is an important part of a thesis, since it will demonstrate your capacity to: 1) collect, read and understand the relevant literature and select the most important contributions on the topic of your choice; 2) provide a critical analysis of the literature to identify current knowledge, key issues, trends and gaps.

In brief, this chapter will offer an overview of what is known (and not known) about the chosen topic. You do not have to 'copy and paste' what other scholars have written, but you need to collect, categorize and discuss the more important information to be able to introduce and understand your topic in a clear and coherent manner. You can also discuss contrasting definitions, ideas, findings, and theoretical perspectives emerging from the literature.

A literature review starts with a *literature search*, which is an organized way of collecting relevant publications (e.g., articles, books, book chapters, etc.) on your chosen topic.

When undertaking your literature search, you can follow these tips:

What do I need to find in the literature?

You must have a clear idea of what you need to look for in the literature, based on your chosen topic. You can break this topic down into some research questions for which you need to find the answer in the literature.

What type of literature do I need to use?

Your literature review should cover the most important sources of academic literature, which are:

- *Academic books*. They are very useful for gaining background knowledge or for definitions, especially when you start a new project.
- *Academic journal articles*. These are the most up-to-date and in-depth sources of academic research. You need to distinguish between primary literature (containing original research) and secondary literature (providing a review of primary articles).

Where can I find the literature?

- To search for books, you can use the Library Catalogue (https://bigsearch.unibg.it/primo-explore/search?vid=39BRG_VIEW).

- To search for academic journal articles, you can use the bibliographic databases (some books are also indexed in the database). The University of Bergamo has access to many bibliographic databases ().
- You can choose a library database which covers all subjects, such as Scopus or Web of Science, or a specialized database (e.g., Business Source Premier for business & management).

How can I use the bibliographic database?

Once you have chosen the appropriate database/s, you can start designing your research strategy. To do so, you need to think about a set of keywords (single words) and phrases (two or more words linked together) that reflect what you need to find in the literature. Generally, phrases must be entered in double quotes " " (e.g., "environmental accounting").

A well-designed research strategy should consider synonyms and different word endings (e.g., singular/plural, verb conjugation, etc.). In most databases, you can put an asterisk * at the end of your keyword to search for all the possible combinations of that word. For instance, if you search for 'account*', you will find: 'accounting', 'accountant', 'accountants', 'account', 'accounts', 'accountable', 'accountability', 'accountancy'.

The next step is to think about how to combine your search terms to develop an effective search strategy. There are three main Boolean operators that allow you to connect your search terms in different ways: AND, OR, and NOT.

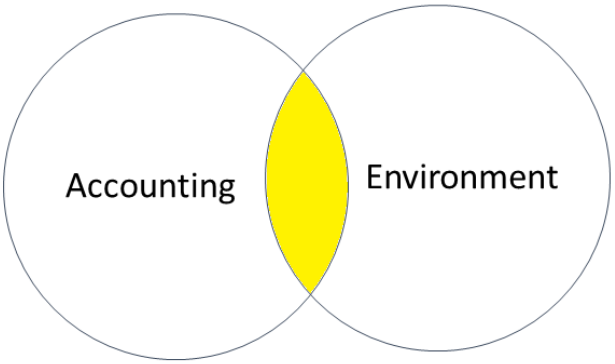
A bibliographic database allows you to choose which part/s of the publication you want to search for your keywords/phrases: title, full text, abstract, and/or keywords.

BOOLEAN OPERATORS

AND

AND is used to limit your results to those that contain both keywords/phrases connected with AND.

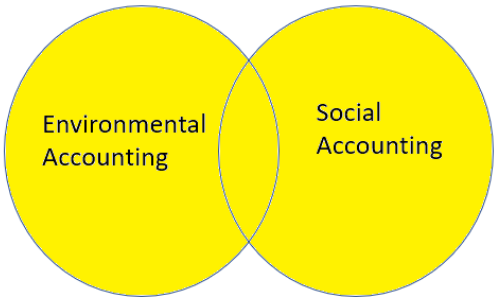
For example: 'Accounting' AND 'Environment'



OR

OR is used to broaden your results to include those that contain one keyword/phrase, the other keyword/phrase, or both keyword/phrase connected with OR.

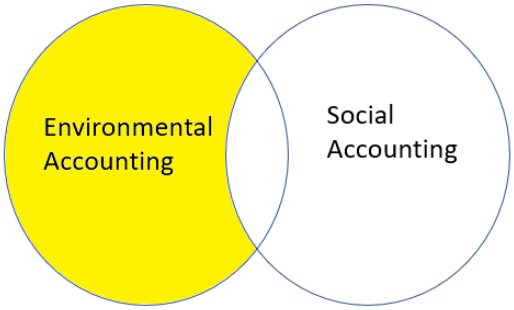
For example: 'Environmental accounting' OR 'Social accounting'



NOT

NOT is used to exclude those results that contain one keyword/phrase.

For example: 'Environmental accounting' NOT 'Social accounting'



In addition, you can use a database to find articles/books published by a certain author (using an *author search box*) or by a certain journal (using a *publication search box*).

Make sure you keep track of the database/s you have used, the terms you have searched and the number of results.

How can I manage my search results?

When you have conducted your search, you need to evaluate your results. You can start by reading the title and the abstracts of the publications, to identify which are relevant and appropriate to your needs. Irrelevant items must be excluded. If you have not found many relevant articles, you can repeat the literature search by using different keywords/phrases. Second, you can download the full texts of the relevant publications, start reading and take note of the most important points. By reading the articles emerging from your literature review, you can find useful additional references (pay attention to the references cited).

2.5. Methodology section

Traditionally, master degree theses are divided into two types: a theoretical (compilation) thesis or an empirical one:

a) A **theoretical** thesis consists in the analysis and processing of a large collection of sources and bibliography. The student is required to collect as much information as possible about the chosen topic. Once the topic has been identified, the objective of a theoretical thesis is to elaborate on and systematically organize existing knowledge within a particular scientific field. The main outcomes of a theoretical thesis will be a 'map' and overview of the evolution of the scientific field in relation to the topic of analysis and the identification of the literature gaps: what still has to be investigated within the particular scientific field of the chosen topic. The theoretical thesis is not just a synthesis of previous studies, but a critical review of the literature used to answer a specific research question.

b) An **empirical** thesis, as the name suggests, requires the collection and analysis of empirical data in order to answer a specific research question. If in the case of a theoretical thesis, the literature is used to answer the research question, in an empirical one the literature is the starting point for formulating and developing the research question or hypothesis. The empirical thesis is based on and develops around a specific research question and is built upon particular methodological choices (guided by the type of question you are investigating).

A quantitative or qualitative approach?

The choice of adopting a qualitative or quantitative approach is dictated in the first instance by the nature of the research question, that is, by the ways in which a given phenomenon can and must be explored in order to understand it.

The real distinction to be made between qualitative and quantitative research lies not simply in the techniques and research methods implemented (because quantitative methods can be used in qualitative research and vice versa), but also in the way in which the research is undertaken. To make this point clearer, the distinction made by Corbetta (1999) is reported below, which identifies the main differences between qualitative research and quantitative research in relation to: a) data collection, b) data analysis and c) results.

	Quantitative Research	**Qualitative Research**
Research design	Structured, closed, precedes research	Unstructured, open, constructed in the course of research
Research methodology	Descriptive, Correlational, Causal-Comparative/Quasi-Experimental, Experimental Research	Case study research; Ethnographic research; Grounded theory, Historical analysis, Narrative
Research methods	Survey Research; Cross-sectional Survey; Longitudinal Survey; Correlational Research; Causal-Comparative Research (Quasi-experimental research); Sampling methods; etc.	In-depth interviews; Focus groups; Content analysis; Observations; Textual or visual analysis (e.g., from books or videos); Lifestyle Immersion and Real-World Dialogue; etc.

Representativeness	Statistically representative sample	Often single cases not statistically representative
Recording instrument	Standardized for all subjects. Objective: data-matrix	Varies according to subjects' interests. Tends not to be standardized
Nature of the data	Hard, objective and standardized	Soft, in-depth analysis
Data analysis		
Subject of the analysis	The variable (analysis by variables, impersonal)	The individual/subject (analysis by subjects)
Objective of the analysis	Explain the differences, the 'variance' of the variables	Understanding the subjects
Mathematical and statistical techniques	Intensive use	Not used
Results		
Data presentation	Tables (relational perspective)	Excerpts from interviews and texts (narrative perspective)
Generalizations	Correlations; causal models; logic of causation	Classifications and types; ideal types; logic of classification
Scope of results	Generalizability	Specificity

In order to develop your thesis, it is important to start from the research question and understand how it can be analyzed. There are some types of research questions that should be investigated from a qualitative approach (e.g., What are the motivations that drive companies to adopt CSR practices?) while others should be investigated from a quantitative one (e.g., What is the correlation between sustainability disclosure and sustainability performances?).

Based on the approach (qualitative or quantitative), the methods for data collection and analysis (qualitative or quantitative) will also be chosen according to the methods used in the field of literature.

NOTE: In the methodology section, you are asked to develop / extend a theoretical model, or to carry out an applied analysis, e.g., an analysis of data and information (quantitative or qualitative) from which to derive elements of support or denial of one (or all) of the research questions developed. Remember that when faced with models, data, or information, it is necessary to have an interpretative attitude, which means giving meaning to data or situations that are not immediately understandable. The goal is, therefore, to give an explanation, to derive one meaning. This is done in the light of the theories, ideas and models examined when reviewing the literature. So, it is as if the student were called to write a persuasive description (of data or of one's own theory).

2.6. Conclusions

The chapter concluding the thesis should be structured in two main paragraphs: one presenting a summary of the research carried out and one presenting possible extensions of the work done in a future research agenda. The first paragraph must provide an overview of the research path followed in the analysis undertaken and present the main results obtained, (two-three pages should be sufficient). The second paragraph (of one or two pages) could contain further insights that the student wants to highlight as a matter of caution about the results he/she believes to have achieved (i.e., the limitations). Very often the results reached at the end of the research (or even of a reasoning) could vary if the elements analyzed were investigated differently, at times because they appear to be secondary, or because time and/or space do not allow otherwise, but, above all, it is very often because theories or data employed in validating a research hypothesis seem to be approximate, partial, or not fully suited to the researcher's needs. Hence, the presentation of cautionary notes when commenting on the results achieved should be considered an intellectually honest and proper 'training' exercise. Offering the reader these indications demonstrates the student’s awareness of the limitations of the results considered to have been achieved. In addition, it is a very useful expedient to avoid inculcating certainties that more experienced researchers could easily dismantle.

2.7. Thesis abstract

When the thesis is completed, an abstract/summary is required. The abstract must cover the structure of the thesis (avoiding the details) and can be developed starting from some concepts regarding the origin of the thesis, indicating the objectives, the procedures followed (basically the index of the thesis in expository form) and finally a report of the main conclusions reached. The length must not exceed one page. If circumstances warrant it, you can try to fit everything on one page by first reducing the line spacing used, and then the font size as appropriate. The abstract/summary should be inserted in the text of the thesis, immediately after the table of contents: in this way the reader can read the entire scope of the work in a concise form. Since the Student Office could ask you to hand in this summary on a separate sheet, it is advisable – with regard only to the summary and, therefore, what you deliver to the Secretariat itself - to write your name and surname, your matriculation number, the title of the thesis, the name of the supervisor and, if necessary, the co-supervisor and the academic year of reference on this sheet.

3. Technical writing issues

3.1. Index

The beginning of your thesis must include an index. It is an organized list of the chapters and subchapters of your thesis with indications of their corresponding page numbers. The following format can be used:

Chapter 1: Title of the chapter……1

1.1. Title of sub-chapter ……1

1.1.1 Title of paragraph ……3

1.2. Title of sub-chapter ……5

1.2.1 Title of paragraph ……8

Etc.

3.2 Bibliography and citations

Citations

When writing a thesis, students need to support every idea/assertion with adequate and precise bibliographic references. The extensive use of the appropriate literature is key to enhancing the overall value of your work and it demonstrates independent research ability. The use of the literature involves **citing**. "Citing" means referring to authoritative sources to acknowledge the origin of your statements/data, validate your idea, indicate

the existence of dissenters, and help readers gain access to references for further information. Without such references, the work would be perceived as lacking deep engagement with the topic and it could even be accused of plagiarism (see par. 3.3).

Therefore, in-text citations should be included in the body of your thesis, when you:

a) include a direct quotation of other scholar/s using their exact words. The borrowed text must be written in italics, highlighted with quotation marks, and referred to using the form (Author/s, Year, p. ...).

> Stakeholders are defined as "*Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objective*s" (Freeman, 1984, p. 46).

b) synthesize or paraphrase a text, without quoting the exact words. You include information in your own words by summarizing or paraphrasing the original author's idea. These references must have the form (Author/s, Year).

> Agency theory, building from assumptions that (1) all actors are narrowly self-interested, (2) all actors are boundedly rational, and (3) agents are more risk averse than principals, has earned a place of prominence (Eisenhardt, 1989).

> Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is often used as an umbrella term for cognate concepts such as corporate sustainability, corporate citizenship, or stakeholder management (Edward and Willmott, 2008; Matten and Moon, 2008; Scherer and Palazzo, 2007).

c) use data or other material (e.g., a graph, table, or formula) from other publications. These references must have the form (Author/s, Year).

> According to the OECD, the unemployment rate in Italy in 2020 was 44.1% (OECD, 2021)

Bibliography

The bibliography is the list of all the publications (e.g., books, articles, websites, etc.) read before and during the writing of the thesis. Students should include in the bibliography only those references which have been used to write the thesis. All these publications need to be cited in the text at the point where they are referred to. Additionally, for every in-text citation included in your thesis, there must be a corresponding entry in the bibliography.

The list of bibliographic references must be made in alphabetical order according to the author's surname, regardless of whether the work is a book, a book chapter, an article or other. If the contribution has more than one author, reference must be made to the surname of the first author.

In writing your bibliography, please refer to the styles used in the following examples.

Book

Author/s (Year). *Title*. Publisher, Place of publication.

Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Pitman, Boston.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students*. Pearson, London.

Book chapter

Author/s of the chapter (Year). *Title of the chapter*, in Author/s of the book (ed.), *Title of the book*, Publisher, Place of publication, page numbers of the chapter.

Weaver, D., McCombs, M., Shaw, D.L. (2004). *Agenda-Setting Research: Issues, Attributes, and Influences*, in L.L. Kaid (ed.), *Handbook of Political communication Research*, Routledge, London, pp. 257-282.

Journal article

Author/s (Year). Title of the article, *Title of the Journal*, volume (issue), page numbers of the article.

Wernerfelt, B. (1984). A resource-based view of the firm, *Strategic Management Journal*, 5(2), 171–180.

Discussion paper/working paper

Author/s (Year). Title. *Discussion paper / Working paper*, number.

Athey S., Stern S. (1998). An Empirical Framework for testing Theories about Complementarity in Organizational Design, *NBER Working paper series*, n. 6600.

Bauer T. K. (2003). Flexible Workplace Practices and Labour Productivity, *IZA Discussion paper*, n. 700.

Online documents

Indicate the link to the website, the name of the institution to which the website refers, the date and, if appropriate, the time of access.
OECD, The Territorial Impact of COVID-19: Managing the Crisis and Recovery across Levels of Government. https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=1095_1095253-immbk05xb7&title=The-territorial-impact-of-COVID-19-Managing-the-crisis-and-recovery-across-levels-of-government&_ga=2.68976793.98470663.1624789701-1904252266.1624789701. Accessed on 25/06/2021, at 11.30 am.

3.3. Plagiarism

Plagiarism refers to the dishonest and unfair appropriation of someone else's work, or a part of it and /or of its elaboration, usurping its authorship (or declaring oneself to be the author). This is an improper, but, unfortunately, very widespread practice, which mistakenly gives the idea of speeding up/enriching the thesis work. To avoid plagiarism, the student **MUST NOT**:

- copy the entire work (or part of the work) of others, passing it off as their own. Even the copying of documents (or part of documents) from the Internet without citing the source constitutes plagiarism.
- paraphrase, summarize or slightly change the thinking of other authors without citing the source.
- faithfully translate articles or book chapters from other languages.

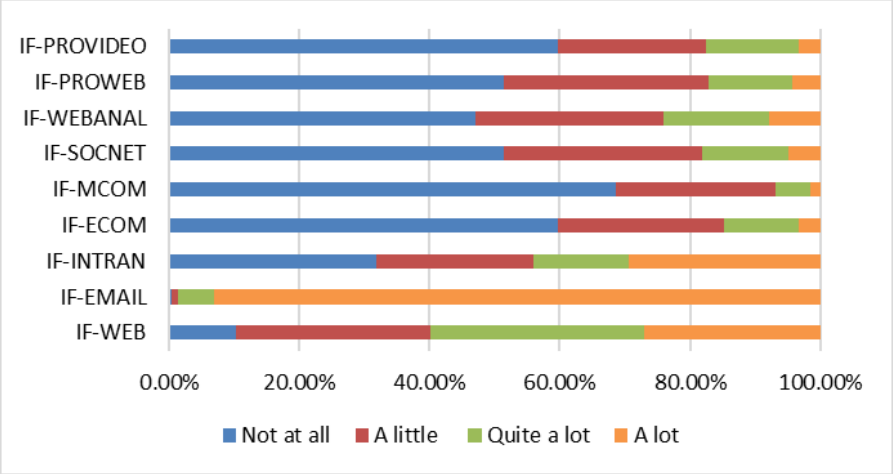
The proper and timely citation of the sources used from time to time in the drafting of the thesis is the only way to prevent any accusation of plagiarism. Dissertations may be submitted to an anti-plagiarism test before final acceptance.

3.4. Figures, graphs and tables

Using figures, graphs and tables to illustrate your ideas and/or present your data or your findings can be an effective way to make your thesis clearer and more understandable. However, some guidelines need to be followed when using figures/tables/graphs. First, they should be numbered in consecutive order. Furthermore, each figure/table/graph should be accompanied by a title briefly describing the content (above) and by a reference to the source (below). Additionally, when presenting data, the units of measurement must always be specified. Finally, each figure/table/graph should be referred to in the body of the text using its number and discussed appropriately. To refer to figures/tables/graphs in the text, you could number them sequentially for each chapter in order of appearance (e.g., Tables in chapter 1: Table 1.1; Table 1.2, etc. - Figures in chapter 1: Figure 1.1; Figure 1.2, etc.).

Example 1: the graph was elaborated by the student from data already available

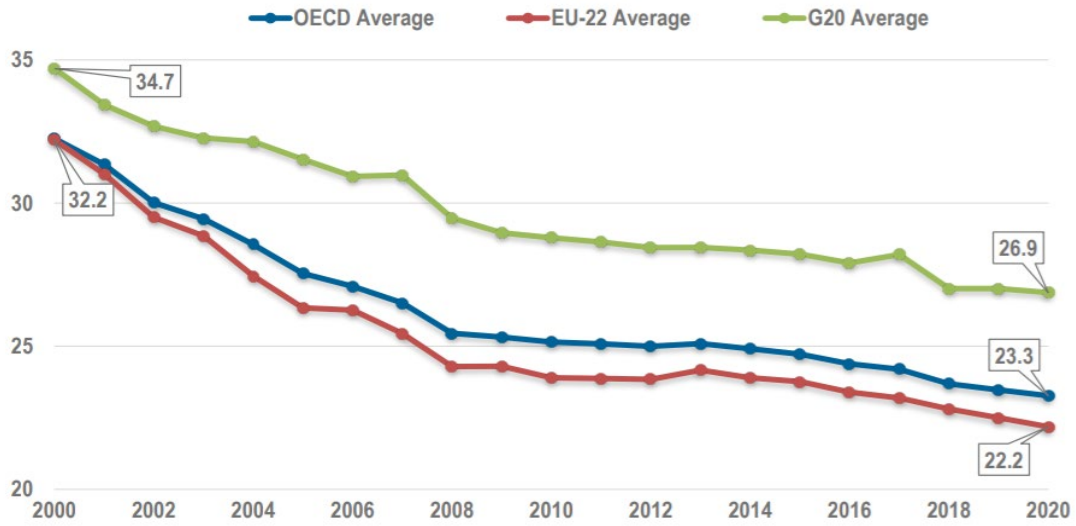
Graph 1.1: Frequency of use of some internet tools: percentage distribution



Source: own elaboration of data from Author, year

Example 2: the graph was borrowed from an OECD report

Graph 1.2: Combined statutory Corporate Income Tax rates (in %), 2000-2020



Source: OECD Tax Database 2020

Example 3: the Table was elaborated according to the result of the student's analysis of his/her own collected data

Table 1.1: Ranges of turnover and employees of the 173 companies considered (absolute and percentage values)

Turnover (million of euros)	Number of companies	%	Number of employees	Number of companies	%
< 1	99	57.2	< 15	123	71.1
1 - 5	33	19.1	16 - 50	32	18.5
5 - 10	12	6.9	50 - 249	18	10.4
10 - 50	29	16.8			
	173	100		173	100

Source: own elaboration

3.5. Formatting

- **Format**: A4
- **Recommended font**: Times, Times New Roman or Courier. Use italics, bold or underline only where strictly necessary
- **Body**: 12. Preferably use justified texts
- **Margins**: 3 cm above, below and on the sides
- **Line spacing** 1.5
- **Page numbering**: insert the function automatically. Preferably place it at the bottom right of the pages.
- **Footnotes**: make the appropriate arrangements with the supervisor. They are used for small digressions from the main topic, for comments, or for notes that are relevant but not such as to deserve to be included in the main text, as if they were the 'asides' of a speech. Footnotes are also useful if there is reference to particular abbreviations, acronyms, etc. that are not easily recognizable by the readers of your thesis. The notes, however, consist of complete sentences with subject, verb and any complements, so that they can be read regardless of the sentence in the text to which they refer. Example: Sentence of the main text: This theory (1) rests on a weak assumption. Note: (1) "This is a theory shared by numerous authors including…
- **Foreign words** must always be written in *italics*.
- **Figures / Graphs / Tables**: they can be freely inserted where needed, within the margins used for the text, if possible, and trying not to leave pages with too much blank space.
- **New chapters**: each chapter should begin on a new odd numbered page

4. Procedures

4.1. Application for final exam admission

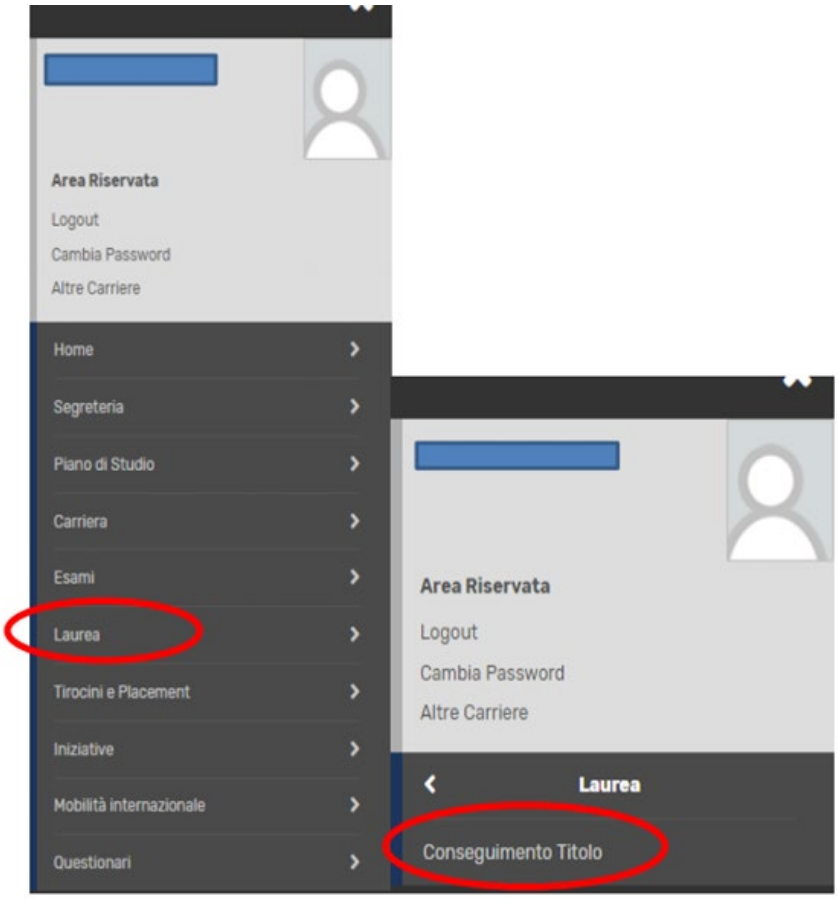
The first step before formally applying for final exam admission is to choose a supervisor and the topic (See par. 2.1).

For each graduation session, the Student Office establishes the deadlines for admission to the final exam (see the agenda in the Department's website).

This application can only be presented online and includes 4 phases:

1) Phase 1: the student enters the title of the thesis from the personal dashboard.

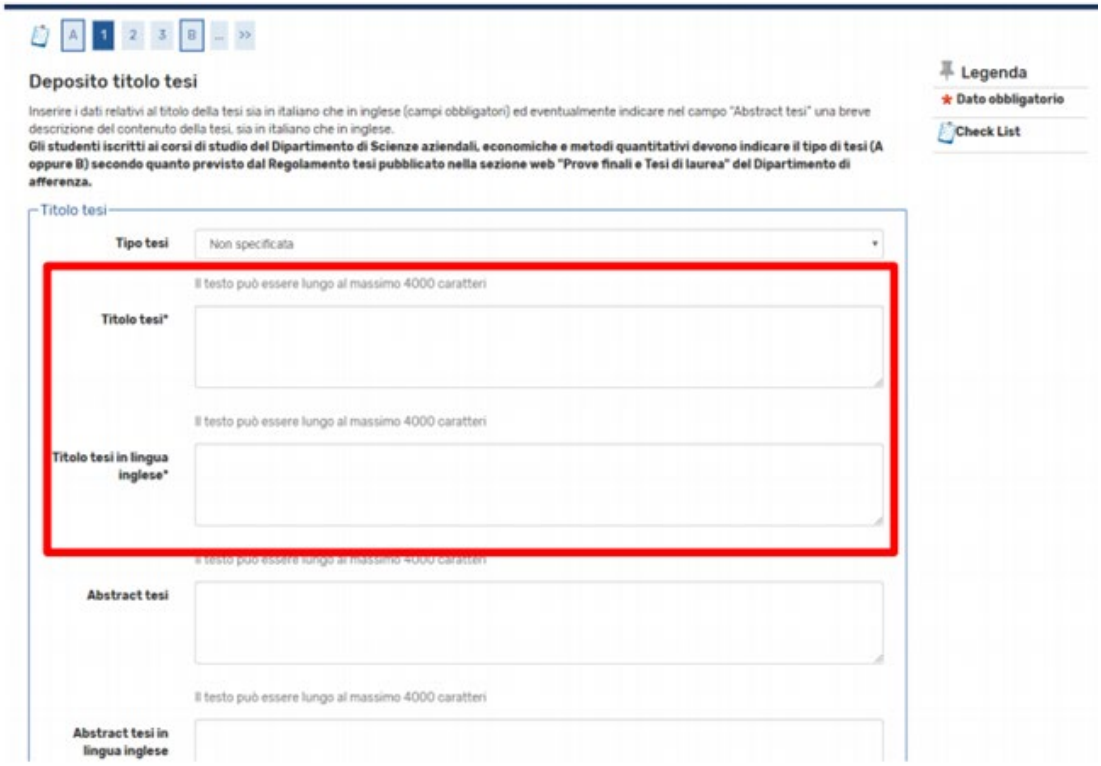
1a) Click on "Laurea: conseguimento titolo"



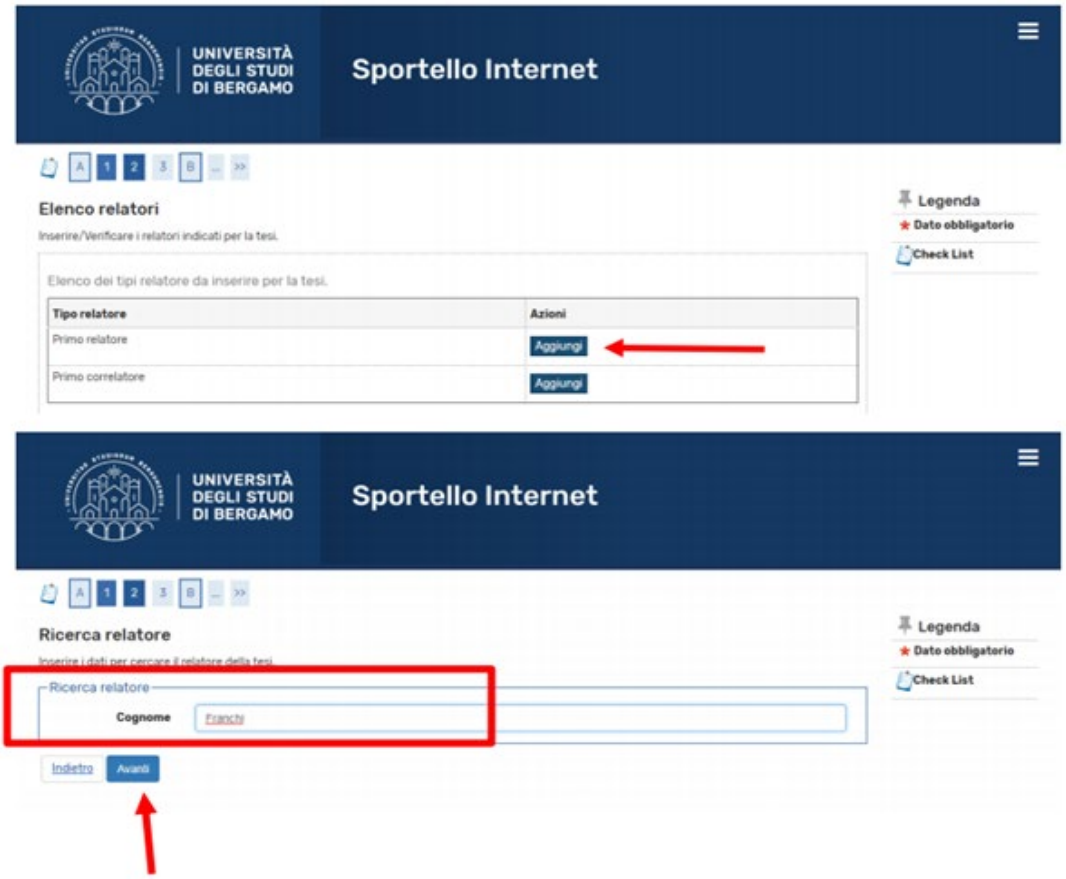
1b) Click on “Inserimento Domanda di tesi”

1c) Enter the title of the thesis (required field) and, if possible, write a note in the "Thesis abstract" field giving a description of the content of the thesis.

Click on the drop-down menu too to provide/not provide authorization to thesis consultation (mandatory field).



1d) Enter the supervisor and any co-supervisor. Click on Add, then write the professor's surname and click on “Avanti”.



1e) Click on “Completa tesi”

NOTE (1): In order to complete the procedure (to enter the degree application / final exam) you must wait for the supervisor’s approval of your thesis. When the supervisor has proceeded with the approval, you will receive an email at

your institutional address (@studenti.unibg.it). From that moment on, you can proceed with the final application.

NOTE (2): The supervisor's approval replaces the signature on the paper application request which no longer has to be printed or delivered to the Student Office

2) Phase 2: the supervisor approves.

3) Phase 3: the student completes the final application for admission to the final exam, after approval by the supervisor.

4) Phase 4: the student uploads the thesis in pdf format from the personal dashboard.

NOTE (3): Before proceeding with phase 3, the student is required to fill in the online AlmaLaurea Questionnaire. The student is also required to comply with further administrative requirements, in relation to:

- exam deadlines
- the deadline for the delivery of the internship booklet at the Internship Office.

4.2. Uploading and printing the thesis

Once the thesis has been completed, the student must download the cover (title page) from Frontespizi and fill in all the parts. Then, the student is required to upload the thesis in pdf format from the personal dashboard by the final deadline given by the Student Office for each graduation session.

At the end of the work, the student must send the final and complete version of the thesis in pdf format by e-mail to the supervisor and any co-supervisor.

If the supervisor requests it, the student must also deliver a paper copy of

the thesis at least 10 days before the date set for the discussion or when suggested by the supervisor. It is NOT, however, necessary to print a copy of the thesis for the Commission. On the day of the discussion, the student will bring a copy for the Commission, that will be returned to the student at the end of the session.

4.3. Discussion, title conferral and vote attribution

As stated by the Regulations (Article 1.1 of the Master's Degree Regulations), "the thesis is discussed in a public session in front of a Commission that will give the final evaluation, conferring the qualification and assigning the relative grade". On the dates shown in the Academic Calendar for each graduation session, the Student Office sets out the calendar of discussions by dividing students into small homogeneous groups based on the thesis topic and supervisors' availability. The calendar is published about two weeks before the discussion on the Department's website. The thesis defence is preceded by the supervisor's presentation to briefly introduce the student's work.

During the discussion, the student can use PowerPoint slides, which are particularly useful for presenting graphs, tables, and empirical results. In this regard, it is essential to follow the supervisor's advice.

The defence lasts about 10-15 minutes, including the Q&A time. Given the limited amount of time, it is important for the student to highlight the key points of the work done. At the end of the discussion, by one or a small group of students, the Commission meets to decide on the grade. At the end of the Commission's meeting, the title is awarded together with the communication

of the grade obtained. Master's degree theses are awarded from 0 to 9 points, except if the student has a starting grade of 100/110 for which the evaluation can reach 10 points. Achieving 7 points means that your work is of very good quality. To achieve a number of points higher than 7, a letter is required, written by the supervisor, to emphasize the exceptional work done by the student. Attaining more than 7 points is a unique achievement proving that your work provides extraordinary insights into a particular topic within the scientific field.