



university of
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faculty of behavioural
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graduate school

Appendix OER: Research Master - Graduation guide for the Research Master BSS

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Appendix: Graduation guide for the Research Master BSS

Preface

The *Graduation guide for the Research Master Behavioural and Social Sciences (ReMa BSS; afstudeergids)* provides all information on procedures, rules, and regulations that apply to the Research Master BSS graduation, e.g., the preparatory phase of the thesis, starting and writing the thesis, the assessment, the process to graduate and the graduation ceremony.

All relevant documents such as a manual, template and assessment form about the master's thesis can be found on [Brightspace](#) of the Graduate School, under Master's thesis. Information about the graduation procedure can be found under programme information, graduation on Brightspace.

The procedure described in this document is in line with the faculty rules and regulations concerning graduation assignments in the Research Master BSS. Staff and students should take note of and adhere to these regulations.

In case of questions, please do not hesitate to contact the academic advisor studyadvice.rema.bss@rug.nl or the Graduate School rema.bss@rug.nl.

1.1 Introduction

The Research Master's Programme in Behavioural and Social sciences (BSS) is concluded by writing an individual master's thesis that fits in the chosen theme:

1. Mental Health: Perspectives from Neuro- and Clinical Psychology
2. Individual Development in Social Context
3. Understanding Societal Change

For students from all themes it is possible to focus in the master's thesis on advanced statistical modeling.

1.1.1 Preparing the master's thesis

Each student chooses a specific research topic that can be supervised by a Research Master BSS staff member. A list of available staff members and their expertise is provided. Further, a database of specific research projects and their staff members is provided, to be inspired, or select a project from. The specific research project is developed in close collaboration with the staff member who supervises the master's thesis.

1.1.2 Learning goals of the master's thesis

The master's thesis is the final exam of the Research Master BSS, which means that students can show what they have learned over the years. The learning goals of the master's thesis can be found on Ocasys.

1.2 Starting the master's thesis

1.2.1 Subject

The subject of the master's thesis should fit into the student's theme and, if applicable, specialization in the Research Master programme. The fit into the theme and specialization is judged by the course coordinator of the course *Preparing your master's thesis: writing your proposal*.

1.2.2 Registration

The student must sign up for a master's thesis via ProgRESS, before the start of semester in which the thesis is planned to be finalized (thus, typically before start block 2A).

1.2.3 Master's thesis plan

A student may only start with the master's thesis of the Research Master's programme after the course 'Preparing your master's thesis: writing your proposal' is completed successfully.

1.2.4 Where master's thesis research takes place

Master's thesis research can be conducted either internally or externally. Internal master's thesis research is carried out at the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen, whereas external master's thesis research is carried out at another institution in The Netherlands or abroad.

1.2.5 Supervision

Both internal and external Master's theses will have an internal supervisor, the first assessor, who assures that the project has a sound scientific background. This first assessor decides on the grade together with the second assessor. The second assessor will be appointed by the first supervisor and the theme coordinator.

In addition, external Master's theses also involve an external supervisor (who holds an academic background in the social sciences, preferably with a PhD degree) providing local supervision.

Each student and first supervisor must make an agreement about the supervision and are obliged to fill in and sign a Master's thesis supervision contract.

The daily supervision of internal master's thesis research is conducted by a staff member of the Faculty BSS. Possible supervision by a temporary staff member is under the supervision of a Research Master BSS staff member. Only Research Master BSS staff members may act as examiners in the Research Master and are, as such, authorized to sign the assessment forms.

External master's thesis research is supervised by an external supervisor in the institution and by a permanent staff member (the first assessor). The external supervisor is mainly concerned with supervising the student in his or her research activities and in establishing and maintaining contacts with the field. The first assessor controls the academic quality of the master's thesis research.

1.2.6 When a first assessor drops out

The student needs to ask a reserve supervisor for the event of imminent long-term absence or any other reason that could result in a stagnation of the daily supervision for a longer period.

1.2.7 Form of the supervision

The guidance and supervision of the master's thesis consist of at least a discussion of the problem statement annex research design, the elaborated research proposal and the planning, an interim progress meeting halfway through the planned trajectory, feedback on at least each draft chapter of the final assignment and a comment on the entire final draft. The scheduled interim reports on which feedback is given, are explicitly recorded in the planning of the graduation trajectory.

The first assessor will provide feedback within 10 working days on the parts that have been handed in according to agreement.

1.2.8 Settlement of complaints

In case of disputes, the student and supervisor should first discuss the problem together and try to find a solution. If there is still a disagreement, then contact the coordinator of the Graduate School.

1.3 Writing the master's thesis

1.3.1 Writing in English

The Research Master's programme provides support to students in writing their master's thesis together with the Language Centre. In the second semester, students can develop their academic writing in English skills while they work on their thesis. Information about registration for these skills sessions will be announced on Brightspace.

1.3.2 Form and design

On the Brightspace page of the Graduate School, under master's thesis, a resource box and manual are available with documents that provide guidelines for reporting specific elements of a thesis, for example, reporting specific types of analyses.

The guidelines for writing the thesis are:

The report must follow the guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) or similar guidelines: introduction - method – results - discussion, all as succinctly as possible (you will find the APA guidelines in the library).

1.3.3 Word limit

The master's thesis minimal number of words is 6,000 and maximum is 10,000 words for core text (i.e., introduction, methods, results, discussion including abstract, keywords and excluding references, tables, figures and appendices). There is a maximum of 5 appendices. If the word count of the thesis is not met, assessment of the thesis may not take place. The student needs to revise the thesis such that it meets the word limit.

An adjustment to the word limit can be allowed for, upon proper motivation (e.g., in case of a qualitative study). This needs to be settled in the master's thesis plan.

Introduction

1. The report must have a solid theoretical basis and a clear link to relevant literature.
2. The relevant literature is to be discussed in an orderly manner and in clear terms. The introduction does not contain elements that are irrelevant to the main question or purpose. If you feel the need to elaborate on some topics, you can do so in the discussion.
3. Please be sure that you clearly define all terms and concepts. This is always important, because it often occurs that different definitions are used for the same terms and concepts, and that different terms are used for the same definition.
4. The main question or purpose should be formulated in clear terms. The question should also be the logical result of the paragraphs preceding it.

Method

1. The selection of test subjects must be described in sufficient detail to allow replication.
2. Basic research that aims at a more profound understanding should be reported in such a way that it can be repeated by someone who has not been involved in the research (sample survey, procedure, hypotheses, measuring instruments, etc.).
3. Applied Research should be reported in such a way that the results can be verified and applied by someone who has not been involved in the research (context, diagnosis, aim, intervention, method, phasing, effect, etc.).
4. The concepts used must be measured or applied unequivocally and reliably. A detailed description of how the concepts have been measured should be included.
5. Provide an underpinning of your sample size (e.g., including an estimate of the power to detect the desired effect size).

Results

1. The selected statistical analyses and interventions must be appropriate to the research question and research aims and they must meet the assumptions that underlie the analysis techniques used. Make explicit how the assumptions were being assessed.
2. The results must be reported clearly and in agreement with what is taught on reporting statistical and other data analyses. Report both on the sampling variability (e.g., using statistical testing) and the effect size. Only include output with a clearly stated purpose and provide a clear interpretation. Refrain from interpreting non-significant results. The use of tables and figures is recommended so as to enhance interpretability.

Discussion

1. The discussion must contain a critical reflection on the study reported. If your sample is not ideal (e.g., do not (fully) match the target population of the study, or the sample size is rather limited) critically reflect upon this.
2. In the discussion, a critical and creative link between the introduction (What did we know already?) and the results (What have we learned?) must be provided, with a focus on the benefits, new ideas and suggestions for improvement, etc. that may be valuable for further research or practical applications.

The master's thesis must be written in English.

The student must use the template for the master's thesis on Brightspace.

1.3.4 Helpful resources for writing literature reviews and reports

The following list of books and articles on academic writing is a collection of suggestions from BSS staff members:

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Edition) (2010).

Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. [Especially the chapter on *Writing clearly and concisely*.]

Anderson-Cook, C. M. (2005). The Chicago guide to writing about numbers. *The American Statistician*, 59(3).

Bem, D. J. (1995). Writing a review article for Psychological Bulletin. *Psychological Bulletin*, 118(2), 172.

Landrum, R. E. (2008). *Undergraduate writing in psychology: learning to tell the scientific story*. Washington, DC : American Psychological Association.

Miller, J. E. (2013). *The Chicago guide to writing about multivariate analysis*. University of Chicago Press.

Silvia, P. J. (2007). *How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing*. Washington, DC : American Psychological Association.

Sternberg, R. J., & Sternberg, K. (2010). *The psychologist's companion: A guide to writing scientific papers for students and researchers*. Cambridge University Press.

Strunk Jr, W., & White, E. B. (2009). *The Elements of Style*. New York : Pearson Longman.

Williams, J.M. (2007). *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (9th Edition). New York: Pearson Longman.

1.3.5 Confidentiality and publication

The student is required to maintain confidentiality within the framework of the master's thesis research. This obligation relates to personal information, patient information and other confidential information which the student has acquired in the context of the research. The ownership of Master's Thesis Research Projects is always at the relevant department/first assessor. This means that the data collected in the framework of the Master's research by the student during and after the completion of the investigation remain the property of the relevant department/thesis supervisor.

The data are - unless otherwise agreed with the first assessor - kept at the University of Groningen in/by the first assessor, in accordance with the protocols for data storage.

Publishing on the basis of data from the master's thesis research is done in consultation and with the approval of the department/first assessor.

1.3.6 Deadline

The deadline for finishing the master's thesis is the end of block 2b (typically beginning of July).

1.4 Assessment

Students obtaining their Master's degree are assessed on several components, listed on the Research Master's Thesis Assessment form including rubrics. The form and rubrics are available electronically on Brightspace.

Students should make individual arrangements with supervisors about the deadline for handing in their thesis. Each thesis is evaluated by two assessors. Each assessor fills in an individual assessment form. The assessors jointly determine the grade which is reflected in the joint grading box on the first assessor's form, including a clear motivation of the grade. The first assessor will discuss this joint grading form with the student in order to provide feedback about the student's performance. Both assessors submit their assessment forms to rema.bss@rug.nl.

1.4.1 Procedure

1. The student writes the thesis and submits it to the first assessor. The second assessor will receive the manuscript of the thesis after approval by the first assessor and will judge the thesis within 10 working days. The assessment of the process is done solely by the first assessor.
2. The first and second assessor fill in an individual assessment form.
3. The first and second assessor jointly determine the grade, on the basis of the version delivered to the second assessor. Modifications can be made upon the second assessor's approval, but will not change the grade.
4. The first and second assessor jointly determine the grade which is reflected in the joint grading box on the first assessor's form, including a clear motivation of the grade.
5. The issue of a disagreement about the assessment, i.e. the first and second assessor cannot reach an agreement on the final assessment, is addressed fully in the Rules and regulations concerning graduation assignments in the bachelor's - and master's programmes of BSS, appendix 2 to the BSS TER.
6. If the master's thesis is considered inadequate, then the student has the possibility to carry out a repair once, within a period of 4 weeks. If the work remains insufficient, the student must register again for the graduation assignment.
7. If the master's thesis is considered adequate, a plagiarism scan takes place. The plagiarism assignment is required for each student to enable them to complete the submission of their master's thesis.
8. Plagiarism scan for students:
 - a. Open the Graduate School environment on the Brightspace.
 - b. In the menu above, go to Content and click master's thesis.
 - c. Click on Master's thesis for plagiarism check and upload the master's thesis.
 - d. Send a message to the first assessor that a plagiarism scan has been processed.
9. Plagiarism report for assessors:
 - a. Assessors can view the report by going to Assessment, then click on assignments and click Master's thesis for Plagiarism Check and find the student under Users.
 - b. Click on the percentage to view the Plagiarism report.
 - c. Evaluate the document:
 - passed plagiarism check. If there is no suspicion of plagiarism
 - failed plagiarism check. If the similarities with other documents raise the suspicion that a student has committed plagiarism. Consider the similarities involved, and decide whether you suspect plagiarism.
 - d. In case of suspected plagiarism, discuss the plagiarism results with the involved student(s). Contact the Graduate school coordinator if you continue to suspect plagiarism after this discussion.
 - e. Notify the student that the master's thesis has been graded.
10. The first assessor informs the student about the final grade of the master's thesis and discusses the joint grading form with the student in order to provide feedback about the

- student's performance.
11. The first and second assessor submit their assessment forms to rema.bss@rug.nl.
 12. The student submits the thesis to the secretary of the Graduate School, following the guidelines on Brightspace. The master's thesis will remain in the archive of the programme in connection with visitation and accreditation.
 13. The student uploads his/her thesis to the RUG library via:
https://forms.ub.rug.nl/theses_gmw_public/.
 14. The Graduate School appoints 30 ECs for the master's thesis module to the student in ProgRESS when the following documents are received via rema.bss@rug.nl:
 - the two assessment forms (signed by the first and second assessor)
 - the master's thesisand:
 - a plagiarism scan has been done
 - the student has submitted the master's thesis to the UG library.

1.5 Graduation process

Every year in September or October, there is a plenary Graduation Ceremony. If students finish the Research Master's programme at a different moment during the year, they can also pick up their diploma individually.

1.5.1 Registration of grades

In order to graduate within the second academic year, all the grades will need to be listed on ProgRESS before September 1st.

In order to graduate, students must start with the graduation procedure themselves. Before students expect to graduate (typically 6 weeks in advance), they must apply for the graduation programme in ProgRESS and offer their course list for review. Once all grades are registered on ProgRESS, the student can send an e-mail to rema.bss@rug.nl indicating that the student would like to graduate. Only the 120 EC that are required for the Research Master's programme will appear on the grades list. An official list of any additional courses can be requested from the Student Desk.

1.5.2 Important date

Grades need to be on ProgRESS and sent to rema.bss@rug.nl before the first of September.

1.5.3 Graduate after September

In case a student can't make it to the deadline of 1 September, please visit [our website](#) for information about the tuition fee.

If students graduate during the academic year, they can apply for their diploma by sending an e-mail to rema.bss@rug.nl once all their grades are listed in proGRESS. Students can pick up their diploma at the Graduate School office one month after their last grade has been registered on ProgRESS.

1.6 Final chapter

In cases not covered by these Rules and Regulations the Director of Studies monitors a settlement in accordance with statutory regulations.