

Teacher's Guidelines for the Monitoring and Assessment of Master Final Projects (MFP)

Description:

This document presents some basic orientations and regulation aspects related with Master Final Projects at Unitat de Coordinació Acadèmica d'Enginyeries i TIC (UCA-EiTIC¹) at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. It should be considered that each master has their own formative and research scope, objectives and other specific characteristics, so, these guidelines must be understood as a general framework. For detailed information, it is highly recommended to check each master description at the UCA- EiTIC website (<http://portal.upf.edu/web/etic/postgrau>).

The master thesis project is carried out mainly during the last two trimesters of the academic year and evaluated by a committee integrated by three members: the master's coordinator, the thesis supervisor and another faculty member of the master. This evaluation of the thesis project takes into account the tutoring sessions, the oral presentation and the written report. The criteria used for the evaluation can be found on the appendix.

Autonomous work and Supervision:

Master students must be autonomous and prove they can undertake a research problem and successfully reach the expected goals. The general process for choosing the project is:

- a) Master coordination publishes a list of potential projects/topics/supervisors.
- b) Students prioritize options for projects/topics, contact professors and write motivation letters.
- c) Allocation of projects to students is done.
- d) Master coordinators makes sure that every student has finally allocated a master thesis topic
- e) After this admission for project issues is done, master students know also the supervisor assigned to help them and guide them through the process to a successful thesis.

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Oral presentation:

Students present the status of their master project work in front of the evaluation committee at the end of the academic year in a public presentation. This presentation does not require to have finished the actual thesis report. Prior to the oral presentation, the student has to submit a draft of the thesis as a PDF file to the supervisor and to the evaluation committee. Oral presentations take 20 minutes plus 10 minutes of questions from the evaluation committee. Oral presentations are scheduled during the last week of June.

Thesis report:

There is one single deadline for the submission of the thesis report (usually at the end of August). Prior to this deadline, the student has to submit the final version of the thesis as a PDF files to the supervisor and to the rest of the evaluation committee via email. Accordingly, the student and supervisor have to arrange that the supervisor has enough time to read and assess the final thesis text before the deadline. After the submission, the evaluation committee fills up the evaluation form and determines the final grade of the thesis project. To facilitate the work of all parties involved we encourage that reports finished before the deadline are sent to the evaluation committee as soon as possible.

Formatting of the report:

As for the format of the written thesis (Font size, line spacing, margins, Section numbering, etc) we propose that the students follow the A4 templates proposed by the UPF to be used in the PhD thesis provided in [here](#) but using [this cover](#). There is no preference on the word processor to use and we will accept documents written with any one, such as LaTeX, Word or LibreOffice. In contrast to the PhD-guidelines the Master thesis should have no prologue, and the abstract should be in English only. The length of the abstract can be up to 500-600 words.

Length and structure of the report:

The thesis report can be structured according to Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion. However, this is not mandatory. Different overall organizations of the report can be used, if necessary. As a general guideline we would like to indicate that a Master report is not supposed to reach the comprehensiveness of a PhD thesis. An adequate length of the thesis is between 20-40 pages (This page count assumes the format referred to above. This count includes the text, figures, figure captions, tables but excludes cover pages, abstract, acknowledgements, table of contents, references and also excludes technical appendices, such as for example programming source codes). The number of 20-40 pages is regarded as a guideline. If a student wants to write 50 pages instead, that is discouraged but perfectly tolerated. A longer report will not result in a lower grade. However, a report should have neither 5 nor 150 pages.

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Appendix: Criteria for the evaluation

A: The quality of the written project report

1: The report is incomprehensible. It does not meet the minimal criteria for scientific writing.

2: The report is difficult to read and not well-organized. Only after complete rewriting and restructuring a publication of the text could potentially be considered.

3: The report is more or less clear but could be published only after major revision.

4: The report is well-written and well-organized. It could be published after minor revisions.

5: The report is very well-written and very well-organized. The state of the art is correctly assessed. In terms of its quality and scientific writing it could be published as it stands in an international journal in the context of the thesis' research line.

Here the evaluation committee should take into account how much effort was needed to reach the quality of the text. For example: Suppose the texts of two students both qualify for grade 4 according to the above criteria. Further suppose that the text of the first student required only a moderate level of correction by the supervisor, whereas the text of the second student required many iterations of extensive corrections. In this case the evaluation committee can consider to rate the report of the first student with 4 and the report of the second student with 3. Furthermore, the evaluation committee should take into account the degree to which the student actively and independently studied the literature underlying the thesis. Here, the inclusion of only 15 references that the student actually read and understood can be more valuable than the inclusion of 100 references of which the student has only heard of.

Grade A:

Comments:

B: The quality of the oral project report

1: The oral project report was incomprehensible. It did not meet the minimal criteria for a scientific presentation.

2: The oral project report was difficult to follow. Only after complete reorganization a presentation at an international conference as contribution of a junior member of the research community could potentially be considered.

3: The oral project report was more or less clear but could be presented at an international scientific conference as contribution of a junior member of the research community only after major revision.

4: The oral project report was well-organized and well-presented. After some improvements the oral project report could be presented at an international scientific conference as contribution of a junior member of the research community.

5: The oral project report was very well-organized and very well-presented. The slides or possible other means of presentation were clear and elaborated. Therefore, they complemented the oral presentation very well. The actual oral presentation was clear. In this form it could be presented at an international scientific conference as contribution of a junior member of the research community in the context of the thesis' research line.

Grade B:

Comments:

C: The student's contribution to the outcome of the project

1: The student made absolutely no contribution and showed no initiative. The student did not work independently nor showed any coherent organization of the work.

2-4: Please intrapolate between the extremes specified in 1 and 5.

5: The student made very substantial contributions to solve the task of the thesis. The student managed to work independently but also to communicate the work with his colleagues and the supervisor. The student organized the work on the thesis very well.

Here the evaluation committee should take into account that a partial solution of a very difficult and challenging problem can be as valuable as the full solution of a relatively easy problem. Furthermore, it is important that students who join the research group just for the period of the thesis (group A) should have the exact same chances compared to students that had an ongoing association to the research group already before the start of their thesis (group B). In particular, work that students of group B did before beginning the master thesis might be reflected in the written thesis report. Thereby the overall contribution of students of the group B can be more substantial than the one of students of group A. This however, should not lead to any disadvantage for students of the group A. In effect the evaluation committee should either only take contributions into account that were made during the thesis or normalize the amount of contributions by the time the student had to make them.

The criterion that the student 'managed to work independently but also to communicate the work with his colleagues and the supervisor' should be interpreted as follows: Initially the supervisor and student should jointly divide the overall thesis project into smaller work packages. The student should then accomplish these work packages independently, or, as the case may be, in collaboration with other members of the group. Upon completion of individual work packages the student should again coordinate with the supervisor to plan subsequent steps. The opposite of 'independent working' is given if a student requires the supervisor to pre-process and work out each and every detail of the thesis project. The opposite of 'communicating work' is given if a student is asked to report on the progress on intermediate steps but fails to do so. The details of the interaction between the student, supervisor and research group will depend on the research line as well as on the structure and context of the research group. In general, the supervisor will inform the student of what type of collaboration is required for a successful completion of the thesis work.

For this criterion the supervisor will provide the initial assessment to the evaluation committee which will then jointly agree on a final assessment. This final assessment will also consider the student participation in the tutoring sessions based on the feedback from the tutoring sessions' coordinator.

Grade C:

Comments:

Additional merit

In case the student contributed to scientific posters, talks, or articles (to be) published in international journals or (to be) presented at international conferences, this can be taken into account as a positive aspect in determining the grades for the criteria A-C. The student does not necessarily have to be the principal author of this contribution. It is sufficient if the student's contribution resulted in a co-authorship.

Different Master students will work in different research contexts. In different research contexts different forms of publishing are used, work is published with different frequencies and on different time scales. Therefore, some students will not have the opportunity to contribute to any publication during the thesis work. Importantly, this does not imply that the work of these students is less qualified. These students should by no means have any disadvantage against those students that can contribute to publications. In other words: Also students that cannot contribute to publications should have the same chance to reach very high grades as those students that can.