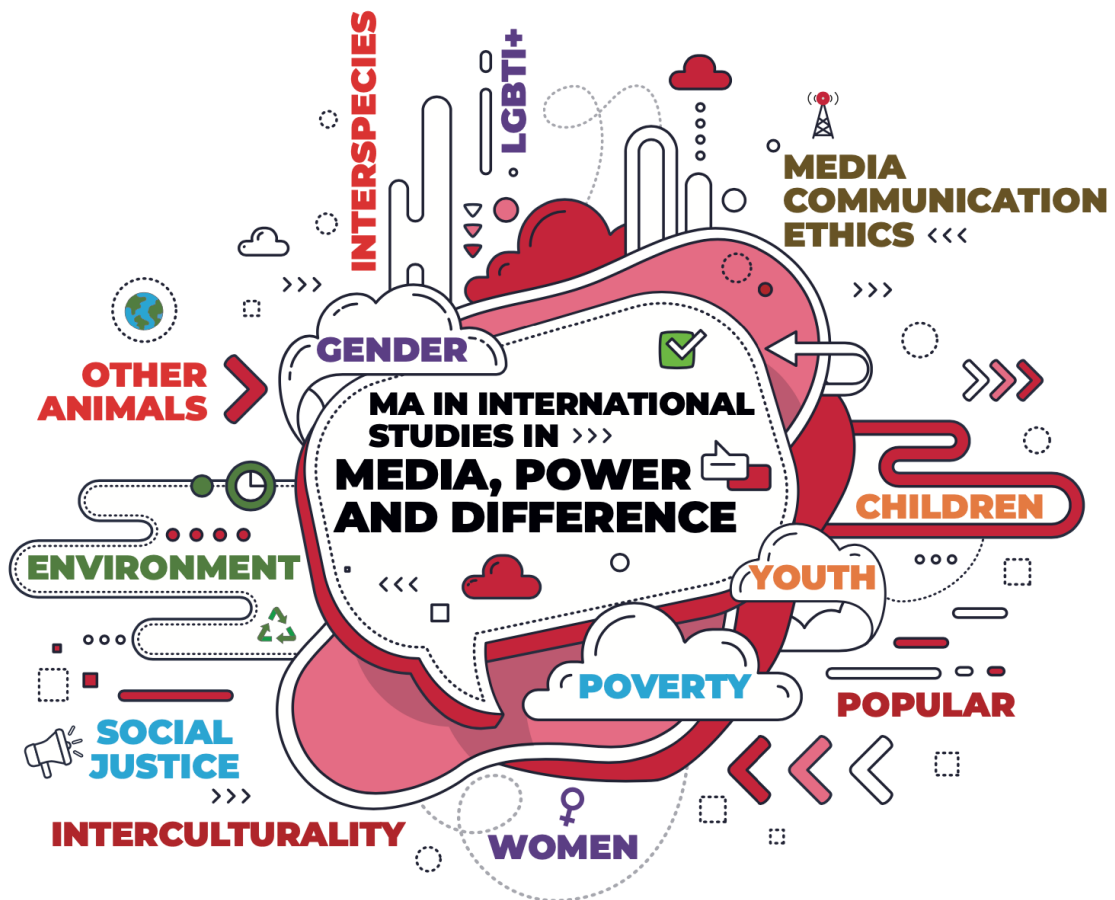# MA in International Studies in Media, Power and Difference

Department of Communication

Dissertation Guidelines 2023-2024

CONTENTS

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The 15 ECTS of the Master's Final Project have to be passed through the submission of a work in order to show the student's research skills. The project has also to be presented in a public dissertation session in front of a Committee made up of three doctor lecturers.

1.1 Objective

The Master's Final Project has the objective to prove the intellectual maturity and the research skills of the student. It has to be an original project, as a result of the personal work of the student under the guidance of a supervisor.

1.2 Dedication of the student

The dedication of the student for the Master's Final Project is of 375 hours. These hours include the work of literature review, sample collection if required, research time, the discussion with the supervisor and the writing of the project.

1.3 The supervisor

The Master's Final Project is carried out under the monitoring of a supervisor, which is assigned to the student by the coordinator during the second term.

Eligible supervisor are the doctors who give teaching in the Master, the doctors of the Department, doctors of UPF as co-supervisor with a doctor from the Department, doctors outside UPF as co-supervisor with a doctor from the Department.

1.4 Submission's Deadline

The project must be submitted by June 17th 2024 (the time limit is midnight). We encourage early submissions.

Delays won't be admitted. All the students which won't deliver or pass the Master's Final Project will be able to register it in the next academic year, provided that they fulfil the requirements about continuity and number of calls. Please note this involves a fees surcharge.

1.5 Language

The project can be written in English, Spanish or Catalan. The oral presentations can be conducted also in any of these three languages.

1.6 Dissertation's Deadline

The Project will be defended publicly in front of an assessment committee made up of three doctor lecturers.

The dissertation will take place at the beginning of July. The exact days will be notified through email during the academic year.

The period between the delivery and the public dissertation won't be in any case inferior to fifteen calendar days. During this time, the project will be available to all the doctor lecturers of the Department.

1.7 Publication of the Project

Projects awarded with the excellent mark (greater than or equal to 9) will be published in RECERCAT, the Catalan digital research repository, for public dissemination. Students must attach the related permission when delivering the project. Students can provide a final version of their project for publication if typos and other minor issues need to be corrected.

1.8 Submission documentation (get the forms at:

To be delivered to the Secretary of the Department of Communication

- Form for the delivery of the Master's Final Project
- Permission to publish the project in the Catalan Digital Research Repository (RecerCat)
- One PDF copy of the Master's Final Project uploaded to the master's programme Moodle, stating in the subject "TFM Name.Family name. (100 MB maximum allowed).

1.9 Assessment

The final evaluation of the dissertation will be done through the presentation and oral defence of it. The examination committee will be made up of three research and teaching members of the Department of Communication at the UPF. The committee will issue a grade that will have to take into account the following elements:

• Quality of the project (75% of the final grade of the tribunal)

• Oral presentation (25% of the final grade of the tribunal)

In the quality of the project, the committee will also take into account the evaluation of the tutor. This includes for each student:

• Participation in tutoring sessions (physical or virtual)

• Compliance to the working plan and timing

For the calculation of the final grade, none of the qualifications may be less than 4.

For more details on the criteria used by the committee to assess both the project and the presentation please check section 5 in this document.

1.10 Committee

- The supervisor of the project (as chair of the committee)
- Two doctors chosen by the coordinator of the programme and the Dept. of Communication.

2. FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Cover and first page

All types of final project must include:

1. Cover page with:

- Title of the document
- Author or authors' name
- Supervisor
- Publication date: **Academic Year 20--/--**
- The name of the collection: **Research Project of the MA in International Studies on Media, Power, and Difference**
- Name of the sub-community: **Department of Communication**
- Name of the University: **Universitat Pompeu Fabra**

First page with:

- Abstract: maximum 150-word length in the same language of the Project
- Keywords: a list of keywords about the content, with a maximum length of 200 characters
- Type of the project (PhD proposal, Research Dissertation, Theoretical Dissertation, Journal Article)

2.2 Digital file

The document must be uploaded in PDF format. If there are some annexes, they must be embedded in the text file. **The size limit per file must be inferior to 100MB**.

A second file can be uploaded if necessary for supplementary material (audio/video recordings, extra images, etc.). Standard formats are recommended.

3. SUPERVISION PROCESS

The Supervisor's role is to assist the student in the development of a suitable project and methodology. The supervisor is neither going to provide a topic nor to tell the student what to research. Yet he or she will assist the student in the project design, research and writing.

Students must agree with the supervisor on the most suitable points of contact (office, video-meeting, email) and a timetable for delivery of draft chapters and for working sessions.

The supervision process will consist of **three working sessions** where the supervisor will:

- Assist in the project design

- Point in the direction of useful sources and references

- Provide feedback and advice for initial drafts (including single chapters, questionnaires, interview guides, etc.)

- Comment once upon final drafts of dissertations (they must be delivered well in advanced of the final project submission date; each supervisor will provide a deadline for this and will review the final draft only once)

Students will:

- Be proactive in contacting their supervisors to arrange a schedule and working plan, delivering drafts, etc.

- Be properly prepared for each supervision session by having a clear idea of the ground they want to cover and the questions they want to ask

- Submit their best work to the supervisor, even if the material is 'in draft' –the supervisor may return work that is not properly checked for spelling and grammar, or is not properly referenced

- Not expect the supervisor to correct spelling and grammatical mistakes or to do proof-reading

- Avoid emailing large quantities of text two days before a deadline with a request for comments and critique the next day

4. TYPES OF FINAL MASTER DISSERTATION

There are two eligible types of dissertations. Students must adhere to one type:

Type 1. *Theoretical Dissertation*

Type 2. *Research-based Dissertation*

The two types aim for the student to acquire the following knowledge:

- Disciplinary knowledge
- Methodological knowledge

The capacities and skills acquired by the student in any modality must be as follow:

- The ability to gather, select, systematize and manage information, documentation, and bibliographical materials
- The capacity to design, structure, and articulate a research project or academic paper
- The capacity to pose and form original proposals to solve relevant research problems
- The capacity to articulate a complex discourse
- The capacity for criticism and self-criticism
- The capacity for analysis and synthesis
- The capacity to work alone
- Rigour in the presentation of the written material

What follows are the requested structure for each type:

Type 1. Theoretical Dissertation

A theoretical or non-empirical dissertation focuses on secondary research – you use data collected and presented by other researchers to develop an argument. This type of dissertation doesn't have any data of your own; it is entirely literature-based. This is likely to be the methodology of theoretical analysis: selection and discussion of theoretical and descriptive material, in context, and detailed comparison of theories in terms of their applicability. The focus is not so much on discovering something about the social world as on reaching a judgement about the value of key concepts or theories for understanding that world. There are few formal constraints on this type of dissertation, but theoretical essays should at least include and apply:

a) **Introduction**. This should include:

- An introduction to the specific topic chosen and a justification of its importance, novelty and academic relevance within the field of communication.

- A general description of the state of the question of the topic to be researched.

- An introduction to your argument, i.e. your main aim and research question(s) or specific aims. Be mindful to avoid duplications. You can present your research questions either directly as questions or as specific aims, stick to one format only.

- An outline of the structure of the dissertation.

b) **State of the question**. If necessary, a more developed state of the question (the problem addressed) can be included in a new section. The state of the question refers to the current understanding, scholarly discussion, and key research findings related to a specific academic question or topic.

b) **Literature review**. This should include:

- Discussing the main themes/ideas that are explicit or implicit in your general aim and research questions/specific aims by presenting and commenting on a selection of relevant literature.

- Most of the literature reviewed should be primary sources, academic reflections or empirical studies.

- Most of the literature reviewed should have been published within the last ten years.

c) **Developing your argument.** In a theoretical essay this can be done:

- At the same time as the literature review (e.g. if your aim is to compare authors and ideas)

- In a separate section (e.g. if your aim is to build on the authors and ideas discussed in the literature review). In this case, the argument must still be developed in the context of the literature review.

d) **Conclusion**. This is the final section and it should include:

- In theoretical essays, the discussion section is usually embedded in the development of the argument. If this is not the case, you should include a discussion of your findings here or in a separate section before the conclusions.

- The conclusions of your essay should build on your previous argumentation and provide a clear answer to the research questions/specific aims, together with an explanation of how the main aim of the essay has been achieved.

- Include an acknowledgement of any limitations of your work and suggestions for future research.

- Finally, summarise the contribution of your work to the field of communication addressed.

f) **List of references**: A final list of all references used in the paper should be included at the end. Please apply the following:

- All references used throughout the paper should be included.

- Only references cited in the paper should be included.

- References must be listed alphabetically without bullets.

- Chicago style must be used.

Please refer to the master's guidelines for further details on how to write an academic paper, how to do a literature review and how to apply Chicago style.

Length: The Dissertation must be between 9,000 and 12,000 words (references included; appendixes not included).

Sources: At least 20 different sources should be cited and, when discussing published sources, they should be referred to in the past tense.

Ethical considerations: Include a statement acknowledging the use of AI, following the Master's guidelines for doing this.

Type 2. Research-based Dissertation

This type of dissertation consists of empirical research on a topic and is presented in the form of a typical research paper. This dissertation contains empirical results of any kind (from text/image analysis, surveys, interviews, documentary observation, ethnography, etc.). It must contain at least the following sections:

a) **Introduction**. This should include:

- An introduction to the specific topic chosen and a justification of its importance, novelty and academic relevance within the field of communication.

- A general description of the state of the question of the topic to be researched.

- An introduction to your argument, i.e. your main aim and research question(s) or specific aims. Be mindful to avoid duplications. You can

present your research questions either directly as questions or as specific aims, stick to one format only.

- An outline of the structure of the dissertation.

b) **State of the question**. If necessary, a more developed state of the question (the problem addressed) can be included in a new section. The state of the question refers to the current understanding, scholarly discussion, and key research findings related to a specific academic question or topic.

b) **Literature review**. This should include:

- Discussing the main themes/ideas that are explicit or implicit in your general aim and research questions/specific aims by presenting and commenting on a selection of relevant literature.

- Most of the literature reviewed should be primary sources, academic reflections or empirical studies.

- Most of the literature reviewed should have been published within the last ten years.

c) **Research design:** It is a good idea to start this section by reminding the reader what your research problem (the main aim of your dissertation) is and what your research questions or specific aims are. Then provide all the details to describe the method applied (how you have proceeded), including:

- *Type of Research*: Describe whether the study is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods

- *Study Setting*: Detail the location and context where the research takes place, which is particularly important for fieldwork or case studies.

- *Sampling Method*: Explain how participants or data sources were selected, including sample size, and the rationale for this choice.

- *Data Collection Methods*: Describe the tools and procedures used for gathering data, such as surveys, interviews, observations, or archival research.

- *Data Analysis*: Outline the techniques and processes used to analyse the data, including any software or statistical methods.

- *Ethical Considerations*: Address ethical issues related to the study, including informed consent and how participant confidentiality is maintained. Include a statement acknowledging the use of AI, following the Master's guidelines for doing this.

- *Limitations*: Acknowledge any limitations in your research design that might impact the results or generalizability of the study. This can be included also at the end of the conclusions.

- *Time Frame*: If relevant, provide the time frame over which the data was collected.

d) **Results**. This section presents the results of your data analysis. Please note that:

- It should clearly explain how the data are presented to answer the research questions or specific aims, so that the results are directly related to the aims of the study.

- It is strongly recommended to use tables, figures or pictures to present the results. All should be numbered, self-explanatory, self-contained, discussed in the text and show patterns and trends.

- The presentation of results should be clear and concise, and evaluative statements should be avoided.

d) **Conclusion**. This is the final section and it should include:

- You should include a discussion of your findings here or in a separate section before the conclusions.

- The conclusions of your essay should build on your previous argumentation and provide a clear answer to the research questions/specific aims, together with an explanation of how the main aim of the essay has been achieved.

- Include an acknowledgement of any limitations of your work, if you have not included them in the research design section, and suggestions for future research.

- Finally, summarise the contribution of your work to the field of communication addressed.

f) **List of references**: A final list of all references used in the paper should be included at the end. Please apply the following:

- All references used throughout the paper should be included.

- Only references cited in the paper should be included.

- References must be listed alphabetically without bullets.

- Chicago style must be used.

Please refer to the master's guidelines for further details on how to write an academic paper, how to do a literature review and how to apply Chicago style.

Length: The Dissertation must be between 9,000 and 12,000 words (references included; appendixes not included).

Sources: At least 20 different sources should be cited and, when discussing published sources, they should be referred to in the past tense.

REGARDING THE TOPICS OF CHOICE: Please note that all dissertations must make an innovative contribution to the issues of **communicating diversity and difference** as addressed in this programme. They must therefore be consistent with the **equal and fair treatment of all individuals**. Explicit or implicit advocacy of any form of violence against human or non-human individuals will therefore not be accepted.

5. ORAL PRESENTATIONS PROCEDURE

Members of the committee

- A chair (the supervisor of the final project to be assessed)
- Two more members (two doctors selected by the coordinator & the department)

Procedure

The oral presentations will be conducted according to the following procedure:

1. Welcome by the commission's chair
2. Student's presentation (15')
3. Comments by the two members of the committee (15')
4. Student's final discussion (5')

The total time for each oral presentation cannot exceed 40 minutes.

After the session the committee will deliberate but no public notice will be made at this moment. The grade will be notified privately to each student by the secretary on the week after.

Assessment

The final evaluation of the dissertation will be done through the presentation and oral defence of it. The examination panel will be made up of three research and teaching members of the Department of Communication at the UPF (one is the tutor of the project). The tribunal will issue a grade that will have to take into account the following elements:

- Quality of the project (75% of the final grade of the tribunal)

- Oral presentation (25% of the final grade of the tribunal)

Assessment criteria for the quality of the project (75%):

- Tutor assessment (*participation in tutoring sessions, compliance to the working plan and timing*)
- Quality of the project:
  - *Rationale:* Is there a reasonable, well-structured exposition of ideas?
  - *Form*: Is the project following the standard formatting of an academic presentation?
  - *Hypothesis/objectives/research questions/ formulated*: Are they clear, enough, original?
  - *Theoretical foundations:* Is the work well grounded on literature review or on a particular theoretical approach or approaches? Is there a sound theoretical justification of the project?
  - *Creativity and innovation*: Is the project inventive, imaginative in some aspect?
  - *Methodology and fieldwork (not applicable to theoretical dissertations):* Is the applied methodology well explained? Is there a well research design? Are the methodological choices reasonable?

Assessment criteria for the oral presentation (25%):

- *Audibility*: Can the student be heard clearly throughout?
- *Pace*: Is the pace of the speech, or flow of ideas, too fast or too slow?
- *Fluency*: Is the speech pattern fluent, indicating familiarity with the material?
- *Tone and Energy*: Is there sufficient variation in tone? Does the presenter seem enthusiastic?
- *Eye Contact*: Is the presenter making eye contact across the audience?
- *Body Language and Gesture*: Is the presenter's posture upright and confident?
- *Structure and Cohesion*: Was the structure clearly outlined? Is the order logical and easy to follow? Is the balance of various elements effective? Is timing accurate?
- *Visual Aids*: Is there a suitable amount? Are they easy to read? Do they effectively support the oral delivery? Does the presenter use them competently?

6. ASSESSMENT RUBRIC (The members of the committee will use this form)

Dissertation assessment

MA in International Studies in Media, Power and Difference

REVIEWER	

DISSERTATION IDENTIFICATION				
Author				
Title				
Supervisor				
Date of defence				
Type of project	PhD proposal	Theoretical paper	Research paper	Academic paper

RECOMMENDED GRADE (0 to 10)	
Comments for the student:	
Date:	

Assessment criteria:

Y: Yes, sufficiently **/ NE:** Yes, but not enough **/ N:** Not at all **/ DA**: It doesn't apply

1. RATIONALE	Y	NE	N	DA
Is there a reasonable, well-structured presentation of ideas? Is the information presented in clear blocks, with titles and subtitles that are relevant in terms of their location throughout the written discourse and their correspondence with the information that they precede? Does the report include all the required sections?				
Is coherence preserved, from the presentation and justification of the project idea and the presentation of the project's objectives, to the project's final conclusions?				
Is the research well-motivated and justified within the domain of social communication and the topics and aims of the MA in International Studies in Media, Power and Difference?				
Comments for the student:				

2. CONTENT	Y	NE	N	DA
Does the introduction clearly summarise what the research project is about?				
Are the sections sufficiently and suitably developed and argued? Is the reader taken into consideration? ?				
Are the arguments exhaustively explained and justified and, where applicable, contrasted against or integrated with different points of view. Is there a solution proposed to deal with any discrepancies or, if possible, has a new proposal been put forward?				
Is the work grounded enough in a review of the literature or in a particular theoretical approach or approaches? Is a theoretical justification of the project included?				
Do the conclusions clearly summarise the research topic, aims and findings and interpret those findings within the chosen theoretical framework?				
Does it include a sufficient number of relevant and reliable references?				
Comments for the student:				

3. METHODOLOGY	Y	NE	N	DA
Is there a clear definition of key concepts for the project?				
Are objectives/hypothesis/research questions well formulated, realistic and justified? Does the project include a discussion and justification of research focus/problems?				
Is there a detailed account and justification for the methods adopted?				
Is a clear justification of data collection/generation process and instruments included?				
Does it include a reflective account of the research process, including challenges, problems, weak/strong points, limitations and ethical issues (if applicable)?				
Comments for the student:				

4. CREATIVITY & INNOVATION	Y	NE	N	DA
Does the project have an inventive or imaginative aspect?				
Does the project represent progress with respect to previous works, and make a genuine contribution to the corresponding scientific/professional area in connection with the needs to which said works attempt to respond?				
Does the project reflect or is it applicable to the reality to which it is addressed?				
Comments for the student:				

5. FORMAL ASPECTS	Y	NE	N	DA
Are the grammar, spelling, and punctuation of the dissertation correct (facilitating the understanding of the written discourse)?				
Does the project correctly apply the reference rules (Chicago style) in tables, figures, citations, and bibliographical references?				
Does the project make correct use of citations in the text?				

Does the table of contents accurately reflect what is included in the project?				
Are the pages of the dissertation numbered?				
Does the dissertation meet the formal characteristics outlined in the final project guidelines (like page limits)?				
Comments for the student:				

6. FOR THE TUTOR	**Y**	**NE**	**N**
Has the student complied with the working plan and timing of the project as agreed with the tutor? Has the student attended and prepared the tutoring sessions?			
Comments for the student:			