GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ON THE FINAL DISSERTATION

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1. General information

The final exam (18 ECTS) consists of the writing and public discussion of a master's dissertation (*Tesi di Laurea Magistrale*) in English. The final dissertation is an original piece of work of an adequate level of originality and persuasiveness, written by the candidate under the supervision of a Professor of the Programme (*Relatore* – Supervisor), possibly assisted by another Professor or junior academic (*Correlatore* – co-supervisor).

The dissertation (15 000 to 20 000 words, excluding Table of Contents and Bibliography) elaborates on a topic covered by the Programme and may be developed in connection with work done during the internship. It will present a research question and develop an original, documented, convincing, and well-written argument.

Final dissertations, being academic pieces of work, must reach a minimum standard of quality, in methodology, content, and presentation. In particular, they must be carefully documented and make constant reference to sources, including primary documents and scholarly analysis.

Through their written work and its public defence, candidates are expected to demonstrate advanced knowledge and understanding of the topic chosen and the underlying general framework, as well as the ability to elaborate critically on it.

2. The student's relationship with the Supervisor

The first step towards the final dissertation is to identify a topic and do some initial research into the existing scholarly analysis of it.

Then, a possible Supervisor should be identified. This is normally the instructor of the Course to which the topic is related, paying special attention to the prevalent methodological approach that you want to take (legal, economic, social sciences, etc…).

Before approaching a Professor to ask her/him to be Supervisor, the student must prepare:

- a research proposal (one page), indicating the research question, the methodological approach, the "state of the art" (i.e. a first review of existing scholarly analysis of the topic) and the expected outcome
- a preliminary bibliography (approximately ten to fifteen books and/or scientific journal articles), and
- a brief outline of the dissertation

If the Professor accepts to supervise the dissertation, she/he will give some guidance on how to proceed in a first meeting.

Another Professor or a Junior Faculty member (including Ph.D. Candidates) may be requested, with the agreement of the Supervisor, to act as a Co-supervisor. The Co-supervisor can either assist the Supervisor or provide an alternative perspective (especially for dissertations having an interdisciplinary dimension).

Afterwards, the student can expect to meet her/his supervisor around four times, to finalize the topic and to have feedbacks on her/his review of a first and a second draft. Please note that the failure to inform the Supervisor for more than four weeks of the progresses made with the work may be considered by the Supervor as a tacit renunciation by the Student.

The supervisor(s) must be given enough time to read and evaluate the work submitted before returning it to students with comments and suggestions. Students must have time to incorporate those comments.

Drafts, including the first one, must be well structured and thoughtful, written in correct English and formatted consistently and adequately. Overall, its content and presentation must *prima facie* demonstrate that the candidate has devoted sufficient time and care.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the drafts, in particular the final one, are proofread, for both language and editing. It is not the Supervisor's task to do this work.

While the Programme teaching staff is committed to react promptly to students' requests, do not expect supervisors to return the draft with correction within days, regardless of it being an early or the final version. One to two weeks is an acceptable time, especially if you need a substantial supervisory activity.

Supervisors may propose minor corrections, but also substantial changes. The supervisor may also reject the draft without comments, and ask for it to be resubmitted if it is below the minimum standard (form-wise or contentwise) set out in the preceding paragraphs.

It is the exclusive decision of the Supervisor to consider a draft as final and ready to be submitted for public discussion. This means that the student may be asked to revise her/his work multiple times until an acceptable minimum standard is reached.

3. Format requirements

The dissertation must be written in Word format (or an alternative word processing equivalent), to be eventually converted in pdf/A for submission.

The page setup must be the following: A4 format, Times New Roman size 12 (or equivalent), 1.5 line spacing, margins 2 cm in the sides and 3 cm for the top and bottom. Footnotes/endnotes should be in a smaller size of the same font and single-spaced.

The cover page must include the dissertation title, the student's full name and matriculation number, and the full name of the thesis' Supervisor and Co-supervisor.

The dissertation must be 15 000 to 20 000 words-long, excluding the table of contents, the footnotes, and the bibliography (roughly 50 pages). It shall be organised in numbered Chapters and Paragraphs, and include an Introduction and a Conclusion. A Table of Contents and a Bibliography must also be included.

Students, with the Supervisor's agreement, may choose any of the standard citation styles. The chosen style must be consistently followed throughout the dissertation.

4. Time management

The research and writing of a dissertation may take a significant amount of time.

In accordance with the applicable Regulation, the 18 ECTS awarded for the final dissertation and exam correspond to 525 hours of workload for the student.

Students are advised to plan their steps, taking into account that around six months are normally necessary between the first meeting with the supervisor and the deadline for the submission. This is only indicative, since the duration of the research and writing work may depend on several factors, including the requirements of the discipline, the complexity of the subject, the background of the student, and the amount of time devoted to this activity.

Dissertations are discussed in four Rounds, organised into three Sessions:

- Summer Session
  - Single Round: June/July
- Autumn Session
  - First Round: October
  - Second Round: January
- Winter Session
  - Single Round: March

For each Round, the precise period and a detailed calendar of deadlines will be provided on the website.

5. Application for graduation and submission of the dissertation

The following steps are necessary to take the final exam (dissertation discussion):

- Period of online application for graduation
- Deadline for the completion of the graduation candidate's questionnaire
- Deadline for completing exams

- Deadline for delivering of paper copies of the thesis to supervisor and co-supervisor
- Deadline for the online dissertation submission

Students may submit their dissertation through the UNIMIA/SIFA online platform (link to website) only after having obtained the Supervisors' agreement.

Only students having obtained and registered the credits for taught courses (93 ECTS) and the compulsory internship (6 ECTS) within the established deadlines are admitted to the discussion of their final dissertation.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure, before submitting the dissertation that:

- the individual study plan on UniMia corresponds to the exams taken, which the student wants to count on their official transcript towards the 120 credits of their Master's Degree (extra credits will be recorded, but will not count towards the Degree) . If needed to align the former with the latter, Students have an opportunity to submit changes (however, the payment of a 20 € registry fee will be required);
- if applicable, a request to be awarded an optional extra point for meritorious extracurricular activities has been duly submitted under the relevant rules and procedures that are published on the website. Meritorious activities include extra internships and participation in moot competitions (as a member of the UNIMI team).

6. Rules and procedures for Final exam extra points

Candidates are entitled to be awarded up to two extra admission points for graduation. The awarding of extra point(s) can be automatic or optional (upon request and assessment).

Automatic extra points are given for:

(a) one point, if the candidate graduates within the last graduation session of the last academic year of her/his study plan (*laurea in corso*);

b) one point, if the candidate has spent a period of study abroad within the framework of European Union programmes, such as Erasmus Plus and Erasmus Placement, or in any case based on international exchange agreements, provided that she/he has obtained at least 70% of the CFU provided for in the Learning Agreement, or if she/he has carried out research activities abroad for the drafting of the Master's dissertation, in agreement with her/his supervisor.

One optional extra point can be awarded to a candidate who has not obtained the two extra points indicated above, has completed extracurricular activities of particular distinction and educational content, and has duly filed a specific, motivated and documented request to this effect.

The request is assessed by a "Committee for the awarding of an extra point for graduation" composed of three memmbers of the Didactic Board.

Meritorious extracurricular activities include:

a) Extracurricular internships or traineeships in Italy or abroad which are particularly relevant to the Master programme or of particular distinction;
b) Participation in a national or international moot competition as a member of the University team, in areas related to the Master programme;
c) Other experiences showing that the candidate otherwise deserves the extra point, having regard to the university and extracurricular experiences. In particular, in the case of attendance at a summer school or a postgraduate course, a minimum duration of two weeks is normally required; this duration requirement may be waived at the discretion of the "Committe for the attribution of the extra graduation point" for summer schools or postgraduate courses particularly prestigious and/or relevant to the Master programme. The Committee decides on the attribution of the optional points based on the duration, prestige and relevance to the Master's programme of the activity carried out.

Participation in the governing bodies of the University does not give rise to an extra point.

Requests for extra graduation points, supported by documents certifying the activities carried out by the student, must be sent from the student's university email address (. @studenti.unimi.it) to the Didactic Office of the Law Faculty (didattica.giurisprudenza@unimi.it):

- The SUBJECT of the mail must be "Application for an extra graduation point",
- In ATTACHMENT the mail must provide:
  - The duly completed application form, accurately describing the activity and the period of performance and motivating the request
  - All the supporting documents needed to assess the request. These documents must show that the activity has been effectively done, the timeline and workload, the detailed content of the activities reported by the student, and their relevance to the scope of the Master programme.

Acknowledgement of receipt of the request is given to the student by the Segreteria didattica.

The requesting student is informed, by email, of the decision of the "Committee for the awarding of an extra point for graduation", with a short motivation.

7. Public discussion of the dissertation

The discussion of the final dissertation is a public defence of the work done before an Examination Board, composed of 5 to 7 professors, normally including the Supervisor and Co-supervisor.

On the day of the final exam, students must deliver a paper copy of their final dissertation to the Board.

The Supervisor briefly introduces the candidate and her/his written dissertation. The candidate is expected to briefly present her/his research question, methodology, and main findings. This should take around 10 minutes and can be done with the aid of tools such as the projection of slides, only if previously agreed upon by the supervisor.

A discussion follows, normally opened by the Supervisor. Any member of the Board is entitled to ask questions and/or make observations, comments, or even criticism of the dissertation and/or the student's presentation.

The candidate is expected to take note of the questions/comments/criticism and reply to them in a concise, clear, and polite manner, demonstrating the ability to think critically about her/his work. At the end of the discussion, the Board meets *in camera* (i.e. behind closed doors).

It briefly discusses the Supervisor's proposal for the grading points to be recognised to the candidate, in light of the quality of her/his written thesis and oral defence. In exceptional cases, the Board may reject the candidate.

The public session is resumed and successful candidates are awarded their Master's Degree (*Laurea Magistrale*) through a solemn formula that indicates the final grade.

8. Final grade

The final grade is expressed on a scale of 110.

The final grade is composed as follows:

- Base admission points: equal to the weighted average (30 cum laude =30), expressed in a scale of 110, rounded to the nearest whole number;
- Extra admission points: up to two points for timely graduation or participation in mobility programmes (automatic) and/or meritorious extracurricular activities (upon request, under the applicable Regulation);
- Final exam points: up to 6 points.

In exceptional cases, the Examination Board, by unanimous vote, can award honours (Lode) to a candidate who has obtained 110/110 points and has obtained one or more honours (Lodi) in the exams or has written and presented a dissertation of outstanding quality.

A dissertation of outstandimg quality is one presenting an innovative research question, containing a thourough and critical review of the relevant literature, and reaching original results, including clear directions for further research.