

**ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΚΟ
ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
ΑΘΗΝΩΝ**



ATHENS UNIVERSITY
OF ECONOMICS
AND BUSINESS

**ΣΧΟΛΗ
ΔΙΟΙΚΗΣΗΣ
ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΕΩΝ**
SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS

ΜΕΤΑΠΤΥΧΙΑΚΟ
ΜΑΡΚΕΤΙΝΓΚ & ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑΣ
MSc IN MARKETING &
COMMUNICATION

Guidelines for the Preparation of the Master's Thesis



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Introduction

In partial fulfilment of the postgraduate degree, students are required to undertake and complete a thesis during the last months of the curriculum. The preparation of a thesis is one of the most creative challenges of the postgraduate Program. The thesis aims to:

- provide an opportunity to explore in depth a particular topic and put into practice theories and concepts learned on the Program;
- enable interaction with faculty members, which is important for the evaluation of the student's capabilities;
- provide the students invaluable knowledge on the undertaking of a scientific research which will be of use to them in both a professional or academic career.

Thesis Types

Students can choose between the following thesis types:

1. Scientific research through collection of primary and/ or secondary data

This type of thesis consists of designing and conducting scientific research through collection of primary and/ or secondary data (qualitative and/ or quantitative). Students must choose their field of interest and by studying international literature on the subject, they should (a) identify and document a knowledge gap, (b) develop research questions and/ or hypotheses, (c) design a tool for gathering the necessary data (e.g. structured questionnaire) and collect the data, (d) analyze the data so as to provide empirical evidence on the research questions and/ or test the research hypotheses, (e) highlight the importance of their finding for the international scientific literature, (f) highlight the importance of the findings for the consumers, the market and society, and (g) propose future research.

As far as the primary data is concerned:

- Firstly, students may collect qualitative data. In this case, there are certain prerequisites: (a) the literature review must conclude to research questions, (b) the data collection tool must be a general discussion guide, (c) the data collection method should take the form of either in-depth interviews or focus groups consisting of practitioners and/ or consumers (depends on the primary focus of the thesis), (d) the number of interviews conducted must be adequate for safe conclusions (e.g. 10-20 interviews), and (e) the analysis should be based on established scientific methods.
- Students may also collect quantitative data, with the following general guidelines: (a) the literature review must conclude to specific research questions in case of exploratory study or to specific research hypotheses in case of confirmatory study, (b) a structured questionnaire must be used for data collection, (c) a survey research or an experimental research should be made, (d) the sampling method should be thoroughly justified and explained while the size of the sample must be representative of the population studied, (e) an adequate number of questionnaires should be collected (e.g. at least 100 for practitioners and 300 for consumers), and (f) the analysis should be based on established scientific methods.



- Moreover, a combination of qualitative and quantitative collection of primary and/or secondary data can be used, based on the aforementioned guidelines. This method is recommended in many cases as it combines the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative research. For example, if a student wants to conduct quantitative research for a field with limited empirical evidence, then a quantitative approach may help in collecting data necessary for the design of a structured questionnaire.
- Finally, the thesis may be in the form of a case study, which means that the research questions that will result from the literature review will focus on a specific business (products or services). This type of thesis can be justified only in cases where the enterprise's practices are of particular interest both theoretically and practically.

2. Research for a specific company or specific industry

This type of thesis gives students the opportunity to choose a specific company or a specific industry (products or services) and focus on an issue that is a threat or an opportunity for the specific company/industry. This type of thesis requires literature review so that the issue under study is supported by a strong theoretical background. In general, this type of thesis does not need collection of primary data unless otherwise instructed by the supervisor. Students can base their thesis on secondary data. Full time students can choose a company or an industry based on their career interests. Part time students can base their thesis on the company/industry they work in. The choices for the thesis type in question are:

1. Developing a strategic marketing/communication plan. This approach typically consists of developing an integrated marketing/communication plan for a business, a strategic business unit or a product.
2. Carrying out an industrial / comparative analysis. An industry/comparative analysis may include examining the structure of an industry, financial trends, market trends and the positions of companies within the industry. Analyses can also focus on aspects of a field such as product research and development, government intervention, and personnel issues.
3. Conducting a marketing plan for a specific business. A marketing plan can focus on specific aspects, such as new product development, pricing policy, distribution channels, promotion mix, etc.
4. Developing a strategy plan for a specific business or sector. A strategy plan may involve developing an integrated strategic plan for a business or focusing on other aspects, such as strategic planning trends in a specific industry.
5. Developing a technology plan for a specific business or industry. Such a thesis may focus on the economic, strategic, engineering, developmental aspects or diffusion of a particular technology.

Process of Preparing the Thesis

1. Choosing a Topic

The best topic to study is the one that is of personal interest to the students which will enable them to make the most of their knowledge and analytical skills, whilst giving them the opportunity to develop their professional skills. For the topic, students can get ideas from the class discussions, their work experience, other interests, recent events or research programs conducted by the faculty. To fully exploit the knowledge gained during the courses of the Program, it is highly advisable that the thesis has an international focus.



2. Selection and Role of Supervisor

The progress of the thesis will be guided by an academic supervisor. The supervisor can be a member of the faculty of the Department of Marketing & Communication or another department of AUED or another University, as long as he/ she is an instructor at the Program. Instructors and other faculty members can supervise a limited number of theses.

Please, keep in mind that students are entirely responsible for the quality and content of your thesis. The **role of the supervisor** is to:

- a) advise students whether the project appears to be feasible and explain the possible risks involved;
- b) assist students in developing the proposal in time;
- c) guide students in finding relevant literature and appropriate theoretical framework for the topic in question;
- d) give feedback on thesis content, format, and presentation.

The supervisor reports to the Director of the MSc in a regular basis regarding the progress of the supervisees. The supervisor is also member of the committee that will examine, evaluate, and grade the thesis.

3. Submission of the Master Thesis Proposal

The Master Thesis Proposal should be submitted for approval to the coordinating committee within the given deadline (see p. 8). The proposal is the blueprint on which the execution of the thesis will be based and includes:

- The topic title;
- A brief description of the thesis's objective;
- An explanation of the importance of and/or personal interest in the topic;
- A brief description of its content;
- A description of the proposed data collection methods and methodology .

The proposal form must be approved by the supervisor and sent to the secretariat.

4. Research Methodology Seminar

To assist students in the preparation of a thesis proposal and to facilitate the transition from course work to thesis, seminar(s) will be delivered to guide students on the content, structure, format, and style of a Master's thesis, to present a brief overview of some common quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches, and to explain how the knowledge gained from the Program should be integrated in a Master's thesis.

5. Scheduling the Thesis

Once the thesis proposal has been submitted, the student should compile a timetable with the help of the supervisor. The timetable must include important landmarks, such as the literature review, the initiation and completion of data collection, the completion of the preliminary analysis, the submission date for the draft of each chapter or part of the final text to the supervisor, the time in which the supervisor must reply



with comments and the time for the submission of the final text. In regular intervals, the student will submit to the Secretariat a PROGRESS REPORT, approved by the supervisor, regarding the writing of the Thesis. The PROGRESS REPORT form is provided by the secretariat.

6. Guidelines

Some guidelines and advice for the successful completion of the Master Thesis include:

- a) Specify particular days and time that to work on the thesis;
- b) Carry out research on a systematic basis: The data should come from information collected by others (i.e., secondary data) and/or information collected by the student (i.e. primary data). Information collected by others can be found in books, articles, published reports, surveys and electronic databases. Data collected by the student will come from in-depth interviews, focus groups, surveys, experiments etc. The student must report in detail the type and source of data he/she is using. The supervisor will advise on the information or data that are mostly suitable for the thesis, bearing in mind the time limitations in which the student works. He/she will also advise the student on the procedures and the practical details of data collection;
- c) Choose the most suitable method of analysis in collaboration with the supervisor;
- d) The text of the thesis must be self-contained. The reader should be able to follow the track of thoughts and the sources of all references should be quoted in the main body of the thesis and included in the end;
- e) The text of the thesis must be well-structured. The structure depends highly on the thesis type. For example, the structure of a thesis based on primary data collection should be the following:

Chapter 1. Introduction. The introduction should include a summary of the issue/topic, a description of the industry/sector involved, and a presentation of the thesis structure.

Chapter 2. Literature review. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with an overview of prior research and existing knowledge base on the subject. A thorough review of the scientific literature will allow the student to (a) identify the gap in the existing knowledge, (b) develop and support the research questions or research hypotheses, and (c) convince the reader for the theoretical and practical contribution of the thesis.

Chapter 3. Methodology. In this chapter students must present in a clear and comprehensive way the research methods, the data collection tool, the sampling methodology, the sample, and the measurement approach of the variables used.

Chapter 4. Analysis and results. This chapter includes the use and description of the appropriate data analysis tools. The study results should be presented in a thorough and self-explanatory way. The use of pies, chats, figures, and tables is strongly recommended. Students must also provide an interpretation of the study findings.

Chapter 5. Conclusions. In the last chapter students must provide a synopsis of the findings, compare them with existing theory and previous research findings, explain the theoretical and/or practical implications of the findings, acknowledge limitations of their study, and provide suggestions for future research.

- f) The text must be well written, easy to read and to follow. The writing style must simple (yet not naïve) and straightforward. Students must pay attention not to submit a thesis that is hard to comprehend,



contains grammar/spelling mistakes, has missing references, presents incomprehensible diagrams, and/or reaches unjustified conclusions. The work presented must be clear, interesting, and meaningful.

The best way to get ideas for your thesis structure and content is to read other top-rated theses submitted to the Program; they can be accessed through the e-class platform.

7. Submission

The Master thesis must be approved by the supervisor and submitted within the given deadline.

Along with the text of the master thesis the student must submit the plagiarism report through the Turnitin software, which also detects if AI writing tools have been used.

Regarding the similarity scores:

- < 24% is acceptable
- 25%-32% lies on the supervisor's judgment if changes to the thesis must be made.
- 33%-49% changes must be made – the thesis' grade can't get a passing grade.
- > 50% students are referred to the General Assembly of the Department and can be expelled from the program.

The master thesis should be submitted to the Secretariat in **word and pdf** format. You should send your thesis by e-mail with the following text: *"I am sending you my master's thesis to be included in the presentation list."*

8. Examination and Evaluation

- Examination of the thesis takes place according to the schedule issued by the secretariat. The examination lasts approximately half an hour.
- Students must present their thesis to a committee of 3 faculty members, approved by the Coordinating committee and comprised by the thesis' supervisor and 2 instructors of the program.
- The examination begins with the thesis presentation (ppt format is advised), which should be around 10 minutes. During or after the presentation, the examination committee will pose questions to the student regarding the structure, content, and/or methodology of the thesis. The goal is students to defend their work in the most satisfactory way.
- Grades are announced at the same time, for all students, regardless of the presentation date. The 3-member committee may ask for minor or major corrections. In this case, the supervisor of the thesis will assess the corrections made and give the final approval for submission.
- In case of failure in the examination or overdue submission, students can re-submit their thesis until the end of the 2nd year of studies. For resubmitting, students must send an application to the secretariat after agreement with the supervisor. The application is approved by the General Assembly of the Department.



- In the event of resubmission, the maximum grade is six (6).
- In the case of resubmission, failure in the examination or overdue submission may result in the dismissal of the student from the Program, after proposal of the Coordinating Committee program to the General Assembly.

Deadlines, Deliverables & Format

1. Submission Deadlines

The timetable is given below. The timetable is very strict and if a student fails to comply with the deadlines, he/she can get an extension of one semester for full time programs after a justified recommendation by the supervisor and decision of the General Assembly of the Department.

For full time students

Submission of Master Thesis proposal	First workday of May of the 1st year of studies
Submission of 1 st progress report	First half of September of the 2nd year of studies
Submission of 2 nd progress report	Second half of October of the 2nd year of studies
Submission of Master Thesis	End of January of the 2nd year of studies

2. Thesis Text Format

- The front cover page has a specific structure (see appendix I). No photos or sketches should be included. The first page includes a personal statement (i.e. Certificate of Thesis Preparation) which is provided in the Appendix II.
- In the second page, the synopsis/ abstract of the Thesis is presented (i.e. brief executive summary), which must provide the reader with a brief (2 pages) summary, regarding the objectives of the thesis, the methodological approach, and its main conclusions.
- The synopsis is followed by the dedication (optional), the acknowledgements (optional), the table of contents and the main text.
- If the thesis includes appendices/annexes then they should be placed after the main text and their titles should be mentioned in the table of contents as well as in the main text.
- At the end of the thesis, a full list of sources and references cited in the text must be included, in alphabetical order by the last name of the first author. All references should be cross-checked against citations to make sure that every reference included in the list has one or more corresponding citations; reference entries without a citation should be deleted.
- The references in the main text should only mention the surname of the author(s) and year of publication, while full information (title, publisher, journal volume, issue etc.) should be presented in



the reference list (see Appendix III). The details provided must suffice for the reader to check every reference. The Appendix II of the Preparation Guide includes detailed guide for the APA Reference Style/Harvard System, that should be used.

- The main text of the Thesis must be around 15.000 words and must not exceed 20.000 words.
- The main body of the thesis must be written in Calibri, font size 11, and double line spacing. Smaller fonts may be used in footnotes, tables etc., but fonts smaller than size 8 must not be used at any point.
- The text must have 2,5 points of margin at all sides (upper, lower, right and left).
- The page numbering must be continuous and include the title page.
- All pages should include a standard header and footer, with the page number, the title of the Program, the academic year, the thesis title, and the student's name.
- The text must be printed in size A4 white paper.

3. Publishing the Thesis

All Theses approved, under the condition that they do not include data that cannot be published by law, are submitted to the Secretariat and uploaded on PYXIDA, AUEB's Institutional Repository and Digital Library.

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Appendix I: Sample of the cover page of the thesis

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MSc IN MARKETING &
COMMUNICATION

FULL TIME WITH INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION

“THESIS TITLE HERE”

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the master’s degree
in marketing & communication

BY

“STUDENT’S NAME HERE”

Athens “year of submission”



Appendix II: Certificate of thesis preparation

CERTIFICATE OF THESIS PREPARATION

The present thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the postgraduate degree of the MSc in Marketing & Communication with International Orientation and will be made publicly accessible via the e-library of the programme and the AUEB Institutional Repository & Digital Library “PYXIDA”.

I hereby also declare that the present thesis is a result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other undergraduate or postgraduate qualification in Greece or abroad. This thesis reflects my personal opinions on the subject. All sources have been cited properly, including online material.

References to this thesis are allowed without special permission, under the condition that the source is explicitly and correctly cited. Approval for using longer extracts, parts of the thesis or the full text can be given only by the Coordinating Committee of the MSc in Marketing & Communication.

Name: [name of the student]

Signature:



Appendix III APA Reference Style Guide