

# Thesis regulations for Master's programmes

These Master's thesis regulations describe the main faculty rules regarding the thesis. In addition to these regulations, a separate guide is available for each programme describing the thesis phase. More information on the procedures can be found on [vu.nl](https://vu.nl). It also includes information on various aspects of the thesis process that may be useful to both students and teachers, such as an example of a work schedule.

When drafting the thesis regulations and guides, a deliberate choice was made to provide students and lecturers with the same information. This ensures that both parties are aware of each other's opportunities, responsibilities, rights and duties. The term student in these regulations is gender inclusive, because this term has always been used in regulations and is seen as a technical term.

The thesis regulations were adopted by the Board of the Faculty of Humanities on 17 July 2017 and have been modified to some degree in January 2020 and January 2023.

## 1. What is a Master's thesis?

In the Faculty of Humanities, knowledge of a specific subject is set in a broad cultural and academic perspective. The aim is to provide students with knowledge and understanding of specific issues while teaching them to adopt a critical approach vis-à-vis academic practice, the significance of the students' profession for individuals and for society at large, and the social role played by academics. The thesis is a part of this learning process and can be seen as a test of academic skill and the culmination of the Master's programme. The thesis has a study load of 18 credits. The student writes the thesis alone.

The thesis shows that the student possesses knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to their specific field of study. This knowledge of a specific subject is embedded in a broad cultural and/or social context. The student also possesses theoretical and methodological insights into the field and the ability to apply these insights independently. The student will show themselves to be capable of carrying out research according to academic standards and of developing their own perspective on the material studied. Students are expected to be able to contribute to generating new academic insights and to carry out research independently. The Master's thesis therefore contains innovative elements.

The study guide for the relevant degree programme lists the learning objectives of the Master's thesis. These learning objectives are linked to the final attainment levels of the programme, as defined in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (which relate to the Dublin descriptors).

## 2. Getting started

Before the student starts writing their thesis, they must be registered for the relevant degree programme's thesis course. For most degree programmes, certain entry requirements apply, including passing AcVa (Academic Skills) and obtaining a certain amount of credits. These are included in the Teaching and Examination Regulations.

At the beginning of the thesis project, the thesis agreement has to be completed and signed by the student, supervisor and second reader, if applicable for the degree programme in question.

Further information about the thesis project can be found in the thesis guide of the degree programme in question. The thesis guides can be found at [vu.nl](http://vu.nl).

### 3. Form

A thesis is written as a fully developed independent research report, according to the standard scientific structure that is common for the degree programme and the field.

The number of words for the thesis depends on the degree programme and is described in the programme-specific thesis guide. The title page of each thesis within the Faculty of Humanities must include the following information:

- title and, where relevant, secondary title of the thesis
- name of university, faculty and programme
- name of student
- student number
- name of supervisor(s)
- name of second reader
- date and year of completion
- word count

### 4. Assessment and assessment form

The student hands in the final version of the thesis as a PDF via Canvas. The final submission date is stated in the faculty graduation procedure (also known as the 'summer regulations'; see paragraph 7.1). The course coordinator of the thesis module must ensure that all supervisors are added to the Canvas module for the thesis, and that an upload section is created to check theses for plagiarism.

The final version of the thesis is assessed by the supervisor, who also carries out a plagiarism check, and an independent second reader using an assessment form. The second reader is not involved in the process of supervising the writing of the thesis in any way. The degree programme also ensures that the same combination of supervisor and second reader will not be used regularly for other theses. The first supervisor is always an examiner approved by the Examination Board and affiliated with the department to which the programme belongs (or is in some way responsible for the programme or its design). The second reader is an examiner approved by the Examination Board. Please note: in the event that the second reader is affiliated with another faculty or university then this should also be submitted to the Examination Board of the Faculty of Humanities in order to appoint the second reader as examiner for the Faculty of Humanities. If desired, a programme may elect to appoint a second supervisor, for example from the field of professional practice, to provide substantive guidance. In such cases, the thesis must also be assessed by an independent assessor approved by the Examination Board, meaning that three persons will be involved in the thesis assessment.

The thesis is assessed based on the above-mentioned assessment form, which has been made known to the student in advance via [vu.nl](http://vu.nl) and/or Canvas and the study guide. Both the supervisor and the second reader complete an assessment form independent of each other. If the supervisor and the second reader agree on the final grade, then the supervisor will complete the cover sheet of the assessment forms of the Faculty of Humanities (document can be found on [vu.nl](http://vu.nl)), and include a summary of the final assessment if the difference between the assessment of the supervisor and the second reader is 1.0 mark or more. The final

assessment is determined through consultation between supervisor and second reader, and they can calculate an average score<sup>1</sup>.

The thesis supervisor forwards the final version of the thesis and the accompanying documents (assessment forms; thesis agreement, cover sheet) in digital form to the Education Office via [onderwijsbureau.fgw@vu.nl](mailto:onderwijsbureau.fgw@vu.nl). This also applies if the thesis has been graded as unsatisfactory. A thesis that has been graded with a pass mark cannot be retaken.

Several special circumstances can occur:

- Should the assessors believe that the submitted version of a thesis is insufficient, the student will have to submit a resit.
- The difference between the original assessments is between 1.0 and 2.0 points: please complete a summary of the final assessment on the assessment form.
- The assessors fail to reach a unanimous agreement: either because they do not agree on whether the thesis can be graded with a pass mark, or because there was a difference of 2.0 or more points in the original assessments, or they disagree for other reasons. In that case the supervisor will submit a request for a third assessor to the Examination Board, which will designate a third assessor. The final grade will be the average of the three separate assessments. Please note: a maximum of one of the assessments given may be a fail grade; i.e., if the average is a pass, but two out of three assessments are a fail, a pass cannot be awarded.

In the event that a resubmitted thesis is again given a fail grade, the student will be required to start all over on a new thesis with a new topic and other assessors (supervisor, second assessor).

A diagrammatical presentation of the various steps and options in the assessment process can be found below in Appendix 1.

In the event that a student experiences problems during the thesis process (mental, physical or other problems) and is at risk of running behind, they are advised to contact the academic advisor for recommendations on how to proceed. If, due to these issues, a student does not expect to finish their thesis on time for the assessment within the current academic year (in accordance with the faculty graduation procedure), the supervisor and the student will conclude an agreement in writing about a new submission date.

In the event that no final version of the thesis is submitted within the current academic year, and no additional agreements have been made in this regard as described above, then the module for that year will be concluded with a No Show (NS) in the system. This is done by the Education Office at the request of the thesis supervisor. The NS will have no influence on the "cum laude" classification. The student can reregister for the module in the new academic year. The student will then start working on a new thesis with a new supervisor.

The assessment forms currently used by the degree programmes within the Faculty of Humanities can be found on [vu.nl](http://vu.nl). Please carefully review this form before the start of the thesis process, so you know what the criteria for assessment are.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: a mark of a 5.5 will be rounded up to a 6.0! See Teaching and Examination Regulations Section 3.6.2.

Further information on the cum laude classification can be found in the [Rules and Guidelines](#) of the Examination Board.

## 5. Interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary theses; graduation projects

For some programmes (or specialisations), students can write a thesis that is interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in nature. This means that these theses, to the extent deemed necessary by the Programme Coordinator, are supervised by two supervisors: one supervisor from the student's core subject, the other supervisor from the second field of specialisation. As indicated above, the evaluation team then consists of three persons: the two supervisors and an independent assessor. In interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary theses, the various components of the programme should be incorporated. The assessment of these theses should therefore focus on the multidisciplinary approach and/or the extent to which the various components of the programme have in fact been incorporated. Some programmes and specialisations enable students to carry out a graduation project, which means that the student placement and the thesis are integrated. During the internship, the student identifies a practical problem which then becomes the subject of further research at the thesis stage and is described/explained.

If the research is connected to (or based on) thesis research that the student has already carried out (or plans to carry out) in the context of a different programme, then the research in question must, in the view of the Examination Board, contain a sufficient number of distinctive elements. The same thesis/graduation project cannot therefore count towards two separate Master's degrees.

## 6. Fraud

A plagiarism check will be carried out after submission of the thesis. This check is carried out by the first supervisor or the thesis coordinator.

In case of suspicion of fraud, the lecturer in question will inform the Examination Board. The procedure and powers of the Examination Board in the event of academic misconduct can be found in the [Rules & Guidelines](#) of the Examination Board.

## 7. Disputes

If a student is unhappy about a certain situation, they should contact their supervisor at the earliest opportunity. If the meeting with the supervisor does not have the desired effect, the students may first contact the academic advisor or lodge a complaint using the complaints form on [vu.nl](#).

## 8. Conclusion

### *8.1 Graduation procedure*

Every year, the Education Office, in consultation with the Examination Board, draws up an overview of the graduation procedure (submission dates, publication of grade, graduation dates, degree awards ceremony), which can be consulted on [vu.nl](#).

### *8.2 Final assessment*

The supervisor will inform the student of the assessment. The degree programme determines whether this is done orally and/or in writing. The assessment forms form the basis of the information provided to the student. On request, the student can review the assessment form(s) and the completed cover sheet.

### *8.3 Archiving*

The lecturer will send the final version of the thesis in PDF format, together with the documents needed for the assessment of the thesis (assessment forms, thesis agreement, cover sheet) to the Education Office, where the documents will be digitally archived.

The final version of the Master's thesis, approved by the supervisor, must also be uploaded by the student via <http://www.uvu.vu.nl/vunetid>. When uploading the thesis, the student will be asked to indicate whether it may be viewed by others. As part of this process, the student submits a short summary of the thesis for the digital archive.

### *8.4. Copyright*

The copyright of the thesis rests, in principle, with the student. Should the thesis or a part thereof be published, then the student is expected to state that it was written within degree programme X at VU Amsterdam under the supervision of Professor Y. The student and the supervisor should reach a clear agreement on this matter. Please note: the student is not the owner of data or works made available by the supervisor.

