



Aalto University
School of Arts, Design
and Architecture

How to do the MA thesis?

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Basic Terminology

Supervisor (valvoja)

Faculty member following your progress with the thesis project. **Is often also your advisor.** Markku, Antti, Miikka, Matti, Kai, Teemu, Andres, Lily or other faculty member.

Advisor (ohjaaja)

Someone helping you to do the job. You must have at least one: from the department and/or outside. To find the advisor is your job – we will help. We pay an external advisor for 10 h.

MA thesis Seminar

Weekly seminar (Sep – Dec, Jan – May).

With Markku (afternoon) & Teemu (evening)

Non-stop: you may start at any time.

7 + 2 + 1 rule

10 times attending (any year) including:

- 1st presentation: thesis idea – 1 A4 (10 min)
- 2nd presentation: TOC + 1 chapter (20 min)
- 1 opponent of someone's 2nd presentation

Thesis Presentation

When you have submitted your thesis work there will be a public presentation of it for the evaluators and whoever will come.

One hour for each work: 20 minutes presentation + 40 minutes discussion. Often very much like your 2nd presentation.

Most likely online due to the Corona situation

Evaluators

2 experts named by the evaluation board.
You may propose these to your supervisor.
The evaluators will give comments and will propose a grade (0–5) for the evaluation board.

Evaluation Board

4–6 faculty members. The Board guarantees that the evaluation process is fair. Makes a decision on the final grade.

Good to know

Workload of the MA thesis work

30 ECTS = 810 hours = 22 weeks (full time)

Whom to trust?

Markku, Antti, Matti, Miikka, Teemu, Pipsa, Sebastian, Andres, Lily or other faculty members. **Meri Karjalainen** deals with the practical graduation processes – let her know in time when you intend to graduate.

$$10+10+10=30$$

Starting from fall 2020 you'll get the thesis credits in three parts:

- After the first presentation (10 ECTS)
- After the second presentation (10 ECTS)
- When the thesis is accepted (10 ECTS)

Ask Markku or Teemu to submit the credits, just to make sure we won't forget.

Written part of the thesis

Presents your work and is a proof that you know what you are talking about.

Is not primarily a “piece of art” but an “academic” work demonstrating your higher level thinking and meta-skills (reflection).

Is written for the Academia (the World), must come with references etc.

Academic writing course

Choose one based on your thesis language

- *Academic Writing*, 3 cr
- *Tieteellinen kirjoittaminen maisteriopiskelijalle*, 3 cr

The courses support your thesis work, so you need to have your topic and some text already in order to take them

Organized by the language centre

Submitting the thesis

No more printed copies required – we won't support the printing costs either. The format is PDF, or PDF/A to be precise.

Use the *eAge* system for submitting the work

Get permission from your supervisor and advisor(s) before doing anything

Deadlines usually four times a year (2 fall, 2 spring)

Maturity test?

Am I supposed to take some test? When? How? Help!

The maturity test used to be a separate test, but nowadays your thesis abstract is it.

Use the Aalto thesis abstract template as a starting point or as is (see the *Materials* page). You need the abstract as a separate file in any case.

Turnitin originality check

Your thesis has to be automatically checked for plagiarism using the *Turnitin* system. Use Turnitin before submitting the thesis for evaluation.

See the "Materials" page for a link.

Thesis evaluation criteria

A matrix, your evaluators will use to evaluate your thesis.

Can be used to set your own objectives.

Not filled in by the evaluators / delivered to you as a such — evaluators write a statement.

Appendix 1 Thesis evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria below apply to the master's theses of the School of Arts, Design and Architecture. The final grade is given for the thesis as a whole using those evaluation criteria which are relevant for the thesis. Emphasis may be put on those criteria that are relevant for that particular thesis: if the student defines his or her work as theoretical or applied research, the criterion *Quality of the artistic component* may be ignored. In such cases, weight is put on the criterion *Discussion of the topic, conclusions and interpretation*

The oral presentation given in the examination session and the skill in answering the questions posed by the examiner may raise the grade of the thesis.

In the grades 3–5 of the chart, the previous standard of quality is included in the next.

Evaluation criteria and matters evaluated	Grounds for failing the thesis	1	2	3	4	5
Choice of topic and of the artistic and/or scientific goals for thesis Relevance of the topic for the field Definition of topic Setting of artistic and/or scientific goals for thesis	The thesis topic has not been approved and it is not related to the programme or major of the student. The lack of any definition of scope significantly complicates the discussion of the topic. The goals of the thesis are not explicated.	The topic of the thesis has been approved but it is poorly linked with the field. A lacking definition of the scope complicates the discussion of the topic. The scientific and artistic goals of the thesis are vaguely presented.	The topic is related to the field but has little relevance for it. Unclear definition of the scope complicates fluent discussion of the topic. Some scientific and/or artistic goals are apparent, but the arguments for them are weak.	The topic has significance for the field. The definition of the scope is clear and supports the discussion of the topic. The student has set scientific and/or artistic goals for the thesis and justifies them.	The definition of the scope is justified and supports the discussion of the topic very well. The student analyses the choice of the scientific and/or artistic goals of the thesis.	The topic is demanding. The definition of the scope demonstrates in-depth understanding of the topic. The student evaluates the choice of the scientific and/or artistic goals of the thesis.
Command of topic and use of sources Command of the topic Use of sources	The student is not familiar enough with the topic to discuss it in the thesis. The key sources relevant for the topic have been ignored. The text repeats the contents of the sources without providing references (plagiarism).	The scope of the topic has been recognised but knowledge of subject area is superficial. The sources are not relevant or evaluated. There are shortcomings in citing and referencing techniques.	The topic has been described. The thesis makes use of sources that allow the discussion of the topic but source evaluation is lacking. The student has fair command of citing and referencing techniques.	The thesis demonstrates the student's command of the topic and its context or theoretical framework as well as of the previous research. The sources used in the thesis are essential for the topic and the use of sources demonstrate good command of the subject area. Sources have been evaluated. Good command of citing and referencing techniques.	The thesis demonstrates the student's very good command of the topic and its context or theoretical framework as well as of the previous research. The thesis demonstrates very good command of key sources. The sources are evaluated and weighted purposefully.	The thesis demonstrates the student's in-depth knowledge of the topic and its context or theoretical framework as well as of the previous research. Finnish and international sources are used extensively. The sources are critically evaluated and their choice and weighting supports the discussion of the topic excellently.
Discussion of the topic, conclusions and interpretation Choice of methods and techniques	The goals set for the thesis are not achieved with the methods or techniques selected.	There are shortcomings in the command of the method or technique selected that affect the results.	The choice and command of methods and techniques support the attainment of the goals in a satisfactory manner.	The choice of methods or techniques supports the discussion of the topic. The student has good command of the methods	The student has excellent command of the methods or techniques and applies them very well. The student demonstrates	The student applies and critically evaluates the selected methods or techniques. The student examines the topic analytically and critically

<p>Ability for analytical and research-oriented work</p> <p>Ability to draw conclusions and think independently</p> <p>Conceptualisation of the topic and linking it to a broader context.</p> <p>Evaluation of thesis reliability</p>	<p>The discussion of the topic lacks any analysis and no conclusions are drawn in the thesis.</p>	<p>The conclusions are exaggerated or lacking. There are major shortcomings in arguing for the conclusions and evaluating the reliability of the thesis.</p>	<p>ner.</p> <p>Conclusions have been drawn but the arguments for them are weak.</p> <p>The thesis discusses factors affecting its reliability.</p>	<p>or techniques selected.</p> <p>The student demonstrates ability for analytical and research-oriented work.</p> <p>The student draws justified conclusions or, in an artistic work, demonstrates independent thinking in relation to the topic discussed. The student understands the broader context of the thesis.</p> <p>The student analyses the reliability of the key aspects of the thesis.</p>	<p>very good skills in analytical and research-oriented work and critical thinking.</p> <p>The student draws justified conclusions based on analysis, or in an artistic work, independent thinking in relation to the topic discussed. The conclusions are analysed in light of the source literature. The student conceptualises the results and discusses their relation to a broader context.</p> <p>The student evaluates the reliability of the thesis critically.</p>	<p>and understands the complexity of the phenomenon.</p> <p>The student draws significant conclusions which inspire future research, design or artistic activity, or, in an artistic work, evaluates his or her thinking in relation to the topic discussed. The student conceptualises the results and discusses their relation to a broader context.</p> <p>The student evaluates the reliability of the thesis critically and comprehensively.</p>
<p>Quality of the artistic component</p> <p>Idea and execution of the production component</p> <p>Artistic thinking or design vision</p> <p>Understanding the broader context of the work</p>	<p>The execution of the production component has major shortcomings and does not support the discussion of the topic.</p>	<p>The execution of the production component has shortcomings and articulates the idea or topic poorly.</p>	<p>The execution of the production component supports the idea of the work to some extent. There may be shortcomings in the execution.</p>	<p>The execution of the production component supports the idea of the work.</p> <p>The student demonstrates ability for artistic thinking or design vision.</p>	<p>The production component execution is of very high quality. The related solutions are interesting and support the idea of the thesis very well.</p> <p>The student demonstrates ability for lateral artistic thinking or design vision.</p> <p>The work is evidently linked to the conventions of the field and to a broader context.</p>	<p>The production component execution is excellent and supports the idea of the thesis insightfully.</p> <p>The student demonstrates excellent ability for lateral artistic thinking or design vision.</p> <p>The student demonstrates in-depth command of the conventions of the field and/or challenges them successfully.</p>
<p>Description and analysis of the process</p> <p>Description and analysis of the working process</p>	<p>No description is provided of the working process or the choices made.</p>	<p>The student describes the working process or the choices made to a minor extent.</p>	<p>The student describes the working process or the choices made but the arguments for them are weak.</p>	<p>The student describes the working process and/or the choices made and justifies them analytically.</p>	<p>The student analyses and evaluates the working process and/or the choices made.</p>	<p>The student evaluates the working process and/or the choices made in depth.</p>
<p>Quality of thesis language and presentation, and the examination session</p> <p>Presentation of thesis</p> <p>Quality of thesis language</p> <p>Oral presentation at examination session</p>	<p>The presentation of the various thesis components complicates understanding its contents.</p> <p>There are major shortcomings in the written expression.</p>	<p>The presentation of the thesis components is not appropriate for the contents.</p> <p>Notable shortcomings in written expression.</p> <p>The student is able to respond to some questions posed at the examination session.</p>	<p>The presentation of the thesis components involves solutions that do not support the discussion of the topic.</p> <p>Written expression is satisfactory, but the language needs revision.</p> <p>The student responds to the questions posed at the examination session in a satisfactory manner.</p>	<p>The presentation of the thesis components support the discussion of the topic.</p> <p>Written expression is fluent and the thesis has no errors that affect readability.</p> <p>The student responds to the questions posed at the examination session and is able to justify the answers.</p>	<p>The solutions applied in to presentation of the thesis components are very good and support the discussion of the topic very well.</p> <p>The written expression is fluent and almost free of errors, and the style is appropriate.</p> <p>The student justifies the views s/he presents at the examination session very well.</p>	<p>The solutions applied to the presentation of the thesis components are commendable and support the discussion of the topic excellently.</p> <p>The written expression supports the discussion of the topic and the understanding of the contents excellently. The text has no errors.</p> <p>The student justifies his or her views presented at the examination session in depth.</p>

Knowledge and professional skills	The student does not demonstrate knowledge or skills required in the degree.	The student demonstrates the minimum level of knowledge and skills and an ability to apply his/her knowledge to work in the field.	The student demonstrates command of the key skills of the field and a satisfactory ability to apply knowledge to work in the field.	The student demonstrates artistic or scientific knowledge and skills or other expertise relevant to the field and an ability to apply the gained knowledge to discussing questions of the field.	The student demonstrates artistic vision, professionalism, analytical or scientific skills and a very good ability to apply the gained knowledge to discussing questions of the field.	The student demonstrates significant artistic vision, professionalism, critical research-oriented thinking and an excellent ability to apply the gained knowledge to discussing issues of the field.
Overall impression Overall description of thesis Connection between the thesis components	The thesis has a great deal of major shortcomings. The thesis components are not interconnected and the student does not justify the choices made.	The thesis has major shortcomings, but meets the minimum criteria for a thesis. The thesis components do not form an integrated whole and the choices regarding the thesis components are not justified.	Despite shortcomings, the work fulfils all the criteria set for a thesis. The thesis components do not form an integrated and coherent whole, and the choices regarding the thesis components are poorly justified.	The thesis fulfils the criteria set for a thesis well. The thesis components form an integrated whole or the student justifies the choices regarding the components well.	The thesis fulfils all the criteria set for a thesis, and has particular merits in some areas. The thesis components form an integrated coherent whole. The student analyses his or her solutions regarding the thesis components.	The thesis has particular merits as a whole and in almost all areas. The thesis components form an integrated whole and support each other excellently. The student justifies and evaluates the solutions regarding the thesis components.