

# Master's thesis process



## Related course codes:

25E99901 Master's thesis (30 ECTS)

AND

25E99905 Master's thesis seminar (6 ECTS)

AND

25E99903 Maturity test (0 ECTS)

Periods I, III, IV (2017-2018)

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## Objectives

### ***What are the main objectives of the Master's thesis process ?***

The Master's thesis process consists of a Master's thesis introductory seminar, regular Master's thesis supervisions and the actual Master's thesis (incl. Maturity Test). While these components are evaluated separately, their objectives are the same.

The Master's thesis process aims at 1) developing the student's capability to conduct independent scholarly research in entrepreneurship, 2) providing the student with in-depth expertise in a chosen area of specialisation, and 3) fostering the student's skills in managing an independently conducted, large and complex project.

### ***What you should know before you start the Master's thesis process***

It is strongly recommended that you complete *25E53000 Researching entrepreneurship and innovation* prior to commencing the Master's thesis process. It is recommended that you also have completed the research method course of your choice (qualitative or quantitative) but this is not strictly required: it may make sense for you to do the methods course in parallel to writing your thesis once you know which type of method would best suit your research objective.

If you are unsure of what topic area you would like to write your thesis in, you can browse through the tables of contents of recent issues of some of the top field journals (e.g. Journal of Business Venturing Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice, Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, Small Business Economics, International Small Business Journal).

However, the kick-off thesis seminar and supervision sessions are primarily aimed at developing your research topic, so you do not need to have it all thought through before signing up to the process. The Entrepreneurship faculty also has many on-going research projects to which you can contribute with your thesis. Please contact Prof Ewald Kibler if you are interested in joining a project.

## ***What you should know after completing the Master's thesis process***

After completing the thesis process, you should feel comfortable extracting information from extant research in an analytical and critical manner, and apply it independently to solving research problems. You should also be able to apply at least one method to generate new research information, and be able to analyse and interpret this information. Furthermore, you should feel comfortable in planning and managing a large project that you carry out yourself.

## ***How you can deepen your knowledge in this area after the course***

If you want to deepen your knowledge of entrepreneurship and enhance your research skills even further, the Aalto University School of Business provides opportunities to pursue a doctoral degree (PhD) in entrepreneurship. For further information, please see:

<https://into.aalto.fi/display/endoctoralbiz/Homepage>

## ***How to kick-off to the Master's thesis process***

The Master's thesis process starts three times a year. The kick-off sessions for the academic year 2017-2018 are as follows:

- Wednesday 20 September 2017, 15:00
- Wednesday 24 January 2018, 15:00
- Wednesday 11 April 2018, 15:00

Enrolment is via WebOodi and the enrolment period begins approximately one month before each deadline. Please note that we cannot admit students to the thesis process outside these enrolment periods.

***Students new to the thesis process:*** You will be assigned to a thesis supervisor *7 days after the thesis seminar kick-off session*; by then, you have the opportunity to send Prof Ewald Kibler a short description of your general thesis themes of interest and/or more concrete thesis ideas. For this, you may also check out the faculty's research profiles at Aalto People <https://people.aalto.fi/index.html>. Your information will be considered when selecting your thesis supervisor 7 days after the kick-off session. You will then need to contact your assigned supervisor to arrange the first meeting.

## ***MyCourses***

The thesis seminar has a resource repository in MyCourses including web links, articles, and other bits and bobs of useful information: <https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=12105>. Note! At this MyCourses page you also submit your final thesis and the maturity test.

# How to complete the Master's thesis process

## **Master's thesis**

You complete the thesis component of the process by producing an independent piece of research that meets the criteria for a Master's thesis.

The thesis will be evaluated on a scale from 0 (fail) to 5 (excellent) solely based on the written work that you produce and hand in for evaluation. In addition to your supervisor's evaluation, an independent second examiner will mark your thesis. The final mark will be jointly recommended to the Head of Department by the supervisor and the second marker. The Head of Department makes the final decision on the mark.

Evaluation of the thesis follows the rubric for Master's theses (Appendix 1).

Please note that the mark you receive based on the thesis is final and not negotiable. Resubmission is possible only if you have failed the thesis.

## **Maturity test**

Once your thesis has been accepted (received a mark sufficient for a pass), you need to complete the maturity test (*25E99903 Maturity test*). The procedure for the maturity test has changed 1 September 2016. You no longer have to write an essay in an exam style situation, but instead, you are required to produce a one-page summary:

<https://into.aalto.fi/display/enmasterbiz/Maturity+test+and+exemptions>

## **Master's thesis seminar: three points**

1) You will have to attend **at least four individual supervisions** during the course of your thesis process. Your supervisor will inform you as to how to book supervisions with him or her. It is essential that you turn up as agreed or if you have to cancel, do so well on time. It is also expected that you will make progress as agreed in the supervisions and that you turn in any plans or chapters well on time, as agreed with your supervisor. This supervision process reflects in the mark you receive for the **Master's Seminar (6ECTS)**.

2) A one-pager must be submitted to your supervisor **3 working days prior to your first supervision**. This document should very briefly explain what your intended research theme is/themes are and why you have decided to pursue one or more particular topics. If you have an idea of the theory or the method that you intend to use, do make a note of them, but it is not necessary to have made these choices before the first supervision. The purpose of the preliminary description of your ideas is to serve as a foundation for the specification of your topic in the first supervision.

3) You will need to submit **three major documents** during the Master's thesis seminar (6ECTS). Those documents also reflect Part I, Part II and Part III of your Master's thesis progress itself (30 ECTS). For each Part you will receive 10 ECTS, resulting in a total of 30 ECTS for completing your Master's thesis. PART III will be completed when you submit your final Master's thesis to MyCourse, and it is up to your supervisor to decide when your work is sufficient for completing PART I and

PART II. It is common that PART I reflects the literature review and PART II the completion of the empirical analysis. NOTE! With completion of Part III, (a) your thesis will be evaluated by your supervisor and a second pre-examiner, and (b) you will be separately graded by your supervisor for your Master's thesis seminar as described above.

The thesis seminar will be marked from 0 (fail) to 5 (excellent).

## ***Submission of work***

You will submit all written documents directly to your supervisor, as per agreement with her or him, either as hardcopies or electronically. Failure to miss agreed deadlines will result in a reduction in the final mark for the thesis seminar.

After receiving the final confirmation from your supervisor, you are able to submit your thesis and maturity test at MyCourses page: <https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=12105>.

General instructions on writing and handing in the Master's thesis:

<https://into.aalto.fi/display/enmasterbiz/Writing+and+handing+in+the+Master's+Thesis>

## Appendix 1: Master's thesis rubric for evaluation

### MSc Rubric: Thesis Research

Measurable Attributes	0 – Insufficient	1 – Sufficient	3 – Good	5 – Excellent
1. Explication of how the study relates to a phenomenon or area of interest	Provides a vague or no description of the relationship.	Provides some explication of the relationship.	Provides a clear explication of the relationship.	Explicates the relationship in an insightful manner.
2. Specification of the research problem	Provides very vague or no description of the research problem.	Provides limited specification of the research problem.	Provides clear specification of the research problem.	Provides an engaging specification of the research problem.
3. Positioning of the research problem within the discipline	Does not position the research problem within the discipline.	Positions the research problem within the discipline to some extent.	Positions the research problem appropriately within the discipline.	Positions the research problem solidly within the discipline.
4. Specification research objectives and/or questions	Provides a very vague specification of the research objectives and/or questions	Provides a limited specification of the research objectives and/or questions.	Provides a clear specification of the research objectives and/or questions.	Provides an insightful specification of the research objectives and/or questions.
5. Review of literature	Reports on earlier literature without connecting it to the research question and/or objective, possibly omitting key references.	Reports on earlier literature without connecting it fully to the research question and/or objective.	Reviews earlier literature relevant to the research question and/or objective in an appropriate manner.	Demonstrates critical thinking in reviewing earlier literature relevant to the research question and/or objective.
6. Development of a theory-based research framework, model and/or hypotheses	Does not use a theory-based research framework, model and/or hypotheses.	Applies a framework, model and/or hypotheses loosely based on theory.	Develops or applies a theory-based research framework, model and/or hypotheses.	Develops an innovative theory-based research framework, model and/or hypotheses.
7. Selection and justification of research methods	Selects inappropriate research methods, does not justify or link them to the research questions or objectives.	Selects appropriate research methods, but does not justify them clearly or create a linkage to the research questions or objectives.	Selects appropriate research methods that are justified and linked to the research questions or objectives.	Selects appropriate, sophisticated, and rigorous research methods that are clearly justified and linked to the research questions or objectives.
8. Selection and justification of research material or data	Selects inappropriate research material, does not justify it, or link it to the research questions and methods.	Selects applicable research material that is weakly justified and/or linked to the research questions and methods.	Selects appropriate research material that is justified and linked to the research questions and methods.	Selects rich research material that is fully justified and solidly linked to the research questions and methods.
9. Application of research methods	Applies research methods in an inappropriate manner.	Applies research methods in a broadly appropriate manner, with some implementation weaknesses that affect the outcome.	Applies research methods in an appropriate manner.	Applies research methods with rigor and proficiency.
10. Analysis and presentation of data/findings (including diagnostics)	Analyses and/or presents data/findings inadequately.	Provides mostly adequate analysis and presentation of the data/findings.	Provides clear and competent analysis and presentation of the data/findings.	Provides rigorous and convincing analysis and presentation of the data/findings.

11. Discussion and interpretation of findings, including limitations	Fails to relate findings to existing literature; provides superficial or erroneous interpretations; provides limited or no discussion of the limitations.	Discusses some connections between findings and existing literature on a general level; provides limited interpretations; addresses some limitations of the study.	Discusses findings and relates them appropriately to existing literature; provides appropriate interpretations; addresses the key limitations of the study.	Discusses thoroughly and critically the findings in relation to existing literature; provides perceptive interpretations; discusses the limitations appropriately.
12. Development of practical, societal, and/or theoretical implications and discussion of avenues for future studies	Fails to develop implications of the study; fails to suggest avenues for future studies.	Develops some implications of the study; presents some avenues for future studies.	Develops clear implications of the study; presents avenues for future studies.	Develops insightful implications and avenues for future studies.
13. Knowledge of ethics in academic research *	Fails to conduct research according to academic norms.	Shows awareness of ethical issues; may report on them.	Demonstrates knowledge of ethical issues; may discuss them explicitly.	Displays competence in addressing ethical issues in academic research; may provide suggestions of advanced or innovative solutions to ethical problems.
14. Academic style, language use and readability	Uses nonacademic style; inaccurate language use interferes with reading and comprehension; citation format not observed.	Uses sufficiently appropriate academic style; inaccurate language use does not interfere with reading and comprehension; use of illustrations and examples infrequent and/or not fully competent; citation format not always observed.	Uses academic language fluently; minor errors may exist but do not interfere with reading and comprehension; illustrations and examples contribute to the clarity of the arguments; citation format almost always observed.	Produces a thesis that meets academic writing standards; readily conveys meaning; illustrations and examples enhance the clarity of the arguments; citation format consistently observed.
15. Consistency and coherence of the thesis	Text is fragmented and unbalanced; internal links among theory, methods and results are not explicit; problems with headings and paragraph and section structure.	Text is not fully balanced; some key internal links are missing; does not fully form a coherent whole; some problems with headings and paragraph and section structure.	Forms a balanced and coherent whole; some internal linkages are implicit rather than explicit; headings and paragraph and section structure typically support the overall coherence.	Forms a coherent whole with consistent and explicit internal linkages; has a logical flow of argumentation with neat headings and clearly structured paragraphs and sections.

## NOTES

### MSc Program Goals

This rubric addresses measurable attributes for the following MSc program goals and objectives:

- the ability to independently produce and apply economic knowledge
- preparedness for demanding international postgraduate programs