

Seminar instructions

The Master's Thesis Seminar supports the thesis writing of the student throughout his/her whole Master's Thesis process. The seminar is aimed for the students in the Information Networks and Industrial Engineering and Management Master's Programmes. The seminar is taught and chaired by Professor Riitta Smeds.

The student can join the seminar flexibly when starting to work on his/her Master's Thesis. Seminar sessions are organized throughout the whole academic year, once a week or less frequently, according to the needs of the students. The autumn and spring terms start with an introductory lecture that deals with scientific reasoning, research approaches and methods, and the structure of a scientific report.

The scope of the seminar is 1 or 2 credits.

The 1 credit seminar includes the following five student presentations (PowerPoint slides and oral presentation):

1. review of an Example Master's Thesis
2. research plan of own Master's Thesis
3. intermediate version of own Thesis
4. peer-review of the intermediate Thesis version of another student (no PowerPoints required)
5. official Master's Thesis presentation

For accomplishing the 2 cr seminar, the student additionally writes

6. a research diary about the advancement of his/her thesis work during the seminar process

In the seminar sessions, the students present and discuss their presentations, discuss the present issues and challenges of their theses, and receive peer support as well academic advising to continue their work.

1. Instructions for reviewing the Example Thesis

Choose an Example Master's Thesis that best supports your own thesis writing. Selection criteria can be e.g. the topic, the theoretical background, or the research method of the Example Thesis that are interesting for your own work.

The review of the Example Thesis can follow the structure below:

- A. Overview of the thesis
 - Topic and objectives
 - Structure
 - Research approach and methods
 - Theoretical background
 - Empirical data
 - Results and conclusions

- B. Evaluate the thesis with the help of e.g. **one of the following questions**:
1. is the theoretical literature sufficient?
 2. how well does the thesis build the bridge from theory to empiria?
 3. how well are the data collection and analysis methods explained?
- C. Evaluate how the reader can follow the logical flow of the research
- how are the findings shown? Can the reader understand where they come from?
 - how are the findings theoretically interpreted?
 - how is the validity of the research ensured?
 - how does the thesis reach its objectives?
 - How well does the text flow from start to finish?
 - strengths and weaknesses of the work as a whole?

Voluntary addition to the evaluation: the real story behind writing the thesis

If you can interview the author of the thesis, you can ask him/her how the thesis was created, e.g. with the following questions: Where did you find the topic? How did your writing proceed? What challenges came up and how did you solve them? What surprised you in the process? How did your thesis get its final form? - Present the interview results after the formal evaluation.

2. Presentation of the Research plan of the Master's Thesis

The research plan can follow e.g. the following structure:

- preliminary topic of the thesis
- preliminary research problem and focus
- What research approach are you planning to use?
- What research methods are you planning to use?
- What empirical data are you planning to collect?
- What literature are you planning to use?
- Schedule of your thesis

3. Presentation and discussing the intermediary version of the Master's Thesis

The intermediary version is the first manuscript of the thesis. It represents “work in progress” that typically includes:

- the topic and objectives of the thesis
- the theoretical background (preliminary, can still be developed)
- description of the planned research approach and research method, with a plan about data collection and analysis
- an initial analysis of the data (if already available)

Approximately one week before the presentation, the intermediate version should be sent to the student who will peer-review the manuscript in the seminar session, and to the supervisor and/or advisor of the thesis (according to your agreement with them). The supervisor and/or advisor are also welcome to follow the presentation of the intermediate version.

The peer-reviewer reads and prepares his/her comments to the text in advance. In the seminar session, the intermediate version is processed in the following way:

- **The author** of the intermediate version of the Master's thesis gives an oral presentation, supported by PowerPoint slides.
- **The peer-reviewer** gives his/her comments orally, and sends them after the session in written form to the author.
- **The seminar group** discusses the intermediate version together.
- **The supervisor and advisor**, if present, give their comments and participate in the discussion.

After the presentation of the intermediate version, the author continues his/her Thesis research under the guidance of the thesis supervisor and advisor. (S)he also continues to participate in the seminar sessions to give and receive support in the Master's Thesis work.

4. Official Master's Thesis presentation

The author presents his/her final Master's Thesis orally at the seminar session. This presentation is the official Master's Thesis presentation, required by the study regulations. The duration of the Master's Thesis presentation is 20 minutes. PowerPoint slides are recommended. After the presentation, the Thesis is discussed with the audience.

After the official presentation, if the author so wishes, he/she can tell to the audience the informal story: "What did I learn from writing my thesis?". Sharing experiences is valuable for other students who soon will follow in the footsteps...

The preparation of the Master's Thesis presentation, as well as the official oral presentation and the discussion thereafter, are great learning occasions, and the author is allowed to finalize and improve the Thesis based on these learnings before submitting it for publication.

The author invites into the official presentation session the supervisor and advisor of the Thesis. Also friends and relatives can be invited. After the presentation, coffee is served, and the presenter usually brings along something with the coffee, e.g. nibbles, cake, or biscuits...

5. Research diary (for the 2 cr seminar)

For accomplishing the 2 cr seminar, the student additionally writes a research diary about how the seminar sessions have supported him/her in conducting the thesis research and writing the thesis. The diary has to be written about altogether eight seminar sessions. In the following, some points are given that you can deal with in your research diary.

- the topic of the thesis
- the research methods
- the structure and language of the thesis
- the evaluation of the research
- the thesis process