



UNIVERSITY of OULU  
OULUN YLIOPISTO



Master's Degree Programme in  
EDUCATION and GLOBALISATION

TOOLKIT  
for Academic Essays  
and Master's Theses

## **For the Reader**

The EdGlo Toolkit for Academic Essays and Master's Theses is compiled in order to give the students introduction and guidance in writing essays and Master's theses at the Faculty of Education. This Toolkit also aims at helping the students in the details related to the graduation process. In addition, this Toolkit gives a brief overview of good scientific practice and the prevention of plagiarism.

The Faculty of Education takes no responsibility for the damage caused by inadequate, outdated or false information.

The EdGlo students and teachers are welcome to send suggestions for up-dates and corrections for this Toolkit to EdGlo Programme Coordinator.

*Toolkit for Academic Essays and Master's Theses*

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# Toolkit for Academic Essays and Master's Theses

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## 1 Academic essays

### Content in academic essays

An essay is a relatively short academic paper written with the aim of presenting your opinion on a certain topic - with the aim to convince (or sometimes to persuade) your reader about your views as well as your academic, research-oriented attitude. For this purpose you should formulate your ideas into a coherent text in keeping with the usual structure of an academic paper, i.e.:

1. provide orientational background for the issue you are discussing (historical, biographical and/or critical context)
2. clearly formulate your views and perspective in a thesis statement
3. support your statement with logical argumentation (summary of relevant theories and/or criticism, analysis of data/ aspects of the problem, comparison, counter-argument)
4. conclusion (reformulation of the thesis statement in light of the supporting arguments and further implications and/or possible follow-up).

In addition to providing ample proof for your research work in the form of in-text references, you should engage in dialogue with the critical literature you are presenting (either fully or partially accepting or dismissing the standpoint they represent).

### Style and format in academic essays

As for the style you should clearly follow formal academic style based on an appropriate vocabulary using technical terminology, clear and varied sentence structure and consistent spelling.

As for the format you need to follow the APA style detailed in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6<sup>th</sup> edition). Please see section 2. in this Toolkit for further information and visit <http://www.apastyle.org>.

## 2 Format in academic essays and Master's theses

### 2.1 General guidelines

Guidelines for the format **primarily** follow the APA style referencing commonly used in social sciences and teacher education. Please, see <http://www.apastyle.org/> for details in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6<sup>th</sup> edition). **At the Faculty of Education the APA style is followed with the following restrictions:**

#### COVER PAGE FOR ESSAYS / REPORTS / OTHER COURSEWORK:

- The title of the work shall be printed on the cover page about 10 centimetres down from the top of the page.
- The following details shall appear in the bottom right corner of the page:
  - University of Oulu
  - Name of the department
  - Name of the course if the work is connected with a specific course
  - Time (e.g. February 2010)
  - Name of the author
- Please note that this does not apply to a Master's thesis. Please see separate instructions for the title page for a Master's thesis at <http://www oulu.fi/ktk/kasope/english/studies/instructions/> and under section 2.2. in this Toolkit.

#### MARGINS IN ESSAYS:

- The top and bottom margins: 2.5 cm
- The left and right margins: 2 cm

#### MARGINS IN MASTER'S THESES:

- The top and bottom margins: 2.5 cm
- The left margin: 4 cm
- The right margin: 1.5 cm

#### PAGE NUMBERING:

- Page numbers are placed in the header (top of the page) in the right corner.
- No page numbering on the cover page.
- Bibliography pages are numbered.

#### CONTENTS PAGE, ABSTRACT:

- In an essay, there is **NO** need for a table of contents or for an abstract.
- Please note that this does not apply to a Master's thesis. Please see separate instructions on how to formulate the table of contents and the abstract page for a Master's thesis at: <http://www oulu.fi/ktk/kasope/english/studies/instructions/> and under sections 2.2. and 2.3. in this Toolkit.

#### TEXT BODY:

- Font: Times New Roman or Arial
- Font size: 12
- Line spacing shall be set at 1.5 (one and a half).
- Alignment of lines: align text to both the left and right margins.
- In an essay, you may use subtitles in the text body but these should be used without numbering.

#### PARAGRAPHS:

- An empty line shall be inserted between paragraphs.
- Do not use indentation at the start of a paragraph.
- One sentence is not a paragraph.

#### REFERENCES:

- References are marked in brackets inside the text. Do not use footnotes!
- Detailed instructions for in-text citation are available at <http://www.apastyle.org/> (see the APA Publication Manual, Chapter 6. Crediting Sources).
- Please note: Different from APA, page numbers should be used in all referencing, not only in direct quotations.
- The reference in brackets needs to include the name of the author, year of publication and the page(s) where the text can be found, e.g. (Kolb 1984, 27).
- Your reference should be equivalent to your bibliography.
- If there are less than five or five authors for a source, all the authors are mentioned.
- If there are six or more authors, all the authors are mentioned for the first time. After that the first author is mentioned and others are replaced by et al.
- If the same source is cited several times in a row, source can be marked as (ibid.).

#### TABLES/FIGURES:

- If you use tables and figures, each one of them shall be numbered and provided with a caption.
- Table captions are placed at the left margin above the table (e.g. Table 5. Skills provided by the programme), while figure captions are placed at the left margin under the figure (e.g. Figure 3. Model of experiential learning).
- If necessary, include source data, e.g. Figure 3. Model of experiential learning (Kolb 1984, 42).

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY / LIST OF REFERENCES:

- List of references must include ALL the sources you refer to in your text, and ONLY those sources which are mentioned in your text.
- List of references starts on a new page/sheet.
- If you use both published and unpublished sources you can separate them as different groups, also you can list the internet sources under separate subtitle.
- Sources are mentioned in an alphabetical order according to the LAST NAME of the writer. If there is no writer, you take the TITLE of the source and list the references in the alphabetical order according to the title. In addition, the last name of the writer is always mentioned first, and the first name only with initials.
- Internet sources should be marked with the date when retrieved and the internet address (e.g. Retrieved October 24, 2007, from <http://cambridge.cic.tsinghua.edu.cn/reading/hkcult1.html>).
- Each item in the list of references should include:
  - Author(s)
  - Year of publication
  - Title, also subtitle
  - Edition
  - Place of publishing
  - Publisher
  - Series (if applicable)
  - Pages (article)
- An example on how the list of references should look like:

Hakkarainen, K., Lonka, K. & Lipponen, L. (2004). *Tutkiva oppiminen, järki, tunteet ja kulttuuri oppimisen sytyttäjinä*. WSOY: Porvoo.

Kennedy, P. (2002). Learning cultures and learning styles: Myth-understandings about adult (Hong Kong) Chinese learners. *International Journal of Education*, 21(5), pp. 430-443. Retrieved October 24, 2007, from <http://cambridge.cic.tsinghua.edu.cn/reading/hkcult1.html>

Kleinfeld, J. (1994). Learning styles and culture. In W. J. Lonner & R. S. Malpass (Eds.), *Psychology and culture* (pp. 151-156). Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon.

#### OTHER REMARKS:

- Consistency in spelling: either 'globalisation' or 'globalization'. Use either GB or US, set the language in your computer.
- Please use full sentences. Essays and other academic work do not include listings with bullet points.
- Do not use shortened forms.

## 2.2 Title page, headings, page numbering and table of contents of Master's theses

You shall submit your Master's thesis in two bound copies and one loose-leaf copy to the office KTK254. All the three copies shall include a **title page** and an **abstract**.

### Printing the title page

- Open the title page template in PDF format (<http://wwwedu.oulu.fi/ktk/opas/thscover.pdf>). The template should open up in Acrobat Reader.
- Fill in your name and the title of your thesis in capital letters, and choose the right options and year in the selectable fields.
- Print the title page on a standard A4 sheet by choosing the Print command in Acrobat Reader (Please note: Do NOT use the *browser's* print command, but the Print icon in the Acrobat Reader window!)

### Printing and provision of covers

A single copy of the final version is to be printed on the printer in the computer classroom. The final thesis, revised and proofread, shall be printed in duplex mode (double-sided). If you need more copies of your thesis, use the copying machine. In other words, you shall not use the printer to make additional copies. A work to be presented or commented in a seminar need not necessarily be printed double-sided, as changes may still need to be done to it. You shall take care of copying your thesis on your own. It is a good idea to save the title page and abstract as separates files.

You are responsible for the progress of your publication process, so take into account the scheduling issues of the Uniprint Oulu well in advance. See section 9.4. in this Toolkit for further information about the provision of covers and the thesis binding process.

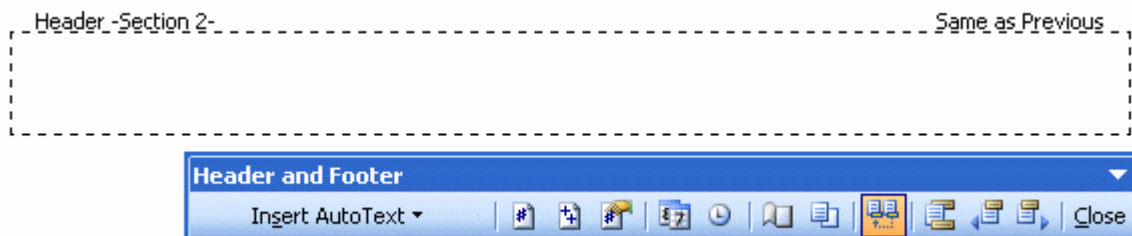
## Formal requirements: headings, table of contents, page numbering

These instructions aim at making it easier for the student to meet the formal requirements of documents such as reports, essays and Master's and Bachelor's theses. The instructions below are based on *Microsoft Word 2003*.

For body text, you should use Times New Roman or Arial at size 12. The line spacing shall be set at 1.5 (one and a half).

Your writing and formatting process should proceed in such a way that you first **write all of your text** without paying any attention to formatting. Then **format all of the headings** using the heading styles. When you have written all of your text, justify the text and hyphenate the document: choose *Edit, Select All*, then *Tools, Language, Hyphenation* and tick *Automatically hyphenate document*.

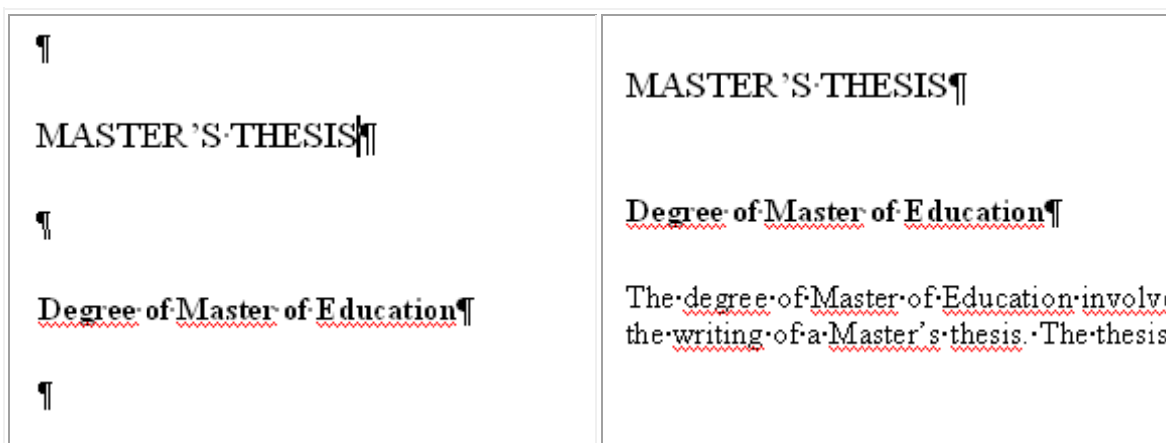
Before formatting the headings, you should insert an empty page at the beginning of the document for the table of contents. Do it like this: place the cursor at the very beginning of the document. Insert an empty page in this way: *Insert, Breaks, Section break types: Next page*. A section break needs to be inserted, because there shall be no page numbers on the cover page, in the abstract or the table of contents. This can only be achieved in Word by dividing the document into sections, allowing different formatting to be used in each section. At this stage, you can already type the heading TABLE OF CONTENTS at the top of the empty page. For a section break to behave properly, a change also needs to be made to the preassumption that sections are similar/different. Do this like this: move the cursor to the top of the first actual text page and make the footer visible by selecting *View, Header and Footer*. Left edge of the header now says "Header (Section 2)", while the left edge says "Same as Previous".



This will have to be removed for Word to treat the sections differently, not similarly,. Do this by removing the selection "Same as Previous" by clicking on the fourth button from the right, starting with "Close", shown in orange in the picture here (when you move the cursor on the button, you see the text "Link to Previous"). This is not enough, however. For some reason, the selection "Same as Previous" is also to be found in the first page footer and the second page header and footer. So, scroll the page down to the footer, click on the footer and remove the selection as described above. Repeat the same procedure on page two. Now you have successfully removed the section break problem arising from Microsoft's unerring logic, and you can close the *Header and Footer* menu.

In the text body, the **main headings** (Heading 1 = Times New Roman, Bold, 14) are typed with capital letters, while **minor headings** (Heading 2 = Times New Roman, Bold 12; Heading 3 = Times New Roman, 12) are written in normal style at the same size as body text (with the first character capitalised). Use the decimal system to number the chapters. Each main chapter is started on a new page, so add a page break at the end of each main chapter (*Insert, Break, Page break*).

A heading shall be separated from the preceding paragraph with three empty lines, while two empty lines shall be inserted after it. In practice, this is accomplished by defining a heading style. The heading style may have been defined incorrectly in the computers used by the students, so you should check to make sure it is right. When the definitions are right, the computer will automatically add the right amount of spacing before and after a heading. **Thus you should not produce an empty line by pressing Enter, as the "three lines before and two after" can be generated automatically.** The formatting of the main headings, for instance, is carried out as follows: *Format, Styles and formatting*, choose Heading 1 as the formatting to apply (move the cursor on Heading 1 and click on the arrow to open the menu *Modify, Format, Font: Times New Roman Bold 14* and then paragraph formatting on the same *Format* menu *Paragraph, Indents and Spacing: Before 24, After 12*) The same line spacing is used in all headings (before 24, after 12). In body text, an empty line shall be inserted between paragraphs. Use no indentation at the start of a paragraph. You can now format all level 1 headings by moving the cursor to the next level 1 heading and applying the Heading 1 style. Then repeat the same formatting procedure for headings at levels 2, 3 etc. Also make sure there are no extra paragraph breaks marked ¶ before and after the headings. You can do his best by toggling on the *Show all* button in the Standard toolbar (the button that looks like a mirrored "p" ¶). If there extra paragraph breaks before and after the heading, your document looks like on the left. When you delete the extra breaks, the documents looks like on the right.



If you use **tables and figures**, each one of them shall be numbered and provided with a caption. Table captions are placed at the left margin above the table (e.g. Table 5. Skills provided by the programme), while figure captions are placed at the left margin under the figure (e.g. Figure 3. Model of experiential learning). If necessary, include source data, e.g. Figure 3. Model of experiential learning (Kolb 1984, 42).

A table of contents of the desired type (typically Formal) is added on the page that was created beforehand by choosing *Insert, Reference, Index and Tables, Table of Contents*. **The table of contents shall always be updated after changes: place the cursor inside the table of contents, press F9 and choose Update table.**

For essays and reports, the top and bottom **margins** are usually 2.5 cm, while the left and right margins are 2 cm. An exception to this are the Bachelor's and Master's theses for which the left margin shall be placed at 4 cm and the right margin at 1.5 cm. If you need to change the page settings, choose *File, Page Setup, Margins*. Master's and Bachelor's theses are printed in duplex mode (double-sided). This means that in the *Page Setup* window mentioned above you shall select

the *Pages* tab and there the *Mirror margins* option for multiple pages. It is really worth the while to do it at this stage. If mirrored margins are set after adding page numbers, the page numbers do not necessarily appear in the right place, i.e. at the outer edge of pages. If you have inserted page numbers before setting mirrored margins, it is a good idea to remove page numbering (see the last paragraph) and add the page numbers again after setting the margins mirrored.

Next **add the page numbers** (*Insert, Page Numbers*). Please note that the cursor needs to be on the first actual text page (usually the Introduction page). Choose *Top of page* as the position of the number, and *Outside* as the type of alignment. Page numbers shall appear **starting with the second page of text** (=2). To remove the number from the first text page (=first page of the introduction), untick "*Show number on first page*". Still in the Page Numbers dialogue box, click *Format* to access the *Page Number Format* dialogue box and at *Page numbering*, set *Start at 1*. Now the page numbers should appear, but unfortunately this is not always the case (see the above comment on Microsoft logic). If you cannot see a page number on page two, repeat the above process of adding page numbers. The likelihood of a number 2 appearing on the second page of text should now be close to 100 per cent.

No page number shall be shown on the abstract page, on the preface page if any or on the Table of Contents page. The sources/references section shall have page numbers, while the appendices shall not. The appendices are placed after the sources/references, and they shall be numbered separately as Appendix 1, Appendix 2, etc.

If necessary, **page numbering may be removed** by first choosing *View, Header and Footer*. This allows you to see the header and footer as well as their formatting menu. Move the cursor on top of the page number so that the cursor looks like a *selection grid*. Then click on the left mouse button. In this way you select not only the page number but the entire frame around it. Then simply press the Delete key and page numbering is removed from the entire document. Please note if you have used section breaks as described above, page numbers are only removed from the section in which the cursor is located.

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*Instructions only apply to Word 2003. Office 2007 users may be able to adapt part of these instructions for Word 2007.*

### 2.3 Instructions for filling in the thesis abstract form

1. FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Choose the appropriate programme/option.

2. AUTHOR

Surname followed by given name. If the thesis is co-authored, the names of the authors shall be typed in alphabetical order.

3. TITLE OF THE THESIS

Full title of the thesis. The title is only entered in English if the original language of the work was English.

4. MAJOR SUBJECT

Major subject in your programme or postgraduate degree: education, educational psychology or music education.

5. TYPE OF THESIS

For first degrees, either Master's or Bachelor's thesis, for postgraduate degrees, either Licentiate or doctoral thesis.

6. YEAR

The year when the thesis was submitted, such as 2009.

7. NUMBER OF PAGES

Number of running pages and the number of appendices.

8. ABSTRACT

Clearly worded free-form abstract with concise sentence structures. When you construct the abstract, please consider the following:

- goals and problem formulation of the thesis,
- what you are trying to find out,
- which research methods you have used,
- main results,
- applicability and generalisation of the results.

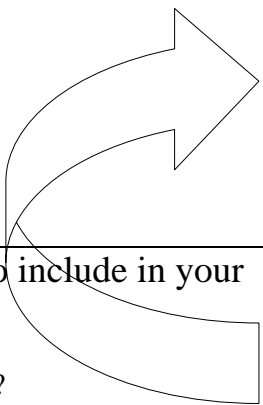
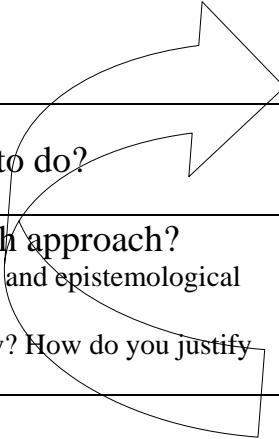
You should draw up the abstract in such a way that it fits in the space provided on the form. If you cannot fit it in the space provided, you may continue the abstract overleaf.

9. KEYWORDS

Description of the contents of the thesis by means of keywords (in alphabetical order). Use the *Eric* Education Resources Information Centre at <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>. For further information and instructions, contact the information specialist at the department's library.

See the actual abstract form under section 11.1. in this Toolkit. The abstract form is available at <http://www.oulu.fi/ktk/kasope/english/studies/instructions/>

### 3 Master's thesis compass

<p><b>What is your general focus in education?</b></p> 	<p>peace, development, migration, sustainability, difference/diversity, citizenship, global citizenship, gender, indigeneity, ethics, equity, inter- and trans- culturalism, effects of globalisation, global education pedagogy, power relations, cultural literacies, partnerships, recognition, redistribution, human rights, identity construction</p>
<p><b>What are you going to include in your literature review?</b>          What has been said before?          What are the current issues?</p>	<p>Historical background (contextualized and situated)          Policy connections          Theoretical perspectives (discussion of tensions)          Previous empirical research</p>
<p><b>What is/are your preliminary question(s)?</b></p> 	<p>What factors influence...?          How is X perceived in Y?          How does X compare to Y?</p>
<p><b>What are you going to do?</b></p>	<p>Critically analyze          Compare          Describe and discuss</p>
<p><b>What is your research approach?</b>          What are your ontological and epistemological assumptions?          What is your methodology? How do you justify your choice?</p>	<p>Quantitative          Qualitative          Discursive</p>
<p><b>What is your data?</b></p>	<p>Perceptions of individuals; Biographical narratives          Classroom practices, interactions, pedagogies;          Policy documents; Educational initiatives;          Conversations; Theories (published ideas)          Educational resources (textbooks, websites, etc.)          Literature, film</p>
<p><b>How are you going to collect the data?</b>          How are you going to choose your informants?          How are you going to address ethical issues?</p>	<p>Interviews; Focus groups; Questionnaires, web surveys; Observations, research journals; Recordings; Research (in case of textual analyses)</p>
<p><b>What do you intend to discuss in your findings?</b></p>	<p>Insights (something emerging from the data that neither you or other authors have thought of before)          Foresights (something that people have talked about and that you can see in the context you are researching)          Problems, Issues, Tensions, Implications, Correlations, Interactions, Common Patters, Unusual Patterns, Historical traces</p>

### **Throughout the process, it is worth considering**

- Where are you coming from in terms of: cultural assumptions about what is real and ideal, theoretical ideas informing your thinking, intuitions about issues, problems and solutions? What are you trying to prove and why? Who would disagree with you and where could they be coming from? What are the blind spots in your thinking about your chosen issue?
- How are you going to demonstrate critical thinking?
- How can you address complexity, power relations, contextual aspects?
- What are the limitations of your research approach?
- What do you intend to learn from the process?
- What is your contribution to the field? How original is your contribution (who has said this before)?






### **Learning outcomes/objectives for Master's thesis**

During the master's thesis process students collaborate in a research group and produce high quality research based on academic standards. An essential part of the process is participation in the Master's thesis seminars during which students choose research focus, relevant theoretical background and research methods for their research. During the theses process students produce a research plan and a theoretical framework, they collect data and apply various analysis methods. After completing the thesis seminars students are able to build up their argumentation and compose a coherent, logical and justified research report. Students are also able to defend their thesis, discuss various approaches to research, and evaluate theses.

### **MA versus PHD**

A general distinction between an MA and a PhD is that in the MA you are required to demonstrate that you can carry out the research process in ways that are valid and consistent within one research tradition/approach. You are also required to demonstrate that you understand how your chosen research approach differs from other approaches. In a PhD, the assumption is that you already know how to do research, so you have to demonstrate how you can use research to make a significant original knowledge contribution to a field of study. In short, an MA asks you if you have learned to do research, while a PHD asks you if you can use research to say something new, intelligent and intelligible to the academic community in your field of study.

## 4 Master's thesis landmarks

<b>Year 1</b>	
<p> <b>1<sup>st</sup> landmark:</b></p> <p><i>You should have reached this landmark by the third week of January.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>research plan</b></li> </ul> <p><i>Comment:</i> this research plan will be different from the plan submitted in the application process, as it will be based on the lessons learned from the master's thesis seminar session in the autumn term, and may well be affected by the research methods course input.</p>
<p> <b>2<sup>nd</sup> landmark:</b></p> <p><i>You should have reached this landmark by the second week of May.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>the first draft of the Introduction</b></li> <li>- <b>the Theoretical Framework section of the thesis</b></li> <li>- <b>version 2 of the research plan, not different, but more detailed than version one</b></li> </ul> <p><i>Comment:</i> the main theme of the spring seminars will be constructing a theoretical frame. The submitted work will act as the basis for the appointment of the supervisor; the supervisor will advise and guide the students during their second academic year</p>
<b>Year 2</b>	
<p> <b>3<sup>rd</sup> landmark:</b></p> <p><i>You should have reached this landmark by the second week of September.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>a written account of how the data has been collected</b></li> <li>- <b>a written suggestion on how the data will be analysed</b></li> </ul> <p><i>Comment:</i> Knowledge gained from the methodology courses in the first year will be applied in order to complete the work that has to be submitted. The theme for the master's seminar for the autumn of the second year will be <i>analysing data</i>.</p>
<p> <b>4<sup>th</sup> landmark:</b></p> <p><i>You should have reached this landmark by the third week of January.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>the <i>Data Analysis</i> section of the thesis</b></li> </ul>
<p> <b>5<sup>th</sup> landmark:</b></p> <p><i>You should have reached this landmark by May.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>the completed thesis</b></li> </ul> <p><i>Comment:</i> the spring term will be the time of writing of the <i>Results of the research</i> and the <i>Discussion</i> sections of the thesis. The master's seminar in spring will involve each student presenting their results, and there will be discussion in sessions where one other student will function as an 'opponent', and all others will participate by contributing a fixed number of comments and/or questions.</p>

## 5 Structure of a Master's thesis

The following is an example of the structure for a thesis with an empirical element.

1. COVER PAGE
  - The title: exact, inspiring, exciting
  - Consider length vs. exactness, two parts?
2. THESIS ABSTRACT
  - Summary of the whole thesis: background, aims, methodological approach, methods, informants, main results, usefulness
  - Keywords: max 6.
3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OR PROLOGUE IF YOU SO WISH
4. TABLE OF CONTENTS
  - Clarity, easy to follow the logic
  - Length
  - How detailed?
  - Not 4.1 if there is no 4.2
5. INTRODUCTION
  - What, why (significance of the research), how?
  - Inspires, gives the map, guidance, introduction
  - The gate
  - The purpose and aims of the research
  - Main theoretical starting points
  - The ways to gain knowledge, from whom (ontological and epistemological premises)
  - Your position
6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK (Does not mean that this is the title)
  - Background and context of the research
  - Main concepts
  - Main theories
  - Develop the argumentation, theorists discuss with you
  - Summary, references
7. QUESTIONS AND TASKS
  - Background for the questions
  - The questions
8. METHODOLOGICAL STARTING POINTS
  - Justifications
  - What does it mean in my research?
  - Ontological and epistemological premises

9. EMPIRICAL PART (Not this name)

- The method
- The research process, data collection methods
- Informants
- Data, research material
- Schedule and the way it was done
- Validity

10. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

- Transparency
- Reliability

11. RESULTS/FINDINGS

- Structure, present and justify the results well
- Examples, extracts, tables, drawings
- The main findings of the study – LINKED TO THEORY
- WHAT IS NEW?
- The summary (if needed)

12. VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, TRUTHFULNESS, ETHICAL CONCERNS

13. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- Measure of maturity
- Summing up the whole study (see the introduction)
- Combine with larger discussions, discuss the results/findings on a deeper level – consequences
- Evaluate the whole process (how did I succeed? Checking the aims, the answers, reliability)
- Suggestions for further research

14. REFERENCES

- Relevant, new, several pages
- From different language and cultural sources

15. APPENDICES

In a nutshell:

- It is a master's thesis, not doctoral dissertation, focus!
- Logical, justified, systematic study of the area you are interested in
- Combine theory and empiria!
- Something new?
- Inductive, deductive or abductive
- Creativity is welcome, remember justification

## 6 Common pitfalls in Master's theses

The following is a listing of the most common pitfalls that occur in the Master's theses writing processes.

1. Title/name is not very exciting or exact, too long and complicated – remember that the terms used in the title and questions must be defined and discussed.
2. Your logic cannot be seen from the table of contents.
3. Introduction does not inspire or introduce properly – after that you do not know what will be investigated and how.
4. Your research questions are unclear or too wide and do not tell about your epistemological or ontological starting points.
5. Your theoretical frame is unclear or unjustified – its role is unclear or it is not clearly connected with the research questions, data collection and results (deductive, inductive, abductive).
6. You do not lead the reader to understand your logic and argumentation.
7. You do not discuss, but the work is a list of quotations.
8. You do not justify, argue, give reasons.
9. The connection between the theoretical and conceptual frame, the questions, the method of collecting data, the results and final discussions is not visible (validity and reliability).
10. Methodological approach is not suitable for the questions.
11. Data collection is not properly justified and described.
12. Data analysis is not transparent, tools are not introduced.
13. Presentation of results is not structured combination of evidence and conclusions are not combined with theory.
14. There is no discussion about validity, reliability or ethical concerns.
15. Final discussion and conclusions (combining the results and earlier research and theoretical frame) are thin.
16. List of references is not convincing.
17. Referencing and use of sources is careless.

In the final evaluation all aspects are balanced. There is no such thing as perfect thesis – why should there be. It is a way of learning and finding out things.

## 7 Opponent's tasks in Master's thesis seminar

The Master's thesis seminars will involve each student presenting their results, and there will be discussion in sessions where one other student will function as an 'opponent', and all others will participate by contributing comments and/or questions.

As an opponent, please remember that you are from your part responsible to ASSIST the fellow-researcher writing the Master's thesis to good quality. You are the CRITICAL FRIEND who gives advice to the best of your knowledge!

The following includes guidance about the issues an opponent should discuss and point out. It is good practice for the opponent to give detailed comments in writing, in comments in the manuscript. In the seminar the opponent should discuss the major issues.

1. Start with the strengths of the work
2. Discuss the title – is it good, informative and accurate?
3. Look at the table of contents – whether it gives a clear idea about the logic. Are the (sub)headings good and informative? Too many, too few?
4. Is introduction an inspiring and clear 'door' to the master's thesis? Is everything essential included so that we know what it is about? (What, why and how?) Is the structure of the research report explained?
5. Are the research tasks/questions/problems clearly stated? Do we all know what is the phenomenon studied, what is the research topic?
6. What are the main concepts and theories and viewpoints, 'the theoretical framework', what are the lenses through which we study the phenomenon, with what tools, from what angle?
7. What are the epistemological and ontological commitments and the position of the writer, what sort of knowledge is looked for (objective, intersubjective, subjective), what is the researcher's view of the 'truth' about the matter, is the writer an outsider or an insider?
8. What is the relevant methodological approach, what are the methods used? Compare with research questions, are the methods suitable for the questions?
9. Evaluate the data collection process – transparent, adequate?
10. Evaluate the data analysis process, what were the tools for it, how transparent is the description of the analysis and interpretation process, how did it correspond with the questions, methodological commitments, epistemological and ontological starting points?
11. How are the results presented to the reader: clear, interesting, how is the RELATION between THEORY and the EMPIRICAL DATA (inductive, abductive, deductive)?
12. Validity and reliability/trustworthiness?
13. Does discussion tell about the depth of the research and the maturity of the writer?

14. Are the references relevant and tell about wide scope of relevant reading? Finnish/ English/ Swedish/ German/ international sources as well?
15. Spelling, references, headings of tables and figures, full stops...

In the end: holistic evaluation, balancing things, the thesis might have faults but on the other hand can be innovative, creative, inspiring, written fluently...

You can be creative (and you are encouraged to be) and break conventions, **if it is justified and you know what you are doing.**

## 8 Assessment criteria for Master's theses

### General assessment criteria

The assessment of Master's theses pays attention to general assessment criteria on the one hand, but also tries to consider the special characteristics of different types of research on the other. The general assessment criteria encompass the following areas:

- theoretical background of the research and familiarisation with literature,
- research problem and its justification,
- choice and use of research methods,
- collection and analysis of data,
- presentation and interpretation of results,
- evaluation of the reliability of the study,
- conclusions,
- discussion and research ethical evaluation,
- linguistic form and use of sources

### Grading scale (from 1 to 5) for approved theses

#### 1 = Sufficient

The theoretical background is quite narrow, one-sided and unclear. There is a lot to complain in the thesis on all levels, shortcomings and clear mistakes. The presentation of the research results is superficial, summarising and enumerative. The discussion does not reach the level of independent interpretation. The whole is quite weak and unfinished.

#### 2 = Satisfactory

The theoretical background is loosely connected with the research problems and the use of research data is mechanical and deficient. The work has plenty of good things, but also obvious shortcomings. The use of research methods is formulaic and unorganised. There are errors in the analysis, but the linguistic and formal aspects of the thesis also show clear deficiency. Although the discussion as a whole is quite scanty, it does contain references to possible applications.

#### 3 = Good

The student has familiarised him/herself thoroughly with the theoretical background. The data has been processed well and almost faultlessly. There may be some uncertainty in some important part of the thesis. The results clearly match the goals set for the research. The language and form of the thesis is good and consistent.

#### 4 = Very good

The student has familiarised him/herself well with the theoretical background, and the use of literature is many-sided and critical. The use of methods has been competent. The results have been interpreted consistently and on a high level. The scientific practices of publishing, layout, language and ethical discussion are well in control. The discussion is independent, analytical and creative.

**5 = Excellent**

The thesis is very well-defined in structure and shows a very deep familiarity with the branch of science. The theoretical background is praiseworthy, many-sided and has a high quality. The connection between theory and empiria is very strong. The methodological analyses are on a high level, they are independent and well-founded. The use of sources is sophisticated, plentiful and critical. The concepts have been defined well and they have been used correctly and clearly. The research data matches the thesis. The data has been classified and analysed well, creatively and flawlessly. The main results have been presented exceptionally well and they have been evaluated critically. The thesis shows an independent grasp and follows good scientific practices. The thesis contains numerous new observations. As a whole, the style of the thesis is excellent and consistent.

## 9 Graduation procedure

### 9.1 What to do - step by step

1. Make sure well before your planned graduation that you have completed all the courses required for your degree.
2. Ask your thesis supervisor to give you a publication permission for your thesis.
3. Enrol for the maturity test (you can only enrol for the maturity test after your thesis has been approved for publication by your thesis supervisor).
4. Have your thesis bound and provided with black hard covers at the Uniprint Oulu.
5. Submit the publication permission and your thesis in 3 copies (2 with hard covers, 1 in loose leaves) to office KTK254.
6. Take the maturity test.
7. Fill out the degree validation application form and submit it to the office KTK253.

Graduation schedule including e.g. various deadlines for submitting the thesis and taking the maturity test are available at: <http://www.oulu.fi/ktk/kasope/english/studies/instructions/>.

### 9.2 Submitting the Master's theses

Students submit their Master's theses in three (3) copies that are in a form accepted by the supervisor, have been approved for publication, laid out and proof-read as required and duplicated in a double-sided format to the Student Affairs Office (KTK254). The deadlines for submitting the thesis are confirmed by the Faculty for each semester. Students must follow those deadlines otherwise the Faculty's study affairs administration cannot guarantee that the student's Master's thesis arrives in time to be duly processed. The Education Dean cannot accept your Master's thesis until your maturity test has been approved. One month or four weeks shall be allowed for the examination of a thesis.

### 9.3 Publication permission from the supervisor

Publication permission form is available at: <http://www.oulu.fi/ktk/kasope/english/studies/instructions/>. When you submit your thesis, you shall also submit the publication permission granted by the supervisor, in which s/he also proposes a second examiner for the thesis. After this, the office asks the Education Dean to sign the publication permission, and the thesis is then delivered to the examiners for a statement.

### 9.4 Binding the thesis with hard black covers

Two of the copies shall be provided with black hard covers, while the third shall be in loose leaves. The student shall make the arrangements and cover the cost to get his or her thesis equipped with hard covers. Students can use the binding services available at the Uniprint Oulu:

- Binding work €25.00 per copy: black or blue hard covers and text printed on the cover (in gold)
- Page printing:
  - o black and white pages €0.07 per page
  - o colour pages €0.30 per page
  - o you can also bring your own ready-to-bind printed thesis for binding
- The above prices include VAT (23 %).
- Time of delivery: TO BE AGREED ON SEPARATELY, booking list tel. 020 7568 672.
- Submission of materials: You can bring the materials to the Uniprint work reception desk or send them by mail to: Uniprint Oy, P.O.Box 8200, 90014 University of Oulu.
- The materials can also be sent by e-mail as a ready-to-print pdf file to [gradut.oulu@uniprint.fi](mailto:gradut.oulu@uniprint.fi).
- After the thesis has been bound, you can fetch it at the Publication Shop where you shall also pay for it. Payment by cash, bankcard or credit card.
- You can inquire if your thesis is ready to be fetched at the Publication Shop of the Uniprint Oulu, tel. 020 7568 672.

## 9.5 Taking the written maturity test

A student getting prepared for a Master's degree shall take a maturity test. The purpose of this test is to prove that you master written expression both in your field of research and in English. Finnish students are required to write the maturity test in their mother tongue and the students of other nationalities write the maturity tests in English.

The maturity test is usually taken on a general examination day. You can only enrol for the test after your thesis has been approved for publication by your thesis supervisor. A minimum of three weeks shall be allowed for the marking of a maturity test. The supervisor of your thesis makes an assessment of the maturity test in terms of its contents and language, and then submits it to the Student Affairs Office (KTK254, student affairs secretary). The maturity test shall be taken at least four weeks in advance of the date when the Dean accepts the thesis.

For the maturity test, the supervisor of the Master's thesis will give two or three topics related to the thesis, and the student shall choose **one** of them. The maturity test consists of a scientifically oriented essay of approximately four pages on the selected topic. Three hours are allowed for writing the essay. The essay shall be written on every line of a folded A4 sheet of cross-ruled writing paper with fairly large squares.

The contents and the language of the maturity test are assessed by the primary supervisor of your thesis. The supervisor grants you either a pass or fail in the test.

### Minimum requirements of the maturity test

1. Your handwriting shall be legible, it must be possible to tell which are capital and small letters, and the boundaries between words shall be clear. A margin of three squares shall be left at the left edge of each page.

2. The essay shall be divided into paragraphs that are separated clearly from each other.
3. The suggested length of the essay is about one full sheet of folded writing paper (approximately four pages) with text on every line. A single page is not enough.
4. The essay shall be provided with a heading. The heading shall be written exactly as it was given by your supervisor. The heading and the contents shall correspond to each other.
5. You shall master the basics of spelling and punctuation. Do not use abbreviations to any major degree.
6. The relations between sentences and clauses shall be expressed clearly. The sentences and clauses shall be complete and varied. There shall not be any serious mistakes in cohesion.
7. The word order shall be unambiguous and in harmony with the structure of the information being presented.
8. The style shall be straight prose – not chatty for instance.
9. The text shall not be filled with diagrams and pictures, as the narration shall proceed by means of language. Tables should not be used, as there are no sources available to you when you are writing the essay.
10. The essay shall form a uniform whole with an outlined structure.
11. It shall be possible for the language consultant to understand the text. You shall not assume that the reader is familiar with your thesis.
12. Your essay may be failed, if major problems occur repeatedly in one of the areas mentioned above, or if it contains plenty of different kinds of errors.

## 10 Good scientific practice and prevention of plagiarism

### 10.1 Good scientific practice at the University of Oulu

The University of Oulu has committed itself to complying with the guidelines of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics for good scientific practice:

For scientific research to be ethically acceptable and reliable and its findings credible, the conduct of research must conform to good scientific practice. Good scientific practice entails, among other things, that researchers and scientific experts

1. follow modes of action endorsed by the research community, that is, integrity, meticulousness and accuracy in conducting research, in recording and presenting results, and in judging research and its results;
2. apply ethically sustainable data-collection, research and evaluation methods conforming to scientific criteria, and practise openness intrinsic to scientific knowledge in publishing their findings; and
3. take due account of other researchers' work and achievements, respecting their work and giving due credit and weight to their achievements in carrying out their own research and publishing its results. Further, it is in keeping of good scientific practice that
4. research is planned, conducted and reported in detail and according to the standards set for scientific knowledge;
5. questions relating to the status, rights, co-authorship, liabilities and obligations of the members of a research team, right to research results and the preservation of material are determined and recorded in a manner acceptable to all parties before the research project starts or a researcher is recruited to the team;
6. the sources of financing and other associations relevant to the conduct of research are made known to those participating in the research and reported when the findings are published; and
7. good administrative practice and good personnel and financial management practices are observed.

In addition, different disciplines have special characteristics relating to good scientific practice, which are specified in more detail in the codes of practice issued by learned societies and professional organisations. Higher education institutions and research institutes have issued, and can issue, specific guidelines concerning research conducted under their auspices. Universities, research institutes, polytechnics and other organisations carrying out research must see to it that the education they provide familiarises students with good scientific practice and research ethics. Every unit providing researcher training has a duty to include in its researcher training programme questions relating to good scientific practice specific to its disciplines. The responsibility for abiding by good scientific practice rests with the research community as a whole. Commitment to good scientific practice is primarily up to each researcher and each member of a research team individually, but also to each research team collectively, the head of a research unit and the leadership of an organisation carrying out research. (Retrieved September 20, 2010, from <http://www.tenk.fi/ENG/HTK/htkeng.pdf>.)

## 10.2 Prevention of plagiarism and the use of the Urkund system

One of the central goals of a research university is to guide its students to adopt the principles of high-quality scientific practice. The University of Oulu has drafted ethical guidelines for both teachers and students. Moreover, the University has guidelines for the management of proved cases of plagiarism (available through: <http://www.oulu.fi/urkund/>). The latter guidelines are addressed to all members of the academic community and concern teachers as well as students.

The Urkund system is available to the students and teachers of the University of Oulu. It is a software for the checking of bibliographic references and prevention of plagiarism. The Urkund system conducts analyses of the materials submitted to it once in 24 hours. Besides public www pages, the system compares the target texts not only to texts in its own databases but also to texts in some protected databases of its partners such as ProQuest, DiVA (Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet), lustus, and Nationalencyklopedin. Thus, besides electronic materials, the Urkund system has access to an extensive corpus of published materials including scientific articles, newspaper articles, encyclopaedias, books, and database materials. The Urkund system compares the target documents with three sets of source materials: 1) the Internet (approximately 10 billion pages), 2) published materials AND 3) student materials (more than 1.5 million pages in February 2009).

The teachers and supervisors who intend to use the system in their courses or during the process of thesis supervision shall inform the students of the matter beforehand. On the same occasion, the teachers/supervisors shall also instruct the students in referencing techniques and familiarize them with the principles of high-quality scientific practice, which every member of the academic community must know.

You may send your work to the Urkund system using the link “Send document/työn lähettäminen”. Before you can load your document for sending, you must read carefully and accept a student contract. If you cannot accept the student contract, you shall contact your teacher to agree with him or her on how to proceed in the matter. The Urkund system processes your document overnight. In addition to public www pages, the system compares your text to texts in its own databases and in the protected databases of its partners. When the analysis of your document is finished the results will be reported to your teacher. You have the right to see the analysis of your work.

Your work is saved in the Urkund system. Your work may be used later for the analysis of other student work. As the copyright owner you may choose that:

- your work is used as a source material text when documents from all other universities are matched. If you choose this option, your own document will be protected against plagiarism.
- your work is used as a source material text for the comparison of student work from the University of Oulu only.

### Relevant links

- The Urkund system for students: [http://www.oulu.fi/urkund/opiskelijalle\\_english.html](http://www.oulu.fi/urkund/opiskelijalle_english.html)
- Guidelines for the management of proved cases of plagiarism at the University of Oulu: [http://www.oulu.fi/urkund/index\\_english.html](http://www.oulu.fi/urkund/index_english.html)
- Good scientific practice and procedures for handling misconduct and fraud in science (National Advisory Board on Research Ethics): <http://www.tenk.fi/ENG/HTK/htkeng.pdf>

## 11 Forms

### 11.1. Master's thesis abstract form

*This electronic version of the Toolkit does not include the forms.*

*This form is available at <http://www.oulu.fi/ktk/kasope/english/studies/instructions/>*

## 11.2. Publication permission

*This electronic version of the Toolkit does not include the forms.*

*This form is available at <http://www oulu.fi/kit/kasope/english/studies/instructions/>*

### **11.3. Degree validation application**

*This electronic version of the Toolkit does not include the forms.*

*This form is available at <http://www oulu.fi/kit/kasope/english/studies/instructions/>*