Master’s Degree Programme in
EDUCATION and GLOBALISATION

TOOLKIT
for Academic Essays
and Master’s Theses

FACULTY of EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY of OULU
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The Faculty of Education takes no responsibility for the damage caused by inadequate, outdated or false information.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/Academic Advisor.

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Toolkit for Academic Essays and Master’s Theses

Faculty of Education
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EdGlo - Master’s Degree Programme in Education and Globalisation
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   DEGREE CONFIRMATION APPLICATION FORM
I  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 orientation 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 (6th edition). Please see section 2. in this Toolkit for further information and visit https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/.
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 https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/ for details. 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 2012)
  - Name of the author
- Please note that this does not apply to a Master’s thesis. Please see separate instructions for the title (cover) page for a Master’s thesis 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 Master’s thesis abstract template at: www.oulu.fi/edu/theses and instructions 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 https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/ (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, p. 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 on 24 October 2012, 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:


**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 by uploading it to the electronic system for submitting Master's theses for final assessment (Laturi database) in a PDF/A format. The Master's thesis file shall include a **title page** and an **abstract**.
- Please consult the IT specialists Vesa Komulainen room KK235 or Esa Kunelius room KTK231 in case you need help.

**Title page**

- The title page template in PDF format is available at [www.oulu.fi/edu/theses](http://www.oulu.fi/edu/theses)
- Fill in your name and the title of your thesis in capital letters, and choose the right options and year in the selectable fields. Save the file on your computer/storage device.

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

These instructions (*Microsoft Word 2010*) 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. Below you find short instructions on how to manage page setup and margins, make sections different from each other, use page numbering, apply heading types, insert tables and figures, and add an automatic table of contents.

These instructions are available also at: [www.oulu.fi/edu/theses → http://www.oulu.fi/sites/default/files/content/Word_2010_instructions.pdf](http://www.oulu.fi/sites/default/files/content/Word_2010_instructions.pdf)

**Page setup and margins**

For essays and reports, the page setup usually is: **top and bottom margins 2.5 cm** and **right and left margins 2 cm**. An exception to this rule is formed by the Bachelor's and Master's theses, in which...
the left margin is 4 cm and the right margin 1.5 cm. If you need to change the page settings, choose the Page Layout tab, click on Margins and then Custom Margins.

**NB!** Master’s and Bachelor’s theses are printed on both sides of the paper (duplex). This means that having chosen the above Page Layout, Margins, Custom margins tab you need to select Mirror margins in the Multiple pages drop-down menu. It is best to do this at this very stage. If you activate mirrored margins after adding the page numbers, the page numbers do not necessarily appear in the right places, i.e. at the outer edge of the pages. If you happen to add page numbers before setting mirrored margins, you should remove them and add them again after setting the margins.

**Inserting a section break for the page of contents**

Before formatting the headings, it is useful to create an empty page at the start of the document for the page of contents. Do this as follows. Place the cursor at the very start of the document. Add an empty page likes this: Page Layout, Breaks, Section Breaks, Odd Page.

A section break is added, because (according to the faculty’s thesis layout instructions) there shall not be any page number visible on the cover page, abstract page, contents page or the first text page. This can only be done in Word by breaking the documents into sections, which allows the use of different formatting in different sections.

**Making sections different from each other**

For the section break to function as expected, you also need to change the assumption that the sections are (dis)similar. Do as follows: display the header by double-clicking on the header area at the top of the page, or by right-clicking in the header area and selecting Edit header. The left edge of the header area now says First Page Header-Section 2, while the right edge says Same as Previous. In the Header & Footer Tools, choose Different Odd & Even Pages. Also make sure that you have selected Different First Page. 2
Same as Previous must be disabled to make Word treat the sections as different, and not the same. This is done by removing the selection Link to Previous in the Header & Footer Tools when the header area is in view. Also check to see if Same as Previous is enabled in the footer or on the following pages. If it is, disable it by clicking on the header/footer and deselecting Link to Previous. Having done all of this, you can close the Header & Footer Tools tab.

Page numbers

Next add the page numbers (Insert, Page Number). NB! According to the faculty’s instructions, the page numbers shall be at the outer edge of the page. Older versions of Word have a setting of its own that does this, but in the new Word 2010 this needs to be done manually separately for even and odd pages.

On the Page Number menu, first choose Format Page Numbers and then Page Numbering, Start at 1. This makes mirror margins appear properly, and a larger margin appear at the left edge of odd pages.

Page numbers shall be visible starting with the second page of text (=2).

Move on to the second page of text. Choose Insert, Page Number to locate the page number on even pages (=2) at the top left edge Even Page Header Section 2. Then move to the next page (=3) and select the top right edge as the position for the page number on odd pages Odd Page Header Section 2.

Page numbers shall not be visible in the abstract, preface if any, or the table of contents pages. The source/reference list is page numbered, while the appendices are not. The appendices are placed after the sources, and they are numbered separately (Appendix 1, Appendix 2, etc.).

If necessary, page numbers are removed by double-clicking on the header area, whereby the upper margin becomes accessible. The page number can be removed by selecting it with the mouse and simply deleting it like any other text. Page numbering needs to be removed separately for the even and odd pages. NB. When you have inserted a section break as described above, the page numbers disappear from the section in which the cursor is located.

Heading types and their management using heading styles

The process of writing and formatting the text takes place by first writing the entire text without worrying too much about formatting. Then all the headings are formatted using heading styles. When all of the text has been written, the text is justified and hyphenated: Page Layout, Hyphenation, Automatic.

Heading types

Main headings

Heading 1 = Times New Roman, Bold, 14
1. The heading is typed in capitals.
2. According to the instructions, headings are spaced from the preceding chapter with 3 empty lines, with 2 empty lines added below.
3. Every main chapter starts from a new page, so a page break is added after every main chapter *Insert, Page Break.*

**Other headings**

**Heading 2 =** Times New Roman, Bold 12  
**Heading 3 =** Times New Roman, 12

1. Normal typeface (starting with a capital letter).  
2. Numbering follows the decimal system.  
3. According to the instructions, headings are spaced from the preceding chapter with 3 empty lines, with 2 empty lines added below.

**Body text**

The font to be used for body text is Times New Roman, size 12 pt. The line spacing is 1.5.

**Management of heading types by means of heading styles**

In practice, the above settings are managed by defining heading styles. The heading style definitions in the computers used by the students do not necessarily follow these instructions, so you should check on them. When the heading styles are defined correctly, the computer automatically adds the right amount of empty space above and below the headings. As a result, you shall not create empty lines by pressing enter repeatedly, as the "3 lines before and 2 after" rule is implemented automatically by following the instructions below.

The formatting of main headings, for instance, is done as follows: *Home* tab, *Heading 1*. The toolbar contains a number of previewed heading styles, place the cursor on *Heading 1*, right-click and then select *Modify*.

In the *Modify Style* tool select the font Times New Roman, Bold, 14. Then click on *Format* in the bottom left corner and select *Paragraph*. Next on the *Indents and Spacing* tab click on *Spacing 1,5 lines*. Input the values of *Before 24pt* and *After 12pt*. On the *Line and page breaks* tab also select *Keep with next*.
The same settings for spacing are used for all the headers (24 before and 12 after). An empty line is entered between body text paragraphs. No indents are used at the start of paragraphs.

Now you can format all Heading 1 tagged headings by placing the cursor on the heading and selecting Heading 1 as the style. Then apply the same formatting, following the instructions above, to the heading levels 2, 3 etc.

Make sure that there are no extra line breaks before and after headings. You can do this best by turning on the Show/Hide feature on the standard toolbar (the button looks like a reversed ¶). All the line breaks are then indicated by ¶ signs. If there are extra line breaks before and after headings, you will see something like on the left below. After deleting the extra breaks it should look more like on the right (see below).

```
¶
MASTER’S THESIS¶

¶
Degree of Master of Education

¶
The degree of Master of Education involves the writing of a Master’s thesis. The thesis
```
Tables and figures

If you use tables and figures, they shall be numbered and each table and figure must be provided with a caption. The caption for a table is placed above the table at the left margin (e.g. Table 5. Competences provided by the education.), while the captions for figures come at the left margin below the figures (e.g. Figure 3. Model of experiential learning.) If necessary, source information is added, e.g. Figure 3. Model of experiential learning (Kolb 1984, p. 42).

Adding an automatic table of contents

Because you used heading styles, you can use automation to create the table of contents. The table of contents is constructed automatically based on the heading styles. Now go to the first page of your document. Click on the References tab and then Table of Contents at the left edge. Then choose what kind of table of contents you wish to add to your document.

While you are working on your document, you can update the table of contents by left-clicking somewhere on it. The Update Table tool will appear on top of the table, allowing you to refresh the table of contents.

Instructions only apply to MS Word 2010. MS Office 2007 users may be able to adapt part of these instructions for MS Word 2007.
2.3 Instructions for filling in the thesis abstract form

The abstract form is available online at www.oulu.fi/edu/theses.

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.

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 2018.

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,
   - application and implication 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 www.eric.ed.gov. For further information and instructions, contact the information specialist at the university library.
### 3 Master’s thesis compass

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headline/overarching questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>For example: What is your general focus in education?</strong></td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are you going to include in your literature review?</strong></td>
<td>Historical background (contextualized and situated) Policy connections Theoretical perspectives (discussion of tensions) Previous empirical research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is/are your preliminary question(s)?</strong></td>
<td>What factors influence…? How is X perceived in Y? How does X compare to Y?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are you going to do?</strong></td>
<td>Critically analyze Compare Describe and discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is your research approach?</strong></td>
<td>Quantitative Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is your data?</strong></td>
<td>Perceptions of individuals, Narratives Classroom-practices, interactions, pedagogies, Policy documents, Educational initiatives, Conversations, Theories (published ideas) Educational resources (textbooks, websites, etc.), Literature, film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How are you going to collect the data?</strong></td>
<td>Interviews; Focus groups; Questionnaires; web surveys; Observations; research journals; Recordings; Theories (in case of textual analyses); Policy documents; Web information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do you intend to discuss in your findings?</strong></td>
<td>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 Patterns, Unusual Patterns, Historical traces Perceptions, Understandings, Conflicts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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, previous academic background, intuitions about issues, problems and solutions? What are you trying to highlight 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?
- Are you trying to demonstrate something? If so, why?
- Who is your audience?
- 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? Do you plan on doing a PhD based on this work?
- 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 form a research group in which they collaborate during the Master’s thesis process 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Pre-landmark:** | - research idea or focus  
*Comment:* this research idea/focus will help you progress towards an actual research plan that will inform and guide your research process. It may change considerably over time however, it is an important starting point towards the completion of your thesis.
| **1st landmark:** | - research plan  
*Comment:* this research plan will be relatively informed you’re your research idea/focus. It will also 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.
| **2nd landmark:** | - the first draft of the Introduction  
- the Theoretical Framework section of the thesis  
- version 2 of the research plan, not different, but more detailed than version one  
*Comment:* 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.
| Year 2 |  |
| **3rd landmark:** | - a written account of how the data has been collected  
- a written suggestion on how the data will be analysed  
*Comment:* 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 *analysing data*.
| **4th landmark:** | - the *Data Analysis* section of the thesis  
**5th landmark:** | - the completed thesis  
*Comment:* the spring term will be the time of writing of the *Results of the research* and the *Discussion* 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.

Check the dates for thesis submission at [http://www.oulu.fi/edu/graduation](http://www.oulu.fi/edu/graduation)
5 Structure of a Master’s thesis

The following is an example of the structure for a thesis with an empirical element. The structure may vary depending on many factors. Please see the examples on page 16.

COVER PAGE
- The title: exact, inspiring, exciting
- Consider length vs. exactness, two parts?

THESIS ABSTRACT
- Summary of the whole thesis: background, aims, methodological approach, methods, informants, main results, usefulness
- Keywords: max 6.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OR PROLOGUE IF YOU SO WISH

LIST OF ACRONYMS (if any?)

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE OF CONTENTS
- Clarity, easy to follow the logic (Not 4.1 if there is no 4.2)
- Length
- How detailed?

INTRODUCTION (Does not mean that this is the title – same goes for the next sections)
- What, why (significance of the research), how?
- Inspires, gives the map, guidance, introduction
- The purpose and aims of the research
- Research questions
- Main theoretical starting points
- The ways to gain knowledge, from whom (ontological and epistemological premises)
- Your position

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
- Background and context of the research
- Main concepts
- Main theories
- Develop the argumentation, theorists discuss with you

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH
- Justifications
- Ontological and epistemological premises
- The methodical approach
- The research process, Schedule and the way it was done
- Data description and data collection methods
- Thorough description of the analysis
- Transparency
RESULTS/FINDINGS
- Structure, present and justify the results well
- Examples, extracts, tables, drawings
- The main findings of the study
- The summary (if needed)

VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, TRUTHFULNESS, ETHICAL CONCERNS

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS
- Summing up the whole study (see the introduction)
- Combine with larger discussions, discuss the results/findings on a deeper level – with the research questions and with the theories related
- Consequences of Findings
- Evaluate the whole process (how did I succeed? Checking the aims, the answers, reliability)
- Suggestions for further research

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

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?
- Creativity is welcome, all is a matter of justifications

LINKS TO A FEW GOOD MASTER’S THESSES

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, too wide or unjustified – its role is unclear or it is not clearly connected with the research questions, data collection and results (deductive, inductive).
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/conceptual frame, the questions, the method of collecting data, the results and final discussions is not visible (validity and reliability), or poorly established.
10. Methodological approach is not suitable for the questions, or is not thoroughly followed.
11. Data collection is not properly justified and described.
12. Data analysis is not transparent, tools are not introduced, only steps without actual data.
13. Presentation of results is not structured combination of evidence.
14. Research questions are not clearly addressed or answered.
15. Discussion points are not clearly combined with theory or with research question.
16. There is too shallow of no discussion about validity, reliability or ethical concerns.
17. Final discussion and conclusions (combining the results and earlier research and theoretical frame) are thin.
18. List of references is not convincing.
19. 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.

To sum up, thesis assessment takes into consideration the various research orientations of theses (such as empirical studies, development studies, historical studies, theoretical studies etc.). Below is an example of an assessment rubric.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment of the thesis</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Theoretical framework and familiarisation with literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Research problem and its justification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Choice and use of research methods</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Collection and analysis of data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Presentation and interpretation of results</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Evaluation of reliability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Conclusions and discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Language and use of sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grade for the thesis is not necessarily the direct average of the above criteria (A-H).
9 Graduation procedure

9.1 What to do - step by step

The students must make sure in good time before planned graduation that they have completed all the studies required by the degree. You can check for the requirements in the Study Guide. You may also request a student advisor or academic affairs secretary to help you in finding out what the status of your studies is.

Thesis upload:

1. Ask your thesis supervisor to give you an uploading authorisation for your thesis.
2. Enrol for the maturity test.
3. Upload your thesis to the Laturi database. Please note that once the upload is final, it is not possible to withdraw thesis from Laturi.
4. Take the maturity test.
5. Fill out the degree validation application at OSAT. https://osat.oulu.fi/

If you have pursued studies in other faculties or universities, make sure the credits are transferred to your study register well in time.

The University of Oulu has introduced an electronic application for degree certificates that you can fill in after confirmation of your credits: https://osat.oulu.fi. The application shall be filed no later than two weeks prior to the day on which the degree is due to be awarded.

Graduation schedule including e.g. various deadlines for submitting the thesis and taking the maturity test are available at www.oulu.fi/edu/graduation.

9.2 Uploading authorisation from the supervisor

See the actual uploading authorisation form under the section 11.2. The form is also available at: www.oulu.fi/edu/theses. You shall submit the uploading authorisation granted by the supervisor, in which s/he also proposes a second examiner (reviewer) for the thesis. After this, the thesis is delivered to the examiners (reviewers) for a statement.

9.3 Submitting the Master’s theses

Students submit their Master’s theses to the Laturi database in a form that is accepted by the supervisor, and has been approved for uploading, laid out and proof-read as required. It is strongly recommended that all Master’s theses are proof-read by trained professionals.
NB! The final thesis is ONE file which consists of the cover page, abstract, thesis itself, references and possible appendices. This final thesis file needs to be in PDF/A format. Once the final thesis has been uploaded to Laturi it cannot be withdrawn.

The deadlines for submitting the theses 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.

**Laturi - Electronic system for submitting Master’s theses for final assessment**

1. When the thesis is ready, the supervisor gives the student permission to upload the thesis to Laturi.
2. The supervisor sends the following information to the Faculty’s student affairs office to be added to Oodi: name of the student, title of the thesis, names of the supervisors and reviewers, major subject, estimated date of approval (based on the graduation schedule).
   - The Laturi system picks up the information from Oodi (takes overnight).
3. The student uploads the final version of the thesis to Laturi.
   - NB! The final thesis is **ONE file** which consists of the cover page, abstract, thesis itself, references and possible appendices. This final file needs to be in PDF/A format.
   - i. For instructions for PDF/A, please see [https://muuntaja.oulu.fi](https://muuntaja.oulu.fi) and the Faculty’s instructions at [http://www.oulu.fi/edu/theses](http://www.oulu.fi/edu/theses).
   - ii. If you need additional help, please consult the IT specialists Vesa Komulainen room or Esa Kunelius room.
4. The reviewers download the thesis from Laturi for assessment purposes.
5. The reviewers (2-3) compose and sign their statement and return it to the Faculty’s student affairs office.
6. The electronic Master’s thesis is approved by the staff member in charge of the degree programme according to the graduation schedule.
7. After the thesis has been approved, the student is informed of the approval and grade of the thesis through Weboodi.

Kindly note: If s/he so wishes, the student can also print the thesis as a book at his/her own expense. However, only electronic Master’s theses can be accepted for assessment.

University-wide instructions for students and teachers can be found at [http://laturi.oulu.fi](http://laturi.oulu.fi). Laturi technical support can be reached at libadmin@oulu.fi.

### 9.4 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 the language which they have competed their upper secondary education and the students of other nationalities write the maturity tests in English.

The maturity test is usually taken on a general examination day, or through the EXAM system. You can only enrol for the test after your thesis has been approved for uploading by your thesis...
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. 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. Handwriting must be readable.

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.
9.5 Submitting the degree confirmation application

Submit your degree validation application at https://osat.oulu.fi/

Please check http://www.oulu.fi/edu/graduation well in advance to make sure you meet the given deadlines for graduation.
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 (http://www.oulu.fi/university/node/42765).

We also follow carefully the Code of conduct for the prevention and processing of misconduct in studies at the University of Oulu. (http://www.oulu.fi/external/Code-of-conduct-for-the-prevention-and-processing-of-misconduct-in-studies-at-University-of-Oulu-2018.pdf)

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. Learned societies operating in Finland, on their part, are responsible for upholding and promoting good scientific practice, which they can maintain for instance through the peer review system of scientific publications.

The ethical guidelines for Teachers and Students of the University of Oulu are available at: www.oulu.fi/students/Ethical%20Guidelines%20for%20Teachers%20and%20Students.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: 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 lähetäminen”. 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: [www.oulu.fi/urkundsystem/student](www.oulu.fi/urkundsystem/student)
- Guidelines for the management of proved cases of plagiarism at the University of Oulu: [www.oulu.fi/urkundsystem/teacher](www.oulu.fi/urkundsystem/teacher)

Good scientific practice and procedures for handling misconduct and fraud in science (National Advisory Board on Research Ethics): [www.tenk.fi/en](www.tenk.fi/en)

11 Links to Forms

- Master’s thesis supervision plan form is available at [www.oulu.fi/edu/theses](www.oulu.fi/edu/theses)
- Master’s thesis cover page template is available at [www.oulu.fi/edu/theses](www.oulu.fi/edu/theses)
- Master’s thesis abstract template is available at [www.oulu.fi/edu/theses](www.oulu.fi/edu/theses)
- Uploading authorisation form is available at [www.oulu.fi/edu/theses](www.oulu.fi/edu/theses).
- Degree confirmation (validation) form is available at [www.oulu.fi/edu/graduation](www.oulu.fi/edu/graduation).