

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER THESIS IN GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGY PROGRAM

Course code	GRAL012
Course title	<i>Master thesis</i>
Type of course	Compulsory
Stage of study	Graduate
ECTS	30ECTS
Coordinating lecturer	Assoc . Prof. Dr. Vita Aktsinaite, e-mail: vitaks@ism.lt
Study form	Full time
Language of instruction	English

2021-2022

The Master's Thesis is the culminating experience in graduate level education for Master degree candidates. It is an individual endeavour of analytical nature, which contains elements of originality and is performed in conformity with general requirements of academic papers and scholarly projects. For the student, the Master's thesis should be a learning activity that is stimulating and engenders a sense of pride and accomplishment.

The intent of the thesis is to provide an opportunity for Master's degree candidates to refine, in some cases acquire, a range of skills at an appropriate level to do capable and competent research. A successful thesis is evidence that the candidate has acquired the minimum level of research skills required and can therefore be accredited a Master's degree. Skills required of thesis writers are those associated with research design, data collection, information management, analysis of data, synthesis of data with existing knowledge and critical evaluation of the writer's own ideas and those presented in the literature reviewed. The thesis should be written in English, within a given period of time and comply with commonly accepted principles of academic ethics.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The Master thesis should be between 15 000 and 20 000 words long, excluding the Title Page, Abstract, References and Appendices. It should be written in English and have a clear written style (some theses can be shorter than the required length – it all depends on the research question. If there is a need for a shorter thesis, it needs to be discussed and approved by the Program Director). The thesis should be formatted according to the APA style requirements which can be found on ISM e-Learning system named Formatting and Citing Requirements of Academic Papers, APA Style Summary or at <http://www.apa.org/>

The Master thesis should include the following elements:

- Title Page
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures and/or List of Tables (if any)
- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Research Methodology
- Empirical Research Results
- Discussion and Conclusions
- References
- Appendices

LEARNING OUTCOMES

LO1. Able to identify a research problem and formulate a research question or hypothesis.

LO2. Ability to select appropriate scientific sources and analyse them critically.

LO3. Able to develop empirical research design and conduct research ethically.

LO4. Able to analyse the empirical research results and develop scientific discussion.

LO5. Able to communicate research results fluently in writing and orally.

CONTENT OF THE THESIS

TITLE PAGE – is the cover page of the whole thesis and it should include (please see Appendix 4 for the example):

- The title should be written using all capital letters, centered within the left and right margins, and spaced about 3 cm from the top of the page.
- Below the title, at the vertical and horizontal center of the margins, place the following five lines (all centered):
 - Line 1: A Thesis
 - Line 2: Presented to the Faculty
 - Line 3: ISM University of Management and Economics
 - Line 4: in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
 - Line 5: Master in Global Leadership and Strategy

Center the following three lines within the margins:

- Line 1: by
- Line 2: [name under which you are registered in the University Studies Office]
- Line 3: [month and year the thesis is submitted; no comma between month and year]

The text on the Title Page should be Times New Roman, size 12, double space.

ABSTRACT – is the first substantive description of the paper read by an external reader. You should view it as an opportunity to set accurate expectations. The Abstract is a summary of the whole thesis as it presents all the major elements of your work in a highly condensed form. Also, the Abstract often functions, together with the thesis title, as a stand-alone text. This section is not merely an introduction in the sense of a preface, preamble, or advance

organizer that prepares the reader for the thesis. In addition to that function, it must be capable of substituting for the whole thesis when there is insufficient time and space for the full text.

The Abstract cannot exceed one page and it usually is about 150 words. The structure of the Abstract should mirror the structure of the whole thesis and should represent all its major elements. For example, if your thesis has five chapters (introduction, literature review, methodology, results, conclusion), there should be one or more sentences assigned to summarize each chapter.

The most common error in abstracts is failure to present results. The primary function of your thesis (and by extension your Abstract) is not to tell readers what you did, **it is to tell them what you discovered**. Other information, such as the account of your research methods, is needed mainly to back the claims you make about your results. Approximately the last half of the Abstract should be dedicated to summarizing and interpreting your results.

TABLE OF CONTENTS – should provide the reader with the exact structure of the whole paper. The Table of Contents should list the chapter headings, appendices, references and the pages on which they can be found.

INTRODUCTION – is the first major chapter of the thesis. It should set out the background of the research study and address the following areas:

- **Relevance of the Topic**
 - What is the background and/or the context of research?
 - What is the main subject of research?
- **Research Question, Goal and Objectives**
 - What is the central research question that the thesis will address?
 - What is the central research goal that you will try to achieve in the paper?
 - How will the set research goal be reached? Through what specific objectives?
 - Why is this subject important in practical terms?
 - Why is this subject important in theoretical terms?
- **Research Design**
 - What research design is going to be used in the thesis?
- **Sequence of the Thesis**
 - What topics are going to be discussed in each of the chapters?
 - How do the chapters of your thesis relate to each other?

The chosen thesis topic is required to be from leadership or strategy field. The topic could be interdisciplinary, for example from strategy and management, however even then one of the fields is required to be leadership or strategy.

LITERATURE REVIEW - is a description of the literature relevant to a particular field or topic. It gives an overview of what has been said, who the key writers are, what are the prevailing theories and hypotheses, what questions are being asked, and what methods and methodologies are appropriate and useful. As such, it is not in itself primary research, but rather it reports on other findings. Generally, the purpose of a review is to analyze critically a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of prior research studies, reviews of literature, and theoretical articles.

Generally, the Literature Review follows this structure:

- **Introduction** where you:
 - Define or identify the general topic, issue, or area of concern, thus providing an appropriate context for reviewing the literature.

- Point out overall trends in what has been published about the topic; or conflicts in theory, methodology, evidence, and conclusions; or gaps in research and scholarship; or a single problem or new perspective of immediate interest.
- Establish the writer's reason (point of view) for reviewing the literature; explain the criteria to be used in analyzing and comparing literature and the organization of the review (sequence); and, when necessary, state why certain literature is or is not included (scope).
- Body of the **Literature Review** where you:
 - Group research studies and other types of literature (reviews, theoretical articles, case studies, etc.) according to common denominators such as qualitative versus quantitative approaches, conclusions of authors, specific purpose or objective, chronology, etc.
 - Summarize individual studies or articles with as much or as little detail as each merit according to its comparative importance in the literature, remembering that space (length) denotes significance.
 - Provide the reader with strong "umbrella" sentences at beginnings of paragraphs, "signposts" throughout, and brief "so what" summary sentences at intermediate points in the review to aid in understanding comparisons and analyses.
- **Conclusion** where you:
 - Summarize major contributions of significant studies and articles to the body of knowledge under review, maintaining the focus established in the Introduction.
 - Clearly and concisely state the research problem and clearly define all relevant concepts.
 - Evaluate the current "state of the art" for the body of knowledge reviewed, pointing out major methodological flaws or gaps in research, inconsistencies in theory and findings, and areas or issues pertinent to future study. Please note that here you are making a significant contribution to science by pointing what other scholars have failed to notice, have not considered, or assessed inaccurately in their works.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY - is based on the research problem, the theoretical framework of the study, and the purpose of the study. It should provide sufficient detail to suggest recommendations to answer the research questions. The purpose of this chapter is to assure the reader that the type of research design is justified and appropriate for the desired outcomes.

Typically, this chapter includes:

- **Research Design**
 - Share your research design by providing:
 - A clear elaboration and presentation of the topic's theoretical framework.
 - Description of how the problem relates to the theoretical framework.
 - Demonstrate how the problem relates to previous research in the field.
 - Present alternate hypothesis within the framework of the theory.
 - Specify that the research for the thesis is experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, causal-comparative, quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, or another design. Be specific. The designated approach should be defended by contrasting and comparing it with alternate methods and rejecting those that do not meet the needs of the study. This section should not be a textbook description of various research designs, but a focused effort to match a rational research design with the purpose of the study.
 - Operationalize each of the identified concepts. Identify and distinguish between independent and dependent variables.
 - Discuss the possible weaknesses of the research design.
- **Setting and Participants**
 - What is the context for the empirical research?
 - What is the sample? How was the sample selected?
- **Instrumentation**
 - What specific instruments are going to be used to collect data?
 - How specifically was the data collected?

- Ethical Considerations
 - Are there any ethical issues with the research design? If yes, what are they and how they will be overcome?
- Internal and External Validity Considerations
 - How is external validity ensured?
 - How is internal validity ensured

If Internet surveys are used for data collection, the rule of one questionnaire filled in from one IP address should apply. Under request, the advisor or anyone formally assessing the thesis should be granted access to the data management webpage in order to check the authenticity of the source and numbers of submitted questionnaires. Accessed data can be used only for preventing plagiarism and cheating. If anonymity of sources is required, the accessing person is obliged to maintain it. The same is applied to qualitative data. Students, upon the request, should be ready to provide the original records of data.

When you deal with personal or private information (e.g. through interviews and surveys), you must obtain explicit consents from all stakeholders regarding their participation and anonymity preferences in order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 of the European Union. You must inform the stakeholders that your supervisor(s), programme director, and the defence committee will have access to such information. Also, you must request the stakeholders to reveal any conflicts of interest prior to obtaining their consents.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RESULTS – is the chapter where you should report the empirical research findings, based on collection and analysis of primary and secondary data sources. Typically, it is suggested to organize this chapter around answering the main research question and/or testing the hypotheses. Make sure you follow some key guidelines and/or a clear pattern when presenting your research results. Some results will need to be presented in a narrative form while others in tables, graphs and figures. You only need to summarize and emphasize the most significant findings of your research. Irrelevant details or any discussion of the theory should not be included in this chapter.

If you have collected quantitative data, you are required to submit initial, raw data in the format of SPSS or Excel files at the end of thesis writing process. Printed version of initial data is not required, and you do not need to include it in the thesis. If you see the need to include some raw results in your thesis, please do that in the Appendices. Still it is advised to include only processed and summarized data in the Appendices.

If you have collected qualitative data, you should provide scripts of interviews and focus groups in a summarized way (for example, data matrix or structured descriptions) in Appendices. All transcripts (audio or Word format) should be uploaded with the final thesis at the end of the thesis writing process and it should be in English. If data is confidential, you should find ways to anonymize the source and not the data.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS – serves to bring the research to an end, one that follows logically from the central theme of the thesis and the topical paragraphs. A conclusion that flows gracefully and logically from what has come before it reinforces the findings of the research and generally enhances the validity of the arguments and positions taken by the writer. Usually this chapter has two main components:

- Discussion where you:
 - Synthesize the literature review and empirical research findings in a meaningful way.
 - Overview the significant findings of your empirical research.
 - Consider your findings in the light of existing research studies (as reviewed in the Literature Review chapter).
 - State what are the implications of your study for current theory.
 - State what are the managerial implications of your study.
 - Examine research findings that fail to support or only partially support your hypotheses.
 - Name the limitations of the study that may affect the validity or the generalizability of the results.

- **Conclusion** where you:
 - Summarize the main points of the thesis.
 - Ask for awareness, action, or similar resolution from readers.
 - Look ahead to future research, developments in the field or paradigm shifts.
 - Do not introduce new facts or ideas that belong in the chapters discussing the findings.
 - Do not reword the Introduction and present it as the conclusion.
 - Do not restate what you have done. Avoid statements such as “in this paper I have discussed the relationship between a states per capita income and per pupil expenditures for education.”

REFERENCES – is a list of sources that you used in your thesis. Make sure that all the sources listed in the thesis are included in the References and vice versa. References list should be prepared according to the APA guidelines.

References should include at least 50 academic (peer-reviewed) sources.

APPENDICES – may include figures and tables or any additional information that would have interrupted the flow of the main body of the thesis. Make sure that you refer to each appendix and explain what it contains in the main text of the thesis.

ROLE OF THE THESIS ADVISOR

The task of the thesis advisor is to guide you through the thesis writing process. Active guidance is understood as sharing experience, providing examples (best practices) and support in research design, analysis of research data, and general issues.

- In general, **the advisor is expected:**
 - Meet with you after each important chapter submission;
 - Consult you on the thesis requirements and draw up a general thesis writing plan;
 - Advise you in finding/formulating the research topic, goal and hypotheses;
 - Advise you in writing each part of the thesis;
 - Provide feedback and comments about the quality of each thesis chapter.

- In general, **the advisor is NOT permitted to:**
 - Provide you with (a list of) sources/ literature;
 - Correct or edit the grammar/ writing style;
 - Formulate entire sentences or parts of the thesis;
 - Teach methods of statistical data analysis;
 - Suggest precise formulations of text (problem, aims, objectives, hypotheses, etc.).

- A relationship between you and the advisor:
 - Any initiative has to come from the student and NOT from the advisor;
 - The advisor should challenge you to strive for a higher quality level and recommend to you what can be improved – but the advisor shall NOT do anything what would be considered as an attempt to co-author the thesis;
 - As the advisor will be asked to grade the quality of the thesis as well as the level of cooperation – any active role in the thesis writing process would be considered as a violation of academic integrity/ conflict of interest;
 - The advisor should provide feedback on the submitted parts of the FBT within 5 working days (if not agreed otherwise with you).

- Coordination between the advisor and the administration/program director:
 - The advisor has to report to the program director if you do not fulfil the requirements on time/ violate the regulations on thesis writing. In case of disregard, the advisor will be made personally responsible for any problems which occur;
 - The advisor is NOT responsible for the incorrect usage of sources, incorrect reporting of data, copyright infringements made by you.

ASSESSMENT OF THE THESIS

The final grade of the Master thesis is made of the grades from the advisor, reviewer and thesis defence committee. Here is how the grade is calculated:

Advisor	20%
Reviewer	20%
Thesis Defence Committee	60%

Both the Advisor and the Reviewer evaluate the thesis based on the following criteria.

Introduction	5%
Literature Review	25%
Research Methodology	15%
Empirical Research Results	25%
Discussion and Conclusion	15%
General Outlook	15%

Each thesis defence committee member evaluates the defence according to the following criteria:

Content	40%
Defence presentation of the Master Thesis	20%
Answers to the defence committee members questions	40%

By decision of the Studies Commission and following approval of Vice-President for Studies, you may be denied the opportunity to prepare and defend the Master thesis, if:

1. The Studies Commission has not approved the topic of the relevant final thesis;
2. The student has failed to adhere to the approved thesis preparation deadlines;
3. The thesis advisor has assigned a negative grade;
4. The thesis reviewer has assigned the negative grade;
5. The student has violated academic ethics;
6. Thesis does not meet the formal requirements (structure, size etc.)
7. The student has failed to upload each part of the thesis to the e-learning system on time.
8. The final thesis demonstrates significant changes in the expected outcomes when compared to the approved thesis proposal.

WHAT TO DO?	HOW TO DO IT?	HOW TO SUBMIT IT?	WHERE TO SUBMIT?
Submission of a Preliminary Thesis Topic by <u>30th March (6pm)</u>	Fill a Master Thesis Survey (on e-learning) where you specify your preliminary Thesis topic.	Electronic copy	http://elearning.ism.lt/
Appointment of Thesis Advisors by <u>25th April (6pm)</u>	The Studies Manager will announce who your thesis advisor is and provide you with his/her contact information.	Electronic copy	Thesis Advisor and http://elearning.ism.lt/
Submission of a Thesis Proposal by <u>30th May (6pm)</u>	Submit a Thesis Proposal (about 3500 - 4000 words) where you include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis topic • Thesis problem definition (including current state of knowledge about the problem (theoretical basis of research) and significance of the proposed study) • Thesis goal and objectives (form may vary from declarative statement of intent, research question(s), or hypothesis formulation and must be congruent with underlying conceptualization of the research problem) • Research design (including justification of selected method(s) of research) • Methods of data collection and analysis • Sequence in which the intended research will be carried out. • Bibliography (list of major references) Arrange a feedback meeting time with the thesis advisor.	Electronic copy	Thesis Advisor and http://elearning.ism.lt/
Defence of a Thesis Proposal <u>2nd June</u>	Every student is required to defend their thesis proposal. A defence for GLS students is taken place as part of Research Methods module, on the last day of the module. Please see the module's syllabus for more details.		
Submission of a Final Thesis Topic <u>30th June (6pm)</u>	Submit a Master Thesis Topic Form (Appendix 1) where you specify your final thesis topic. Please make sure that your final topic is approved by your thesis advisor. Note that you can make only minor changes in your thesis topic after this date.	Electronic copy	http://elearning.ism.lt/

<p>Submission of Introduction and Literature Review Chapters by <u>12th September</u> <u>(6pm)</u></p>	<p>Submit fully written Introduction and Literature Review chapters. Please note that your Thesis Proposal will serve as the basis for the Introduction chapter so take into account your advisor's and defence committee comments and revise your Introduction accordingly.</p> <p>Arrange a feedback meeting time with the thesis advisor.</p>	<p>Electronic copy¹</p>	<p>Thesis Advisor and http://elearning.ism.lt/</p>
<p>Submission of Research Methodology Chapter by <u>26th September</u> <u>(6pm)</u></p>	<p>Submit the Research Methodology chapter and revised Introduction and Literature Review chapters.</p> <p>Arrange a feedback meeting time with the thesis advisor.</p>	<p>Electronic copy</p>	<p>Thesis Advisor and http://elearning.ism.lt/</p>
<p>Submission of Empirical Research Results Chapter by <u>14th November</u> <u>(6pm)</u></p>	<p>Submit the Empirical Research Results chapter and revised Introduction, Literature Review and Research Methodology chapters.</p> <p>Arrange a feedback meeting time with the thesis advisor.</p>	<p>Electronic copy</p>	<p>Thesis Advisor and http://elearning.ism.lt/</p>
<p>Submission of the Thesis to the Advisor by <u>5th December (6pm)</u></p>	<p>Submit the complete and formatted thesis to the advisor for feedback.</p> <p>Arrange a feedback meeting time with the thesis advisor.</p> <p>Note: This version of your thesis will be checked for plagiarism.</p>	<p>Electronic copy</p>	<p>Thesis Advisor and http://elearning.ism.lt/</p>
<p>Submission of the Final Master Thesis by <u>19th December</u> <u>(6pm)</u></p>	<p>Submit the Final Master Thesis in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 (one) electronic copy of the Master Thesis submitted online • Empirical research raw data submitted online • A Signed Thesis Submission Form (Appendix 2) <p>Note: You must sign all the copies of the Master Thesis.</p>	<p>Only lectronic copy is required</p>	<p>Studies Office and and http://elearning.ism.lt/</p>

¹ All the interim **chapters** of the thesis and the **final thesis** should be uploaded **ONLY in Word format**.

Preparation for the Thesis Defence Seminar <u>17th January, 2023</u>	Attend the Preparation for the Thesis Defence Seminar where you will be introduced to content and format requirements for the defence.		
Confirmation of Eligibility for the Public Master Thesis Defence	The Study committee announces the eligibility to defend the Master thesis decision.		
Master Thesis Public Defence on <u>23-25 January, 2023</u>	Defend the thesis at the public defence.		

Appendix 1. MASTER THESIS TOPIC FORM

(the form should be typewritten)

Surname and Name:	
Master Program:	
Final Thesis Topic:	
Date:	Signature:
Advisor's Name and Signature:	

Appendix 2. MASTER THESIS SUBMISSION FORM

This form should be typewritten.

I hereby submit this Master Thesis as approved by my Advisor. In submitting my Thesis for inclusion in the University archive, I hereby certify that this Master Thesis represents my own work and has been written in accordance with commonly accepted principles of academic ethics as defined in ISM Regulations of Studies.

Name, Surname	Signature

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Master Programme

--

Master Thesis Title

--

Advisor (Name, Surname)

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Submission deadline

To be completed by administration only.	
Confirmation of Thesis submission:	
Date:	Name, Surname Signature

Appendix 3. TITLE PAGE EXAMPLE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATIONAL
PERFORMANCE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO MINING COMPANIES

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty

of ISM University of Management and Economics

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master in Global Leadership and Strategy

by

Petras Petraitis

May 2021