1. Introduction

A master’s thesis is more than just a requirement towards your Master of Science (MSc.) degree, it is an opportunity to deepen your knowledge and understanding of a certain topic area within your field of study, and to provide you with training in working independently. With all of that in mind, it is important that the thesis is completed in a professional manner. Be sure to allocate sufficient time for preparation as well as work on your thesis. This guidebook has been designed to assist you in your work. The most important feature of a good thesis is its content. The guidebook will help you getting started and outline content requirements as well as formal aspects such as structure and format.

2. Content, Topics and Supervisors – Frequently Asked Questions

Following are several frequently asked questions and answers related to topics, content and supervision.

2.1 What is a Master’s Thesis?

A Master’s thesis is the document that presents the author's own research and findings and is submitted in support of candidature for a Master of Science degree.

The work on the Master’s thesis is worth 30 ECTS credits in total.

2.2 Can I write my thesis in any subject area?

The general objective of the thesis is that students show their ability to work independently on a topic related to their field of studies. For example, if you are a student of the MSc. in International Business, your subject area must fall into international business and management, a subject area for a student in MSc. in Corporate Finance would be related to corporate finance.

2.3. How is a master’s thesis developed?

A good thesis topic combines both theory and practice elements. A thesis should be based on a specific issue, problem or question that needs answering or clarifying. The issue or problem should
be developed into a research question. The student attempts to answer the research question by gathering data and consulting the literature on the relevant topic.

A thesis should contain:

- A clear research question and objective of study.
- An extensive and relevant literature review relating to the objective and research questions. It should define the issue, give sufficient and relevant theoretical background information on related research, and relate the research question to previous research results. It sets the thesis in context and builds up the rationale for the objective and research question of the thesis.
- Precise information on methodology; what data was gathered, how and why (students can gather primary and/or secondary data depending on relevance to answering the research question).
- Meticulous reporting on the results (data findings).
- Evaluation of the findings with reference to the stated objective.
- Discussion on how the findings relate to the literature and how theory is supported, altered or rejected based on the findings.
- Discussion on limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

2.4 Can I write my thesis for a specific company?

A thesis can be written in the context of a specific company. Make sure, however, to consult your thesis supervisor or the programme director before committing to any thesis topic. If a thesis has been written in cooperation with a company, the thesis can be concealed temporarily in order to respect the company’s right to confidentiality. Make sure to clarify this with representatives of the organization before you start working on a company research, and remember to specify this when the thesis is submitted (a specific form exists for such purposes).

2.5 Can a thesis be co-written with another student?

No, a master’s thesis can only be submitted by one individual.

2.6 How do I define a thesis topic?
You are responsible for defining a topic for a thesis. You can seek ideas from courses, reading material, faculty or companies but the topic by and large depends on your interest, creativity and independent thinking.

Occasionally faculty might be looking for students to work on a certain research topic or to assist in research projects. These may provide opportunities to develop your ideas or even to use existing data. Do not hesitate to contact a faculty member for advice and consultation. Please note, that the Programme Director does reserve the right to refuse any suggested thesis topic for certain reasons (e.g. non-availability of a qualified supervisor, triviality of topic, etc.).

When you are developing your topic/idea, you may start by:

- Investigating the possibility of using an existing issue or problem from within an organization over which you have already gained “inside knowledge”, through your work experience or your time and work experience as a trainee (i.e., during the internship) or from suggestions obtained via your personal contacts.

- Researching different types of business databases for a comprehensive literature review (including, for example, journal research articles, business magazines and published thesis) which would lead to a list of ideas within certain topics of interest (e.g., International Human Resources, Marketing Communication, Leadership, Public Management).

- Reading through academic articles on your subject of interest and noting the “further research” issues often mentioned in the concluding section of most of these papers.

In any case, it is strongly recommended that students carefully examine whether a topic really fits with her/his personal and career interests and then seek advice from either one or possibly a few RU faculty members. Once a thesis topic has been agreed upon, student, supervisor, Programme Director and – if applicable – company have to sign The Topic and Thesis Registration Form.

Recommendations

It is worth noting that forming a research topic is quite a demanding part of the thesis project. Developing your topic and research question takes a great deal of work and independent thinking. Start considering your choice of subject early in the program.

The process really starts the semester before you plan to hand in your thesis when you should write a synopsis of one to two pages, which is handed in to the Programme Director. This will help advise you on the subject and the choice of supervisor. In the process of developing the initial proposal you may want to meet with internal faculty members and discuss your ideas. The Program Director must
approve your choice of both subject and supervisor. In collaboration with your supervisor you will write a Research Proposal that should be approved by your supervisor at the beginning of the thesis semester.

2.7 How do I find a supervisor for my thesis?

After you have handed in the two page synopsis the Programme Director can give recommendations for a suitable supervisor but please note that it is your responsibility to finalize the choice of supervisor and hand in The Topic and Thesis Registration Form signed by the supervisor.

RU’s faculty members are considered internal supervisors. A complete list of faculty will be made available at the beginning of each academic year.

Generally only core faculty members (not part time) qualify as supervisors. Please consult the Programme Director if you are in doubt who can qualify as a supervisor. Non-RU staff can supervise theses if they have a graduate degree in the relevant field of study. They should also have proven experience in supervising theses, and/or have a considerable industry experience in the field. This arrangement is subject to the approval of the Programme Director.

Your choice of supervisor is always subject to approval by the Programme Director. Please note that you must have established a supervisor during the term previous to the one you plan to write your thesis, no later than the date specified in Appendix 1. Failing to do so will exempt you from writing a thesis in that term.

2.8 What about different methodologies?

Concerning the issue of research methodology, it is important to notice that, at least in principle, all methodologies are acceptable (e.g., qualitative or quantitative, one company case study, survey research etc.), provided that the methodology and design of study is appropriate and in alignment with the study’s objective and research question.

You are expected to propose the methodology/ies for your research in your research proposal, and your supervisor should give you feedback in this regard.

Make sure that you consult recommended books on research methodology when you are designing your research project. This will help you to choose the appropriate methodology for your topic. It is very important that there is a match between your research question and the research methodology you choose, and you should be able to rationalise your choice of methodology.

2.9 Do I need to collect primary data?
Primary data is collected by the student him or herself, from a primary source of information for the objective of answering the particular research question. This includes conducting surveys or interviews, making first hand observations or conducting experiments. Secondary data is collected by someone else, typically not particularly for the objective of your research question. This includes existing databases, reports, reviews etc. The type of data you gather (primary or secondary) depends on the objective of the research and the nature of your research question. Most important is to find out what type of data is best suited to answer the proposed research question(s).

3 Timeframe and Deadlines

On average, it takes around 7-9 months to complete the entire process and students can expect to spend at least four months of this time working full-time on theory and research findings. Students should start the process in the semester preceding the one they plan to work on their thesis. A schedule for deadlines is provided in appendix 1. Failure to meet deadlines can result in exclusion from the process.

3.1. Thesis proposal

The first step in the process is to write a thesis proposal. Specific deadlines for proposals and confirmation of supervisors are set in this process. During the semester preceding you thesis semester you should have worked on a research proposal and secured a supervisor. A finalized research proposal shall be ready and signed by the supervisor at the beginning of your thesis semester.

A Research Proposal should include:

- A clear statement of objectives and a well-defined and focused research question
- Brief literature review - This entails a summary of the main findings of scholarly articles in the field you have chosen as your subject and inform your research question.
- Proposed methodology - What type of data collection you propose to embark upon
- Potential outcomes and Possible implications
- Timeline for work
- A list of references

The proposal can be up to 15 pages. The thesis proposal needs to be approved by your supervisor.

A major ingredient to a successful thesis is strict time management and working with deadlines. The University’s policies stipulate that the supervisor and the student have to agree on timelines and
procedure for the thesis process. Appendix 1 gives you an overview on processes, time and deadlines involved.

3.2. Deadlines and process

The deadlines for submitting your thesis are set up according to your graduation date:

- May 15th: for graduation in June
- January 5th: for graduation in January

Students have to keep their supervisor informed about the progress of their thesis on a regular basis, and it is recommended that you meet with your supervisor at least three times during the process. Students can also expect to be asked to present before a panel of supervisors one or two times during the process. Students should follow the deadline scheme provided in appendix 1, failure to do so may result in exclusion from the process.

In order to structure the process of writing the thesis and monitoring the progress, it is highly recommended that you set up a work schedule with your supervisor as early as possible.

**Succeeding in the thesis work, however, is entirely in your hands. You are responsible for managing the overall process** from proposing the research topic to submitting the finished work, including e.g. registering the topic, scheduling appointments with the supervisor, and reporting/presenting the work in progress.

3.3. Final draft submission

A final draft of the thesis shall be handed in to the supervisor 5 weeks prior to the final submission date. A final draft should be complete, including all sections and all material (literature and date) in addition to analysis and discussions. Do not plan for adding new data after the submission of the final draft, unless instructed to do so by your supervisor. Late submission of final draft is highly discouraged. Although you have submitted almost complete work, do plan for having plenty to work on after you have received comments from your supervisor.

If the submitted final draft is incomplete, the supervisor can recommend that the student should ask for extension (see section 4).

4 Evaluation of the Thesis
The thesis will be evaluated by your supervisor and an examiner. In the case where the examiner and supervisor are unable to reach a conclusion regarding evaluation and grading, a second examiner may be appointed. The second examiner should seek to integrate both views and recommend a conclusion which shall be final.

Each student will be given a brief statement explaining the specific rating of his/her thesis.

Thesis grades will be provided according to the usual grading system from 0 to 10.

A passing grade for a thesis is 6.0.

If a thesis is graded below 6.0, the student has failed and is not allowed to resubmit. The student can request to be re-registered for a master’s thesis. In the case of re-registration the student will have to pay full tuition (30 ECTS). The student will be required to submit a detailed research proposal for a new thesis, however data collected for the former thesis may be used if approved by the supervisor. Normally a new supervisor will be appointed, the new supervisor will have to approve the research proposal and approve of any data used. Re-registration for a master’s thesis is only permitted once.

A student can at any time before the final hand in date, request an extension to the next term. The extension is subject to the approval and availability of supervisor. The student is required to register for the following semester and pay tuition according to the RU pricing scheme for 15 ECTS at the master’s level.
APPENDIX 1 – Time Schedule and Deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>hand in preliminary proposal</th>
<th>last day for having supervisor approved</th>
<th>project proposal completed</th>
<th>gathering of empirical data completed</th>
<th>hand in final draft</th>
<th>hand in date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>September 30th</td>
<td>November 20th</td>
<td>January 5th</td>
<td>March 1st</td>
<td>April 15th</td>
<td>May 15th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>March 31st</td>
<td>June 1st</td>
<td>August 31st</td>
<td>October 15th</td>
<td>December 1st</td>
<td>January 5th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX 2 - Structure of the Thesis

- Title Page (cf. Appendix)
- Abstract and up to 6 keywords
- Affidavit confirming that the student was the original author of the thesis and that the thesis has not been submitted for a similar purpose in another educational program. (cf. Appendix)
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables and Figures
- Thesis, structured in hierarchical, numbered chapters and containing *:
  - Introduction
  - Problem/issues statement and research question/s
  - Literature review
  - Conceptual framework (model based on the literature review)
  - A clear research question - hypothesise if applicable and/or possible answers to the research question.
  - Empirical Study (methodology and results)
  - Discussion
  - Conclusion and recommendations
- Appendix
- List of References

* Please note that not all the parts mentioned above may be applicable to your particular thesis. Please consult your supervisor for more information.
APPENDIX 3 - Referencing

When you write a paper or an assignment, it is important to acknowledge the sources of the information that you have used. In other words, you have to say where you have taken ALL your ideas from. Not only direct quotations, but also, to name but few, a summary of a text, pictures, conversations, and lecture notes have to be referenced. Consistency and accuracy are important.

You have to reference direct and indirect quotes in the text. Quotes can occur in two forms, namely as direct quotes and as indirect quotes. Direct quotes are those that you borrow or take over exactly as they are written. Indirect quotes are those where you paraphrase or change the wording. What both have in common is that they are not your intellectual property and, thus, have to be acknowledged.

The APA Style is the preferred referencing style for all written work in Business Administration and Management. You will find the latest version of the APA Publication Manual in RU’s Library. There are also online sources you could use (see 4.1), but be aware that you are using the latest version of the APA Style. If you run into problems citing one or more of your sources you are welcome to ask for assistance at the RU’s Library Research Assistance or book an appointment with an information specialist at library@ru.is.

Further information on style guides

Information on APA style can be found in the following links:

http://www.apastyle.org
http://blog.apastyle.org
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
http://libguides.jcu.edu.au/referencing
APPENDIX 4 – RESEARCH RESOURCES

You are welcome to ask the Library and Information Services at RU (LIRU), for assistance in regards to your research work.

The library’s’ Research Assistance desk is a drop-in service (no need to book in advance). The service is open Monday – Thursday, 14:00-16:00 and Friday 10:00-12:00.

In addition, students working on their thesis can book an appointment with an information specialist at library@ru.is.

The library offers several resources to assist you in your thesis work (books, journals, databases, etc).

Gegnir is the library system hosting a national catalogue and gives access to information about material in most libraries in Iceland. For example, college, public, administration, institution, expert, and school libraries at all levels. You have an access to a database of master theses: http://gegnir.is

Leitir.is (http://www.leitir.is) allows you to search for materials in the library catalogue Gegnir and across all databases subscribed to by

Journals and articles
http://en.ru.is/journals in English
http://ru.is/timarit in Icelandic

LIRU can order books and photocopies of articles from journals which are not available in the library or in subscribed databases (inter-library loans). These services are especially intended for RU faculty and for students preparing their final thesis.

Inter-library loans:
http://en.ru.is/rusb/interlibrary-loans/ in English
http://www.ru.is/bokasafn/millisafnalan in Icelandic

Off-Campus Access:
You have remote access to all e-resources subscribed to by LIRU.

http://en.ru.is/remoteaccess in English
http://ru.is/fjaradgangur in Icelandic

For further information see also:
http://en.ru.is/library in English
http://www.ru.is/bokasafn in Icelandic
http://en.ru.is/library-a-z/ in English
http://www.ru.is/bokasafnid-a-o/ in Icelandic

Repository of academic and research documents:
http://skemman.is/en/ in English
http://skemman.is/is/ in Icelandic

You can follow the library on Facebook at http://facebook.com/bokasafn
APPENDIX 5 – FORMATING AND OTHER FORMAL REQUIREMENTS.

Formatting Guidelines
The following formatting guidelines apply to all thesis:
- Length: all thesis are required to keep to the specified length, which is 100-120 pages.
- Font type: Times New Roman
- Font size: 12 pt for text body, larger sizes for headings, smaller sizes for tables etc.
- Spacing: 1.5
- Margins: left 3.5 cm, right 2.5 cm, top 2.5 cm, bottom 2.0 cm
- Footnotes: all notes are to be provided in the form of numbered footnotes

Other Formal Requirements
The final version of the thesis has to be submitted to RU’s main reception in three bound hardcopies (black binding) by the day indicated in Chapter 3.

It is also required that before submitting the hardcopies, the thesis will have to be submitted electronically (digital copy) to Skemman repository and to Turnitin plagiarism detection software.

When submitting the printed copies you will need to attach the e-mail confirmation you received when you submitted the digital copy to Skemman and a receipt for submission to Turnitin.

Submitting to Skemman
Digital copies need to be submitted to Skemman repository in PDF format http://skemman.is/en/ (English) or http://skemman.is/is/ (Icelandic). The file must be locked, meaning that it has to be protected against printing and copying (you need Adobe Acrobat X Pro to do this). You have access to Adobe Acrobat X Pro on the computers at the RU library in the Uranus wing.

To create a PDF you will need Acrobat Professional or you can use the following options: 2007 Microsoft Office users can download this official add-in to create PDFs. Other office pack users can download this freeware or any software in this list. To log in to Skemman, students must use their RU user name and password. For a step-by-step instruction on how to submit your thesis via Skemman please visit http://en.ru.is/skemman

If any problems come up when submitting a thesis to Skemman, you can contact the library representative by e-mail at library@ru.is.

Submitting to Turnitin
Turnitin is a plagiarism detection software that compares student papers against a database of journal articles, websites and student papers.
Students are made users of Turnitin and will upon registration by their instructor, receive an e-mail from the system. Follow the instructions in the e-mail and activate your account within 2 weeks from receiving the e-mail. Turnitin can be used as an aid to detect possible plagiarism or faulty referencing. As such students can upload their work more than once and use the similarity report that the system generates to improve their work. The first similarity report is usually ready within one hour, but with a second or third upload it can take the system up to 24 hours to generate a similarity report.
Further information on how Turnitin works can be found on the RU library website http://en.ru.is/referencing/plagiarism/
See further instructions on how to upload to Turnitin.

Naming the file
Thesis in PDF format needs to be named according to the following naming conventions:
☐ Thesis: MIB0611_Thesis_Firstname_Lastname_Title.pdf

Master’s in International Business: MIB
Master’s in Human Resource Management and Organizational Psychology: MHR
Master’s in Marketing: MAR
Master’s in Corporate Finance: MCF
Master’s in Investment Management: MSIM
Month of graduation: 06 (June) and 01 (January)
Year of graduation: 11

Title page, text page and binding
For samples of the title page, a text page and the thesis binding please refer to the appendix at the end of this guidebook.

Uploading to Turnitin and saving similarity report (originality report)
Before submitting hardcopies to RU’s main reception, students are required to upload their thesis to Turnitin plagiarism detection software. Students also need to send their supervisor an e-mail containing the similarity report in a PDF-format no later than at 11:59 pm on the day following the thesis deadline for the hard copies.

Students are made users of Turnitin and will upon registration by their instructor, receive an e-mail from the system. Follow the instructions in the e-mail and activate your account within 2 weeks from receiving the e-mail.

Students can upload their work more than once and use the similarity report that the system generates to improve their work. The first similarity report is usually ready within one hour, but with a second or third upload it can take the system up to 24 hours to generate a similarity report.

Files can be uploaded to Turnitin in a variety of formats, such as Word, PDF or TXT.

See also instructions on using the system at http://en.ru.is/referencing/plagiarism/

Uploading to Turnitin:

1. Log in to Turnitin
2. Click on the class name „Masters thesis ...“
3. Click on the assignment within the class  f. ex. „Thesis“
4. Click on the blue Submit button
5. Choose a submission title for the file and type it in the appropriate field
6. Choose one of the two options (above the name fields)
   a. Single file upload
   b. Cut & paste upload
7. Find your file  
   a. Choose from this computer  
   b. Choose from Dropbox  
   c. Choose from Google Drive  
8. Click **Upload** (a preview of the first page of your file appears)  
9. Click **Confirm**  
10. Click **Return to assignment list**  
11. The system sends you an e-mail titled **This is your Turnitin Digital Receipt**  
   a. Print out the e-mail and submit one copy of it with the hard copies of your thesis  
   b. If you don’t print out the e-mail you can always print out a receipt for upload from within the system. You click on the class name and then click on the arrow on the far right of the assignment title and choose **Digital receipt**  

**Saving a similarity report in PDF format:**  

1. When **Turnitin** has compiled a similarity report for your assignment, a percentage number and a coloured box appears next to the assignment title  
2. Click on the percentage number to access the similarity report  
3. Click on the printer sign in the lower left corner of the screen to download the similarity report  
4. Choose „Download PDF of current view for printing“ (the downloading might take a while depending on the size of the file)  
5. Save the PDF file  
6. Send your supervisor the file no later than at 11:59 pm on the day following the thesis deadline for the hard copies  

Further information on how Turnitin works can be found on the RU library website  
http://en.ru.is/referencing/plagiarism/  

If problems occur with **Turnitin** please contact RU’s information specialists or send an e-mail to library@ru.is
APPENDIX 6 – SAMPLE PAGES AND SAMPLE BINDINGS

Master’s Thesis
Submitted to: Reykjavik University School of Business

PROGRAM NAME

THESIS TITLE
Subtitle

Name of the author dd/mm/yyyy

Supervisor
Title First Name Last Name

City, Date Signature of student

Sample Text Page

1. Chapter Title Page XX

1. Heading Level 1

1.1. Heading Level 2

1.1.1. Heading Level 3

1.1.2. Heading Level 3

Reykjavik University Month of graduation, year
PROGRAM NAME

THESIS TITLE
Subtitle
Name of the author
/dd/mm/yyyy