

Thesis Manual
University College Tilburg: Liberal Arts and Sciences
Bachelor Thesis Course 840900-B-18
2023 – 2024

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1. Learning Objectives

The bachelor thesis is the final project of the BSc/ BA Liberal Arts and Sciences. It is an 18 credit project, which has the following objectives:

1. To formulate a clearly delineated research question and to be able to describe the scientific and societal relevance of this research question.
2. Review the academic literature relevant to the research question and compare various positions in literature.
3. To describe and motivate the research methodology used to answer the research question.
4. To collect and analyze data and to present the results of the analysis.
5. To discuss the relevance of the findings.
6. To be aware of research ethics and adhere to ethical standards.
7. To argue clearly, coherently, and consistently.
8. Present according to style requirements, including (a) logical structuring, (b) correct spelling, (c) adequate visuals, and (d) complete and correct referencing and citing of sources.
9. Plan and keep to the thesis project process, work independently, and adopt a professional attitude.

2. Thesis Procedure

Eligibility

- The student may register for the thesis course on Osiris once they have achieved 90 ECTS. However, they may only start the thesis after achieving 120 ECTS at the start of the semester. The enrolment on Osiris after achieving 90 ECTS will give students access to relevant information such as deadlines and help plan their courses, semester abroad, etc.
- It is advisable that students complete all pending courses, such as first and second year compulsory courses, minors, etc., before starting their thesis.

Supervision

- Any professor from Tilburg University can supervise a LAS thesis. Supervisors from outside the University are not allowed to supervise a thesis.
- A PhD student or a lecturer without a PhD may supervise the LAS thesis project if the second reader has a PhD. It is advisable that the supervisor of the PhD student acts as the second reader.
- The Tilburg University Professors with Emeritus status may supervise the LAS thesis. The student must consult with the program director of their major regarding such arrangement.

Thesis Writing in the Fall Semester

- Students writing their thesis in the fall semester must inform the LAS thesis coordinator about their plans to write thesis and enroll for the Bachelorthesis Liberal Arts and Sciences (840900-B-18) on Osiris.
- There are no tracks or circles offered in the fall semester. The students need to identify a research topic and find a suitable supervisor. Students do not need to submit a proposal. However, they are encouraged to develop a brief outline of their research topic before approaching a potential supervisor. If they are unable to find a thesis topic or a supervisor, they request assistance from the program director of their major for guidance.
- Students must visit the LAS bachelor thesis canvas page regularly for important information and latest updates.
- **Cognitive Neuroscience**: Students in CN major must contact Dr. Mirjam Keetels and enroll on the CNP bachelor thesis canvas page to participate in their ongoing research projects.

Thesis Writing in the Spring Semester

- The enrollment for the spring semester starts in the fall semester. The students have to attend the thesis information session. Please check the thesis canvas page and timetable for the date and time of the thesis information session. The session is organized online usually in November. The students must take a note of the session (check timetable) and time zone if they are on an exchange.

- After the thesis information session in November, the students will be able to enroll in the methodology-based tracks and themes-based circles of their choice.

Tracks (methodology-based)

Students indicate a preference for a track on the thesis canvas page. These tracks are based on the methodology of the theses and focus on one or two majors. A track includes twelve to twenty students. In a track, students receive joint training in different steps of the research process:

1. Formulating a research question and identifying the societal/ scientific/ practical relevance of the question.
 2. Performing a literature review to develop the theoretical framework.
 3. The ethics of doing research, referencing/ plagiarism, ethics of data collection, and data management, if relevant, including obtaining ethical clearance.
 4. Collecting data, be it primary historical sources, legal cases, interview data, experimental data, survey data, secondary data, or any other form of data collection relevant to the circles.
 5. Analyzing the data with the help of qualitative or quantitative methods.
 6. Concluding and discussing the findings.
- The track coordinator offers workshops in a track. The classes discuss the above-mentioned topics and support the students in the set-up and writing process of the thesis. Three workshops are scheduled during the semester (See your timetable). These workshops are not intended to give feedback to students on their individual thesis projects.
 - **Important:** participation in track sessions is part of a criterion in the assessment form. Students need to report their absence to the track coordinator and thesis coordinator in advance.
 - A track is further subdivided into theme-based circles. Each circle may comprise of two to five students and is supervised by a lecturer. The track coordinator also coordinates the track's overall functioning.

Circles (theme-based)

Within tracks, multiple thematic circles of different sizes are offered. A supervisor offers a circle around a topic (applying the method of the track). Supervision in a circle may be as a group or more individually, as the supervisor sees fit (depending, e.g., on the coherence of the projects in a circle or joint data collection).

- A circle supervisor will arrange their circle meetings and supervise student theses. This setup provides a structure that invites students to work consistently on their projects, allows students to learn from peer experiences, and ensures access to supervisors. The format does imply that students need to follow the topic, method, and phasing of the track and/or circle they are allocated.

- Circle supervisors are responsible for organizing circle meetings with the students. They organize at least five meetings during the semester. As a general rule of thumb, students can expect feedback on each chapter of their thesis and the complete draft of the thesis.
- **If you do not find space in your preferred circle - Indicate your preference:** Each track offers an option to register for an undefined circle. Students may register for this circle if they are interested in the track but could not find a spot in any circle. Also, they may indicate their interests so a new circle can be added to the track if required. Students are advised to inform their choice to the thesis coordinator and stay in regular contact for such arrangements.

Free Track

- If a student has a clear idea of a research project that does not fit within any of the circles offered, the student may write the thesis in the free track.
- Students opting for a free track are advised to attend track workshops. The students in the free track carry more responsibility and need to follow a procedure different from students opting for circles in other tracks. They must report interest for a free track on the canvas page and submit a half/one-page proposal to the program director of their major. They must develop a proposal within two weeks after the information session in November. The program director will assess the project's feasibility based on students' clarity of the subject matter, approve or reject the proposal, and inform the thesis coordinator.
- If the project is approved, the students are responsible for finding a supervisor for their thesis. They should register the supervisor's name with the program director and thesis coordinator before the deadline (announced on the canvas page).
- **Important:** Students in the free track need to take the lead in developing and executing the project. It also means they need to follow strict deadlines for submitting a proposal to the program director and finding a supervisor. The students should note that circle supervisors will not have additional spots for free track proposals.

Thesis Structure and Formatting

Each major has a different expectation from the students in terms of thesis structure and formatting. An indicative structure of the thesis for each major (e.g., word limit, font, referencing style, etc.) can be viewed on the LAS thesis canvas page. The student may consult the track coordinator and/ or the program director of their major for any questions.

Thesis Submission

- The students must submit a PDF file of their thesis to their supervisor, the second reader, and the LAS Thesis Administration (LASBachelorThesis@uvt.nl) by the deadline.
- The thesis must be named in the format "lastname_firstname" See examples below:
 Baker_Remy
 le_Comte_Kim
 van_Dijck_June

- Students must note that the thesis will be available publicly through the university unless the student submits a request not to make it public.
- If the thesis contains sensitive information and for that reason may not be made public, the student must clearly indicate it to the LAS thesis administration while submitting their thesis. The claim must be supported by the thesis supervisor. Even if there is no sensitive information in the thesis, the student can still choose not to make the thesis available publicly. Please refer to the Tilburg University guidelines on publishing thesis.
- **Ethical considerations:** The students would need to follow the guidelines set by their supervisor's school. Since supervisors have a better grasp of the requirements in their discipline, they will be able to ensure compliance.

Thesis Process Feedback Form

- The students are expected to complete the thesis process feedback form after submitting their thesis. They will be able to reflect on the LAS thesis process, supervision, and overall thesis writing experience.
- The form will be sent out to the students at the end of the semester. It can also be downloaded from the LAS Thesis canvas page along with the instructions on how to submit the thesis.

3. Important Dates 2023/ 2024

Fall Semester	
17 Aug 2023 onwards	Enroll for the LAS Bachelor Thesis (840900-B-18) on Osiris
28 Aug 2023	Start thesis
10 Dec 2023	Submission of thesis
11 – 22 Dec 2023	Thesis Assessment
21 Jan 2024	Resit (hand in the reworked version of your thesis)
22 – 28 Jan 2024	Resit Thesis Assessment
28 Apr 2024	Extended deadline (only in exceptional circumstances)

Spring Semester	
9 Nov 2023	Thesis Information Session (Online) – check timetable for any changes
29 Jan 2024	Start thesis
30 Jun 2024	Submission of thesis
1 – 14 Jul 2024	Thesis Assessment
11 Aug 2024	Resit (hand in the reworked version of your thesis)
12 – 18 Aug 2024	Resit Thesis Assessment
30 Nov 2024	Extended deadline (only in exceptional circumstances)

4. Information for Supervisors

Supervisors must read the “Thesis Assessment and Plagiarism Check” section of the manual.

- The education background of LAS students slightly differs from that of students in a disciplinary bachelor. Moreover, the LAS thesis procedure may vary from the procedure used in your home department. In their first year, LAS students have been introduced to several disciplines, such as history, law, philosophy, sociology, psychology, economics, etc. They have learned to study issues from multiple disciplinary angles. We challenge our students to write an interdisciplinary thesis.
- In their second year, the students have chosen one of five majors of 60 ECTS: Arts and Humanities, Business and Economics, Law in an International Context, Social Sciences, or Cognitive Neurosciences. The students have been thoroughly introduced to the field of their major, both regarding content and methodology. However, third-year LAS students may not have the same amount of background knowledge as students in a strictly disciplinary bachelor. In that regard, they may need additional assistance in their search for literature and formulating a research question.
- We encourage supervisors to make specific agreements about the supervision process with the circle members (e.g., number and phasing of circle meetings, preferred means of contact). Circle supervisors are advised to discuss mutual expectations during the initial thesis writing stage. They may also use a learning contract clarifying the following:
 - What are common interests?
 - What are expectations?
 - What meeting schedule do we agree upon?
 - How (if any) is contact outside circle meetings organized?
 - What (if any) is a standard body of papers to read for all participating in the circle?
 - To what extent of peer feedback do we organize?
 - Where to go when you need help?

Please see the examples of learning contracts in Appendix 1.

- The students are informed about the number of spots offered by each supervisor in their circle. The enrollment opens for all circles at the same time in November. Students self enroll in the circles on a first-come basis. If a student contacts the supervisor directly, we cannot reserve spots in circles for specific students.
- The supervisor identifies the second reader and contact them for thesis assessment. They may coordinate with the track coordinator and among each other to identify a second reader/ assessor whose department will receive compensation for 3 hours of work.
- Supervisors use the LAS Thesis Assessment Form (Download it from the LAS thesis canvas page) to determine the overall thesis grade. It is mandatory to use the LAS Thesis Assessment Form; the supervisors **cannot** use their departmental assessment form.
- The assessment form calculates the final grade automatically based on the independent assessment of supervisor and second reader. The first page is saved as pdf and sent to the students. The complete file is submitted to LASBachelorThesis@uvt.nl

- The assessment form is available to students and supervisors on canvas page from the beginning of the academic year. An instruction video to fill the assessment form will be available on the LAS thesis Canvas page in due course.
- Supervisors also send a thesis result form (*tentamenbriefje*) to Student Administration using course code 840900-B-18.
- **Ethical considerations:** The students will need to follow the guidelines set by their supervisor's school. Since supervisors have a better grasp of the requirements in their discipline, they will be able to ensure compliance.

5. Thesis Assessment and Plagiarism Check

- The thesis is graded on the following criteria:

Research Question	Is the research topic clearly delineated? Is the main research question socially and scientifically relevant? Is the research question original?
Literature Review	Is the appropriate literature examined? Are positions in the literature compared? Are the theories relevant and are they explained in an understandable, structured and convincing manner?
Argumentation	Are the arguments clear, coherent, and consistent?
Methodology	Are the methods described in a clear manner? Are the methods motivated in a convincing way?
Findings, conclusions and discussion	Are the data collected and results presented adequately? Do the conclusions result from the findings of the study? Do the conclusions give a clear answer to the research question? Is there a good discussion of the relevance of the findings?
Presentation	Is the thesis logically structured? Is the spelling correct; is there unity in style and clarity in terminology? Is the reporting (models, visuals, annotation) formally adequate? Are the quotations, references and sources cited correct and complete?
Process	Has the project been carried out as planned? Did the student work independently and with a professional attitude? Did the student take initiative and provide input punctually and regularly?

The supervisors are advised to discuss the assessment criteria with the students in the initial phase of the project. It would help establish the expectations.

- Grade Calculation: Each component carries weight as indicated in the table below.

	Weight
Research Question	10%
Literature Review	20%
Argumentation	10%
Methodology	20%
Findings, conclusions and discussion	20%
Presentation	10%
Process (graded by supervisor only)	10%

If any of the components is graded 4 or less by either of the assessors, the thesis will be considered a fail. If the student receives two or more 5s on any of the components by either of the assessors, the thesis will be considered a fail.

The assessment form calculates the final grade automatically based on the independent assessment of supervisor and second reader. The first page is saved as pdf and sent to the

students. The complete file is submitted to LASBachelorThesis@uvt.nl The assessment form is available to students and supervisors on canvas page from the beginning of the academic year.

- The supervisors are advised to follow the table below for grading:

4	Fail	Incomplete; cannot be compensated
5	Insufficient	Does not meet descriptors at a sufficient level; often unclear or underdeveloped
6	Sufficient	Meets most descriptors at a sufficient level; sometimes unclear or underdeveloped
7	More than sufficient	Meets all descriptors at a sufficient level; some lapses in clarity and development
8	Good	Meets most descriptors at a high level; clear and well developed
9	Very Good	Meets all descriptors at a high level; very clear and well developed
10	Excellent	Meets all descriptors at an extremely high level; extremely clear and well developed

- The assessment procedure requires supervisors to [check plagiarism](#) and to report a suspicion of fraud to the board of examiners when the outcome of the check indicates plagiarism may be a problem.

How to use Turnitin

- ✓ Click “Turnitin Login” on top right corner
- ✓ Click “Launch”
- ✓ If the “Launch” feature is unavailable, click the grey dot on the left bottom corner
- ✓ Click “Edit profile,” enter your details, and save
- ✓ Go to home page and click “Launch” again
- ✓ Click “Upload” on top right corner
- ✓ Drag and drop or select PDF file, and click “confirm”
- ✓ Insert Author’s name and click “confirm”

The software will generate a report showing percentage of overlap. Include the percentage of overlap in the assessment form.

- **Use of LLMs:** The use of Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT is not allowed. If the supervisor suspects use of LLMs for thesis writing, they need to report it by submitting Fraud/ Plagiarism Report Form to the TSHD Examination Committee (tshd.excom@tilburguniversity.edu). The form is available on the LAS thesis canvas page. Supervisors and students are encouraged to check the TSHD’s latest rules and regulations for any exceptions or provisions.
- It is important to note that the supervisor and the second reader grade independently. The second reader sends the assessment form to the supervisor for compiling. Then, they may discuss the grades and the feedback and come to a joint conclusion.

- **Third Examiner:** When there is 1.5pt or more difference in overall assessment between the supervisor and the 2nd reader after their deliberation, the program director serves as 3rd examiner. They decide upon the grade, in consultation with supervisor and 2nd reader, between the limits set by the initial two assessments. The program director's decision would be final. If the program director is involved in the project, the academic director assists in selecting a suitable 3rd examiner.
- The supervisor then communicates the result (grade with feedback) to the student, submit the student administration, and to the LAS administration.
- **Resit opportunity:** The student can utilize the resit opportunity to rewrite and resubmit the thesis if it is assessed as insufficient.
- **Resit of a sufficient thesis:** If the thesis has been assessed as sufficient, but the student wants to achieve a higher grade, they need to write a new thesis on a different topic with a new supervisor next semester.
- **Failing the Resit:** Students who do not pass the resit of the bachelor's thesis need to restart the thesis trajectory in the next semester with a new topic and a new supervisor.
- **Extension in exceptional circumstances:** In case of exceptional circumstances (to be communicated to and assessed by the thesis coordinator, track coordinator/ program director, and thesis supervisor), the student is given the opportunity to make use of a three-month extended revision period (see important dates for each semester). During this period, the student is given a final opportunity to rework the thesis. The student must renew their registration with the university to make use of this possibility. During the three-month extended revision period, the student is given one opportunity to get feedback from the supervisor on an improved version of the paper. Important: The students requesting three-month extension must inform the supervisor and the thesis coordinator about the circumstances before the thesis submission deadline.

6. Contacts

- Vikas Lakhani, LAS Thesis Coordinator
v.lakhani@tilburguniversity.edu
Students may contact the thesis coordinator if they need information regarding thesis procedure, or if they encounter any trouble in thesis writing (including supervision).
- LAS Thesis Administration
LASBachelorThesis@uvt.nl
For thesis submission and assessment form submission
- Student Administration – only for supervisors
tentamenuitslagen@tilburguniversity.edu
Tentamenbriefje submission
- TSHD Examination Committee
tshd.excom@tilburguniversity.edu
Report Fraud/ Plagiarism
- John Gelissen, Program Director Social Sciences
J.P.T.M.Gelissen@tilburguniversity.edu
- Suzanne van der Beek, Program Director Arts and Humanities
S.E.vdrBeek@tilburguniversity.edu
- Gerwin van der Laan, Program Director Business and Economics
G.vdrLaan@tilburguniversity.edu
- Michiel Bot, Program Director Law in an International Context
Michiel.Bot@tilburguniversity.edu
- Andrew Reid, Program Director Cognitive Neuroscience
A.T.Reid@tilburguniversity.edu

Appendix 1: Learning Contract

Example 1

- Make a clear time plan.
- Produce work at agreed intervals (indicated in the time plan) and work steadily towards finishing the thesis in the period agreed upon with the supervisor(s).
- Communicate about questions, blocks, problems (usually in short emails)

For each meeting:

- Make a short summary about what was discussed in our meeting.
- Prepare an agenda which will include all the issues you want to discuss in a meeting and send this agenda two workdays in advance (so summary last time, agenda next time)
- Make a list of specific questions if necessary.
- Send the work you want to discuss with your supervisor (together with the summary, agenda, and questions) in advance.
- Pages to read: a maximum of 10! (This is not the number of pages read each time.)

During the meeting:

- Make notes during each meeting to be able to process the feedback given by the supervisor
- Be open for critical but constructive feedback given

Supervisor:

Name

Contact details

Example 2

Student name:

Student number:

Start date:

Research Area:

Supervisor name:

Proposed date of completion:

Agreed frequency number of meetings:

As a student, I agree to:

- Prepare an agenda that will include all the issues I want to discuss in a meeting and send this agenda at least two workdays in advance.
- Send the work I want to discuss with my supervisor **at least two workdays** in advance (**max. 15 pages**).
- Make notes during each meeting to process the feedback given by the supervisor.
- Be open to critical but constructive feedback given to me.
- Prepare a supervision log (1/2 A4 - 1 A4) after each meeting in which all issues discussed and agreements made are summarised.
- Send this supervision log within two days after each meeting.
- Communicate about questions, blocks, and problems (usually in short emails)
- Produce work at agreed intervals (indicated in the time plan) and work steadily towards finishing my thesis in the period agreed upon with my supervisors.
- Make a clear time plan.

As a supervisor, I agree to:

- Communicate in advance about times in which no supervision can take place (e.g., days off, holidays, etc.)
- Read all the work that is sent in advance
- Critically but constructively, comment on the work and advise the student
- Read the supervision log and make adjustments when necessary
- Respond to short question (by email) within two workdays

- Stimulate the student to work steadily towards completing the thesis within the agreed-upon timeframe.
- Prepare the student for the graduation session