

## **Master's Thesis Regulations**

(pursuant to Article 4.14 of the Master's Programme Teaching and Examination Regulations (*Onderwijs- en examenregeling van de masteropleidingen*))

### **Article 1 – Scope**

1. - These regulations are applicable to all students who start writing their Master's thesis after 31 August 2004 to complete a programme of studies in Tax Law, Business Law, International and European Law, International Business Law, Labour Law and Employment Relations, Law and Technology, Public Governance, International Business Taxation Law, Victimology and Criminal Justice and the Research Master in Law, and for students in the master Law who were registered for the Law program before 1 September 2014 and whose research proposal was approved before 1 October 2014.
2. - The date on which the student registers in the electronic thesis file will be considered the starting date.

### **Article 2 – Aims**

With the Master's thesis, the student must show that he possesses the academic skills to use the knowledge acquired in the course of the studies to independently

- formulate a scientific question in the field of study;
- set up a study to answer this question in an academically responsible way;
- collect, order, analyse, correlate, and evaluate the data relevant to this study;
- substantiate the answer found and, where necessary, to contribute to defensible solutions;
- present the design, execution, and results of the study clearly, systematically, and verifiably in writing.

In addition, the student must be able to present his thesis before an audience of non-lawyers or non-public administration specialists, as the case may be, and to defend it before the examiners.

### **Article 3 – Research Lab**

The Research Lab is part of the thesis phase of the programmes of Law and Public Governance.

### **Article 4 – Study load**

The study load for the Master's thesis is 504 hours (18 ECTS) in all Master's programmes, with the exception of International Business Law, Public Governance and the Law program, where the study load for the Master's thesis is 336 hours (12 ECTS). The study load for the thesis for the Research master in Law is 672 hours (24 ECTS).

### **Article 5 – Electronic thesis file**

1. - The student must register in the electronic thesis file.<sup>1</sup>
2. - The thesis file has the following functions:
  - supporting student supervision
  - monitoring thesis progress
  - stimulating thesis quality
  - recording definitive version.

### **Article 6 – Thesis coordinator, thesis supervisor, and second evaluator**

1. - Each programme has a thesis coordinator.
2. - The thesis coordinator of the programme appoints at least one thesis supervisor and one second evaluator per student.
3. It is the task of the thesis supervisor to supervise the student as regards the content of the thesis research and the writing of the thesis; he also acts as a corrector and as an evaluator.
4. - The second evaluator conducts a marginal assessment of the final version.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.scriptiedossier.nl/pages/page.asp?lang=en>

### **Article 7 – Supervision**

1. - The student has a minimum of three meetings with the supervisor. In these meetings, the following subjects will be discussed: the choice of subject, the formulation of the research question, the outline of the thesis, and a discussion of the draft text.
2. - The number of meetings can be increased within reasonable limits
3. - On the basis of the approved thesis proposal, arrangements are made concerning
  - the schedule;
  - frequency of further supervision;
  - the possibility to submit and discuss drafts of parts of the thesis.
4. - If more than one department is involved in the thesis, joint consultation will take place at the initiative of the thesis supervisor(s) on the distribution of tasks between the supervisors.

### **Article 8 – Supervision problems**

- 1.- In the event that problems occur during the supervision process which cannot be resolved by the student and the thesis supervisor together, the student and/or the thesis supervisor can apply to the thesis coordinator a request to solve the problem.
2. - If mediation by the thesis coordinator does not lead to a solution, the student and/or the thesis supervisor can apply to the thesis ombudsman (*scriptievertrouwenspersoon*) appointed by Tilburg Law School.

### **Article 9 – Size and presentation of the thesis**

1. - In principle, the size of the thesis is approximately 16,000 words ( $\pm$  40 pages A4) of text, excluding footnotes, bibliography, and any appendices.
- 2.- The size of the thesis for the Public Governance programme is approximately 20,000 words ( $\pm$  50 pages A4) of text, excluding footnotes, bibliography, and any appendices.
3. - The thesis can be submitted in different forms, e.g., an article in a journal, an explanatory memorandum to a bill, case advice. Each form has its own requirements as to size, although these will always be in proportion to the norm of 16,000 words (20,000 in the case of the Public Governance programme) and to the study load described in Article 4.
4. - Research conducted in the framework of the Master's thesis may include practical research.

### **Article 10 – Combined thesis**

Should a student want to write one thesis to complete different programmes or different specialisations, then the combined thesis has to meet all the requirements of the separate programmes or specialisations. With regard to the form and size of the combined thesis, the requirements referred to in Article 9 apply cumulatively to a maximum of 32,000 words (approximately 80 pages A4) of text, excluding footnotes, bibliography, and any appendices.

### **Article 11 – Academic fraud**

1. - The thesis supervisor will report plagiarism or academic fraud in the conduct of research to the Examination Board.
2. - The definitions of plagiarism and fraud as set out in the Rules and Regulations are applicable.<sup>2</sup>
3. - The final version of the thesis is checked for plagiarism through the electronic thesis file prior to the assessment.
4. - The MTO/ bachelor thesis or any other final thesis, may not be used for the Master's thesis. Students need to upload their previously written MTO/ bachelor thesis or any other final thesis to the electronic thesis file.

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<sup>2</sup> Article 7 paragraphs 5 and 6 Rules and Regulations.

## **Article 12 – Citation and references**

Citation, references in footnotes, and the layout of the bibliography of a law thesis should in principle follow the *Oscola system*<sup>3</sup>. The *APA style*.<sup>4</sup> Should be followed when writing a thesis for Public Governance.

## **Article 13 – Submitting the final version**

1. - The student decides when the final version is finished. From that moment on, he cannot make any changes to the thesis until assessment has taken place.
2. - The final version must be submitted both electronically and in hard copy to the thesis supervisor. It must be accompanied by a *verklaring van eigen werk* (“Statement of Integrity”). The thesis supervisor determines the number of copies to be submitted.
3. - The student must submit the definite final version of the thesis for plagiarism control to the electronic thesis file at least 3 weeks before the intended graduation date.

## **Article 14 – The first, preliminary, assessment**

1. - Preliminary to the assessment of the Master’s thesis, the following aspects will be assessed:
  - *language/style* (points of attention include: formulation, grammar, spelling, punctuation, stylistic conventions relating to the type of text)
  - *structure* (points of attention include: consistency at text, section, and paragraph levels)
  - *format* (points of attention include: lay-out, footnotes, bibliography).
2. – the preliminary assessment of the Master’s thesis will only be determined after all the aspects referred to under 1 have been assessed as sufficient. The thesis will be marked as sufficient if the criteria and guidelines listed in Article 17, paragraphs 1 and 2 have been met.

## **Article 15 – Second assessment**

After the preliminary thesis mark is determined, the second evaluator marginally tests whether the preliminary thesis mark reflects the quality of the thesis.

## **Article 16 – Revision**

In the event the preliminary thesis mark is insufficient, the student will be given the assessment form so that it is clear what aspects need to be improved. After been given the assessment form the student has two weeks to revise the thesis, which, if properly revised, can then be assessed as sufficient.

## **Article 17 – The final thesis mark**

1. - The final thesis mark will be determined by grading the following categories as either insufficient, sufficient, good, or very good:
  - Language / Grammar / Punctuation / Form /Style / Citation and Bibliography criteria / considerations. A fail on language criterion can be sufficient for an overall fail.
  - Research question, embedding and operationalisation
  - Method / Approach
  - Analysis
  - Conclusion / Synthesis
  - Additional considerations: independency, defense.
2. - In calculating the preliminary thesis mark, the following guidelines apply.
  - 6 will be given
    - if all categories are ‘sufficient’ or if one category is ‘good’ and the other ones ‘sufficient’;

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<sup>3</sup> See the ‘Oxford law’ site of the University of Oxford: <<http://www.law.ox.ac.uk/index.shtml>> about the faculty > publications > oscola (<http://www.law.ox.ac.uk/publications/oscola.php>).

<sup>4</sup> The American Psychological Association developed this style. For more information, see “APA” on the Citation Styles website of the Tilburg University library: <<http://www.tilburguniversity.edu/intranet/publish/citingsources/styles/>>. The use of OSCOLA (Oxford Standard for Citation Of Legal Authorities) is also recommended.

- if the independence aspect is 'poor' because the student has insufficiently shown his ability to independently realise the aims referred to in Article 2;  
**7** if at least two categories are assessed as 'good';  
**8** if all categories are assessed as 'good' or if every 'sufficient' is compensated by a 'very good';  
**9** if at least two categories are assessed as 'very good' and all other categories as 'good';  
**10** if all categories are assessed as 'very good'.
3. - The level of the sufficient mark for the Master's thesis will also be determined by the presentation of the thesis subject for non-specialists (*leken-praatje*) and the defence of the thesis.

#### **Article 18 – Appeal**

An appeal to the final thesis mark can be lodged within six weeks with the University's Examination Appeals Board

#### **Article 19 – Evaluation**

After the final Master's Examination, the student will be asked to evaluate the thesis phase on the basis of a questionnaire.

#### **Article 20 – Copyright**

1. - The copyright of a final or Master's thesis is vested in the student.
2. - The student gives his permission to incorporate his thesis in the thesis database of the university, unless he has indicated his objection through the thesis file.
- 3.- By submitting their thesis, students give permission, in the broadest sense of the word, to be checked for plagiarism by a plagiarism detection system chosen by the institution referred to in Article 11 paragraph 3.
4. - This includes a consent for the inclusion of the thesis in the repository of Tilburg University and the databases of plagiarism detection systems with which Tilburg University and / or other educational institution in the Netherlands has or will concluded a contract. This for future plagiarism controls.
5. - The student is still free to choose that his or her work is not made public for another purpose than the plagiarism check as referred to in Article 11.

Adopted by the Examination Board of Tilburg Law School on 9 June 2004. Amended on 21 April 2008, 8 June 2009, August 2016, September 2017.

## MA Thesis Assessment Form

<b>0. LANGUAGE / GRAMMAR / PUNCTUATION / FORM / STYLE/ CITATION AND BIBLIOGRAPHY CRITERIA / CONSIDERATIONS</b>	
CRITERIA / CONSIDERATIONS - Whether the use of language is up to standard (including: grammar, spelling errors, punctuation) - Whether the thesis is written coherently. - Whether headings and paragraphs are clear and logical. - Bibliography according to academic standards. - Citation according to academic standards. (Note: a fail on language criterion can be sufficient for an overall fail)	
This is a knock-out criterion which means that you either pass or fail on this category. <b>Failing on this category means your work will not be graded.</b>	PASS
	FAIL

<b>1. RESEARCH QUESTION, EMBEDDING, OPERATIONALISATION</b>				<b>20 %</b>
CRITERIA / CONSIDERATIONS - Demarcation and presentation of clear research question(s) - Identification of a 'gap' or 'lacuna' in the existing body of knowledge - Extent to which the research question is embedded in the literature - Whether subquestions (if applicable) logically follow from or relate to the research question - Whether subquestions (if applicable) are relevant for answering the research question				
<i>Excellent (3)</i>	<i>Good (2)</i>	<i>Sufficiënt (1)</i>	<i>Insufficiënt (0)</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
Exceptional	Adequate. Minor flaws possible	Acceptable, but flawed	Absent / Unacceptable	

<b>2. METHOD / APPROACH</b>				<b>10 %</b>
CRITERIA / CONSIDERATIONS - Level of delineation (clarity / precision) - Feasibility - Appropriateness for answering the research question - Innovativeness (e.g. innovative method or research design, new use of arguments or data)				
<i>Excellent (3)</i>	<i>Good (2)</i>	<i>Sufficiënt (1)</i>	<i>Insufficiënt (0)</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
Exceptional	Adequate. Minor flaws possible	Acceptable, but flawed	Absent / Unacceptable	

<b>3. ANALYSIS</b>				<b>50 %</b>
CRITERIA / CONSIDERATIONS - Whether the research takes the necessary steps for answering the research question. - Whether the argumentation is convincing / Whether arguments are overlooked / Whether argumentation contains flaws. - Relevance and appropriateness of the materials/data/information (including: International, historical and/or interdisciplinary sources are used when appropriate. Primary sources are used when expected). - Completeness of the materials / whether relevant sources are overlooked. - Whether sources are critically processed.				
<i>Excellent (3)</i>	<i>Good (2)</i>	<i>Sufficiënt (1)</i>	<i>Insufficiënt (0)</i>	<i>SCORE</i>

Exceptional	Adequate. Minor flaws possible	Acceptable, but flawed	Absent / Unacceptable	
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<b>4. CONCLUSION / SYNTHESIS</b>				<b>20 %</b>
CRITERIA / CONSIDERATIONS				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whether an answer to the research question is provided.</li> <li>- Whether the conclusion logically follows from the analysis.</li> <li>- Whether the conclusion acknowledges the limitations of the research.</li> <li>- Whether the conclusion can be read independently of the other parts of the thesis.</li> </ul>				
<i>Excellent (3)</i>	<i>Good (2)</i>	<i>Sufficiënt (1)</i>	<i>Insufficiënt (0)</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
Exceptional	Adequate. Minor flaws possible	Acceptable, but flawed	Absent / Unacceptable	

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Only for the first supervisor:
Independency of the student (the level of independency can affect the grade):
Defense (if applicable)
-0,5/ + 0,5 / no impact on the grade
General Remarks

## **Explanation**

- The form proceeds from four (assessment) categories that count for the final grade.
- One category, namely language usage, counts as a 'knock out' requirement. If language usage scores as unsatisfactory, the substance of the thesis cannot be assessed. Correct language usage should be an entry requirement for assessment.
- The (grading) categories are evaluated with the grade 0, 1, 2, or 3. The weighting of the categories ranges from 10% to 50%.
- An assessment is made per category as to whether the component has been dealt with in an insufficient (0), sufficient (1), good (2) or excellent (3) manner. The points for attention of a category are listed under the heading 'Criteria'.