



UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG  
UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG

Faculty of Economics, Social Sciences, and Management Department of  
Communication and Media Sciences

# **Master's Thesis**

Master of Arts in  
Business Communication

*Formal and editorial requirements Valid  
from SA22*

The purpose of this document is to inform students of the formal and editorial requirements for master's theses (27 + 3 ECTS) completed as part of the Master's in Business Communication. These requirements are intended to ensure consistency and rigor in the presentation of theses.

These requirements apply to theses supervised by professors and teachers in the Master's in Business Communication program. The requirements of teachers in other departments of the Department of Communication and Media Sciences, and more generally of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences and Management, may differ.

## 1. General considerations:

- The master's thesis is worth 30 ECTS credits in the language of the written work (27 credits for the thesis and 3 credits for attending the master's colloquium). The workload corresponds to approximately 675-810 hours of work, or 17 to 20 weeks of full-time work.
- The seminar is repeated each semester. Students choose the semester in which to attend the seminar based on when they begin their master's thesis.
- Once the final proposal has been drawn up and approved, the thesis must be completed within six months. The student and the instructor(s) supervising the thesis must sign the master's thesis supervision form (available in the instructor's Moodle space).
- The thesis must be between 80 and 100 pages long.
- The thesis must be related to the field of communication and media.
- If the student wishes to be supervised by a teacher from outside the Department of Communication and Media Sciences, they must attend and register for a seminar (via MyUnifr) given by a teacher from the Department of Communication and Media Sciences, who will be the second supervisor. Completion of step B is mandatory, as is the submission of the document "Conformité du travail 2<sup>ème</sup> superviseur DCM" (available for download from the DCM teacher's Moodle space). In this case, the <sup>second</sup>supervisor does not grade the Master's thesis.
- The thesis may be written in French, English, or German. Each instructor decides on the conditions for supervising the thesis and the accepted language.
- A Moodle space for each teacher's seminar is open to students; the password is provided during the seminar.
- The work must include theoretical and empirical elements.
- The master's thesis is an individual scientific research project; group work is not permitted.
- The deadline for the teacher concerned to correct the work, set by the dean's office, is three months.
- Credits are only awarded if the thesis has obtained a sufficient grade (equal to or higher than 4.0).
- In the event of an insufficient grade, the student has the option of redoing the thesis once, on a new topic and with a different instructor. The final grade will be taken into consideration.



## 2. The Master's colloquium

Students must attend the master's seminar of the professor supervising them. The primary purpose of the seminar is to promote in-depth study of the research project. To this end, students commit to attending sessions regularly. Two seminars prior to the presentation of the master's thesis proposal are strongly recommended; three seminars are mandatory in all cases (two of which correspond to the two required presentations, see below).

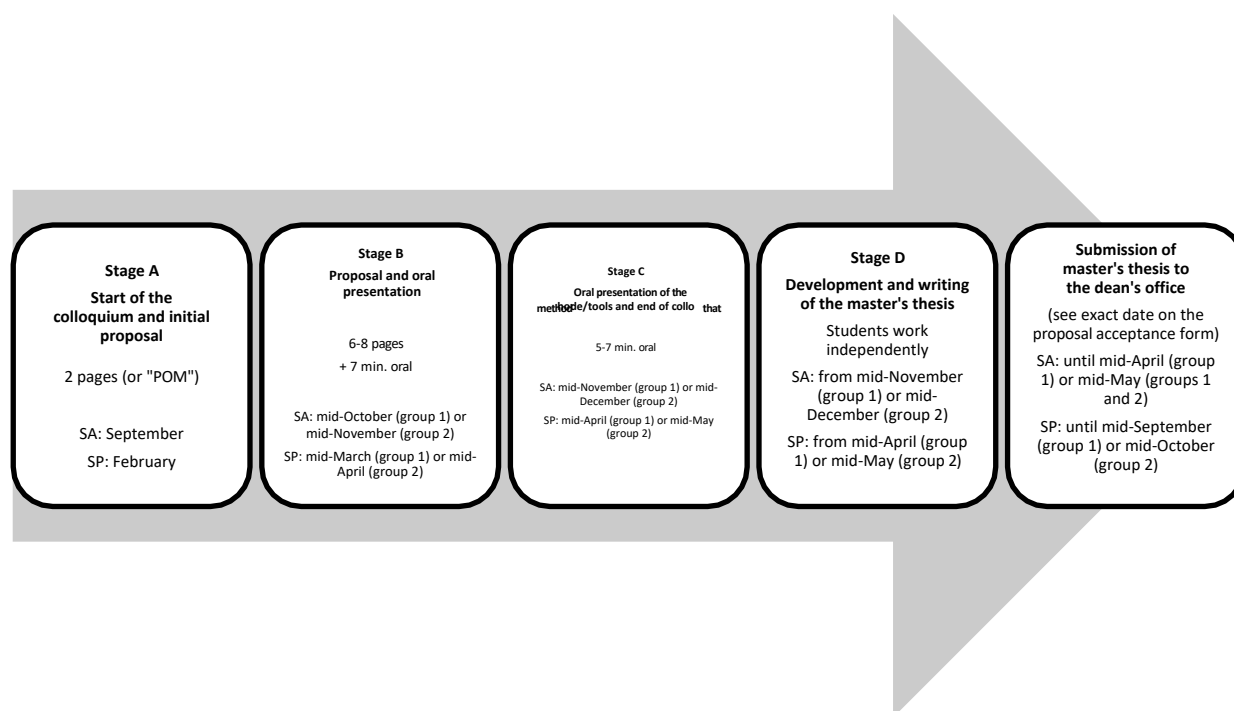
Please note: you must register for the seminar and the master's thesis with the teacher on MySES.

## 3. The stages of the master's thesis and the supervision periods

Teachers who can supervise master's theses offer two supervision periods per academic year (the specific supervision dates for each semester are communicated at the beginning of each colloquium):

- Fall semester: September to April
- SP: February to September

These supervision periods include monitoring the master's colloquium with presentations of the research proposal (steps (A)-(B)-(C)), supervision of the work by the teacher during the colloquium, as well as the development and writing of the student's master's thesis (step D) and the final submission of the master's thesis. The different phases of the master's thesis for each semester and the approximate dates are indicated in the summary diagram below:



A tutor in qualitative research methodology and a tutor in quantitative research methodology are available to advise and guide students. Their names are announced at the beginning of each seminar.

Please note: in order to avoid paying the registration fee for the following semester, the deadline for submitting your master's thesis to the dean's office is the last Thursday before the start of classes for the semester.

Students must also comply with the formatting and submission guidelines of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences (see SES website).

In addition to the paper copies submitted to the dean's office, a PDF version with appendices must be submitted to the teacher's conference Moodle space, where the "compilatio" plagiarism detection system will verify the originality of the master's thesis (using an anti-plagiarism database). Theses that are not submitted to Moodle will not be accepted.

All codes (SPSS, R, etc.) used to produce the empirical results must also be submitted on Moodle.

### **Stage A. Start of the seminar and initial proposal of a research topic:**

The student proposes an initial 2-page work project (excluding bibliographical references). The proposal must contain at least:

- The general theme of the work (1/2 page)
- The issue and objectives of the work (1 page)
- The proposed methodology (1/2 page)
- Main bibliographical references

In agreement with the instructor and in place of the 2-page proposal above, students may submit their project proposal in the form of a "POM" (Problem-Objective-Method) document, available in the instructor's Moodle space.

These elements may evolve as the proposal is refined.

### **Step B. Proposal and oral presentation:**

The student improves their initial proposal to produce a complete and detailed proposal of approximately 6-8 pages (excluding bibliographical references). It must contain the following elements:

- Introduction: description of the subject and its relevance (1/2 page)
- Theoretical framework and literature review (theoretical approach, concepts discussed) (4-5 pages)
- Research question: what are you seeking to demonstrate? (1/2 page)
- Research hypotheses (if applicable) (1/2 page)
- Proposed methodology (approach and type of analysis, data collection, time frame, etc.) (1-2 pages)

An oral presentation of the research project during the conference is mandatory. It consists of presenting the research project to all conference participants. The elements that appear

in the written proposal must be presented on separate slides. The presentation should last no longer than 7 minutes. It will be followed by an open discussion.

Reminder: if the Master's thesis is supervised by a professor from outside the Department of Communication and Media Sciences, the student agrees to attend a seminar given by a DCM professor, under the conditions and rules set by each professor. French-speaking DCM professors require at least attendance at the seminar and completion of Work Stage B (oral presentation).

### **Step C. Oral presentation of the method/tools and end of the seminar:**

Students must also present the method and/or tools used in their research in detail. This involves explaining how the empirical part of the work will be carried out, step by step. The concepts related to the chosen method must be mentioned. The oral presentation with slides must be accompanied by a 2-page Word document or take the form of a detailed PowerPoint presentation, according to the instructor's instructions. The presentation should last approximately 5-7 minutes.

Once the methods and tools have been presented and accepted by the instructor, the student may collect data. He or she may work completely independently. If additional questions arise, the student may attend the colloquium sessions.

### **Step D: Development and writing of the master's thesis:**

The master's thesis is an individual piece of work. Therefore, although students will have full access to their instructor during the colloquium, it is important that each student work independently on the final draft of their thesis. It is therefore essential that each student attends the colloquium in a responsible manner for the phases of developing and writing the master's thesis for which they consider they need supervision. Once the colloquium is over, students work independently, without supervision from their teacher.

#### 4. Assessment of the master's thesis

The following criteria are applied for the assessment of the master's thesis:

- Mastery of theories and concepts and development of the research project
- Mastery of research methods and framing
- Written quality of the proposal and argumentation
- Originality and potential contribution to the discipline

In the event that the master's thesis is supervised by a teacher from outside the Department of Communication and Media Sciences, the DCM teacher signs the document certifying that the quality of the work carried out under the supervision of the external teacher is equivalent to work carried out under the supervision of the DCM teacher (document available for download on the teacher's Moodle space). French-speaking DCM teachers do not grade Master's theses.

#### 5. The format of the Master's thesis

The structure of the Master's thesis must be clear and logical. The guidelines below must be followed.

- **Cover page:** must include the title of the work, the semester in which the work was submitted, the student's first and last name, student number, email address, submission date, and the supervisor's first and last name. An example of a cover page is provided at the end of this document.
- **Acknowledgments** (optional)
- **Abstract:** a summary of the objectives of the master's thesis and its main findings.
- **Table of contents:** the titles of the different parts and sub-parts (or sections, etc.) of the thesis must be precise, i.e., they must indicate the content of the part in question (for example, it is not sufficient to indicate only "theoretical part"). The corresponding page number must be indicated next to the title. If the master's thesis contains figures or tables, these must also be listed.
- **Introduction:** must contain a presentation of the research topic and context, as well as a brief presentation of the state of the art, key concepts of the work, the problem, and the research question. The results of the work may be described (verification or refutation of hypotheses, without going into detail). A presentation of the main parts of the work (justifying their relevance) is also expected.
- **Body of the work:** the body of the work generally includes:
  - the state of the art (clearly detailed),
  - the theoretical chapters, in which the concepts are carefully defined, the theoretical model is presented, and the hypotheses that enable the research question to be answered are detailed,
  - the methodology, which contains the operationalization of concepts and a detailed presentation of the planning and implementation of data collection (clearly detailed),
  - the analysis and presentation of the results. References to the data sets that are the subject of detailed analysis are given in the text. Tables or graphs may be included (with titles and sources indicated), as may

excerpts from interviews, for example (in italics). These different sections have introductions and intermediate conclusions.

- Final discussion and conclusion: this section summarizes the main findings from the different sections and shows how these findings answer the research question. The limitations of the work and prospects for future research should be specified.
- **Bibliography, Webography:** see the "bibliographical references" section of this document.
- **Appendices:** all supplementary documents must be included in this section: corpus of analyzed data; questionnaires; transcribed interviews, etc. If there are a large number of appendices, the student may submit them in digital form.
- **Statutory declaration:** in accordance with the guidelines of May 13, 2008, of the University of Fribourg, a statutory declaration attesting to the scientific integrity of the work is required (downloadable from the SES website).



## **6. Presentation of the document**

The master's thesis is an academic work that must comply with the criteria of scientific writing. Rigor and critical thinking must be developed throughout the work. In all cases, avoid giving the work an overly personal and subjective tone; it is not a matter of showcasing your writing style, as you would, for example, in a journalistic article. Particular attention must be paid to language and spelling, in both English and French.

The body text is in Times New Roman (12 point), line spacing 1.5, which corresponds to approximately 2,000 characters per page (not including spaces). It is possible to choose another font as long as it meets readability criteria and represents the same number of characters per page as Times New Roman.

The margins are standard: 2.5 cm.

Paragraph spacing: 0 pt before and 6 pt after. Leave one

line before and after each title.

The student's name appears in the header; a short title of the work and the page numbers are mentioned in the footer. The font size of the header and footer is 2 points smaller than the body text, i.e., 10 points.

Footnotes are numbered consecutively (2 points smaller than the body text, i.e., 10 points).

## 7. Bibliographic references

Plagiarism is a serious infringement of intellectual property rights. When basing your work on the work of other authors, you are required to cite your sources. Any infringement will result in sanctions, and plagiarists will be subject to disciplinary measures. Students can use software such as Compilatio to check the quality of their work before submitting it.

If the master's thesis extends the theme of work completed for a course or seminar (or individual seminar work), each element taken from the previous work must be cited with particular rigor (the number of elements used must be moderate), citing the authors of the previous work.

Care should be taken to indicate **direct quotations with quotation marks at the beginning and end of the quotation**, as well as the exact reference for the quotation according to the model presented below. In the case of paraphrases (to be used sparingly), the source should also be indicated according to a similar model.

**Quotations in English:** it is also possible to include a few quotations in English in the body of the text in French. Present a term or concept in its original language if it is very specific (and if it would lose its meaning if translated, for example). In all other cases, it is recommended to translate the quotation into French and add the exact reference after it: [our translation].

Bibliographic references are included in the body of the text and not in footnotes. Please follow the author-date style according to APA<sup>7th</sup> edition standards (American Psychology Association). It is possible to adopt another standard, provided that it is applied consistently throughout the work. The examples below are not an exhaustive list.

- **When referring to a book or article**, indicate the author's name and the year of publication of the work used, as follows: (Goffman, 1972). As a general rule, for up to 3-4 authors, all names must be cited (Dupret, Klaus, and Ghazzal, 2010). In the case of multiple authors, all authors must be cited the first time, as in the previous example, then, if the same reference is used again, the following formula can be used: (Pélissier et al., 2002).
- **If you wish to explicitly cite or paraphrase a portion of a work**, follow the citation or paraphrase with the author's name, the year of publication, and the pages where the quotation can be found: (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1966, pp. 87-89) or (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1966, p. 84).
- **If the author's name is mentioned in the text**, simply add the year of publication in parentheses. For example: "Goffman (1972) highlighted elements that had previously been overlooked by most sociological studies."
- In general, **it is possible to shorten a fairly long quotation** (the meaning of the author's original idea must remain the same, however). Use the following formula: [...]. For example: "These three components of the social process through which the self is constituted show that identity cannot result from the actions of actors alone [...] but requires a social order structured by rules." (Nizet and Rigaux, 2005, p. 91).

- **When referring to a website** (of an association, company, etc.): cite the name of the author or website and the year. For example: (Federal Statistical Office, 2015).

Many software programs (e.g., Endnote, Zotero, Mendeley) facilitate the processing of bibliographic references in a document. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these tools.

The bibliography, grouped at the end of the document, should list exhaustively and in alphabetical order only those references mentioned or cited in the text.

References in the bibliography must be single-spaced, with a 1.25 cm indent for the second and subsequent lines.

As shown in the examples below, in French, colons are preceded and followed by a space (xxx: xxx). In English, colons are only followed by a space (xxx: xxx).

*For books:*

Goffman, E. (1972). *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. Penguin Books.

Bourdieu, P., and Passeron, J.-C. (1966). *Les Héritiers, les étudiants et la culture*. Éditions de Minuit.

*For articles in collective works:*

Trognon, A. (1987). Producing data. In A. Blanchet (Ed.), *Survey techniques in the social sciences* (pp. 1-15). Dunod.

*For journal articles (with/without DOI):*

Boullier, D. (2004). The fabrication of public opinion in television conversations. *Réseaux*, 4(126), 57-87.

Raymond, C., Marin, M.-F., Juster, R.-P., & Lupien, S. J. (2019). Should we suppress or reappraise our stress?: The moderating role of reappraisal on cortisol reactivity and recovery in healthy adults. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 32(3), 286-297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2019.1596676>

Dupret, B., Klaus, E., and Ghazzal, Z. (2010). Commenting on current events on the internet. The structure of intelligibility in an Arabic discussion forum. *Réseaux*, 2(160-161), 285-317.

*For a newspaper article (with author):*

Larosse, J. (1999, November 26). The new work. *La Liberté*, 64. *For a*

*dictionary or encyclopedia (without/with author):*

Anorexia nervosa. (1999). In H. Bloch (Ed.), *Grand dictionnaire de la psychologie* (pp. 61-62). Larousse-Bordas.

Dortier, J.-F. (Ed.). (2004). *Dictionary of the humanities*. Ed. Sciences humaines.

*For an online encyclopedia:*

*Switzerland. (n.d.). In Wikipedia* <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suisse>

*For websites:*

Swiss Undocumented Migrants Movement. (2004). *National Coordination of Undocumented Migrants in Switzerland*

<http://www.sans-papiers.ch/>

Federal Statistical Office. (2015). *Key figures – Print media offering.*

<http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/16/03/key/ind16.indicator.16010201.160102.html>

*For articles or comments from blogs and social networks:*

Cornu, D. (2015, April 27). *More complaints to the ombudsman last year.*

<http://www.mediateur.tamedia.ch/?p=234>

## 8. Reference bibliography

- Bauer, M. W., and Gaskell, G. (2000). *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound*. SAGE Publications. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849209731>
- Beaud, M. (2013). *The art of the thesis: how to prepare and write a master's thesis, a doctoral thesis, or any other academic work in the Internet age*. La Découverte.
- Becker, H. S. (2009). *The tricks of the trade: how to conduct research in the social sciences*. La Découverte.
- Bertrand, F. and Maumy-Bertrand, M. (2014). *Introduction to Statistics with R*. Dunod.
- Cahuzac, E. and Bontemps, C. (2008). *Stata for practice: statistics, graphics, and programming elements*. Stata Press.
- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., and Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15–3. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151>
- Haccoun, R.R. and Cousineau, D. (2007). *Statistics: Concepts and Applications*. Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
- Krippendorff, Klaus (2004). *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology*. SAGE Publications.
- Miles, M.G., Huberman, M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: a methods sourcebook*. SAGE Publications.
- Neuendorf, K. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook*. SAGE Publications. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781071802878>
- Riffe, Daniel, Stephen Lacy, and Fico, F. (2014). *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*. Routledge.
- Van Campenhoudt, L., and Quivy, R. (2011). *Manual of social science research*. Dunod.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA SCIENCES

**Title**

Subtitle

Master's thesis

Master of Arts in Business Communication

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Semester

Student's first and last name

Student number

Email

Supervisor(s):

FRIBOURG

Date: DAY-MONTH-YEAR