Final Paper and Master's dissertation guidelines

Here are some useful indications on how to start, arrange and refine your final paper/master's dissertation.

How to get started

TABLE OF CONTENTS: Once the topic of your final paper/master's dissertation has been defined with your supervisor, it is useful to build a table of contents that will serve as a guide and outline for drafting.
It can, of course, be modified as the work progresses based on the bibliographic material examined, research developments, and your supervisor's suggestions.

In any case, it is a useful guide for planning the drafting timeline and checking the progress. When writing the final paper, the table of contents should perfectly match the chapter and paragraph titles of your final paper/master's dissertation.

It is advisable to pay attention to the structure of paragraphs to avoid excessive use of sub-paragraphs and define a maximum length for any section of your final paper/master's dissertation.

COMPUTER SKILLS:
If your final paper/master's dissertation involves data analysis, it's necessary to enhance your knowledge of major statistical methodologies and refine your skills in using data analysis software. In addition, we recommend ensuring proficiency in at least one word processing software and in constructing tables and graphs. If you have any difficulties with your computer skills, it's best to address these gaps before writing your final paper/master's dissertation or working with data in other ways, such as tabulation of data, score calculation or data reduction.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY: Your final paper/master's dissertation may be written in English as well as in a foreign language, with prior agreement.
In both cases, it's essential to master morpho-syntactic rules and adequate semantic knowledge. Spelling or grammatical errors greatly reduce the quality of the text, so it's important to practice writing, review grammar rules, and ask someone to proofread your work.
You may find useful to ask someone (unfamiliar with the subject matter) to read some sections for fluency and clarity.

Proper use of punctuation is crucial, as a wrong punctuation can change the meaning of a sentence.

Finally, remember that it is absolutely necessary to avoid spaces before any punctuation mark, except for open parentheses.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS.
Whether it is a literature review or a research dissertation, the starting point is with a knowledge of the existing literature on the topic that will be explored. This involves obtaining literature through personal bibliographic research and possibly also guidance provided by the supervisor.

The material must be examined, read, and studied in relation to the study's objectives and questions.

It is good practice to catalogue the material, distinguishing textual sentences from summaries or personal reflections (this aspect will be crucial in the writing stage; it is important to distinguish one's own reflections from what has been found in previous studies).

This work must be integrated and reworked as it progresses by referring to new literature or revising some particularly central articles or chapters. After consulting the literature, take time to reflect. Then, based on what has been elaborated and reworked, draft the introductory section. Avoid writing on the fly every time interesting ideas are found in books or articles consulted, because the meaning may change once you delve deeper into them, even after multiple re-readings of all the referenced literature

Arrangement

STRUCTURE: Typically, a final paper or master's dissertation includes a title page, table of contents, foreword, chapters, bibliography, and, if applicable, an appendix. Each of these parts has its own internal structure and length, which should be checked before starting to write. Each chapter should start on a new page, and the appendix should not be numbered. The supervisor may provide specific instructions, especially regarding the topic matter (such as literature review, internship summary, or research project).

It is recommended to read at least one final paper or master's dissertation to understand the appropriate structure, length, and sequence of elements.

LENGTH: The final paper for bachelor's degrees should be between 15 and 25 pages, and the master's dissertation should not exceed 100 pages (excluding annexes and appendices). The recommended font is Arial or Times New Roman, size 12, with line spacing of 2 or 1.5

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WRITING PROCESS: Before drafting the final paper or master's dissertation, it should be clear to you what you want to write and work out the most consistent way to express it. For example, instead of "The study involved 60 students, 40 males and 20 females," it is clearer to say "40 male students and 20 female students participated in the study." Similarly, instead of "we found contentious results: only some articles (Doe, Smith) found a relationship between the two variables; Jones has highlighted their independence." instead of "Doe found the correlation between the two variables. Smith confirmed it.
Jones highlighted they were independent, instead".

When translating from other languages, adjustments may be necessary to accommodate the syntax. For example, "Prima di utilizzare uno strumento di misura di recente sviluppo è fondamentale testarne la validità di costrutto" can be translated "As the literature has recently put forward an innovative scale to measure this construct"

It is recommended to comply with anti-plagiarism norms and to avoid copying from any source, including other dissertations/papers. It is recommended to develop only original texts.

CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR: It is recommended to plan with your supervisor the possibility of submitting parts of your work and the timeline for completion. It is also suggested to schedule regular appointments with your supervisor and send an email in case of any delays or unforeseen events.

Before submitting any part or the entire draft of your final paper or master's dissertation, make sure to do your best to ensure that the text is complete and formally correct.

Although it is not your supervisor's responsibility to correct spelling or grammatical errors, such errors can negatively impact your evaluation and create uncertainty or misunderstandings regarding the information you intend to convey.

Writing is a skill that can be learned. It is important to re-read your work, even after some time has passed, and to ask your supervisor for feedback, including on partial drafts, while avoiding over-fragmentation, and take their suggestions into consideration.

Refining

STYLE: Your final paper or master's dissertation should be a technical presentation of your topic (and not a flamboyant one), using the appropriate specialized language of your field. The main criteria for writing are concision (using precise terms and avoiding repetition), clarity (using a linear structure of subject, verb, and object), and completeness (including all necessary information).

For example, "The xy instrument consisting of n items to be answered with a scale was used to measure anxiety..." should be preferred to "if we want to proceed with anxiety-related aspects measurement...".

When describing your research, maintain a chronological order and clearly state the participants, instruments, and procedures used. A reader (this may be a friend or family member to whom the manuscript is handed over for advice on comprehensibility) who is unfamiliar with your research should be able to understand what was done, and anyone who wants to replicate your study or use your instruments or procedures should be able to do so based on your description in your final paper or master's dissertation.

Pages must be numbered (bottom section, central or external alignment): odd pages must be on the right side.

TABLES, FIGURES, AND CHARTS: every graphic representation should be informative and non-redundant with textual information. Best practice: avoid "copy and paste" of statistical analysis software's outputs, nor from papers or books, especially if not in your writings' same language.

Instead, we recommend that you reconstruct them with labels and descriptions in the language used in your thesis or report.

Each table, chart, or figure should be numbered sequentially (with distinct numbering for each type) and accompanied by a caption. The font size for the caption should be the same size or larger than the text to ensure readability. It is important to include a reference to each visual aid in the text (for example, "see Table 4" or "As seen in Chart 2"). We recommend seeking advice from your supervisor about specific examples of histograms, line graphs, tables, and charts and avoiding excessive use of visual aids, which should summarize and present the main data clearly.

REPORTING STATISTICAL VALUES: Standard formats must be followed for commonly used statistical tests such as $t(48)=4.27$, $p<.01$ (t Student), $F(2,98)=8.57$, $p<.05$ (ANOVA), $r(120)=.38$, $p<.001$ (Pearson correlation index). Before reporting them, we suggest that you ensure a good understanding of the analyses. It is possible to request support from your supervisor as well as Polo di Psicologia Statistical office (https://polo.psicologia.unipd.it/servizi-informatici-statistici --- manca nella sezione EN) for elucidations and insights

BIBLIOGRAPHY/BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCIES:
The reference list should include all the works cited in your paper, with an asterisk (*) preceding those that were not directly consulted (at the end of the list, write *= works not directly consulted). We suggest limiting the number of citations of works not consulted. The references should be listed in alphabetical order according to the latest edition of the APA Publication Manual's standard format
 (https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines).
Here some examples:
book Rossi, P. (2023). La psicologia. Bologna: Il Mulino.
paper Rossi, P., e Bianchi, M. (2023). Lo studio della psicologia. La Nuova Rivista, 20, 45-55. **chapter** Rossi, P. (2023). Cos'è la psicologia. In L. Bianchi e A. Verdi (a cura di), Studiare la psicologia (pp. 20-30). Bari: Laterza.
Moreover, any websites consulted should be cited, provided they are not commonly used or of dubious scientific quality. In doing so, make sure to specify not only "where" (which virtual library) but also "what" (which document, written by whom) was downloaded. A proper citation/quotation example can be as follows:
World Economic Forum (2022). *Global Gender Gap Report*.
Retrieved from https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022
on March 7th 2023.