

International Law Department

Guidelines for Drafting the Master's Dissertation

The Master's dissertation (*mémoire*) is the culmination of the two years master's programme. It must be an original research independently carried out by the candidate under the supervision of a member of the ILD Faculty. The International Law Department (ILD) encourages students to be creative in choosing their topic and rigorous in carrying out their research.

The structure and content of master's dissertations may vary depending on the subject, the student's personal choices and on the supervisor's preferences. The ILD strongly encourages students to consult regularly – and independently of administrative deadlines – with their supervisors in order to agree on the format and style of their dissertation.

A master's dissertation will typically include analysis of the relevant legal issues and the research questions. It may also address questions of methodology and include a critical survey of the existing literature. The organisation of the structure and content of the dissertation in terms of specific sections and chapters should be discussed and agreed upon by the candidate and his or her supervisor in the early stages of the research.

Likewise, the ILD has no general requirement in terms of adopting specific reference styles. The only requirement is that once chosen, any given style (amongst those commonly in use) should be implemented consistently throughout the text.

Students agree on the topic of their dissertation with a supervisor. Students are free to choose the supervisor among the faculty of the ILD. They are free to contact an instructor as early as they wish, but no later than the end of the second semester. They should bear in mind that the potential supervisor has to agree to supervise their dissertation. She or he might decline. Students must communicate the tentative title of their dissertation by the end of the second semester.

Students can start researching as early as they have agreed on a topic with a faculty member; they do not need to wait for the beginning of the third or fourth semester. The master's dissertation is time and energy consuming, an exercise not to be underestimated. How to organize one's time and how much time to allocate to working on the dissertation in the months preceding the submission deadline is part of the learning process. Clarity and intelligibility are also evaluated and may significantly contribute to the overall quality of the research.

The supervisor chooses the dissertation's second reader.

The minimum length of a master's thesis is 20.000 words (the maximum is 30.000 words as indicated in the Implementation Guidelines), including footnotes.

Most requirements for disciplinary master's dissertation are spelt out in the Academic Regulations Implementation Guidelines. The main relevant provisions are reproduced below:

Semesters	Students	Departments/Faculty/Administration
...omissis	... omissis	...omissis
Semester 2 Dissertation: Title and supervisor	<p>The dissertation supervisor is usually linked to the department or programme the student is in. However, if the chosen subject of the dissertation so warrants, the student may make a request to the Direction of Studies in order to approach a professor affiliated to another department or programme of the Institute. In exceptional circumstances and if the subject requires it, he may request a co-supervision with a faculty member of another department or programme</p> <p>Once the professor has consented to supervise the dissertation, the student is required to register the title of his/her dissertation, and the name of the supervisor, in the Institute's computer programme, no later than the agreed deadline set up each year before the end of the second semester by the Direction of Studies.</p>	<p>Visiting professors or lecturers who only teach a course or seminar for a single semester are not eligible to supervise dissertations.</p> <p>If the subject of dissertation so warrants the Direction of Studies may authorise a professor affiliated to another department or programme of the Institute to supervise or co-supervise the dissertation.</p> <p>The dissertation supervisor is notified by email, through the Institute's computer programme, and validates the information recorded by the student.</p>
Semester 3 Dissertation: detailed plan	<p>The student must download an electronic copy of the detailed plan of his dissertation on the Institute's computer programme, no later than the agreed deadline set up each year by the Direction of Studies before the end of the third semester.</p>	<p>As soon as the document has been uploaded, the dissertation supervisor is informed by an email and has access to the text via the Institute's computer programme.</p>

Semester 4 Dissertation: designation of a second reader		<p>A second reader is selected by the dissertation supervisor amongst the Institute's faculty member (including visiting professors and lecturers) who are holders of a PhD. The designation of the second reader must be completed before the month of June of the fourth semester. The dissertation supervisor enters this information in the Institute's computer programme. In exceptional cases, if the subject requires it, the dissertation supervisor may suggest</p>
---	--	---

		to the Direction of Studies that the second reader be a faculty member or an expert from outside the Institute (usually a holder of a PhD).
Semester 4 Dissertation: Submission	The final version of the dissertation must not exceed 30,000 words and must include a 150-word summary inserted at the beginning of the manuscript. The student will upload an electronic copy of the dissertation on the Institute's computer programme. This must be done during the fourth semester, by the date set each year, by the Direction of Studies, according to the academic calendar.	As soon as the document has been uploaded, the dissertation supervisor as well as the second reader are informed and have access to the text, via the Institute's computer programme.
Semester 4 Dissertation: evaluation	Once the report and grade have been uploaded by the members of the jury, the students will have access to them via the Institute's computer programme.	The dissertation is assessed and graded within a maximum deadline of four weeks by a jury composed of the dissertation supervisor and the second reader (the exact date will be determined each year by the Direction of Studies based on the academic calendar). Once the deadline has been reached, the members of the jury upload the form containing the assessment report and grade on the Institute's computer programme
Semester 2-4 Dissertation: procedures and calendar	Procedures and the calendar with deadlines as they appear on the Institute's website are self-authenticating. Failure to respect these procedures and deadlines will be disqualifying.	