

International Law Department

Guidelines for Drafting the MPT (Mémoire préliminaire de thèse)

The MPT is a piece of written work related to the candidate's doctoral research project submitted by a PhD candidate beforehand and assessed by the thesis supervisor and second reader. The successful defence of the MPT is the necessary prerequisite to go ahead in the doctoral curriculum. Strategically situated at the end of the third semester, the MPT defence allows the candidate to benefit from the advice of two Faculty members (the supervisor and the second reader) on his or her intellectual project. Provided that the candidate has already met the course credits requirement, the MPT can be defended at an earlier stage, subject to his or her thesis supervisor's approval.

The oral defence should not exceed 60 minutes (1 h). The candidate will make an initial oral presentation for no longer than 20 minutes. For the remaining 40 minutes, he or she will answer the questions posed by the supervisor and the second reader. Candidates receive two individual reports assessing their written document, one from the supervisor and another from the second reader. The candidate is free to choose the style and content of his or her oral presentation. He or she may decide to address all or part of the remarks made by the readers in their report. The candidate would normally explain the interest of the subject chosen, his or her working hypothesis and the way he/she intends to approach it.

The diversity of the Faculty and the different traditions and methods to which they adhere makes it difficult to impart instructions for drafting the MPT that be valid once and for all for every PhD candidate. The International Law Department (ILD) strongly advises that the candidate agree with his or her supervisor on the format of the MPT as well as on its length and content. The goal of the MPT is to ascertain that the candidate is ready to continue on his or her doctoral curriculum. For this, the candidate must demonstrate the necessary analytical and drafting skills that are required for bringing his or her work successfully to completion at the end of the curriculum.

The length of the MPT shall not exceed 40'000 words. As regards content, specific instructions shall be provided by the thesis supervisor. The MPT consists of a substantive piece of analytical legal writing on the subject of the PhD. The following elements are usually included in the structure of most MPTs:

- A section where the relevant legal issues are identified and the research questions that the candidate wants to address in the thesis are formulated;
- a section on the research methodology;
- a section where the candidate accounts for the state of the literature on the topic he or she wants to address (literature review);
- a section where a reasoned and fairly detailed outline of his or her plan of work both in terms of content and timeline is laid down;
- a bibliography, where the most significant scholarly work on the topic is listed. The bibliography can be arranged alphabetically or thematically and can also be annotated;

At the request of the supervisor, the MPT can also consist of a draft of one or two chapters of the thesis, in addition to a general outline or prospective table of contents of the thesis to allow the readers to orientate and to correctly frame and contextualise the submitted chapters. It can also discuss in detail specific parts of the most relevant legal issues and research questions and provide a detailed and reasoned outline of the different parts or sections of the work.

Doctoral students are reminded that they are free to choose the supervisor amongst ILD Faculty members. At the time of admission, an indication is given as to the Faculty member who has expressed an interest in supervising the candidate's work. While conforming to this initial choice is not mandatory, any request to change the assigned supervisor must be duly submitted to the head of department as soon as possible and reasons must be provided for any such request. The supervisor chooses the second reader. The latter is a colleague of the department and, in principle, will act as 'internal member' of the thesis's jury. In case of a *co-direction*, the two co-supervisors assess the MPT; one of the two co-supervisors must be a member of the ILD.