

## 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, bibliography not included. 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.

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## 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
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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 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).</p>
Semester 4  Dissertation: Submission	<p>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</p>	<p>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.</p>

	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.	
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.	