

**BACHELOR DEGREE PROGRAMME IN SCIENCES  
OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE**

**GUIDELINES FOR THE SETTING OF THE DEGREE THESIS**

**(TO BE LINKED TO THE CURRENT REGULATIONS OF THE FINAL DEGREE EXAMS)**

Approved by the Faculty's board resolution no. 181  
of 16/12/2022

## **Art. 1 Purpose**

The thesis is an integral part of the degree course: it is a means to deepen a specific thematic subject matter within the Sciences of Communication, and it is the tool with which the student not only shows to have acquired theoretical competences in this area, but also to be able to elaborate and discuss knowledge and show specific abilities in performing in an autonomous and professional way.

Therefore the thesis shall not be considered a formal performance of a university requisite; on the contrary, the objective is to elaborate some pertinent, relevant and original scientific work in the field of Communication Sciences.

The writing of the thesis leaves ample individual possibilities of elaboration and presentation, to allow the student to orientate their own scientific work on academic conventions and, at the same time, to take into account the general expectations of the world of work. Besides the scientific and cognitive purposes, in fact, the thesis may also take on a professional value: it is an important tool of communication, whose readers may be experts of the subject as well as people who are not necessarily experienced in the topic treated. Therefore when exposing their own thought, it will be important for the student to be aware of such a multitude of recipients.

Students have the possibility to show their own communicative ability both in writing the thesis and discussing it at the degree session. The primary advisor takes part in all the phases of this process, but the responsibility of the production of the thesis has mainly to be ascribed to the student himself.

The thesis is assessed according to the following qualitative criteria:

- the key arguments of the selected theme are exposed in a clear way;
- the work shows sufficient description of the state of the art literature on the selected theme;
- the selected methods for the research carried out and the writing of the thesis are suitable to clarify and convincingly answer the questions that the same research asks and are treated competently;
- the work is structured logically;
- the work leads to clear and convincing observations and conclusions which answer the main questions dealt with in a differentiated manner; the work presents an original argumentation;
- the author is aware of the practical relevance of the results of the thesis;
- the thesis includes all the necessary structural elements, in a correct balance among them.
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## **Art. 2 Elaboration of the Thesis**

The student proposes the assignment of a primary advisor and a title for the thesis after having verified the primary advisor's availability and agreed on the argument of the thesis. The proposal is then evaluated by the competent committee which may either approve or ask for changes.

While writing the thesis it is recommended to follow these preliminary steps:

- a) the student picks out a possible tutor, verifies his availability to follow thesis work, and agrees on a thematic proposal;
- b) the student applies at the digital platform for the primary advisor and a title (even temporary) of the thesis;
- c) the student uploads the exposé using the digital platform at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano together with the request for the title and first supervisor of the thesis (Art. 5).

- d) since the competent committee may suggest changes to the student's proposal, it is wise for the student to wait for the Committee's answer before going further with the thesis.

The student then passes on to the following phases:

- e) elaboration of a research hypothesis, the thesis structure and a work schedule;
- f) a phase of research that leads to a preliminary literature review;
- g) analysis of the data and results of relevant publications;
- h) in accordance with the primary advisor, choice of a citation style to be followed in the thesis;
- i) writing of the first version of the thesis;
- j) integration of the different parts of the work, keeping also in mind the primary advisor and faculty co- advisor's feedback;
- k) writing out of its final version.

### **Art. 3** **Types of Research**

There are various approaches to the development of the thesis, and within Communication these may be broken down into three general working typologies: the theoretical-critical thesis (sometimes also called "bibliographic"), the empirical thesis and the project thesis. In accordance with the primary advisor the student develops his own work according to one of these three approaches bearing in mind the following orientations and directions.

#### **3.1. Theoretical-critical thesis**

The theoretical-critical thesis is a type of research that uses as direct sources documentary materials, existing texts, articles, testimony, etc. on a given argument or phenomenon; it does not include the development of research with empirical data.

The strong point of a theoretical-critical thesis is its cognitive value: the candidate deepens in detail the knowledge of a given argument, thus allowing him to develop a critical and original reading of the analyzed material.

A valid theoretical-critical thesis shows features of originality and interest for the chosen discipline, opening new lines of research; it may investigate unpublished interdisciplinary spaces and supply innovative indications on new themes and on new ways of linking phenomena, methods, specific arguments, authors or scholars who are part of the area of interest of the Bachelor degree programme.

On average the length of the text should be between 60 and 80 pages, to which appendices and the bibliography may be added.

Besides the indications supplied by the primary advisor, students should refer to the following criteria:

- 1) a very circumscribed theme
- 2) an originality of sources
- 3) an essential bibliography strictly pertinent to the chosen subject, showing knowledge of the subject from its origins to the most recent treatises. Furthermore, the reference bibliography shall fulfill the criteria of multilingualism, showing a preference for using texts in original language, articles, and any other selected material serving the purpose of the thesis.
- 4) a critical choice of bibliographical references and an ability of reasoning with respect to the choice of one's own approach, in such a way that the work may represent a new point of view on the theme dealt with.

### **3.2. Empirical thesis**

The empirical thesis starts off from real data obtained for example by observing behaviors and events, or from experimental data. It involves therefore the study, the measurement and evaluation of the relationship among various phenomena or variables.

The strong point of an empirical thesis consists in the achievement of a deep understanding of the data and their quality (social, individual, interactive) and/or in the confirmation or rejection of theories, models and hypotheses. Therefore the data must be obtained on the basis of a sound empirical plan allowing one to draw solid conclusions.

The two most widespread empirical thesis types are the "confirmatory type", that strengthens a theory with further evidence, and the "exploratory/fact-finding type" related to research for which evidence is scarce or absent. For both types a sound knowledge of the existing literature ("state-of-the-art" knowledge) is necessary, and both can produce interesting and original results. In addition, a good empirical thesis allows one to elaborate original ideas beginning from data that existing views cannot explain.

The average length of the text should be between 60 and 80 pages, to which appendices and the bibliography may be added.

Besides the directions supplied by the tutor, students should make reference to the following criteria:

- 1)correctness of the theoretical references and coherence of the hypotheses with the empirical design;
- 2)description of data that is coherent with the data itself; interpretation strictly based on the data;
- 3)adequacy and validity of the data analysis;
- 4)applicability of results obtained.

### **3.3. Project thesis**

The thesis may comprise a project of communication (marketing, publicity, video, documentary, interview, journalistic essay...) and/or the realization of a communicative product; these may be developed in textual form to be printed or in digital format, and on any useful device (computer, audio, video, etc.). The student who tends to adopt this type of thesis is recommended to acquire the specific abilities necessary for the realization of the project/product, for example exploiting the possibility of attending relevant courses in other Faculties of unibz.

The thesis is composed of a written product (not less than 20-30 pages, to which appendices and the bibliography may be added) and a communicative project/product.

The written production follows the structure outlined in art. 7, developing the followings aspects with greater attention:

- the project arguments and specific theoretical references;
- description of fundamental elements related to the project/product: customer, consumer target, background (needs, context, resources), purpose of the communicative product;
- analysis and comparison with other similar products and projects and hypotheses on the effectiveness of the communicative product.

The evaluation is in keeping with the guidelines (Art. 1), with particular attention to the following elements:

1. presentation and justification of the work's project and theory described in the written part;
2. structuring and organization of the project;
3. communicative effectiveness of the produced work;
4. project and technical abilities highlighted in the written portion and in the product (thus also the format, layout, colours, material, structure, etc.);
5. quality of presentation during candidate's discussion session.

#### **Art. 4 Choice of the Theme**

The choice of the theme constitutes the decisive step for writing the Bachelor Degree thesis; for this reason a commission has been established to express their opinion accordingly, to better direct the author of the thesis.

Ideally, the chosen theme reflects the author's real individual interests; he has, for instance, discovered a gap in the existing research on a certain phenomenon, or intends to revise certain matters in a new light of research.

The formulation of the theme should contain a first sketch of its lay-out that will subsequently be followed during its writing containing the indication of a final objective.

Sometimes a theme may result too vast, and could be hence restricted further; when formulating the theme it is advisable to consider such risk. Equally important is the fact that the

theme may not result fanciful or excessively eclectic, but rather has strong bounds to reality.

#### **Art. 5 Exposé (or research proposal)**

The student has to hand in a proposal of the thesis (exposé) of 3000-4000 strokes, signed by the primary advisor, showing a clear indication of the subject matter dealt with and illustrating the preliminary structure of the work.

The layout of the exposé should include the following points:

1. Elaboration of a work title on the basis of the theme
2. Motivation and interest for research:
  - What is my interest in relation to the theme?
  - What would I like to investigate regarding this theme?
3. State of research
  - What knowledge exists at present?
  - What is the relationship between my work and research on this theme?
4. Research question (key scientific question):
  - To what question does one want to find an answer?
  - What hypotheses can be formulated?
5. Objectives:
  - What does one want to point out, reach, show or disprove?
  - Who are the recipients of the work's central theme?
6. Material:
  - What does my material consist in?
  - How do I get organized to obtain the material?
7. Method:

What methods do I choose to carry out the job and how am I going to use the material?

  - What methods do I choose to present the work?

8. Time Schedule:

- By when will I have to finish the job, and how much time do I have to calculate for each single step?

9. Provisional structuring:

- What aspects will be elaborated and in what order?

### **Art. 6**

#### **Role of the primary advisor and the academic faculty co-advisor**

The primary advisor and the student jointly arrange mode and frequency of supervision; such accord shall take into account the type of theme chosen and the student's own habits of working scientifically. In any case, the student is strongly advised to ask the tutor for consultancy as soon as he comes to a decisive or new work phase of his thesis. The student should also remember to involve the faculty co-advisor right from the beginning of his work; if this does not occur, one will risk that the faculty co-advisor will not be able to state his own critical suggestions in time for a revision before the final thesis examination, and that therefore the student, despite his admission to the examination, is strongly penalized in the evaluation because of gaps that have not been filled.

In first place, the faculty co-advisor needs to be informed at least of the thesis plan; besides this, it is possible to ask the faculty co-advisor for advice on critical themes or a real collaboration.

**The student is therefore strongly advised against calling at the faculty co-advisor's just before the deadline and/or asking for his opinion on already developed theses.**

The primary advisor and academic faculty co-advisor, as well as the whole teaching staff, are available to offer their very advice in the different phases of the elaboration of the thesis, both on its specific contents, and on methodology and procedure.

If he considers it appropriate, the primary advisor can provide ideas or facilitate useful contacts for the research; nevertheless the role of the primary advisor may be confined to choosing among the alternatives proposed by the student, or to verifying the quality of the ongoing work and its feasibility. The teachers involved in the writing of the thesis play a supporting role, whereas it is up to the student to be proactive.

### **Art. 7**

#### **Structure and style**

In structuring the thesis on the whole, as well as in its different sections (chapters, passages, paragraphs), it is recommended that students follow the same basic principles listed as follows, keeping in mind that the detailed structuring of the various parts and their relevance may vary according to the type of thesis chosen (theoretical-critical, experimental, project thesis):

- an introduction to the Theme, articulation of Research Question and an outline of the approach adopted in the thesis;
- an ample and up-to-date literature review not limited to the sources in only one language but comprising relevant texts in different languages;
- an exposition of the chosen theoretical framework, locating it with respect to various theoretical orientations and motivating its choice;
- an exposition of the methodology of research / research plan;
- a presentation and processing of the collected data;
- an analysis of the data within the perspective of the chosen theoretical framework;

- final conclusions outlining research perspectives emerging from the thesis work and possible applications of results obtained.

In general it is recommended to present information, data and analyses in the impersonal form (in English, for example, through the use of the third person or the impersonal pronoun "one"), in order to show a clear distinction between one's own position and that of other authors referred to.

The use of the first person (singular) must not be excluded a priori; however, it has to be limited to some specific cases in which one's own methodological choices or one's own position in relation to relevant literature are expressed. The use of the first person singular, can be, for instance, appropriate for explaining the method one followed, ("I thought it was important to do..." rather than ("It was thought to be important to do") and in the discussion ("In the light of the literature, I believe that..." instead of ("In the light of the literature, it is believed that..."). In any case, one should remember that impersonal forms and the first person represent different points of view, defining meaning and responsibility for the conveyed contents.

The structuring of the contents may occur according to one's own individual preferences, for example, by adopting a system of numeration (like: 1., 1.1, 1.1.1, 1.1.2,...), or using the alpha-numerical format (i.e.: I., 1., a). In any case it is essential to structure the contents in principal sections (chapters) and subordinate sections (passages, paragraphs) in order to effectively direct the reader in the text.

## **Art. 8** **Format**

### General presentation

a) The Bachelor Degree Programme does not establish a set number of pages, but requires from the student a work that respects in its completeness the structure as stated in art. 6 as well as the established qualitative assessment criteria listed in art. 1;

b) the thesis must upload with borders of 30 mm, and interline spacing of 1,5. The font dimensions are the following: 14 for the titles, 11 for the text and 10 for the footnotes. The pages need to be numbered progressively. In the appendix further material like questionnaires, graphs, explanatory sheets, prospectuses etc. may be added;

c) the thesis must be upload by the date fixed for the thesis examination session;

d) the thesis must be equipped with an index, functioning as general orientation in the text; the index may not contain graphs or other visual materials;

e) the title page has to be in line with the demands and contain all relevant principal;

## **Art. 9** **Bibliography**

With regard to the bibliography, reference is made to the usual "Reference Style Guidelines" and/or the APA Referencing Style Guide (<http://www.apastyle.org/>)".