

**STUDY GUIDE**  
**Master Thesis Innovation Sciences**  
**(OEM06)**

*Document version: April 2017*

Floor Alkemade

(Minor updates: Erik van der Vleuten & Education Coordination IE&IS)

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## 1. Introduction

The master thesis project (MTP) is the final project in the master program Innovation Sciences. This text serves as a study guide for the MTP, providing information for both students and supervisors. The Master Thesis Project is a 30 ECTS project that enables students to specialize in a subject that fits with ongoing research within the [Technology, Innovation & Society group](#) (which hosts the TU/e MSc program Innovation Sciences) as well as with their personal specialization with the field of Innovation Sciences.

For their master's thesis, students individually investigate ill-structured problems in the field of innovation sciences and transition studies. Students typically address questions and problems that are relevant to larger real-world economic, societal, and/or sustainability challenges; combine existing technological and social science/ humanities knowledge; identify knowledge gaps; do independent research under supervision; and work on/ reflect on the translation of research findings into design, policy, or strategy recommendations for innovation in existing and new socio-technical systems. Students are actively supervised during their MSc research by their supervisor and are free to choose and arrange a project, provided the supervisor agrees.

Students develop their own research proposal with support from their supervisor. After the research proposal has been approved, the student executes the research and reports the result in the form of a written thesis and an oral presentation. The MTP can take place internally or (partly) externally (i.e. in an organization other than the university).

The content of this document is an addition to the official master program regulations (the '*Education and Examination Regulations*', the '*Examination Rules and Procedures*' and the '*Graduation Regulations*'). In case of doubt, the official regulations prevail.

## 2. Intended learning outcomes

The master's thesis is the final, individually written report of the master's thesis project and is considered as an assessment of the final academic proficiency of the student in relation to the learning objectives of the academic MSc degree in Innovation Sciences.

The learning outcomes of the Master thesis are therefore aligned with the learning outcomes of the Master program Innovation Sciences:

### 1) Competent in scientific disciplines

- a. Advanced knowledge of and insight into technological systems and their components in a specific technology domain.
- b. Thorough understanding of concepts, theoretical frameworks and methodologies of innovation sciences extending to the forefront of knowledge
- c. Thorough multidisciplinary knowledge integrating innovation sciences knowledge with technological knowledge in relevant domains, and the ability to critically reflect on the scope and limitations of this knowledge.
- d. Thorough knowledge of and advanced skills in the techniques of observation, data collection and analysis techniques in the innovation sciences domain, and an ability to critically reflect of the scope and limitations of these methods.

## **2) Competent in doing research**

- a. Ability to formulate research problems in terms of concepts and theories of innovation sciences.
- b. Ability to independently develop and execute a research plan.
- c. Ability to contribute independently to the development of scientific knowledge in one of the areas of the innovation sciences.
- d. Ability to identify and analyze problems typical for the innovation sciences, by integrating technological and social sciences perspectives.
- e. Ability to appraise relevant scientific evidence on its usefulness in addressing research problems.

## **3) Competent in designing**

- a. Ability to independently translate the outcomes of innovation sciences research into design, policy or strategy recommendations for innovation in existing and new socio-technical systems.
- b. Ability to independently identify both the social and the technical implications of innovation sciences in design recommendations.

## **4) A scientific approach**

- a. Ability to apply and critically examine existing theories, concepts and models in the innovation sciences domain.
- b. Ability to look beyond the borders of a specific discipline, to be sensitive to the relative contributions of various disciplines and to understand the knowledge demands of a specific discipline.
- c. Ability to use a systematic approach characterized by the consistent application of existing theories, concepts and models in innovation sciences, and knowledge of current debates about this.

## **5) Basic intellectual skills**

- a. A reflective attitude, with an ability to critically and independently reflect on own thinking, decision making, and professional behavior.
- b. A critical mindset and the ability to ask constructive questions regarding complex problems in the field.
- c. Ability to read and write scientific texts.
- d. Ability to think in abstract terms, including the ability to develop (formal) models of phenomena and processes in the domain.

## **6) Competent in co-operating and communicating**

- a. Capability of reporting and communicating the results of one's learning and decision making –including one's research outcomes --, both verbally and in writing, with academics and engineers in various domain, users, and the general public
- b. Ability to recognize and deal with differences in work practices between scientific disciplines, and academics from other cultural backgrounds.

- c. Ability to take a leading role in multi- or interdisciplinary teams of engineers and academics.
- d. Ability to listen, read, talk and write in English on a professional level.

### 7) Takes account of the temporal, technological and social context

- a. Ability to reflect on the relation between the use of scientific knowledge and technology, the implicated social, normative and ethical issues, and the way in which knowledge and technology development is influenced by its social and historical context, and the ability to integrate such relations and implications in their scientific work.
- b. Understanding of the different roles of engineers and related professionals in society, and the ability to determine one's own place as a professional in society.

## 3. Admission criteria and formalities

The Master Thesis Project is 30 ECTS, which corresponds to about 22 weeks of fulltime work, with a study load of 840 hours.

Table 1 specifies the general planning and deadlines. Section 4 of this document gives a more detailed description of the different phases of the MTP. In order to monitor the stages in the graduation process, several administrative forms are used, these forms can be downloaded from the [Forms page on the Education Guide](#).

### Starting the MTP:

- **Start form MTP:** At least 10 days before the intended MTP start date, the student must submit the *Start form MTP* (see the [Forms page on the Education Guide](#)) to the student administration CSA-IEIS. The administration then checks if the student can start the MTP; in particular, note that no more than 10 course-related ECTS may still be open). The administration then approves/declines the MTP start.
- **Research Proposal:** Within 3 weeks of the MTP start, the student submits a *Research Proposal form* (see intranet) to the Exam Committee for approval. The Research Proposal states the members of the Assessment Committee (including the supervisor/ first assessor, second supervisor/assessor, and the third assessor), as well as the research questions, relevance, proposed method, and key scientific references of the envisioned research. The Research Proposal is signed by the first supervisor and the student

## 4. Timing and deadlines

Table 1 specifies the general planning for the MTP. In the *Research proposal*, the student further specifies this planning.

	Start Q1	in	Start Q2	in	Start Q3	in	Start Q4	in
Discussion with mentor about desired Master's thesis subject and possible Master's thesis supervisor / Final decision about topic and supervisor	Q4		Q1		Q2		Q3	
	Week 3		Week 3		Week 3		Week 3	
Meeting with supervisor.	Q4		Q1		Q2		Q3	
Determine second and third assessor	Week 6		Week 6		Week 6		Week 6	
Send information to Letty Calame								
Start MTP	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
Meeting with supervisor	Week 1		Week 1		Week 1		Week 1	
Submit Research Proposal to supervisor and second assessor	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
	Week 2		Week 2		Week 2		Week 2	
Meeting with supervisor, discuss comments	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
	Week 3		Week 3		Week 3		Week 3	
Submit revised proposal to exam committee using Research proposal form (approved by supervisor and second assessor)	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
	Week 3		Week 3		Week 3		Week 3	
Intermediary meetings with supervisor according to RP and discussion of draft chapters	Q1w6-		Q2w6-		Q3w6-		Q4w6-	
	Q2w3		Q3w3		Q4w3		Q1w3	
Submit draft version complete thesis to supervisor and second assessor	Q2 w4		Q3 w4		Q4 w4		Q1 w4	
Meeting with supervisor Discussion of feedback	Q2w6		Q2w6		Q2w6		Q2w6	
Submit final version	Q2w8		Q2w8		Q2w8		Q2w8	
Presentation and defense	Q2w10		Q3w10		Q4w10		Q1w10	

**Table 1: Time table MTP**

## 5. Master Thesis Project outline

### *Step 1: Select a topic and a supervisor*

A list of thesis topics and supervisors can be found on the Canvas page OMTPIIS. If you need help you can consult with your mentor and/or the course coordinator in order to find a suitable topic. Many of our students go to an external organization to conduct part of the research. Working at an external organization often eases collection of data, and provides you with professional work experience.

### *Step 2: Research Proposal*

Once you and your supervisor (and possibly your supervisor from the external organization) agree upon the general research question and approach, you specify this in a research proposal. In the research proposal you (1) Introduce the research question and explain clearly how it is embedded in the literature, (2) Explain why your project fits the Innovation Sciences domain, how it connects or contributes to the scientific discipline of Innovation Sciences, how it fits within your personal specialization, and how you integrate Innovation Sciences and technological knowledge in your project (3) Indicate **how** you are going to answer your research question. Describe the methods you will use or develop and how you will collect your data (e.g., interviews, databases or other sources). Also describe how you will analyze your data, and (4) Provide three references of scientific articles and/or books that underlie the research proposal.

For your reference, on the [Education Guide – Graduation project](#) you can find a few well-written proposals to use as example. Once your first and second supervisors agree with your proposal, you submit your proposal to the exam committee. The proposal has to be submitted within 3 weeks of the start of the thesis project. If the research proposal is not approved you will revise and resubmit within one week, in close cooperation with your supervisor.

### *Step 3 : Research phase*

During this phase you regularly discuss your research and draft chapters with your first supervisor. The thesis should at least contain the following elements:

**Introduction:** In the introduction, you sketch the general context of your problem. You introduce your problem and rephrase it in theoretical terms, that is, you describe the underlying scientific problem. After a short description of the most important earlier contributions that address this problem, you identify the gap in the literature and state your main research aim or question. The introduction should also include a description of the scientific and societal relevance of your research as well as a short outline of the thesis.

**Literature review / analytical framework / Theory:** In this section you (1) provide an overview of the relevant scientific literature and, based upon this, (2) explain the theoretical concepts you will use (starting from your RQ) and provide definitions. You also discuss the links (or your hypotheses about these links) between the main theoretical concepts.

**Research methods:** In the methods section you describe how you will ‘measure’ your theoretical concepts and relations, and why you have chosen this approach. In addition this section also elaborates on the type of data you will collect and the data sources you use. Make explicit how your methods will provide an answer to your research question!

**Results/Analysis:** Here you present your actual results and relate these to the theory section or specific hypotheses you have introduced.

**Conclusion.** In the conclusions section you answer the research question.

**Discussion.** In the discussion section you reflect on the outcomes and quality of your work discussing limitations, and implications (both theoretical and managerial/policy).

**References.** The thesis should contain at least 20 references to relevant scientific articles or books. (see Appendix 2 for the appropriate format)

**Press release and summary** In addition to writing a Master Thesis report, you should also write a *press release* and a *summary*, according to the guidelines in the *Press release format* that can be downloaded from the [forms page on the Education Guide](#).

## 6. Master Thesis Defense and evaluation criteria

After completion of the thesis, the student submits the thesis to the first, second, and third assessor. After all assessors have approved the Master Thesis, a date is set for the thesis defense. At least ten working days shall pass between the formal approval of the Master Thesis and the defense. The Exam Committee is informed immediately after the date and time have been set, at least ten working days before the oral exam. There should also be at least ten working days between the defense and the scheduled meeting of the Exam Committee.

The thesis defense (final examination) consists of:

1. An oral presentation by the student, with a maximum of 30 minutes, of the methodology and main results of the project;
2. An oral exam, in which the student is questioned on his/her project and thesis.  
The supervisor may invite other people to take part in the oral examination.

The *oral presentation* is public. However, it is an examination and as such the result is not known in advance. The student must be warned in advance that it is not a foregone conclusion that he/she will pass the examination. Before the meeting, the first supervisor must determine what the committee’s assessment is of the work that has been delivered. If necessary the first supervisor must point out possible problems to the committee and the student. The assessment committee will grade the student according to the evaluation criteria 1 through 7 corresponding to the learning outcomes in described above.

The assessment committee rates each of the seven criteria (*insufficient – sufficient – good – excellent*). The student passes if a maximum of one criterion is marked as *insufficient*, with the exception of criteria (2), (3) and (4), which should always be marked *sufficient* at least.

The committee then assigns a final grade to the master thesis project between 1 and 10 (half grades are allowed, e.g., 6.5 or 7.5).

- Excellent (9 or 10 = top 10%): thesis shows deep understanding of the topic, a substantial degree of creative engagement; faultless exposition, is clearly structured around a central thesis, and has clear signs of independent thought; Typically, such a thesis is suitable for publication in an international, peer-reviewed scientific journal.
- Good pass (8): very clear and accurate exposition, good understanding of topic, structured around a central thesis, signs of independent thought;
- Sufficient (7 or 6): reasonably clear and accurate exposition, structured around a central thesis, adequate grasp of topic, transcending the course materials. Exhibits rather basic, but still acceptable, level of relevant knowledge and understanding. Faults in exposition may to some extent be compensated for by evidence of independent thought;
- Insufficient (< 6): fails to make low pass grade because of insufficiency in one or more of the criteria.

If the student does not pass, the assessment committee may decide to:

- Either give the student the opportunity to improve the Master Thesis work, and decide on a second oral exam, which should take place within one month after the initial oral exam, or
- Discontinue the project and fail the student. In this case, the Examinations Committee decides whether the student receives the right on thesis supervision during the writing of a new thesis, on a new topic should the student decide to do this.

The Exam Committee regularly checks the assessments of the MTP's. This can be done both randomly and targeted (*e.g.*, for very high or low grades).

## 7. Responsibilities of supervisors

In general the thesis supervisor is the person who supervises the student's research. It is the first supervisor's responsibility that a thesis project meets all the necessary conditions. The first supervisor serves as a role-model of a researcher for students. He/she accompanies the student in selecting a good research question. Being a role-model means that the personal and professional behaviors of faculty members should be the standard that the student will emulate. Students' attitudes towards the discipline and the academy are conditioned by examples provided by mentors and thesis supervisors in the graduate school. More specifically, the first supervisor has the responsibility to:

- Assist the student with developing a thesis topic;
- Make sure that the research project is feasible and within scope of the innovation sciences master
- Regularly meet with the student
- In case of a project within an external organization, visit the organization at least once to meet with the supervisor from the organization and the student
- Provide timely and consistent high quality feedback to concepts of the research



- proposal, individual chapters and the concept version of the thesis.
- Fill out the assessment form.
- The first supervisor ensures the timely appointment of a second and third assessor;
- Student supervision and guidance will cost approximately 40 hours for the first supervisor.

In case of a thesis project in an organization (see Appendix 3), the first supervisor is responsible for ensuring that:

- The organization in which the project is being carried out demonstrates sufficient involvement; a capable company supervisor spends enough time and puts enough energy into the project, there is a clear problem area for the project, and the management of the company is interested in the project as such;
- The situation within the company for the graduation project offers sufficient opportunity for the successful completion of the project (reorganizations for example can lead to unworkable situations)

The second assessor will provide feedback on the research proposal, the concept thesis, and the final version (10 hours) and attend the thesis defense. The third assessor will only assess the final version (5 hours).

## **8. Responsibilities of the student**

It should remain clear at all times that the project is the responsibility of the student. In other words, the student always maintains final responsibility for the proposal, the project, and the thesis. He/she must design and control the planning of the project and also draw up agendas and write up reports on discussions, meetings, and agreements.

It is the student's responsibility to be acquainted with all relevant regulations and procedures regarding the project and it is the student's responsibility to apply them. In particular the student will follow the TU/e guide for scientific conduct and will sign and submit the corresponding form to make this commitment explicit.

## Appendix 1: Master Thesis (report) formal requirements

The final report must fulfill the following requirements:

- Maximum of 50 pages (main text)
- The report is written in English.
- A digital version of the graduation report must be delivered to the IE&IS Administration Office, at least five working days before the scheduled meeting of the Examinations Committee for which the student has put his/her name forward.
- The Master thesis is public and will be digitally published by the library. If the organization in which the graduation phase has taken place considers that publication of the research would harm its interests, the student must write the report such that it is suitable for publication. In general this will imply masking of data and possibly an appendix that is kept confidential. In this case the report must be readable without the appendix.
- A self-contained summary (of approximately three pages) must be included.
- The report is self-contained.
- The title page must include the title of the report, the author's name and student identity number, names of the supervisors and their respective Faculties, the title of the MSc program, the name of the student's Faculty, the name of the University and the publishing date. The standard layout can be downloaded
- Layout requirements
  - \* Margins must be 1 inch (2.54 cm), left/right/top/bottom
  - \* Footer contains only page numbers, centered
  - \* Pages are numbered consecutively.
  - \* base text font: Times New Roman 11 or 12 pt.
  - \* heading font: Arial
- Figures, tables and other exhibits must be numbered. Numbering can be consecutive throughout the report or per chapter. In the latter case, the number must be preceded by the chapter number (e.g. Figure 2.1 is the first figure in chapter 2).
- Figures, tables and other exhibits must have a caption that is descriptive.
- Headings must be numbered.

## Appendix 2: Literature references

All citations in the text should refer to:

- Single Author: the Author's name (without initials, unless there is ambiguity) and the year of publication;
- Two Authors: both Authors' names and the year of publication;
- Three or more Authors: first Author's name followed by "et al." and the year of publication.

Examples: "...as demonstrated in (Allan, 1996a, 1996b, 1999; Allan and Jones, 1995). Lee et al. (2000) have recently shown..."

In the literature list references should be arranged first alphabetically and then further sorted chronologically if necessary. More than one reference from the same author(s) in the same year must be identified by the letters "a", "b", "c", etc., placed after the year of publication.

*Examples:*

Reference to a journal publication:

- Griffiths W, Judge G. "Testing and estimating location vectors when the error covariance matrix is unknown". *Journal of Econometrics* 1999; 54; p. 121-138 (note that journal names are not to be abbreviated).

Reference to a book:

- Hawawini G, Swary I. *Mergers and acquisitions in the U.S. banking industry: Evidence from the capital markets*. North-Holland: Amsterdam; 1990.

Reference to a chapter in an edited book:

- Brunner K, Melzer AH 2010. "Money Supply". In: Friedman BM, Hahn FH (Eds), *Handbook of monetary economics*, vol.1. North-Holland: Amsterdam; 2010. p. 357-396.

Citing and listing of Web references:

As a minimum, the full URL should be given, and the date the URL was accessed. Any further information, if known (author names, dates, reference to a source publication, etc.), should also be given. Web references can be listed separately (e.g., after the reference list) under a different heading if desired, or can be included in the reference list.

## Appendix 3: Principles Internship Agreements

	Student	Mentor	Department
<b>Compensation internship</b>	The student will personally come to an agreement with the company about compensation	-	-
<b>Confidentiality</b>	If requested, the student can personally sign for confidentiality for the duration of the internship (with a possible prolongation of max. 5 years after the internship)	If requested, the mentor and the second assessor can sign for confidentiality for the duration of the internship (with a possible prolongation of max. 5 years after the internship)	-
	The student will personally assure that he/she can meet <u>all</u> requirements for graduation, including mandatory publication of the thesis in the university library (masking of data is not desirable)	-	-
<b>IP</b>	The student will personally prevent that he/she signs away his/her IP-rights <u>after</u> the internship; this can severely impede his/her career for the future	-	IP that is developed during the internship, according to the Dutch law, already completely belongs to the company in case of an <u>educational</u> internship; this does not require any additional agreements between the company and the educational institution

*In case a company does not agree with the principles mentioned above, then please refer the negotiations to Drs. M. van der Hoeven, managing director ([secretariaat.bv@tue.nl](mailto:secretariaat.bv@tue.nl))*

IP that is developed during the internship, according to the Dutch law, already completely belongs to the company in case of an educational internship. This does not require any additional agreements between the company and the educational institution.

For the students, it is important to come to an agreement with the company about possible compensation and confidentiality, whereas for the latter holds that publication in the university library is mandatory for graduation; exceptions are not possible; masking of data is not desirable either. Furthermore, it is

important for students' career paths that the company does not demand prolongation of the IP-rights long after the internship.

For all aforementioned issues, the department can't and won't take responsibility. Possibly, in case the company insists, the mentor can sign a confidentiality agreement, but then solely regarding confidentiality.