

Master's Thesis Guide 2020-2021

Timeline

- April 21st:** Presentation of the Research Project for the Master Thesis. You have 15 minutes to present just the project of your Master Thesis.
- May 14th:** Deadline for master thesis proposal: one-page research proposal that includes your name, the name of your advisor, the title of the thesis, and an extended abstract. Email it to: monavarr@pa.uc3m.es
- September 14th:** Deadline for Master Thesis Submission.
- September 22nd:** Oral defense.

Finding a topic and an advisor

- Find a good match. Finding a topic and a faculty advisor is your responsibility. It is key that the match is good. Think about a topic you are interested in, and talk to different faculty members who may have similar research interests as you do.
- Start early: start thinking about topics and start talking to different faculty members early on in your second year.
- Talk to many people. Don't limit yourself to faculty members that have taught you. Don't limit yourself to talking to one faculty member.
- Your first idea need not be your best idea. Don't limit yourself to the first topic that comes to your mind.
- Your thesis should make an original contribution to the literature. Your Thesis is NOT a literature review. This does not mean it needs to be rocket science. Most research is not revolutionary, but is a marginal improvement upon the existing literature.
- For students who end up continuing with the PhD program, the professor who supervises the Master's thesis often becomes the PhD advisor, though that need not always be the case.
- Having an advisor who is not on the faculty of UC3M is possible, but in that case there should be a co advisor from UC3M. Students who wish to take an outside advisor should talk to the Director of the Master's program.

Written presentation of the Master's thesis.

- Your thesis should take the form of a standard academic paper. The best way of understanding what is meant by a standard academic paper is by checking high quality academic journals or high quality working papers.
- The original contribution of the thesis should be made very clear in the introduction by positioning the paper in the broader literature.

- The thesis should be written in English. It should read well. Remember: You want to make the task of your referee easy. Having some results is necessary but not sufficient. You should spend lots of time polishing the write-up of the thesis to make it look professional. Learning how to write well is difficult and takes time. Here is a good place to start:

http://www.deirdremccloskey.com/docs/pdf/Article_86.pdf

- It is a good idea to use Latex or Scientific Word. Everyone does so nowadays, so you might just as well start.
- Here you can find the mandatory cover that you have to use: Cover in English (Word)
<https://uc3m.libguides.com/TFM>

Oral presentation of the Master's thesis.

- Prepare for a presentation of maximum 20 minutes. The total time for each student is 30 minutes, but that includes questions.
- Some professors may interrupt you with questions during your presentation, whereas others will ask questions at the end of the talk.
- Make sure you get through your presentation. If the audience starts asking questions that deviate you from the main discussion, feel free to say you would prefer to discuss these issues after the presentation. (Of course, use this strategy sparingly, you cannot answer all questions that way).
- Try to think about what the weaknesses of your work are, and have an answer ready when asked about them. In general, try to think about the questions you might get. This way you can at least give them some thought.
- Do not be overly defensive (criticisms may occasionally be very harsh, do not get thrown off!, and do not perceive them as a personal attack). Remember that in academia people tend to be very critical and even provocative. It is part of our scientific culture, and you should get used to it.
- The first two slides need to make it crystal clear what your thesis is about. The next two slides need to make it crystal clear what your contribution will be compared to the existing literature. These are two very important issues, and you need to get them across in the first two minutes. The committee needs to know right away what you are doing and also what the novelty of your work is.
- The slides need to look professional. For example, if you present tables, people should be able to read what is on the tables without using a telescope.
- PRACTICE with your advisor, PRACTICE with your fellow students, PRACTICE in front of the mirror, etc., etc.
- If anything, the oral presentation is maybe more important than the written presentation. Committee members will form their impression of your work on how you present, on how you get your ideas across, on how you handle questions, etc.