

Master's Thesis 2025

Timeline

- Tuesday, April 29: Presentation of the Research Project for the Master Thesis. You have 15 minutes to present just the project of your Master Thesis.
- Friday, May 23: 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: Silvia Mateo simateok@pa.uc3m.es
- Thursday, September 11: Deadline for Master Thesis Submission.
- Thursday, September 25: 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 whose research interests are related with the topic of your thesis. You can find a list of the faculty of the department with a summary of their research interests on the department website: <http://economics.uc3m.es/faculty/>

Besides the quality of the match, it is important that your advisor has enough time to dedicate to you. So, another important aspect is to pick an advisor that does not already have too many students.

- 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 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 program.

Written presentation of the Master's thesis.

- Your thesis should take the form of a standard academic paper. The best way to understand what is meant by a standard academic paper is by reading papers in your field of interest in high quality academic journals, or by reading working papers from recognized expert in your field.
- The original contribution of the thesis should be made very clear in the introduction by positioning the paper in the broader literature. Given that it is your first work as an independent researcher, your thesis is likely to be close or inspired by some already published work. So, **you should be extra careful to cite correctly the papers from which you are using the data or the methodology.** Always ask your advisor how to do that in your TFM, this is a very sensitive issue in research!!! DO NOT COPY SENTENCES, TABLES OR GRAPHS FROM OTHER PAPERS, OUR ANTI-PLAGIARISM SOFTWARE WILL PICK THEM UP. Evidence of plagiarism can lead us to reject your TFM.
- 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 a lot 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

- Here are some presentations and videos from publishers that the university is making available for you and that can guide you both in writing your thesis and in other aspects of graduate life and work:

How to easily write an effective paper:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=13d3lTisGJliNE_6g0xDDFjXCC78bvhe6

Writing an effective scientific paper:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Jf8SMdpoMOrF6zJLorP6CJiTWjGZMJ06>

Power point slides from both presentations:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=10jXpnrkWlu_xy5gaDxRxISOrIXRcx99I

- It is a good idea to use Latex or Scientific Word. Everyone does so nowadays, so you might just as well start.
- You will need to use a mandatory cover that you can download from the following link:

<https://uc3m.libguides.com/en/MFP>

Oral defense of the Master thesis.

- Prepare for a presentation of at most 20 minutes. The time allocated to the presentation of 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). The bottom line is that you are the master of your time, but we will stop you after 30 minutes even if you are not done, so it is your responsibility to make sure you finish your deck of slides on time.
- 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, but you should not get thrown off! Do not perceive them as a personal attack. Remember that in academia people tend to be very critical and even provocative. It's part of our scientific culture, and you should get used to it. Your thesis is not supposed to be perfect, but it is supposed to show that you have put effort into 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 is 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.
- To get a sense of what a good presentation is, I STRONGLY URGE you to attend to the internal seminars and the reading groups, and not only those of your fields.