MASTER’S THESIS LINGUISTICS AND LITERARY STUDIES

REGULATIONS

ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-2018
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1. THE PLACE OF THE THESIS IN THE MASTER’S COURSE

The thesis is an academic paper which completes the master’s programme and through which the student demonstrates a capacity for analytical work, the ability to synthesize information and (limited) independent problem-solving skills at an academic level. The paper reflects the student’s general capacity for critical reflection and research. In the master's thesis, the student demonstrates that he/she adequately masters the skills that form the learning objectives of the Master's programme in Linguistics and Literary Studies, and that (s)he is capable, with the guidance of a supervisor, of adopting a scientifically based and critical approach to the subject matter.

The course unit description for the master's thesis in Linguistics and Literary Studies can be consulted on the faculty website under 'course catalogue'.

2. TERMS & CONDITIONS FOR ADMISSION/ENROLMENT REQUIREMENTS

Only students holding an academic bachelor’s diploma in Linguistics and Literary Studies, or an officially equivalent diploma granting access to a master’s programme in Linguistics and Literary Studies as well as students who have completed the bridge or preparatory programme can enrol for the course unit "Master in Linguistics and Literary Studies".

Students who have not yet been awarded an academic bachelor's diploma in Linguistics and Literary Studies but have passed the thesis for the bachelor's diploma in Linguistics and Literary Studies at Vrije Universiteit Brussel are also admitted to the "master's thesis" course unit (course prospectus 4019474FNR) (subject to compliance with the current Teaching and Examinations Regulations and with the enrolment requirements).

It is not possible to enrol for the “Master’s Thesis Linguistics and Literary Studies” course unit under a course-credits contract or examinations contract.

3. THE SUBJECT OF THE MASTER’S THESIS

The topic and subject matter of the master’s thesis must relate to a field connected to the Linguistics and Literary Studies master’s diploma to be obtained. Moreover, the subject of the master's thesis must be related to one or more of the course units from the master’s programme’s curriculum.

For the joint-languages Linguistics and Literary Studies master's programme, the master's thesis must be written in one of the two main languages chosen for the master's programme; for the single-language Linguistics and Literary Studies master's thesis, the thesis must be written in the language chosen for the master's programme.

The subject of the thesis is chosen in consultation with the supervisor. A thesis supervisor must be a senior academic staff member ("ZAP"), a post-doctoral research assistant, a teaching professor or any other member of the academic staff who holds a doctorate.
4. GUIDELINES

4.1 Content

The master's thesis must be an original contribution to the field of research. The work must be personal and original; plagiarism in any form is strictly forbidden. See also the Teaching and Examinations Regulations, Art. 118.

The master's thesis must contain the following:

1. an exposition of its theme and thesis and a definition and delineation of the topic and key issues;
2. a critical perspective on the chosen topic, including the research methodology (if applicable);
3. a presentation of the findings (if applicable) and a critical discussion and conclusion;
4. a complete list of the publications and other sources used;
5. any appendices (illustrations, statistics, etc.).

In addition, Art 124 of the Teaching and Examination Regulations stipulates:

"The master’s thesis must be submitted both in writing and in electronic form. In the Supplementary Faculty Teaching and Examinations Regulations, it is stated that, together with their master’s thesis, students must submit a publishable summary as well as an abstract to be included in the standard lists of theses published in Belgian specialist journals."

The summary (both in English and in the language in which the master's thesis has been written) consists of 500-1000 words; the abstract is a brief statement in English of 100 to 150 words.

The student further characterizes the master’s thesis in a series of key words in both Dutch and English.

All the above information must also be included in the master's thesis.
4.2. Format

The master’s thesis must have a minimum of 15,000 and a maximum of 30,000 words, excluding the appendices. Deviations from these length requirements are possible with the supervisor’s consent.

Use a standard font, e.g. Arial/Calibri/Verdana 12, and 1.5 line spacing.

The following must appear on the title page:

- Logo of Vrije Universiteit Brussel;
- Student’s first name and last name (top right-hand corner);
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel;
- Faculty of Arts and Philosophy;
- Field of study: Linguistics and Literary Studies;
- Title of thesis;
- Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literary Studies (*);
- Supervisor (Title First Name Last Name);
- Academic year (bottom right-hand corner)

(*) Specify languages, whether single or joint-language programme.

The second page presents the following:

- an English translation of the title of the master’s thesis.
- the following signed personal statement on plagiarism:

I solemnly declare that I have written the master’s thesis entitled (title) myself.

I am aware of the rules on plagiarism and have therefore ensured that these have been applied in this master’s thesis.

Date Name + signature
5. **SUPERVISION**

The supervisor provides the student with guidance in all the stages of the research and supervises the reporting of the findings of this research.

The supervisor also provides guidance on aspects related to the content of the master's thesis, for example, such as its research questions, methodology and the logic and structure of the arguments given.

In accordance with the Teaching and Examinations Regulations, Article 122 applies here too:

“A supervisor undertakes to supervise the student on a regular basis, while the student undertakes to keep his supervisor informed of the research progress made. In the event of any failure to comply, the student or the supervisor concerned may notify the Dean in writing. The Dean shall subsequently come to a decision, which may lead to a change of supervisor or annulment of a supervisor’s duties vis-a-vis the student concerned and shall report this circumstance to the Faculty Council.”

For practical support, students may also contact members of the academic support staff or special academic staff of the Department.

6. **EVALUATION**

**Credit points (ECTS)**

The master’s thesis counts for 20 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). If a student obtains a fail mark for a master’s thesis (i.e., a mark lower than 10/20), he/she will not pass the master’s course. Students who do not attend (without legitimate reason) the master's thesis presentation day prior to the submission of the master’s thesis will fail the master's thesis.

**Composition of the thesis jury**

The composition of the jury is determined by the Linguistics and Literary Studies department and consists of two members, including the thesis supervisor. The second member of the Thesis Defence Panel can be either a member of the senior academic staff (ZAP), a member of the academic support staff (OAP) with at least two years of seniority, or an external expert.
Procedure
The two panel members will read and assess the master’s thesis independently from each other. They will each write a report on the basis of the standard evaluation form and award a mark (out of 20) for the thesis. Their assessments and marks are then discussed at a meeting of all the jury members. The final mark is the arithmetic mean of the marks awarded by the two jury members.

According to Article 125 of the Teaching and Examinations Regulations, students may, on request, obtain the end result and consult the written reports, or receive a copy thereof, at least four working days before the end of the examinations period. The students are informed of the final result they have obtained by the departmental administration office.

Depending on this result, students may be entitled to an oral defence of their master’s thesis (for more details, see Art. 125 of the Teaching and Examinations Regulations + the supplementary faculty Teaching and Examinations Regulations, which may be consulted on the faculty website). The results of the master thesis are communicated to the students no later than on the Monday of the final exam week; students who wish to defend their research orally must request the oral defence by the Wednesday of the final exam week to the Head of the Department, who immediately takes the necessary steps to organize the oral defence.

Evaluation Criteria
The student’s result is determined on the basis of the written master’s thesis that has been submitted.

The jury evaluates the master’s thesis according to the evaluation form that is communicated to the students in the Research Methodology course. The form evaluates the the following aspects of the thesis:

- student's research attitude and progress;
- research problem and its context;
- research methodology and theory;
- presentation of the analysis and interpretation of the research results;
- source management;
- language and style;
- material presentation.

CAVEAT:
A master's thesis containing too many language errors can never get a pass mark, no matter how good the content.
7. TIMETABLE

Submission of Topic
The topic and name of the supervisor for the master’s thesis must be submitted to the departmental administration office by 31 October 2017 at the latest using the requisite form (available on the faculty website https://my.vub.ac.be/en/LW/regulations-forms#forms).

CAVEAT:
- If a student repeats a year, the subject and the name of the supervisor must be submitted again, even if no changes are made.
- Sanctions may be imposed by the Dean for any failure to comply with the timetable and/or any other of the requirements laid down in Article 118 of the Teaching and Examinations Regulations and in the Supplementary Faculty Teaching and Examinations Regulations.
- Any student wishing to change topic or switch supervisor must apply in writing to the Dean, stating the reasons therefore (see also the Teaching and Examinations Regulations, Art. 121).

Submission of Thesis
(see also Art. 123 of the Teaching and Examinations Regulations)
Students submit their thesis either:

- by 8 January 2018 (first exam period of first exam session);
- by 29 May 2017 (first exam period of first exam session);
- by 6 August 2017 (second exam session);
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Students who decide to submit their master’s thesis in the first exam period of the first exam session (i.e. in January) must enrol for the following academic year.

Only the student may submit the master’s thesis to the departmental administration office (room 404, building B, fifth floor) and this no later than the date and time specified on the faculty website.

Students must inform themselves of the opening hours of the departmental secretariat. When the submission deadline is not respected, the student will be marked “Absent” for
this course unit in the exam session concerned (cf. Art. 124 of the Teaching and Examination Regulations).

CAVEAT:
- hard copy of the thesis for each of the jury members (supervisor, possible co-supervisor(s) and the second reader);
- an additional hard copy for the library;
- an electronic version (in MS Word) on a carrier (USB stick or DVD) for the faculty archives;
- a printout of the Turnitin confirmation screen (plagiarism-prevention software).

Students who are unable to submit their master's thesis to the departmental administration office in person due to special circumstances may, subject to approval by the Dean, submit the required copies to the departmental administration office by registered mail or courier service.

- The motivated request for this departure from the standard procedure must reach the Dean at least 14 calendar days before the final date of submission of the master's thesis.

The thesis submission procedure consists of submitting the following:

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The following must be inserted after the title page in each copy of the master’s thesis (see Art. 124 of the Teaching and Examination Regulations):

- a publishable summary;
- an abstract to be included in the standard lists of theses published in Belgian specialist journals.

Special Regulations for outgoing Erasmus students

Students departing before 31 October 2017 must determine their thesis topic and meet with their thesis supervisors prior to departure.
Appendix: Title page template

Name Student
Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte
Field of Study: Linguistics and Literary Studies

Insert Title Here
Subtitle (if applicable)

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literary Studies (add study language(s) here)

Supervisor: Title First Name Last Name
Co-Supervisor: Only add if applicable
Academic Year: 20xx-20xx
I solemnly declare that I have written this master’s thesis entitled “insert title” myself. I am aware of the rules on plagiarism and have therefore ensured that these have been applied in this master’s thesis.

Date

Name + signature

(What is marked in blue should be completed in black.)