
Final Master Thesis Seminar

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The importance of the Final Master Thesis

The Final Master Thesis (FMT) is one of the most important learning activities in the Master's program, since it gives students the opportunity to study a topic of their interest in depth and it allows them to develop important capacities such as planning, problem-solving, information analysis, and result interpretation.

The FMT is worth 6 ECTS credits out of the 60 that are earned by completing the Masters. The goal of the FMT is for students to produce a high-quality academic research project or marketing plan that they can be proud of.

For those students who are interested in pursuing an academic career (by following up with a Master of Research and/or a PhD), the FMT represents an opportunity to confirm their interest in a particular topic and their ability to contribute to the existing body of knowledge of said topic.

For the teachers, the FMT is an opportunity to interact with students in a different way; instead of teaching students the knowledge they have acquired through the years, teachers work together with students to produce new knowledge and help students make a contribution.

Preparation and Monitoring Sessions

The goal of the 'Preparation and Monitoring Sessions of the FMT' is to guide and support students through the process of completing the FMT. With the help of those sessions' students will learn:

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- - How to design a Marketing Plan (*taught by Helena Palumbo in the seminar sessions of the 1st term course "Identification of Market Opportunities"*).
- - How to narrow down the topics that really interest them
- - How to produce a high-quality research document that reflects such interests
- - How to find relevant information on the chosen topic taking into account the

research that has already been conducted on said topic

- How to apply a methodology that can be easily replicated by others in other fields or circumstances.
- How to analyze relevant data and use that information to support their conclusions.

The 'Preparation and Monitoring Sessions of the FMT' will also allow students to connect with the teachers from UPF and BSM outside the classroom, allowing for networking opportunities.

Progress-sharing Sessions

The goal of the 'Progress-sharing Sessions of the FMT' is to allow students to present their progress in the FMT to their classmates, and then receive feedback from them.

Three progress-sharing sessions will take place throughout the academic year, one per term. In those sessions:

- Each student will do a PowerPoint presentation of their progress in front of their classmates
- The classmates listening to the presentations will provide feedback on each presentation.

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Development of Professional Competencies (DPC)

The FMT allows students to actively participate in DPC modules. The competences from the DPC modules complement the technical expertise acquired throughout the FMT. Participation in the DPC modules is compulsory. The competencies developed in the context of the FMT are:

First term:

- Teamwork

Second term:

- Research methodology and information management (Online)
- Presentation skills

Third term:

- Flexibility

Advisors

Students can propose a specific advisor or be assigned one. Each student cannot have more than one official advisor.

Advisors must always be UPF-BSM teachers with ample knowledge about the topic of the FMT. So, for example, a student who wishes to make a marketing plan for a company that only sells digitally needs to find/be assigned a UPF-BSM teacher with ample knowledge about e-commerce. Similarly, a student who wishes to do a research project about the underlying mechanisms of certain consumer decisions needs to find/be assigned a UPF-BSM teacher whose research specializes in consumer behavior. If a specialist on the topic selected by the student cannot be found among the UPF-BSM teachers, the student will have to select another topic. This is especially true for students wishing to undertake research projects.

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In order to ensure that the student's topic and the expertise of the advisor are aligned, it is also possible for the advisor to help the student choose a specific topic. This may happen if the student wishes to work with a particular UPF-BSM teacher.

Even if the student finds a UPF-BSM teacher who specializes in the topic the student wants to pursue, the teacher has the power to reject working with the student on that topic. Therefore, it is the job of the student to sell his or her topic to the desired advisor. These 'negotiations' are obviously skipped in cases where the student is assigned an advisor (instead of choosing one).

If a student needs to be assigned an advisor, the decision of which UPF-BSM teacher to assign will be made by the Program Directors.

The goal of the advisor is to guide students throughout the different stages of the FMT, supporting students as they search for information, design suitable models, analyze and interpret results, and consider avenues for future research.

Students will have to arrange monthly sessions with their advisors in order to review and discuss the progress achieved in the FMT. While not all these sessions need to be face-to-face meetings, it is imperative that students meet with their advisors face-to-face at least once per term. Students need to be proactive and arrange these meetings themselves.

The advisor will be responsible for evaluating the contents of the FMP and will have to be present the day of the final presentation (i.e. the day of the thesis defense).

The full responsibilities of students and advisors are specified in the table below:

TERM	STUDENT	ADVISOR
1	Selection of the topic (it can be a company/product if designing a marketing plan, or another marketing-related topic if going for a research project)	Accepting the topic and/or student (this process may involve input from the Program Directors)

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	<p>First contact with the advisor</p> <p>Attending the following face-to-face meetings with the advisor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project startup meeting - Progress review meeting <p>Reporting and discussing the progress made in the FMT (at least once per month)</p> <p>In all cases, it is the student who must contact the advisor.</p>	<p>Evaluate the topic proposed by the student. First feedback.</p> <p>Communicating with the assigned student monthly (either face-to-face or remotely) in order to answer questions and provide working guidelines for the FMT.</p> <p>It is recommended to meet face-to-face with the student at least twice during the first term. It is always the student who must contact the advisor.</p>
2	<p>Submitting the first draft of the FMT and the FMT's work plan at the time and in the format that are specified to the student.</p> <p>Attending the face-to-face meetings with the advisor (at least one per term).</p> <p>Reporting and discussing the progress made in the FMT (at least once per month)</p> <p>In all cases, it is the student who must contact the advisor.</p>	<p>Reviewing and evaluating the first draft of the FMT according to the evaluation criteria made available to the advisor.</p> <p>Communicating with the assigned student monthly (either face-to-face or remotely) in order to answer questions and provide working guidelines for the FMT.</p> <p>At least one of those interactions must be face-to-face. It is always the student who must contact the advisor.</p>
	<p>Submitting the second draft of the FMT and the FMT's work plan at the time and in the format that are specified to the student.</p>	<p>Reviewing and evaluating the second draft of the FMT according to the evaluation criteria made available to the advisor.</p>

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3	<p>Attending the face-to-face meetings with the advisor (at least one per term).</p> <p>Reporting and discussing the progress made in the FMT (at least once per month)</p> <p>In all cases, it is the student who must contact the advisor.</p>	<p>Communicating with the assigned student monthly (either face-to-face or remotely) in order to answer questions and provide working guidelines for the FMT.</p> <p>At least one of those interactions must be face-to-face. It is always the student who must contact the advisor.</p>
	<p>Submitting the FMT's final report at the time and in the format that are specified to the student.</p>	<p>Reviewing and evaluating the FMT's final report according to the evaluation criteria made available to the advisor.</p>
	<p>Defending the FMT before the assigned evaluation board.</p>	<p>Attending the defense of the FMT (but never as a member of the evaluation board).</p>

The contents of the FMT

1. The Final Master Thesis will consist on either a Marketing Plan or a marketing-related research project (recommended only to aspiring PhD students). In both cases, the FMT will be developed throughout the whole academic year.
2. If designing a Marketing Plan, students must choose a company/product that is real and accessible.

Submission and Defense of the FMT

The FMT will be presented and defended publicly. The FMT will be evaluated by an evaluation board presided by the Masters' directors. The student's advisor cannot be part of the evaluation board.

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The FMT defense will take place between July 1st and July 5th. The FMT's final report must be submitted the week prior to the defense.

Evaluation Criteria for the FMT

The evaluation of FMT is structured as such:

Deliveries

Throughout the academic year there will be three deliveries related to the FMT as well as a presentation before an Evaluation Board: the FMT defense. Each delivery will be evaluated by the student's advisor, who will then provide feedback on the FMT's progress. The grades obtained in each delivery will have a very substantial effect on the FMT's final grade, as indicated in the table below. The Evaluation Board will evaluate the defense of the FMT.

Evaluation Criteria	Date	% of the Final Grade
Attendance to the FMT seminars	Throughout the year	20%
First delivery: 1st draft of the FMT	End of first term	5%
Second delivery: 2nd draft of the FMT	End of second term	15%
Third delivery: FMT's final report	End of third term	25%
Defense (must be passed)	End of third term	35%

In the evaluation of each delivery, the following aspects will be considered:

- **Format:** structure, language use, style and presentation, ability to analyze and summarize information.
- **Content:** ability to apply the knowledge learnt in the Masters on a real case, technical quality, creativity, ability to use existing research and other information sources to support your ideas

Tardiness in delivery submission

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If students fail to submit any of the deliveries on time, there will be a 5% penalty when computing the FMT's final grade. So, for example, if a student submits the second draft of the FMT late, the weight of that delivery will be reduced from 15% to 10%. The implication is that the highest possible overall grade for that student will also be reduced from a 10 out of 10 to a 9.5 out of 10. If the second draft is not submitted at all, the 5% penalty also applies. Therefore, the highest possible overall grade for that student would be reduced to an 8 out of 10.

The Defense

In order to receive a passing grade in the FMT it is absolutely necessary for students to defend their marketing plan or research project successfully. Unsuccessful defenses will result in a failing grade in the FMT as a whole, and will require students to redefend their master theses at a later date.

Changing the topic of the FMT

Students are allowed to change the topic of their FMT once as long as the following requirements are fulfilled:

1. The change of topic has been approved by the student's advisor.
2. The request to change topics was made before the fifth week of the second term.

Note: changing topics after the fifth week of the second term is technically possible but will result in (cumulative) 5% deduction in the FMT's final grade. The advisor's permission must be received in all cases.

Changing Advisors

Switching to another advisor is not allowed unless any of the following circumstances occur:

1. The current advisor decides, for personal or professional reasons, to stop advising a student.

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2. The advisor announces that he or she cannot supervise the topic proposed by the student.
3. There is a substantiated incompatibility between the ideas and/or style of the advisor and those of the student.

Any advisor changes that take place from the second term onwards will be managed by the Masters' directors who will search the most convenient solution for the student.

Schedule of activities and deliveries

The activities related to the FMT take place throughout the whole academic year and follow the following schedule:

TERM	ACTIVITY
1	Preparing a topic for the FMT. Answering the questionnaire ' <i>StudentPreferencesForCompanyOrProject</i> ' which will be uploaded to eCampus.
	Presenting the chosen topic before one's classmates and teachers. This presentation will be recorded. A word document called ' <i>TopicPresentation_Guidelines</i> ' will be uploaded to eCampus with the details.
	Having an advisor assigned; the Program's Directors will assign an advisor to each student depending on the topic the student chose.
	Project startup meeting with the advisor (face-to-face). The advisor either accepts or rejects the topic chosen by the student.
	Project review meetings with the advisor (at least one face-to- face)
	Delivery of the first draft. The contents of the first draft will be outlined in a complementary document that will be uploaded to eCampus on a later date.

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	First presentation of the FMT (which will include the contents from the first draft). Length: 5 minutes.
	Project review meetings with the advisor (at least one face-to- face)
2	<p>Online DPC module: Methodology for information collection and management. (Participation in this module is required to obtain a passing grade in the second draft)</p> <p>Delivery of the second draft. The contents of the second draft will be outlined in a complementary document that will be uploaded to eCampus on a later date.</p>
	Second presentation of the FMT (which will include the contents from the second draft). Length: 10-15 minutes.
3	<p>Project review meetings with the advisor (at least one face-to- face)</p> <p>Third presentation of the FMT. Intended as a rehearsal for the thesis defense and to obtain feedback to complete the final report. It will cover everything done by the student in the context of the FMT.</p> <p>Delivery of the final report. The contents of the final report will be outlined in a complementary document that will be uploaded to eCampus on a later date.</p> <p>Defense of the FMT before the Evaluation Board</p>

Complementary and support activities

As students work on their FMT they will be able to receive advice from the Program Directors and UPF librarians.

Students will also be informed in advance of any activity or event related to the FMT that could facilitate or support its realization.

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