Approved by:
ISM University of Managementand Economics
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ISM UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMICS, UAB

BACHELOR, INTERNATIONAL MASTER AND EXECUTIVE MASTER STUDIES' FINAL THESES DEFENCE AND EVALUATION PROCEDURE

1. The procedure for defending and evaluating final theses shall regulate the defense and evaluation of the final theses of International Master Degree at ISM University of Management and Economics (hereinafter – University).
2. International Master degree studies shall be completed with the preparation of a bachelor or master thesis and its public defence. Only the students who have successfully completed all the assessments provided in the respective study programme, passed all the required exams by the date of the defence and have demonstrated sufficient knowledge and skills are allowed to defend their final thesis.
3. In the international Master's study programmes (IMM, ITM, GLS, FE, BSM), the preparation and assessment of the final thesis is a cumulative (stage-based) process. It consists of four stages: research project (thesis topic) defence, first interim defence, second interim defence, and final public thesis defence. At each stage, the student submits a written component of the thesis, presents it publicly, and answers questions from the committee. The specific deadlines for each stage, the required length of the written submission, the presentation duration, and the content to be assessed are established in the final thesis requirements of the respective study programme. These may differ between programmes due to differences in the requirements applicable to the final thesis.
4. During the research project (thesis topic) defence, the relevance of the topic, the preliminary theoretical framework, and the preliminary research model (research logic) are assessed. The research project (thesis topic) defence is assessed on a pass/fail basis in the IMM and FE study programmes, or graded numerically in the ITM, GLS, and BSM study programmes. The result of the research project (thesis topic) defence is not included in the final thesis grade; however, passing this stage is a prerequisite for continuing work on the thesis and participating in subsequent defences. The student may change the thesis topic until the first interim defence.
5. During the first interim defence, the student presents the literature review, formulation of hypotheses (where applicable), the research model, and the selected methodological approach (validated measurement instruments for quantitative research, interview guidelines for qualitative research, or a summary of the methodological approach in other cases). During the second interim

defence, the student presents the research methodology applied and the empirical research results. During the final defence, the student presents all components of the thesis, with particular emphasis on the discussion and the theoretical and/or managerial implications.

6. The interim defences are assessed by the Interim Defence Committee. The interim defence grades contribute to the final thesis grade according to the weighting specified in this Procedure. The results of the interim defence assessments are communicated to students via the my.ism.lt system and/or individually.

7. A student is entitled to retake the first and/or second interim defence once. The grade obtained upon retaking an interim defence shall be multiplied by a coefficient of 0.8. If the student fails an interim defence after the retake, the Study Committee shall decide whether the student may continue the thesis preparation process.

8. The Final Thesis Assessment Committees (hereinafter referred to as the "Assessment Committees") shall consist of specialists with relevant expertise in the field of study (or group of fields of study), including researchers, professional practitioners, and representatives of social partners, in accordance with the applicable legal requirements regarding the number and composition of committee members.

9. An Assessment Committee shall be established for each study programme. The Programme Director shall propose the composition of the Assessment Committee, which must be approved by the International Master's Studies Committee. The Assessment Committees shall be formally approved by the Rector.

10. The following requirements are recommended regarding the number and composition of Final Thesis Assessment Committee members:

    10.1. In International Master's studies, the Assessment Committee shall consist of at least four members, at least three of whom must hold a doctoral degree, at least one of whom must be a professor, and at least one of whom must be an academic staff member of another higher education institution or a representative of the business or public sector (who may also be a doctoral student employed in the business or public sector). One of the Assessment Committee members shall serve as the Chair of the Committee.

    10.2. The thesis supervisor may serve as a member or Chair of the Assessment Committee but may not participate in the assessment of a thesis defended by a student they have supervised.

    10.3. In International Master's studies, the committees for the research project (thesis topic) defence and interim defences shall consist of at least two academic staff members. The members of the Interim Defence Committee shall be selected by the Programme Director, and the committee composition shall be approved by the Study Committee through formal minutes. The results of the research project (thesis topic) defence and interim defences

shall be recorded in an interim defence assessment form, in which each committee member shall indicate the student's grade and, where necessary, provide comments. Within one working day of the interim defence, the completed form shall be submitted by the committee members to the Studies Office, which shall enter the grades into the my.ism.lt system and retain the forms in accordance with the University's Records Management Plan.

11. During the preparation of the final thesis, the student shall have the right to upload their thesis to the text similarity detection system and obtain a text similarity report. The conditions and deadlines for uploading the final thesis to the text similarity detection system shall be determined by the International Master's Studies Committee.

12. The thesis supervisor, reviewer and/or members of the Assessment Committee may initiate a check of the final thesis using the text similarity detection system or request a text similarity report at any stage of the thesis preparation or assessment process.

13. Once a student has submitted their final thesis, a plagiarism check shall be carried out in accordance with the following procedure:

    13.1. Following the final submission of theses, the Programme Director shall review the text similarity index of all theses submitted within the respective study programme, as calculated by the text similarity detection system used by the University.

    13.2. Theses with a text similarity index exceeding 10% shall be reviewed by the Programme Director.

    13.3. Any suspected cases of plagiarism identified by the Programme Director, thesis supervisor or reviewer shall be referred to the Ethics Committee for consideration, based on the text similarity detection system report or other evidence.If a student fails to adhere to the established deadlines for thesis writing, the thesis preparation process may be suspended during its course by the decision of the Studies Committee.

14. The thesis shall be assessed in writing by the thesis supervisor and the reviewer no later than five days before the public defence of the final thesis.

    14.1. When submitting the written supervisor's evaluation (by completing the automated Supervisor's Evaluation Form), the thesis supervisor shall follow the thesis assessment criteria established in the Requirements for Final Theses of International Master's Study Programmes, as applicable.

    14.2. When submitting the written review (by completing the automated Reviewer's Evaluation Form), the reviewer shall follow the thesis assessment criteria established in the Requirements for Final Theses of International Master's Study Programmes. The written review shall include comments identifying the main strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, a grade-based assessment of the thesis against the individual criteria, and at

least three questions. The reviewer shall be appointed by the Programme Director.

15. The Programme Director may appoint a second reviewer if:

    15.1. The assessment given by the thesis supervisor or the reviewer is negative (below 5).

    15.2. The assessments given by the thesis supervisor and the reviewer are both positive but differ by two or more points.

16. Having reviewed the written assessments provided by the thesis supervisor and the reviewer, the Programme Director shall submit a recommendation to the Study Committee regarding the thesis's eligibility for public defence (whether to permit or not permit the thesis to proceed to public defence). The Study Committee shall make the final decision on the thesis's eligibility for public defence.

17. By a decision of the Study Committee, a student may be denied permission to defend their final thesis if any of the following circumstances apply to the thesis or the thesis preparation process:

    17.1. The final thesis topic or research project (Research Proposal) has not been approved by the Programme Director.

    17.2. The submitted final thesis has been prepared on a topic different from the one that was defended and approved.

    17.3. The student has failed to comply with the deadlines for thesis preparation.

    17.4. The student has failed to submit the final thesis by the specified deadline (in which case, the student forfeits the right to defend the thesis in the current semester).

    17.5. The thesis supervisor and/or reviewer(s) have given the final thesis a negative assessment.

    17.6. The University's Ethics Committee has established that one or more breaches of academic ethics have occurred.

    17.7. The final thesis does not meet the formal requirements (e.g. requirements concerning its structure, the length of the thesis as a whole or its individual sections, or the inclusion of empirical research data in the appendices).

18. If a student fails to comply with the established thesis preparation deadlines, the Study Committee may decide to suspend the thesis preparation process while it is in progress.

19. For students enrolled in all Master's study programmes, the reviewer's report and the thesis supervisor's evaluation shall be sent by email no later than two days before the scheduled thesis defence. The reviewer's comments are intended solely for the student's personal use and independent preparation for the thesis defence. The reviewer's comments may not be discussed

with the thesis supervisor, the University's academic staff or any other members of the Assessment Committee. The questions included in the review and the reviewer's identity shall be disclosed only during the thesis defence.The final grade of the final thesis shall be rounded according to the evaluation system established in the Regulations for Bachelor, International Master or Executive Master Degree Studies, respectively.

20. During the defence, the author of the final thesis shall briefly present their thesis, outlining the research problem, aim and objectives, the situation and/or literature review conducted, the research methodology, the results obtained, the reliability of the methods applied, and the conclusions, which shall be explained and substantiated, as well as providing recommendations. Following a summary of the reviewer's and/or thesis supervisor's comments, the student shall answer questions from the reviewer, members of the Final Thesis Assessment Committee and other persons attending the defence, and comply with any other requirements of the thesis defence. If the reviewer and/or thesis supervisor is absent from the defence meeting, their written evaluations shall be read out by one of the members of the Final Thesis Assessment Committee.

21. When assessing the final thesis and its defence, the members of the Final Thesis Assessment Committee shall apply the same criteria as those specified in the thesis review. In addition, the assessment shall take into account the comprehensiveness and substantiation of the answers to questions, the student's demonstrated knowledge of the topic, methods, results, practical applicability and limitations of the research during the defence, as well as the fluency and clarity of their speech. Each Committee member shall award a single grade reflecting their overall assessment of both the final thesis and its defence. Grades may be awarded to one decimal place.

1. The final thesis and its defence in International Master's studies (IMM, ITM, GLS, FE and BSM study programmes) shall be assessed on the basis of a cumulative final grade comprising the assessments of the interim defences, the thesis supervisor, the reviewer and the Final Thesis Assessment Committee at the final defence.

2. $P = 0.15 \times TG1k + 0.15 \times TG2k + 0.15 \times DV + 0.15 \times DR + 0.40 \times VK$, where:

3. P – final grade;

4. TG1k, TG2k – grades awarded by the first and second Interim Defence Committees (not rounded);

5. DV – grade awarded by the thesis supervisor (not rounded);

6. DR – grade awarded by the thesis reviewer (not rounded);

7. VK – grade awarded by the Final Thesis Assessment Committee at the final thesis defence (not rounded).

8. Components of the cumulative assessment:

Thesis Preparation and Assessment Stage	Assessed by	Weight in the Final Grade
Research project (thesis topic) defence	Research Project Defence Committee	Pass/fail or a grade; not included in the final grade
First interim defence	Interim Defence Committee	15%
Second interim defence	Interim Defence Committee	15%
Final thesis defence	Assessment Committee	40%
Final thesis	Thesis supervisor	15%
Final thesis	Reviewer	15%
Total		**100%**

22. If the final thesis has been assessed by two reviewers, the arithmetic mean of their assessments shall be used when calculating the final grade.

23. The final thesis grade shall be rounded in accordance with the grading system established in the Regulations on International Master's Studies.

24. Members of the Assessment Committee shall have the right to adjust the calculated final thesis grade in the following cases:

    24.1. By no more than one grade point upwards or downwards, where the Assessment Committee unanimously decides that, taking into account the overall standard of final theses and their defences, the student's thesis and its defence merit a higher or lower grade than the one obtained through the arithmetic calculation.

    24.2. To award a negative grade to a thesis that has received a positive grade based on the arithmetic calculation, where, during the defence, reasonable doubts arise regarding the originality of the thesis or significant breaches of academic ethics.

    24.3. The Assessment Committee may also significantly lower the grade where required components of the thesis are formally missing or do not meet the established requirements, but this has not been taken into account by the reviewer or the thesis supervisor.

25. At the discretion of the Programme Director, the results shall be announced either at the end of the one-day defence session or after all thesis defences for the respective study programme in the semester have been completed. The final thesis results shall be communicated to students individually via the my.ism.lt system and/or in person, with students being informed of the announcement procedure in advance.

26. The decision of the final thesis evaluation is collegial, final and not subject to appeal.

27. The decisions of the final thesis evaluation commission shall be approved by the minutes, which shall be signed by the chairman of the commission. The minutes of the final thesis evaluation commission are stored in the Bachelor, International Master and Executive School departments respectively. The evaluations of the final thesis supervisors, reviewers, commission and final evaluations are provided in the appendix to the minutes. The appendix to the minutes shall be signed by all the members of the commission. After the defence, the final theses are stored following the prescribed procedure in the Bachelor, the International Master and the Executive School study departments respectively.

28. The evaluation commission may recommend placing the thesis in the eLABa information system. With the consent of the student, thesis storage and access statuses are determined in accordance with the University‘s Procedure on Uploading ISM Electronic Documents to the Information System of eLABa.