

Onboarding Information – Thesis Supervisors

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This onboarding document is meant to intermittently inform (external) supervisors on the procedures, important dates and the thesis support students are offered by the Master Information Studies.

Timeline

- Thesis Fair: October
- Start date: 1st January (parttime until March 31st)
- Deadline Thesis Design: end-February
- Midterm evaluation: mid-May
- Official end date: **30th June**

Until the end of March, the students will work parttime on their thesis design alongside other courses. From April onwards, they will work on their thesis fulltime.

After students have found their thesis project during the thesis fair (or on the Datanose Marketplace), they start looking for a UvA supervisor. A thesis project is finalized when a UvA supervisor is assigned to it. At that moment, students will submit a thesis form in Datanose that marks the start of the thesis process.

From January onwards, the students will work on their thesis design parttime which will be submitted mid-February. This marks the first moment of evaluation to see whether the thesis project is indeed viable and to see whether any adjustments are necessary. The thesis design needs a sign of approval from the UvA supervisor on Datanose.

Students will submit mandatory milestones (see appendix A) as part of the thesis support programme. They are based on the stage of research and thesis writing they supposed to be in at the moment and meant to alleviate the workload of supervisors and to keep students on track.

Supervision

Students receives 18 EC for their thesis project. This leaves a total of 36 hours (2 hours per 1 EC) for UvA supervision and grading. Beside the UvA supervisor, a student will have an examiner who is only involved in the grading process. In the case of an external project, daily supervision will be done by an external supervisor. The external supervisor will supply information from the side of the organization/company but does not have a formal say in grading the thesis at the end. Normally, the UvA supervisor will ask an external supervisor for their opinion before finalizing the grade. It is also recommended for the UvA supervisor and the external supervisor to meet at least twice. Overall this means:

- Supervisor: maximum of 32 hours available to supervise a student
- Examiner: maximum of 4 hours to evaluate and grade a thesis

- External supervisor / Daily Mentor (*for external projects only*): expectation is 2-4 hours a week, maximum to be decided by organization/company
- For external projects: it is expected that the organization/company provides extra computing resources when needed (but the university can complement to this with the Snellius cluster)

A typical thesis supervision will include a meeting every week or 2 weeks. It is a good idea to be proactive and ping your student(s) now and then. We have good experiences with asking for a regular update with achievements made and plans for next week. This can well be organized within GitHub.

Thesis Support Sessions

All students are encouraged to participate in the thesis support sessions. The sessions aim to keep the students on track and to let them reflect critically on their work. Sessions take place every 2-3 weeks from January to June. Sessions are focused on stimulating critical reflection and assessing the quality of research. The idea of the sessions is to reduce the workload for supervisors by providing students with supervision on general academic aspects and to let them share their work with peers. Sessions are supposed to let students come in better prepared when they meet with their supervisor.

Expectations

Collaborating with the university means that the organization/company conforms to the requirement that a student needs to answer a research question with scientific relevance. To deliver only a practical solution for the organization/company involved is not sufficient for a master thesis. The student then cannot pass. It is recommended for external supervisor and UvA supervisor to meet at the beginning and during the thesis project in order to get the expectations clear on all sides.

Any external project needs to be explicitly approved by the thesis coordinator. Approval presupposes that an implementation can be validated. A typical Data Science thesis requires hand-labelled data, sufficient complexity going beyond simple approaches such as a linear regression and with a proper evaluation setup (cross-validation, using more than 1 dataset, train/test, et cetera). For an Information Systems thesis, it is required to have a proper validation, quantitative or qualitative. When interviews are used to get a requirement set, the set must be validated and this will normally be done by means of a design (interface, small algorithmic test, outline of a test framework, et cetera).

By default all UvA theses are published on <https://scripties.uba.uva.nl>. This means that the university expects the collaboration partners to comply with the principle of open research. In special cases, it is possible to diverge. However, it is a hard requirement that in **all cases** UvA supervisor and examiner get access to data and code to guarantee the quality of assessment. When the collaboration partner wants to work with a non-disclosure agreement, the university will use this [template contract](#). If this yield a problem from the side of the partner, the thesis project cannot continue. Sharing of code and (sample) data can be done via GitHub. For a Data Science thesis, the code also needs to be run on the second (public) dataset and it is necessary for UvA supervisor and examiner to get the same results as reported in thesis. Code for generating plots and tables also has to be shared and needs to be clear.

Evaluation and Grading

In case a student has a valid reason to submit a thesis late, they have to apply for an extension. If they do not do so and submit their thesis late they will receive a penalty on their grade. The grade penalty system is as follows:

- After the deadline on June 30th – Grade cap of 7
- If the thesis is not submitted before the 31st of July the grade will be capped at 6 (pass)

There are several moments to determine if the student is on the right track. The first moment is after handing in the thesis design mid-February. If the thesis design is deemed not good enough to start the data collection and writing process, there is the opportunity for the student to make the necessary adjustments. If the adjustments do not suffice, the thesis project will be cancelled.

Around mid-May, there is a midterm evaluation. This is when the UvA supervisor decides whether the work performed so far is good enough to proceed. Termination of the thesis at this point means that the student has to start from scratch in September. If nothing is mentioned by the UvA supervisor, it is assumed that all is fine and the student proceeds.

The final grade will be determined by the UvA supervisor and the examiner. The external supervisor (=daily mentor) will only have an advisory say in the grading. The timeline of the grading is as follows:

- 30 June – Submission final version thesis by students
- 30 June – 15 July: UvA supervisor and examiner upload the feedback with an indication of the grade (fail, sufficient, good, etc.)
- 15 July – 22 July: Student can start the rebuttal process and submit clarifications or decide actively not to do offer a rebuttal
- 22 – 30 July (or sooner if process allows): UvA supervisor and examiner have a short meeting about the final grade and the examiner finishes the evaluation

The timeline above is an indication but if everyone is in agreement can be done in a shorter timeframe. The official timeframe in which the thesis needs to be graded is 20 working days.

Rebuttal System

The final grade will be determined by the UvA supervisor and examiner after the rebuttal. Though the external supervisor has not a formal say in the grading, the university highly appreciates it when the external supervisor informs the UvA supervisor how the thesis process is assessed. It may also be that the UvA supervisor or examiner reaches out actively to the external supervisor to hear their opinion on how the student's work is evaluated. There will be no final presentation with the external supervisor, unless an occasion is arranged directly with the student and UvA supervisor.

The university works with a rebuttal system. Following the feedback of UvA supervisor and examiner:

1. The student either accepts the feedback and decides actively on Datanose not to provide any clarifications, thus making no use of the rebuttal option.
2. The student can decide to go for the rebuttal and take the opportunity to give clarifications or explanations to the remarks and questions asked by the UvA supervisor and examiner in the evaluation form. If students do so, the UvA supervisor and examiner can look over the answers provided and decide if this makes a difference to the grade given.

For more information, you can contact the IS thesis support coordinator Lester van der Pluijm (l.c.vanderpluijm@uva.nl)

Appendix 1: Overview Milestone and Deadlines

Milestones

All students have to submit 5 milestone (Canvas/Datanose)

1. Thesis Design – end-February

The Thesis Design is performed by the student as individual work but it is supported by the supervisor. Students need to find a UvA supervisor. If they fail to find a UvA supervisor, students need to ask the thesis support coordinator for assistance in finding one (before uploading the thesis design).

Deliverable: A PDF that is no longer than 4 pages (including references) in ACM format. The Overleaf [template](#) can be used (setup Thesis Design).

2. Exploratory Data Analysis or Literature Review – end-March

Data Science Students: Exploratory Data Analysis

Deliverable: A PDF of the Jupyter notebook that has a minimal length of 3 pages (including GitHub link)

Information Systems Students: Literature Review

Deliverable: A PDF that has a minimal length of 3 pages and includes a search query refinement

3. Draft Methodology Section – mid-April

Deliverable: A PDF that has a minimal length of 3 pages in ACM format (double column)

4. Pre-Draft Thesis – mid-May

Deliverable: A PDF that presents a draft of the master thesis that preferably includes results and that conforms to the ACM format. The Overleaf [template](#) can be used (setup Thesis).

5. Draft Thesis – mid-June

The master thesis is expected to follow the Overleaf [template](#) (setup Thesis) which is in line with the ACM double-column format. Though length appears to be short, students are expected to be redacting the text frequently to really get to the essential. It is the same as publishing for a scientific journal.

Deliverable: A PDF with a maximum length of 10 pages (references should start no further than at the top of the second column of the tenth page, excluding appendix)

June 30th - Upload Final version Thesis – Datanose

After receiving the final feedback mid-June students have to upload their final version before 23.59h on the 30th of June. They will do this in Datanose on their own thesis project page.