MASTER DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Each student in the Master in Management (MiM) and in the Master of Science (MSc) Degree is required to write an individual Master Dissertation (MD).
The aim of this dissertation is to address a current issue in management from both an academic and a professional perspective, thus contributing to the study, analysis, formalization and abstraction of the identified problem or issue as they are related to the field of expertise of the Master of Science. This requires students to develop a wide range of capabilities by drawing knowledge from both the academic and professional literature, as well as from the MSc specialization courses.

A TBS tutor is assigned to each student in order to ensure a high-quality level of research, meeting the best international standards.
Though the dissertation is expected to have both academic and practical dimensions, MiM and MSc students doing an internship (*or an apprenticeship*) should develop the MD around a major management issue related to the mission of their internship (*or apprenticeship*). MSc students without internship should formulate their research problem based on a convincing literature review and on empirical data.

In both cases, students are required to refer to a substantial number of academic articles (*minimum number of academic articles cited in the references: 15*), as well as empirical data and professional articles, when relevant. In the MD, the student is expected to clearly highlight his/her contribution from a personal and critical analysis standpoint.

OBJECTIVES

This academic exercise aims to strengthen the skills and competencies of the MiM and MSc Students on the Learning Goals (LG) 2 and 5 for the written document, and LG 3 for the oral presentation:

LG 2. Our graduates will acquire research and problem-solving techniques and are able to solve complex managerial problems.

LG 3. Our graduates will be effective communicators both orally and in writing.

LG 5. Our graduates will have a global perspective, including international issues and corporate social responsibility.

It also contributes to developing competencies of students, who should be able to:

- identify, analyze and understand scientific contributions related to a specific management issue ;
- adopt a global approach and to develop one's critical thinking with respect to the state of knowledge in the relevant field ;
- base operational decisions on solid theoretical knowledge.

The level of achievement of the Learning Goals will be precisely assessed for each student, based on the evaluation grids dedicated to the written and the oral presentation of the MD.

MSc MASTER DISSERTATION PROCESS

In connection with the Unit 8 "Research Methods" courses of the MSc, to successfully complete this assignment, students will have to conduct a rigorous research following these key-steps:

1. **Defining the research question**
   Academic Checkpoint: validate your research question with your TBS tutor

2. **Designing the research project**
   Academic Checkpoint: validate your research project with your TBS tutor

3. **Collecting and analyzing data**

4. **Making managerial recommendations and concluding**

5. **Writing the master dissertation**
   The document should be submitted at the latest 2 weeks before the oral defense.

6. **Defending the Master dissertation**

STEP 1: DEFINING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question is the starting point of the Master Dissertation. To formulate your research question, you should first define the theme you wish to investigate. The theme is related to your Master of Science expertise and your professional or personal interest. Some up-to-date research themes may be suggested by the TBS researchers involved in the MSc courses.

You should refer to your MSc courses on Research methods (Course Unit 8) to select and formulate your research question. Then, you will submit it to your tutor in order to validate its relevance.

Once you have decided the theme you want to investigate, you must carry out a literature and empirical review (read many academic articles, books and professional articles…) on your theme in order to understand the current professional issues and academic debate surrounding your theme.

This part of your work will help you to build the introduction of your Master Dissertation and part of your literature review.

It will also lead you to select a relevant research question. Indeed, there is no need to develop a study on an already fully investigated research question. To develop a relevant and personal contribution to your field of expertise, you should select a new or under-investigated research question.

Most academic articles end with the limitations of their study and research questions that need to be further investigated. You will find there an interesting source to formulate your research question.

A good research question addresses an important business or managerial issue. The boundaries and scope of the subject must be clearly defined.

Research questions usually start by a: Why?, What?, Who?, Where?, How?

STEP 2: DESIGNING THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Once you have validated your research question with your tutor, you have to design your research project. It will include:

- **A clear synthesis and analysis of the academic and professional literature review linked to your research question.**
  - To successfully write the "state of the Art" on your research question, you must define the types of sources you need to find: what books? what documents or conferences? Where to find them?

- The literature review synthetizes the current knowledge, issues and debates surrounding the research question. The student should demonstrate a discerning, comprehensive and critical engagement with what has been read. He/she analyzes and synthetizes findings highlighting the knowledge already gathered, current issues and investigations that remain to be done.

⇨ **A relevant and robust research method**: depending on your research theme and your research question, the method may be a quantitative research approach with a set of 2/3 hypotheses to be tested (hypothetico-deductive approach), or a qualitative research design, usually more concerned with establishing answers to the *whys* and *hows* of the research object.

Since it is impossible to use all the methods available, it is essential to choose the most appropriate for the work in progress. Consequently, the researcher must master the know-how of the different methods available: creating a proper questionnaire, conducting a useful interview, statistically validating an inquiry, identifying facts and results (case study or documentary research), etc.
Discussions with the faculty members involved in the course unit 8 "Research methods" and your tutor will help you determine the suitable research method/s for your dissertation.

STEP 3: COLLECTING AND ANALYSING DATA

Once your research project is validated by your tutor, you can start collecting data. This means that you will lead your research project to test your hypotheses (quantitative approach) or build the contextualized understanding of your research object (qualitative approach). This part of the work can last from one month up to three months. You must ensure that you have done all you need to collect relevant data ready for analysis and conclusion. For students doing an internship, a significant part of the data may be related to your mission. You will then have to demonstrate reflexivity to build a convincing analysis.

The analysis of your data will lead you to develop a clear demonstration strongly rooted in your collected data. You must be clear, honest and rigorous in what you are able to explain/answer and what remains open issue.

In the MD dissertation, explain the methods you will use to test your hypotheses (*if relevant*) and why you have chosen these methods rather than another (*in all cases*). Be clear, precise and rigorous in your argumentation, referring to your MSc research methods course unit. The student must show that he/she has carefully collected sufficient and relevant data.

STEP 4: MAKING MANAGERIAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING

Why and how your research can help managers to lead more responsibly their business?

Your Master Dissertation is an academic exercise that should lead to developing managerial or business recommendations. This link between scientific knowledge and practical implications is key to enhance your managerial and decision skills.

You must develop 3 to 5 recommendations in this part of your dissertation.

These recommendations must consider their corporate social and environmental impacts and be aligned with the value of responsibility of TBS.

As a conclusion of your master dissertation, you will emphasize the major learning of this work (scientific method, knowledge, critical thinking, surprising result, etc.), highlight the limits of your study and develop a global perspective on your topic related to global corporate social responsibility issues.

STEP 5: WRITING THE MASTER DISSERTATION

The write-up should be about **30 pages of text (not counting** the title page, appendixes, table of contents, executive summary, bibliography, etc.,). The format of the text must be as follows: Times New Roman, size 12, single-spaced. Pages must be numbered.

COVER PAGE: The cover page must indicate the title of the Master Dissertation, the name of the author, the name of the academic supervisor (tutor of the student for the MD), the title of the program, and the submission date (as shown in appendix III: Cover page).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (1 page): The second page must indicate the title of the dissertation and an executive summary. You have to present the key points of the dissertation in a synthetic way, like the abstract of the academic papers cited in your references. The executive summary has thus to be clear, well-structured, and professional. A list of keywords that characterize its content will be provided at the end of this second page.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: A word of thanks to all who helped in one way or

another in making your work a success, especially the corporate staff is relevant.

TABLE OF CONTENT: The third page must indicate the table of contents with page numbers keyed to the relevant sections of the document. The sections, headings, and sub-headings must be clearly identifiable (using the Word numbering system: 1 then 1.1 then 1.1.1, etc.).

LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES AND APPENDICES: Tables and Figures must be numbered (for example: Figure 5. The main components of a management decision-support system). The title must be placed below the figure, and for tables, it must be placed above.

INTRODUCTION: The introductory section of the master dissertation explains to the reader the context, interest, and importance of the question under study. The research question is introduced here and followed by a roadmap for readers.

CONTENT: As explained before, the MD must present:

- a literature review,
- a method part,
- results analysis,
- and managerial recommendations.

CITATION: All sources must be clearly cited. References to authors must be given in the text, at the end of a sentence or at a logical break in the sentence. References must be cited in brackets, giving the name(s) of the author(s) and publication date, for example (XX, 2007) or (XX and YY, 2019). When there are more than two authors, use the formula "et al." after the name of the first author, for example (XX et al., 2020). When the name of the author appears in a sentence, only the date of the relevant publication must be given, for example "as ZZZ (2004) points out…" Finally, when reference is made to many articles, authors should be mentioned in alphabetical order and separated with a semi-colon, for example (XX and YY, 2015; ZZZ et al., 2011).

When an author's sentence or phrase is borrowed directly, in addition to citing the reference, **quotation marks must be used**.

CONCLUSION: the conclusion emphasizes the major learning of the MD (scientific method, knowledge, critical thinking, surprising result, etc.) and highlights its limits and the potential future perspective or actions that can be undertaken.

SELF - ASSESSMENT (1 page): your own personal reflection on this experience, the key learning points and how tackling the managerial issue has shaped your professionalism.

REFERENCES: Bibliographical references, videos, documents, conferences, etc. must be given in the references at the end of the document. They must be presented as shown in Appendix 1.

APPENDICES: Includes all data that are too detailed to be incorporated within the main body of your written document. Inside the write-up, reference should be made to all appendices.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: This is to be written on the back page of your write-up. It is a short description of your former degrees and work experience. In other words, a summary of your CV.

STEP 6: DEFENDING THE MASTER DISSERTATION

The written document must be submitted not later than two weeks before the oral presentation.

Submissions (for both the written document and the presentation slides) will be done electronically on the pedagogical platform (C@mpus) at a specific address which will be communicated to students close to the time of submission. No electronic submissions will be allowed after the submission deadline.

The oral presentation will last for 45 minutes:

- 15-20 minutes of presentation by the student.
- 10-15 minutes of questions and answers.
- 5 minutes of deliberation by the panel.
- 5-10 minutes of feedback by the panel.

The defense must not be an exhaustive reproduction of the written work. It should aim to highlight the essential points (especially the results and recommendations).

It should aim to widen the scope of the discussion on the subject.

It must be a professional presentation. One of the objectives is to convince the members of the panel (the academic supervisor and/or the company representative) of the relevance and feasibility of the recommendations.

MASTER DISSERTATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

No assessment shall be made of any work that does not respect these guidelines nor of any work that has evidence of **plagiarism**. The academic supervisors can assess the presence and degree of plagiarism thanks to the use of very efficient **software tools** **that verify sources**, as well as to their own experience and intuition.

 A Reminder of the Code of Conduct:

"Any fraud or attempted fraud automatically entails a grade of zero for the work in question. The School administration can also take sanctions, from the cancellation of all results to the non-authorization to continue the program