

WRITING and DISCUSSING a PhD THESIS: WHAT YOU MAY WANT TO KNOW BEFORE STARTING 39th class

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UNIVERSITÀ
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The structure of a PhD thesis
The validation procedures
The discussion
Doctor Europeus
Q&A



The PhD thesis: the end of a journey, and the start of another one

- A PhD thesis is an original work detailing the research that you carried out during the course of your doctoral degree and is meant to produce an original contribution to your research field.
- The PhD thesis summarizes what you have done in your PhD course, and is focused on your specific research topic
- It is not a list of the results of three years, but a story that developed in the three years, that has been validated (or it will be..) by peer-reviewed papers



The types of PhD thesis

Traditional thesis format



Very close to the structure of a paper, which largely consists of a general introduction, a literature review, an overall description of the materials and methods, a presentation of all the results, and a general discussion

Manuscript format



The main chapters are written as standalone publishable articles between a general introduction and discussion.



The structure of the PhD thesis

The structure of a thesis is generally very close to the structure of a manuscript

- Abstract
- Introduction and Literature review
- Aims (Theory Framework)
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion



The structure of the Traditional PhD thesis

Abstract

The abstract is brief and outlines your research, touches on each of the main sections of your thesis, and your contribution to the field by way of your PhD thesis. Abstract is a very important part of the thesis (although short). The abstract answers the most important question to the reviewer: what is the contribution of your thesis to the field

Introduction and Literature Review

In the Introduction, you help the reviewer understand your entire dissertation, including what your paper is about, why it's important to the field, a brief description of your methodology, and how your research and the thesis are laid out. Literature Review: Within the literature review, you are making a case for your new research by telling the story of the work that's already been done. You'll cover a bit about the history of the topic at hand, and how your study fits into the present and future.

Aims (Theory Framework)

Here, you explain assumptions related to the study, which gap you aim to fill, and how you will. new findings and expertise.



The structure of the Traditional PhD thesis

Methods

This is the most detailed and descriptive section. Here you will present the specific techniques and methods you used to get the results you were looking for,.

Results

Here you present your findings. This section is technical, and full of details.

Discussion

Complicated part. In principle, it is similar to the results chapter, but you're building new theories and information from the results, and demonstrate how your data provide the scientific community with an advance of the state of the art.

Conclusion

Here, you take a step back and reflect on what your original goals and intentions for the research were. You'll outline them in context of your project



The structure of the Manuscript PhD thesis

- Abstract
- Introduction and Literature review
- Some chapters, each with a short introduction, materials and methods, results, and a very brief discussion
- A comprehensive discussion that pulls everything together
- Conclusion



The structure of the Manuscript PhD thesis

- General introduction on the topic
- Chapter 1
 - Background
 - Aims
 - Material and methods
 - Results
 - Discussion
 - Conclusions
- Chapter 2
- Chapter 3
-
- General Discussion and future direction



It is not allowed to cut and paste the articles

- The PhD thesis is not the sum of the articles, but provides the reader with a priceless added value: the overall picture of a scientific topic
- You will be asked to present the thesis AND the articles, which might (and usually are) be assessed separately
- Copyright infringements (in the case of non-Open Access publications)



How to deal with published articles

- Published articles are extremely important: they present the evidence that your results have been validated by a peer-review process
- A sentence like "the results of the present chapter have already been published in" providing the link and possibly the screenshot of the first page would be fine
- Take very much care where you decide to publish!!! Your articles will stay there FOREVER.



The procedure to submit the thesis

- A) validation by the internal reviewing panel, that can
 - Accept the thesis as it is (rare)
 - Ask for minor changes (the most probable event)
 - Ask for major changes (it happens)
- B) External reviewing process: thesis is submitted to two reviewers, who have one month to assess the merit of the thesis
- C) Discussion of the thesis. The thesis is submitted to the Discussion Board, made of two external reviewers and one internal (member of the Internal reviewing panel)

Managed by the PhD school

**Managed by the UNIMI
PhD offices**



Where are the procedure published and available?

- <https://dottorati.unimi.it/vas/en/phdvaswork-tools-and-info-for-your-phd/>

PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

The duration of the thesis is divided into five steps:

1st Presentation of the thesis to the Council for approval

The doctoral thesis, accompanied by an abstract, is submitted in English.

The thesis and a report of the PhD student on the activities carried out during the Doctorate and on any publications (thesis + *Visual Report of the thesis*) must be submitted and *where necessary* is submitted before the last day of the course for the PhD students, who declare it to the Internal Evaluation panel. But, in any case, will assess the merit of the thesis in any case.

2nd Approval of the thesis by the Internal Council

3. Request for changes. The thesis is sent to the student to the requested changes to be made.

Using the following form: *Thesis + Internal panel* Thesis evaluation form. Once it has been filled up to the last day, the Internal Council has the information to approve the PhD student research article. The thesis is evaluated by internal evaluation.

4th Presentation to the external evaluation

The thesis is submitted to a list of two qualified reviewers, at least one of whom is a graduate professor (external thesis outside the University). The reviewers are suggested by the supervisor and are suggested by the Internal Council. The Graduate student thesis is the reviewer is what is published. The reviewers assess the merit of the thesis in the attached form: *Thesis + External Evaluation* Thesis Evaluation Form and propose to enhance in public discussion or send back to the PhD student for revision. The thesis may be, in any case, submitted to public discussion, with a second series of the reviewers. If all the reviewers will be submitted more work.

5th Defense of the doctoral thesis

- <https://www.unimi.it/en/study/postgraduate-study/doctoral-research-phd-programmes/completing-your-doctoral-studies>

Completing your doctoral studies

The final stage of the doctoral programme is the submission of a final dissertation.

The supervisor can opt to verify the originality of the student's research, both in the publication and final version of the thesis, using the Turnitin and plagiarism checking software, as described in the *new Booklet of online materials* last *Alumni's Guide*.

The thesis is evaluated by a minimum of two external reviewers who can decide whether to recommend that the student be admitted to defend their work publicly, or that the thesis be sent back to the student for revision. The thesis requires additional work in accordance.

From inside and outside:

- Internal Evaluation Panel
- External Evaluation Panel
- Internal Evaluation Panel

Student Office for PhD students:

- Student Office for PhD students
- Student Office for PhD students
- Student Office for PhD students

Office opening hours:

- Monday and Tuesday: 10:00 - 18:00
- Wednesday: 10:00 - 18:00
- Thursday: 10:00 - 18:00
- Friday: 10:00 - 18:00

Online help: [Internal/Student](#)



The procedure to submit the thesis

validation by the internal reviewing panel

The thesis, after the validation by the supervisor, MUST be ready after three years from the beginning of the study course



September 30th for all (most of) the PhD students

The thesis must be sent to the address phdcourse.vas@unimi.it jointly with a report summarising the main achievements, including

- Courses (taken and given)
- Papers and abstracts
- International profile (stages abroad)
- Meetings attended
- Everything you believe may help to provide the panel with a picture of what you have done



The procedure to submit the thesis

External reviewing process

- Once validated by the PhD Council, the thesis is submitted to two external reviewers, who have one month to assess its merit
- The External reviewers are suggested by the Supervisor and their participation must be validated by the Council
- They should be expert in the topic and with limited conflict of interest
- They have one month to deliver the report.
- Once the thesis has been approved by the external reviewers the thesis is ready for the discussion. This part is managed by the PhD office of the University





UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO

Direzione Segreterie Studenti e Diritto allo studio
Ufficio Segreteria Dottorati di ricerca, Master e Corsi di
perfezionamento

Dottorato di ricerca - PhD Completing the PhD programme

Procedures for the 39th cycle final exam

Completing the PhD - Workflow - 1

- By the end of the programme (September 30th for the majority of **39th cycle** students, unless you ask for an **extension**): submission of the **thesis** and a **report** on activities and publications to the PhD Coordinator, who delivers it to the Faculty
- By the end of **October**, the Faculty gives an assessment (3^o year evaluation) on your activities and delivers it to our **Office**.
Starting from November, we enter the positive assessment in our database: from that moment on, you can submit the **application** for the admission to the final exam.



Completing the PhD - Workflow - 2

- By the end of **October**, the PhD Coordinator delivers the thesis to the **external reviewers**.
- **Within 30 days**, external reviewers should return the thesis along with their comments and requests
- The external reviewers propose the **admission** to public discussion or send the thesis back to the PhD student for **revisions**, to be done in maximum 6 months.
- The thesis must be, in any case, admitted to public discussion, with attached a second review of the reviewers, filled after any corrections and/or additions were made.



Completing the PhD - Workflow - 3

- Following the positive feedback from the reviewers, the Faculty approves the admission to the final exam and appoints a **thesis examination committee** (*commissione giudicatrice*) and sets a date for the final exam, usually within 4 months from the initial submission of the thesis
- The thesis examination committee is composed of **3 members**, except for co-tutelle and other international agreements, which may require specific procedures
- The PhD student sends the final version of the thesis to the Committee, within the date set by the PhD Coordinator or Department Office.



Completing the PhD - Workflow - 4

- Our Office prepares the Rector's decree, sends to the committee information about the final exam's minutes (*verbale*) and publish the details about the Committee's date and place.
- After the final exam, the Committee sends the minutes to our Office. We check and digitally archive them and manage your administrative position: from that moment on, you can download [official certificates and self-certifications](#) to attest your PhD
- The PhD diploma parchment is printed within a few months from the final exam



Focus on: Application for the admission to the final exam

- Complete the ANVUR questionnaire
- After at least 24h, submit the application for the admission to the final exam
- Pay the diploma fee (116 EUR)
- Before sitting the exam, upload the thesis on AIR (the uploading service onto AIR is available 24h after the admission application) and send the *declaratoria*
- Complete the AlmaLaurea questionnaire on Unimia



Do you have any questions or doubts?

You can:

- Write us through [INFORMASTUDENTI](#) > **Postgraduate** > **Doctoral research**
- [Book an appointment](#) with our desk Sportello Dottorati:
 - Every Tuesday 1-3 p.m.: remote appointments: we will call you on the phone (Italian phone numbers only) or via Microsoft Teams
 - Every Thursday 1-3 p.m.: in presence appointments at the Sportello Dottorati, Segreteria Studenti, via Santa Sofia 9/1, Milan.



Useful links and References - 1

- [Completing your doctoral studies | Università degli Studi di Milano Statale \(unimi.it\)](#) - *to be updated*
- [PhDVAS@work - PhD Course in Veterinary and Animal Science \(unimi.it\)](#)
- [Welcome Desk - InformaStudenti | Università degli Studi di Milano Statale \(unimi.it\)](#)
Please select the following category: Postgraduate > Doctoral research (*Postlaurea > Dottorati di ricerca*)
- [Student Desks - Locations and opening hours | Università degli Studi di Milano Statale \(unimi.it\)](#)
- [Certificates and self-certification | Università degli Studi di Milano Statale \(unimi.it\)](#)

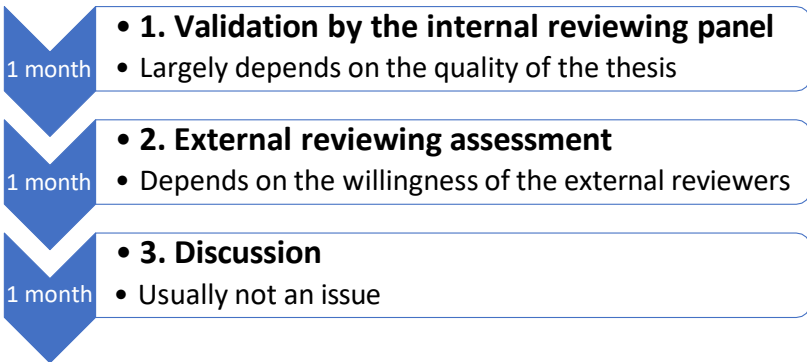


Useful links and References - 2

- [Regolamento d'Ateneo in materia di dottorati di ricerca | Università degli Studi di Milano Statale \(unimi.it\)](#)
- [Decreto Ministeriale n.226 del 14-12-2021 | Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca \(mur.gov.it\)](#)



Timetable/Schedule



“Doctor Europaeus” Mention

It is important for your international profile

To obtain the “Doctor Europaeus” mention, the PhD student must fulfil the following requirements (on the top of the ordinary procedures):

- The two reviewers who evaluate the thesis must be from two different EU countries
- At least one of the members of the Thesis Committee has to belong to a higher education institution from a European country.
- The thesis must be written and defended in English.
- The PhD student went for a secondment to another European country for at least three months, within a stay of at least three months.

European countries mentioned above are referred to as any of the European countries, not only the ones belonging to the European Union (e.g., Switzerland and the UK are included).



Take home message

- Be prepared: procedures are not so complicated, but they may be time consuming when the results of three years of research come together.
- Ask to your supervisor, he is the one who can really help you
- If you have any question, please do ask.



Questions?

