

Institut des sciences de la
communication et de la cognition
Pierre-à-Mazel 7
CH-2000 Neuchâtel
Suisse

*Centre de sciences cognitives
Cognitive science center*

www.unine.ch/islc

Master of Arts (MA) in Cognitive Science Guidelines for the MA thesis

Steps to write a MA thesis:

I. The student contacts the prospective supervisor, who must be a professor from the Institute of Communication and Cognition Sciences (FLSH), and a topic, preferably based on the student's proposal, is established during a first meeting or possibly via email or remotely.

II. The student submits a research plan that includes:

1. A title
2. A one-page summary that explains the research problem and the research question(s)
3. A bibliography

III. Feedback is then provided to the student by the supervisor.

IV. The student conducts the research and writes the thesis independently and consults the supervisor for one or more follow-up meetings if needed.

V. The student submits a first draft of the thesis to the supervisor, who may request revisions for a final version.

VI. Once the supervisor deems the thesis complete, based on the final version, they organize the defense by appointing an examiner. The defense can take place at any time, depending on availability, but no earlier than three weeks after the thesis is accepted as the final version to be defended.

VII. Formal recommendations:

1. The thesis must be written entirely in English. It may be reviewed and edited by an English speaker or using software to ensure excellent readability.
2. The length of the MA thesis is discussed with the supervisor; an experimental research thesis is traditionally shorter than others. The standard length for non-



experimental thesis is a minimum of 60 pages excluding the bibliography and appendices. The thesis is written in Times New Roman 12 pt, with 1.5 line spacing, 2,5 cm margins, and pages numbered in the top right corner.

3. The thesis is automatically checked by specialized software for plagiarism and the use of artificial intelligence. The use of AI is permitted or not at the discretion of the supervisor; if permitted for specific tasks, the relevant sections and reasons for its use must be clearly indicated.
4. The structure is discussed with the supervisor but is typically as follows:
 1. Title page
 2. Acknowledgments
 3. Abstract (1 page)
 4. Table of contents
 5. Introduction, including the research problem and research question(s)
 6. Literature review
 7. Main study
 8. Discussion/conclusions
 9. References
 10. Appendices, if applicable
 11. A declaration of honor (mandatory), available at:
https://www.unine.ch/files/live/sites/systemsite/files/General/Plagiat/Declaration_honneur_fr.pdf

VIII. Before the defense, the supervisor informs the student about the planned proceedings, which typically include:

1. A 15-20 minute presentation by the student on their main findings, what they gained from the work, the reasons for choosing the research problem, the limitations of the work, and its future prospects.
2. The examiner and the supervisor each have 15-20 minutes for their comments and questions.
3. The student withdraws for the deliberation of the supervisor and expert, after which the result is announced; the defense form is transferred to the institute's secretariate for processing. A grade below 4 is considered a failure and requires rewriting the thesis and holding a new defense. The student is allowed two attempts in total.

IX. After a successful defense, and after incorporating any modifications requested during the defense, the student submits one copy of the thesis to the Faculty library and one copy to the Institute library.

