



**POLITECNICO**  
MILANO 1863

SCUOLA DEL DESIGN

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**VADEMECUM**

**Master Thesis / CdLM in Communication Design**

### **0. Premise**

This document aims to guide the student for defining the theme of the Master's Degree thesis and the choice of the supervisor.

Here is collected and provided all the information, useful both for the final year students and for the supervisors, to be followed in the preparation of the Master's Degree in Communication Design of the Design School of the Politecnico di Milano.

Information and extracts from the Regulations necessary for the preparation of the thesis work are also included (see Annex D), while the information relating to the organization of the work (commissions, registration, online delivery, of the graduation exam) for which see the respective Educational Regulations published on the website of the Design School under the heading "Studying design".

Formally the writing of the Master's Degree thesis consists of four phases, which will be illustrated below:

1. acceptance of the thesis;
2. preparation of the thesis;
3. registration, delivery and approval of the master thesis;
4. discussion of the master thesis.

### **1. Acceptance of the thesis**

When choosing and defining the theme of the master's thesis, the student can follow two methods:

- a) choose a thesis in thematic continuity with the final synthesis laboratory (LSF) attended;
- b) choose a thesis theme in a thematic discontinuity with the LSF.

For the choice of the thesis topic the student can formulate, propose and agree on a topic of his / her interest; or consult and choose from the topics published in the Thesis Wall.

To arrange a thesis project with a professor, the student can fill in a form for the presentation of the thesis proposal (Annex A).

The students agree with the supervisor on the program and on the timing of the thesis, discussing its contents during agreed individual meetings.

In some cases, especially when the thesis has strong interdisciplinary characteristics, it is desirable to use a co-supervisor as a consultant on some parts of the thesis that require specific competences (in term of design and / or theory) outside the area covered by the supervisor.

Please note that, as per the Regulations, the thesis work is strictly individual.



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## **2. Writing the thesis**

The theses can be historical, theoretical-critical, with a final design output, research based, experimental, etc.

The student, with the consent of the supervisor, can opt for two different types of thesis:

- Research thesis (which leads to an increase of up to 8 points);
- Consolidation thesis (which leads to an increase up to 4 points).

To give a better understanding of how these two types of thesis differ, let us take the following example. If both theses are of a historical nature, the difference is as follows: (1) the research thesis will propose and explore in an original way, with scientific rigor, a little investigated theme bringing an increase of knowledge with respect to a specific area; (2) the consolidation thesis will instead develop a circumscribed work that focuses on consolidated topics, organizing a part of the already available knowledge.

## **3. Registration, delivery and approval of the master thesis**

Once enrolled in the graduation call agreed with the supervisor, the student must deposit the thesis, in PDF format, through the University online services. After the deposit, the supervisor has three possibilities:

- a) approve the thesis (the approval is equivalent to the validation of the PET: Preparation of the thesis);
- b) temporarily postpone the thesis if it presents some solvable problem (in this case the student still has a few days for a new and definitive deposit);
- c) refuse the thesis if the thesis does not reach the expected level or if it presents problems that cannot be solved in a few days (the refusal involves the withdrawal from the graduation session by the student).

## **4. Discussion of the master thesis**

The final examination consists in the discussion of the thesis prepared by the student under the guidance of the supervisor. The thesis is discussed in one of the Operational Commissions (CO) of the Master Course in Communication Design.

During the discussion the "candidate" can use the digital, audio / video and paper tools necessary to effectively present the summary of the work performed "(see Regulations: <https://www.normativa.polimi.it/>).

As an indication, each graduating student has 10 minutes to present the final work in the case of a consolidation thesis and 20 minutes in the case of a research thesis. At the end of the exhibition, the teachers of the commission can ask the candidate to clarify or deepen questions.

## **5. Evaluation**

Research theses can have an evaluation from -1 to +8 increment points.

Consolidation theses can be evaluated from -1 to +4 increment points. In order to obtain an evaluation cum laude, the final mark formulated by the commission (weighted average and expressed in one hundred and ten plus the increment) must be, before rounding, equal to or greater than 111 (one hundred and eleven) hundred-decimal points. The evaluation cum laude is proposed by a member of the commission and is assigned only and exclusively if all the members agree.



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## **6. Valorization**

Some theses, due to the interest obtained and their relevance to the various research topics of the degree course, will be reported in the specific sections of the website of the master course [www.designdellacomunicazione.polimi.it](http://www.designdellacomunicazione.polimi.it).

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Deposit and thesis assistance (see the Archival and Librarian System page dedicated to the thesis: <http://www.biblio.polimi.it/risorse/deposito--and-assistenza/>)

## **7. Information for students**

Students will be provided with all the necessary information on the timing, on the necessary bureaucratic steps, and on any other modality concerning the preparation and presentation of the Master's thesis. The opportunities to provide these indications are:

- a) a communication in the initial phase of the synthesis laboratory;
- b) an explanatory text available on the CdL website;

In this general information the difference between research thesis and consolidation thesis will be reiterated and indications given on the opportunity of choosing between the two modalities.

## **8. Editing**

The textual part of a research thesis, excluding therefore the images and the other graphic support, must be equivalent to a minimum 100 sheets of A4 format, equal to at least 180,000 characters (including spaces). About 50 sheets of A4 are required for the consolidation thesis.

For the writing of the thesis the students refer to the Pdf document (see the Pdf Annex C - Editorial regulations.pdf) with some minimum editorial rules, which they must follow with care and attention. These rules (taken from the major manuals available) will not in any case be in contradiction with those provided by the Archival and Library System and by other provisions of the School.

For a better overview of editorial work, and for possible consultation, the most important editorial indications concern:

- *how to cite*: illustration of direct quotations through the use of quotation marks and bibliographic reference techniques, according to the author-date system, possibly with the help of explanatory notes;
- *how to paraphrase*: illustration of indirect citations through the synthesis of one or more passages of an author, but with the appropriate references, to corroborate a determined thesis or argument;
- *how to compose the bibliography and sitography*: instructions on how to adopt a bibliographic and citational style that includes all the bibliographic data and that is consistent throughout the thesis, choosing from those indicated by the Archival and Librarian System, in particular APA Style and Chicago Style (Annex C);
- *how to number the different partitions of the thesis*: parts, chapters, paragraphs and subparagraphs;
- *how to compose and number captions (and all other paratextual elements)*: current titles, footnotes, tables and diagrams, etc.;
- *use of italics and small caps* (and, if necessary, of bold, but avoiding the underlined - unless this falls within the choices of graphic design);
- *use of punctuation* (summary scheme with essential rules, online tutorial suggestions).



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TO CONSULT THE UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS

<http://www.biblio.polimi.it>), in particolare:

<http://www.biblio.polimi.it/corsi-e-tutorials/citazioni-e-diritto-dautore/>

<http://www.biblio.polimi.it/corsi-e-tutorials/gestione-bibliografie/>

## **9. Formal structure**

In accordance with the usual book composition, the thesis must follow a standard succession of the first pages (half title page, title page, colophon, index, etc.) and of the last (where the index of the figures, the bibliography, the possible ones will be placed). indexes of names, any glossary, etc.).

Students will be provided with minimum information on the rules for composing the book (especially useful for students who have not attended the three-year course in Communication Design).

These indications will aim to allow a quick but detailed vision of the book's editorial organization. In fact, they will mainly concern the way in which the following parts must be prepared:

- *index or summary*: it must make clear the partition of the thesis: Parties (if there are), Chapters, Paragraphs, Subparagraphs, etc.;
- *abstract* (in Italian and in English): it will have to be understood in particular both the research question and the end to which it aims: from what moves the research, what tools and methods have been used, the results obtained and how these are interpreted and judged;
- *introduction*: unlike the abstract, it must go into more detail in the different parts of the thesis, thus showing the argumentative path and its various steps, with an anticipation of the conclusions;
- *index of the figures*: to be drawn up according to what indicated by the Archival and Librarian System;
- *cover*: contains the editorial information in the first and fourth cover, any implications, etc.

## **10. Argumentative structure (for research theses)**

It is recommended that the thesis is developed starting from the form presented to the professor (see Annex A). This can then be gradually reorganized starting from an argumentative path that includes (not necessarily in the order shown here):

- the declaration of the thematic field of research;
- the formulation of the problem from which the research starts;
- the consequent formulation of the research question;
- the statement of the assumption or main topic of the thesis;
- the development of the various supporting arguments reported (including, for example, case studies, but not only);
- the refutation or discussion of any adverse arguments (if any);
- exposure of research results and proposed design innovation;
- the presentation of the contributions that the research addressed brings to the culture of the project and the design of the communication.

## **11. Argumentative structure (for consolidation theses)**

The consolidation theses, if appropriate, can follow the arguments presented in point 10. However, since this type of thesis aims at "an application-design objective and / or systematization and organization of documentary or bibliographic contents", it is sufficient that the consolidation thesis presents a clear and coherently structured presentation, providing as completely as possible all the reasons for the design choices or the documentary data relating to the chosen topic.



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## **12. Synthetic outline of the thesis**

Undergraduates must print at least two copies of the thesis; they will also have to send a short report in PDF format to the commission, two or three days before the dissertation, which anticipates the contents and structure of the thesis (according to the scheme proposed by Annex B). The purpose of this report is to make it easier for members of the commission to understand the work done.

The report will include:

- title and subtitle of the thesis;
- the abstract (also in a more discursive and in-depth form);
- the most relevant topics addressed;
- an advance on the main conclusions;
- the main bibliographic references;
- images or other materials that can help provide a first but exhaustive idea of the thesis.