

Guidelines Master Thesis Neuropsychology

2017-2018



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1. Overview thesis research and internships within the master Neuropsychology

Master thesis research is separate from other forms of internships in the master, be it clinical or research/innovation internships (see Figure 1 for an overview). Every student has to conduct thesis research and write a master thesis, and, on top of that, has to do an internship, which can be a research or a clinical internship. These guidelines are specific for the master thesis. Students obtain 15 ECTS after finishing their master thesis.

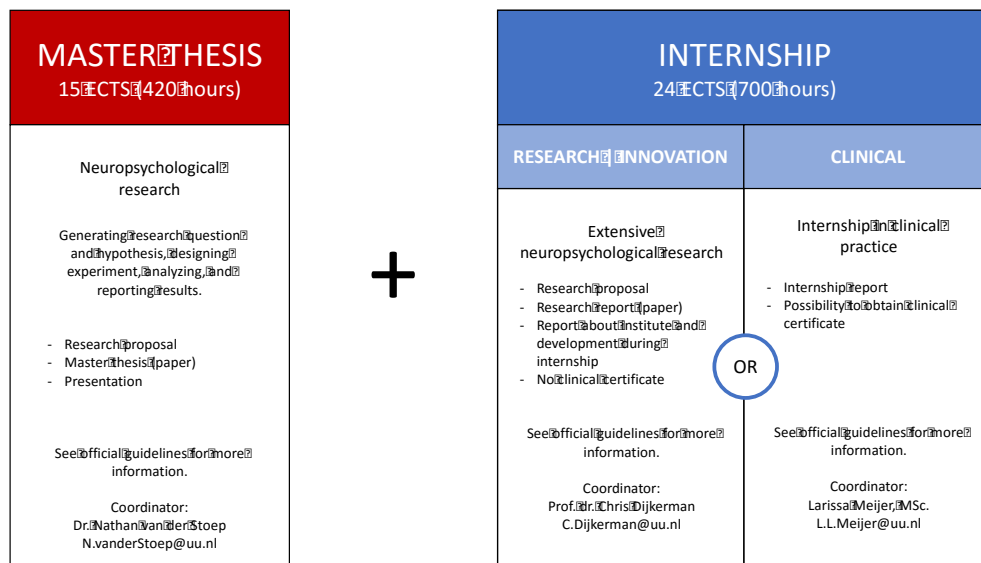


Figure 1. Overview of the master thesis and the two types of internships that are separate from the master thesis.

Goal

After finishing the master thesis the student has gained experience with conducting neuropsychological research.

Content

During the master thesis, the student gains experience with generating a research question and hypotheses, designing an experiment, collecting data, and reporting the results of a neuropsychological study. Thesis research is not limited to experimental studies in a healthy/patient population, but can also be a meta-analysis, for example. When deviating from one of these formats it is important to first discuss this with the coordinator.

2. Learning goals

Communication skills: Interpret, report, and communicate findings of a neuropsychological study.

Organisational skills: Planning a project, scheduling and testing participants.

Academic skills: Critically evaluating, analysing, and structuring information.

Academic abilities: Analysing and evaluating research reports. Generating falsifiable hypotheses. Preparing and conducting research. Collecting and analysing data. Reporting results of a study.

Professional skills: Academic thinking and working as a neuropsychologist. Being able to use scientific research methods in the context of neuropsychological research.

3. Products

To obtain 15 ECTs for your master thesis, the following reports have been handed in and evaluated with at least a 5.5 (overall score) or higher:

- Research proposal (see p. 6)
- Master thesis report (see p. 8)
- Presentation (see p. 8)

As part of the Academic Professional course, students have to present their research proposal or their master thesis results during a poster session (see guidelines Academic Professional for more information).

4. Procedure

De procedure voor het aanmelden en uitvoeren van de thesis is als volgt (tip: print deze pagina uit en gebruik dit als checklist voor jezelf!):



1. Choose a topic on Blackboard (Thesis Neuropsychologie/Course Content/Topics/Internal or /External) and apply for the thesis position by sending an e-mail to the researcher containing a motivation letter and CV.

Note 1: If you found a position on Blackboard under external topics, you need a secondary supervisor from Utrecht University, department of Experimental Psychology in addition to the

supervisor at the institute. You can request a supervisor by contacting the master thesis coordinator. Most external positions and patient positions will require Dutch language proficiency because of contact with Dutch patients.

Note 2: If you found a potential master thesis position on your own (i.e. not via Blackboard), first discuss this position with the coordinator. You should not start without approval.

2. Once you found a position, you can start writing your research proposal with help from your supervisors. Upload your proposal before one of the two deadlines (see p. 6). See p. 6 and 12 for the research proposal format.

3. Wait for formal approval in Osiris from the master thesis coordinator and revise the research proposal if needed. You can start your project if your supervisors are satisfied with the proposal before receiving formal approval.

4. Hand in your master thesis with your supervisors and schedule a final presentation or meeting + Upload thesis on blackboard for plagiarism check. See p. 8 for the guidelines of the final report.

5. Make a poster and present it for the Academische Professional course.

5. Choosing a topic

A list with available topics will be made available on Blackboard in the folder Thesis Neuropsychologie/Course Content/Topics/Internal or /External. If you do not have access to this course when you should have, you can e-mail the master thesis coordinator to add you to the course.

Internal: Supervisors are researchers associated with the department of Experimental Psychology, Utrecht University.

External: Supervisors are researchers associated with an external institute (e.g. GGZ Centraal, VUmc). In this case you need a secondary supervisor from the department of Experimental Psychology, Utrecht University. You can request a supervisor by contacting the master thesis coordinator.

6. Supervision

Each student has the right to be supervised in a good way. Students can expect the supervisor to provide feedback on their research proposal, performance, and master thesis report, and help out during the research process. Students are expected to invest in the research project and communicate their progress and report any issues/obstacles during their research in a timely manner to their supervisors so they can help out. In the rare case that communicating with the supervisor is problematic students can contact the master thesis coordinator for help. The supervisor from Utrecht University is responsible for handling all the necessary forms. If the master thesis coordinator is the supervisor from Utrecht University, the neuropsychology program coordinator or another senior staffmember of the department of Experimental Psychology can be contacted.

Students can expect supervision on the following topics, which will also be evaluated:

- **Content:** Generating a research question, hypotheses, appropriately framing the question in the context of the literature on the topic, theoretical relevance.
- **Method:** Experimental design, creating the experiment, prepare data for analysis, data analysis.
- **Report:** Feedback on drafts of the master thesis report to make sure the final thesis is written in line with international standards of a research paper.
- **Process:** Monitoring and supervising the progress of the project and helping out when running into obstacles.

7. The research proposal

Before starting their thesis research students have to write a research proposal under supervision of their thesis supervisors. The research proposal needs to be uploaded using the following link: [click here](#).

There are two deadlines for handing in your research propopsal:

Deadline Round 1: Before 31 October 2017 om 23.59

Deadline Round 2: Before 6 March 2018 om 23.59

Research proposals submitted after a deadline will be evaluated in the next round. Formal approval of the research proposal by the master thesis coordinator is required to pass the course.

Format

Proposals should have the following format. Proposals that do not follow the format will not be evaluated. It may be a good idea to bring the research proposal format with you when discussing the study design with your supervisors.

Length: Max 5 pages A4, Excluding title page and references. Times New Roman, font size 12, line spacing 1.5.

Content: The proposal should describe the scientific and/or practical relevance of the study, the methods, analysis plan, and timetable of the proposed study. Students should use the future tense given that this is a research proposal and the study has not yet been conducted.

Title page: Provide a title, student name, student number, name of supervisor(s). See Appendix B.

Introduction: Give a concise description of the theoretical background of the study leading to the research question and the hypotheses.

Methods: It should be clear from the description that the study is well-designed and realistic. Required materials, design, and type of data being collected should be made clear.

Note: In some cases students collect neuropsychological data from a (slightly) different study, while using neuropsychological data from an already existing database. If this is the case, this has to be explicitly mentioned in the research proposal.

Timetable: A brief overview of the time plan of the project. This is a 1-year master program and students are expected to finish their master within this year. The final grade of the thesis needs to be registered at the end of July if students want to graduate in August. Take 10 workdays into account to allow supervisors to evaluate the master thesis.

References: A list of used references, APA style.

Style: Student should stick to the APA guidelines for the layout of the thesis and reference style. See: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

8. The master thesis report

The master thesis is written in English and has the form of a manuscript for a scientific article according to APA guidelines. A different manuscript and reference style can be used after discussing this with the supervisors (e.g. Vancouver style).

Research manuscripts should follow these guidelines:

Length: Max. 8000 words in total (aim for ~4000).

Title page: Provide a title, student name, student number, name of supervisor(s). See Appendix B.

Abstract: Max. 250 words.

Introduction: Give a description of the theoretical background of the study leading to the research question and the hypotheses.

Methods: Detailed description of participants/patients, materials, design, procedure, data processing steps, data analysis.

Results: Clear report of the results of the study describing the analysis results and using relevant figures and table to communicate the results.

Discussion: Discussion of the findings of the study in the context of the literature, discussing theoretical and practical implications of the results.

Conclusion: A final conclusion of the study.

References: An overview of the literature cited in the manuscript. Sources should consist of scientific literature (peer-reviewed published papers).

Appendices: Bijvoorbeeld vragenlijsten of extra analyses, tabellen, grafieken.

9. Presentation

Students can discuss with their supervisor(s) whether they would like to give a presentation or have a final interview regarding the master thesis project. The presentation or interview should take about 15 minutes (+ 10 minutes for questions). Students should use slides during their presentation. Presentations can be part of a (lab)meeting of one of the supervisors.

10. Grading

The master thesis report needs to be handed in before the end of June to allow some time for grading and a possible do-over/revision of the thesis report. The thesis will be graded both by the main supervisor and the second supervisor or another staffmember of the department of experimental psychology. The main supervisor will grade all aspects of the thesis including theoretical insight, research skills, work attitude, and the final presentation

See Blackboard Course Content/Forms/Master Thesis Neuropsychology Grading Form 2017-2018 for more information on all aspects of grading (see Appendix A for more).

The master thesis grading form and the master thesis report have to be uploaded by the Utrecht University supervisor via this link: [click here](#). The master thesis coordinator will register the grade in Osiris only after the thesis has formally passed the plagiarism check done by the coordinator. Upload your thesis on Blackboard/Assignments to let it be checked for plagiarism.

11. Important guidelines on passing the course

To ensure finishing the master thesis within the time given, please take into account the following guidelines and regulations:

- The student and supervisor create a realistic timetable for the project and determine a deadline for handing the final master thesis report together. This timetable and deadline are written down in the research proposal.
- In the period described in the timetable, the student has the right to be supervised on the topics mentioned at p. 5.
- Under certain circumstances can the deadline be changed, if this is discussed with the supervisor and coordinator in a timely manner.
- When the deadline for handing in the master thesis report has passed, it is not possible to improve an already evaluated master thesis report.
- If the master thesis had not been finished within the period agreed upon, or if the final master thesis is of insufficient quality after handing the the thesis for a final evaluation, a grade below 5.5 will be given (schale 1-10) and students do not pass the course.
- If a student does not pass the course, the student has the right to revise the report one more time, after having discussed and agreed upon the (limited) amount of additional supervision, a deadline, and points to improve.
- If a revision of thesis, after not passing the course, is still unsatisfactory, the student loses the right to be supervised and the supervisor is no longer obligated to supervise the

student. The student may pass the course only after discussing with the master thesis coordinator under which terms and conditions passing the course is still possible.

- If a student believes a delay is caused by lack of supervision, despite discussing this with the supervisor, the student reports this to the master thesis coordinator or, if the master thesis coordinator is the supervisor, the neuropsychology program coordinator or another senior staffmember. The coordinator discusses the situation with the student and supervisor and reports on possible consequences and solutions.

12. Questions about the master thesis

If you have questions about the master thesis after having read the guidelines and asked other students for help, feel free to post your question on the Discussion Board on Blackboard. The master thesis coordinator will not answer questions by e-mail, with the exception of questions that are of personal nature and not suitable for posting on the public Discussion Board. In that case you can also make an appointment and come by the office of the master thesis coordinator. Contact information of the master thesis coordinator can be found on Blackboard under Staff Information.

Appendix A: Guidelines for grading

The final grade for the master thesis is a weighted average of the grades on:

Theoretical insight (20%): Insight into the issue the research addresses, understanding the the research questions in the context of the literature on the topic, etc.

Research skills (20%): Design and execution of the study, analysing data.

Work attitude (10%): Evaluation of the student's independence, creativity, proactivity, and problem solving skills. Did the student develop?

Presentation (10%): Presenting the results of the study in a final presentation or final discussion.

Quality of the thesis report (40%):

General: Is the thesis well-structured and easy to read? Is the layout good? Is there a clear distinction between own thoughts and those of others (i.e. are sources cited properly)? Does the idea or finding contribute anything to the literature or does it provide new insights in theory or practical situations? Is the research ok, good, or excellent?

Title page and abstract: Is the title appropriate? Does abstract cover all relevant aspects and a clear conclusion of the study?

Introduction: Is there a clear line of reasoning based on existing literature leading to the hypotheses? Is the research question and are the hypotheses explained clearly?

Methods: Are the methods clearly described and is an exact replication of the study possible based on the information in the methods section? Are the methods sound and allow them to answer the research question? Are the data analysis steps and statistical analyses clearly described?

Results: Is the data correctly analyzed, reported, and interpreted? Are figures and/or tables helpful and necessary?

Discussion, including conclusions and implications: Are the conclusions supported by the data and are the results discussed in the context of the literature? Are the results and their theoretical and practical implications critically evaluated (strength and weaknesses)?

Literature: Are papers properly cited and the reference list in line with APA guidelines?

Appendix: Are all relevant materials added in the appendix (e.g. questionnaires)?

Appendix B: Format title page research proposal and thesis



Title of the thesis

Master thesis Neuropsychology
Utrecht University

Name: John Doe

Studentnumber: 123456

Supervisor(s):

Name and title first supervisor

Name and title second supervisor

