

Course manual
Joint Master's Programme in
International Humanitarian Action

All universities

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Master Thesis Guide

Last semester



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

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Credits:

Aix-Marseille	15 ECTS (minimum of 375 hours)
Bochum	30 ECTS (750 hours including optional internship)
Deusto	15 ECTS (minimum of 375 hours)
Dublin	30 ECTS (750 hours including optional internship)
Groningen	20 ECTS (minimum of 460 internship hours)
Louvain	20 ECTS (minimum of 400 internship hours)
Uppsala	30 ECTS (minimum of 750 hours)

Period:

Last semester

1. Introduction

The Master Thesis is a compulsory element of the fourth component (Research and Internship, 30 ECTS) of the NOHA Joint Master's Degree in International Humanitarian Action to be completed during the last semester. It is a requirement for obtaining the Master's degree. In order to present the Master Thesis and receive a final grade, students should have successfully passed all first and second semester courses (60 ECTS).

The Master Thesis is a scholarly written report that substantiates a specific point of view as a result of original research carried out by a student on an agreed issue that falls within the humanitarian action study programme. The thesis must be written under the guidance of a first supervisor. There is some flexibility in the format of the Master Thesis. Nevertheless an agreed format for a NOHA Joints Master's Degree thesis should be adhered to as set out in this course guide.

In general, the objective of the NOHA Master Thesis is to show that students are able to put the knowledge, skills and competences acquired in the NOHA programme into practice. As the final element in the master's degree, the thesis gives the student an opportunity to demonstrate acquired expertise in the chosen research area.

2. Learning outcomes

In conformity with the learning outcomes set out by the NOHA network, the participants in the thesis module should achieve the following learning outcomes by the end of the module:

- Has been able to choose and find a topic for relevant humanitarian research.
- Has demonstrated the capacity to orientate on a research topic, structure the research project and formulate research questions with accompanying sub questions, and/or hypotheses.
- Has demonstrated the capacity to choose methodology correctly.
- Has demonstrated the ability to use in a scientific manner scientific methods to deal with a problem in the field of humanitarian action or assistance.
- Has demonstrated the capacity to find appropriate primary and secondary sources and to do proper research according to the standards of scientific working procedures.
- Has demonstrated the capacity to select relevant and reliable sources of information and use them correctly.
- Has demonstrated sound critical thinking in the analysis and assessment of a particular humanitarian research subject and its related academic debates.
- Has demonstrated the ability to theorize on the Master thesis subject with regard to the broader context of humanitarian action.
- Has demonstrated the capacity to draw conclusions in a systematic way and formulate recommendations based on the research undertaken.
- Has demonstrated the ability to summarize and present one's research findings and limits of one's research project to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

3. Teaching and learning methodology

All students who wish to obtain credit points for their NOHA Master Thesis should make sure that the following stages have been fulfilled:

1. Assignment of a first supervisor by the home university and a second supervisor by the host university.

2. Meeting between the first supervisor and the student for the development of the proposal.
3. Approval of the Master Thesis proposal by the first supervisor and the second supervisor.
4. Review of the student's work in progress during the research process. Principal responsibility for this lies with the first supervisor. It includes at least two individual tutorial meetings to follow the phases of completion of the Master Thesis, specifically:
 - a. an interim review during the research and writing process
 - b. a review of the final draft
5. After approval of the final draft by the first supervisor, the second supervisor needs to give approval before the Master Thesis can be considered completed.
6. Submission of the approved NOHA Master Thesis via NOHA Blackboard.

Depending on national regulations the following requirement may also be part of the formal stages to be fulfilled:

- Oral defence (either before or after the submission of the Master's thesis).

4. Programme and training activities

The following time-frame is applicable for the 90 ECTS NOHA Master's Programme as a minimum. The home university may set additional guidelines, such as for the oral defence.

November-January	<p>Orientation: choosing a topic</p> <p>In this phase students start to orientate themselves on their thesis topic. This phase should result in a small paper (around 2 pages) in which the students write down a preliminary thesis topic that interest them and compose a list of relevant literature of a minimum of 5 academic publications.</p>
January-April	<p>Writing a thesis research proposal</p> <p>In this phase, students start working on a thesis research plan, which will be the input for the introduction of their thesis. A template form for the thesis research proposal and what it should contain is available via NOHA Blackboard.</p> <p>The first supervisor can be consulted on a draft of a student's proposal during this process.</p>
30 April	<p>Deadline submission thesis research proposal to NOHA Blackboard.</p>
End of May	<p>The home university and the host university assign the first and second supervisor. Both the first and the second supervisor need to give their formal approval to the thesis research proposal.</p>

June-November

Thesis research and writing

In this phase, students are actually conducting research and writing the thesis. Background literature is read and the theoretical framework is formulated. In addition, research is conducted through desk research, primary data collection, and the subsequent analysis of primary or secondary data.

After this, the results of the analysis are written down in the Master thesis: the Master thesis is a scientific report on the results of the research.

The students regularly submit draft texts (chapters) to their first supervisor so that the first supervisor can comment on the student's work and progress. Students are strongly advised to keep the thesis writing process as much as possible separated from their internship activities in order to prevent having a double full-time workload.

For those students who go on third semester exchange to NOHA Mundus partners outside Europe, the thesis proposal will complement the research plan at the NOHA Mundus partner. Consequently, this may require additional coordination activities for the student vis-à-vis the supervisors.

30 November midnight

Ultimate deadline for submission of the final draft to NOHA Blackboard

N.B.: If an **oral defence** is required, the **deadline** at your university may be set earlier.

Before this deadline, the student has discussed already more than one draft version of the thesis with the first supervisor. Via uploading on NOHA Blackboard, the level of plagiarism is automatically checked. In case of doubts you will be informed on further procedures.

December

Corrections and oral defence (if applicable)

During this period final feedback from the first supervisor and the second supervisor, and if applicable the oral defence, should be incorporated into the thesis.

31 December
Midnight

Deadline for submission of the revised Master Thesis (if applicable) to NOHA Blackboard

5. Workload

Depending on national regulations and taking into consideration students' prior experience and their future career prospects, the weight given to the Master Thesis within the fourth component of the Master's programme varies from 30 ECTS (Ruhr-University of Bochum, the University College Dublin and Uppsala University) to 20 ECTS (Université Catholique de Louvain and the University of Groningen) and 15 ECTS (Aix Marseille Université and the University of Deusto).

Therefore this course guide sets the minimum format for the thesis, while the length of the thesis is decided by each NOHA University according to the average workload associated with the process of writing a Master Thesis work. The minimum length of the Master thesis can be calculated as follows:

- Writing a minimum of 1,200 words for your Master thesis is considered equivalent to 1 ECTS or 25 hours of workload.

For instance, a Master Thesis of 15 ECTS should have at least a length of 18,000 words for the introduction, chapters and conclusion. In case the thesis and internship are counted as one module, then the workload dedicated solely to the internship can be deducted from the workload for the Master thesis, on the condition of approval by your home university.

6. Format requirements

Language

The Master Thesis should be written and presented in the language of instruction of your home university (English, French or Spanish) or in another NOHA language of instruction as agreed with your NOHA home director and supervisors.

Contents

A Master Thesis should at least contain the following elements:

- A title page with:
 - the main title and possible subtitle;
 - the name of the author;
 - the month and year of conclusion;
 - the names of the supervisors and their universities;
 - the NOHA logo;
 - the following text:

This thesis is submitted for obtaining the Joint Master's Degree in International Humanitarian Action. By submitting the thesis, the author certifies that the text is from his own hand, does not include the work of someone else unless clearly indicated, and that the thesis has been produced in accordance with proper academic practices.
- An abstract: the abstract states the problem, describes the methods and procedures used, and gives the main results or conclusions of the research. It should not exceed 500 words in length.
- A table of contents: it should contain page numbers for every item included; titles in the table of contents should correspond literally to those of the headings of the text.
- A preface (optional): the preface usually contains your motivation why you wrote your thesis and words of appreciation or thanks to people who have inspired or supported you during the writing process.
- An introduction, which should describe:
 - the problem of your research;
 - the aims and research objective;
 - the research question;
 - the set of sub questions or hypotheses underpinning your research;
 - the justification for your research by highlighting the importance and relevance of your research angle for academia and the humanitarian field;
 - the research setup which explains your approach, your selected methods of research (data collection, field work, literature research), your sources and the research structure (make sure that you justify your choices);
 - the limitations of your research setup.
- Main text, which can be subdivided into: chapters (which include their own introductions and conclusions), sections, and subsections. Commonly the main text consists out of:
 - A theoretical/conceptual chapter, which includes a literature review of the theoretical angle you choose for your thesis as well as the construction of a conceptual framework and/or hypotheses.
 - Empirical chapters, by which is meant the part of the thesis that reports on the results of your analysis by means of the conceptual part of the thesis, addressing the sub questions of your overarching research question. The empirical chapters can be based on document analysis, but also on your own research conducted in the field. It is useful to answer one sub question per chapter, if relevant.
- Conclusions: summarize the main research results and present the conclusions you have

reached by:

- Explaining the answers to the questions posed in the introduction.
- Giving a final general conclusion (both empirically and theoretically).
- Pointing out the constraints and limits of your study with regard to methodology and conceptual framework.
- If applicable: providing lessons and recommendations for the humanitarian and academic community.
- Bibliography: list of consulted sources (ordered alphabetically by last name of the author), cases and decisions.
- Appendices (if applicable).
- A list of abbreviations /acronyms (often also placed after the table of contents). Names of institutions, journals, states, etc. should always be written in full the first time with the abbreviation or acronym in brackets, and afterwards you provide only the abbreviation or acronym.

Size and format

- Paper size: A4.
- Text must be in 12 point font for the body text, 10 point for footnotes.
- Line-spacing: 1.5 spaced, except for footnotes (single-space footnotes, with double spacing to separate one note from the next).
- Margins: 2.5 cm at top and bottom; 3 cm for left and right margin.
- Page numbering: lower right-hand side of each page.
- Chapters should each start on a new page. Chapters and sub sections should be numbered.
- Titles of papers, parts, chapters, sections, subsections, etc. do not end with a full stop or period (or any other punctuation mark except perhaps a question mark) and should be substantial and should preferably fit on one line.
- Graphs, schemes and pictures can be proper information sources. Number them, give them a proper title and refer to the source.
- Italics: only for foreign words, book/journal titles, headings. No quotations in italics.
- Boldface: Only for the thesis title and for headings.

References

There are many different systems of citing references but they can be grouped in two main types: inserted in the text or in footnotes/endnotes. The different styles or systems of organising references and citations are often referred to by a name such as "Harvard", "Oxford", "Chicago Manual of style" or "name-year system".

In-text Harvard author-date system is the most widely used in humanitarian studies and provides a precise system of reference. Other systems used in humanitarian studies are the Oxford (footnotes) and the Chicago systems. Short instructions, but direct referral to a comprehensive web-source on these systems can be found at:

- Harvard System of Referencing is for instance used in the journal *Disasters*, the *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, the journal *Development* and the *World Conference on Humanitarian Studies*. See for detailed explanations on the in-text Harvard author-date system: <http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>
- Oxford footnote system from the Refugee Survey Quarterly (Oxford): http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/refqtl/for_authors/index.html
- Chicago Manual of Style with endnotes from the *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*: <http://sites.tufts.edu/jha/submission-guidelines>

Students can choose any of the three styles suggested as long as it is used in a consistent and appropriate way and is accepted by your first supervisor/home university.

Beware of plagiarism!

Please be warned that plagiarism (using ideas or copying text from someone without providing a proper reference) is not allowed and is considered a ‘mortal sin’ in the academic community with grave consequences during your studies or in some cases even during your career afterwards. Sometimes it can even mean infringement of intellectual property rights and copyright laws with the risk of becoming legally prosecuted. You can prevent this easily by providing a complete bibliography of sources used, in combination with an adequately implemented referencing system throughout your text. Please also note that auto-plagiarism (copying earlier texts from your own hand without a proper reference) is not accepted either. Upon submission of texts to NOHA Blackboard, an automatic check against plagiarism and auto-plagiarism is executed.

7. Assessment criteria

The student must demonstrate that he or she has achieved the above mentioned learning outcomes provided by the development of a Master Thesis which is to be submitted in writing and in electronic format according to the workload associated with the process of writing a Master Thesis at the NOHA home university of the student. As a minimum standard, writing 1,200 words is considered the equivalent to 1 ECTS. In some NOHA Universities it is also required according to national legislation to present the master thesis and provide an oral defence before an evaluation court.

The final grade for the module will be determined on the basis of the criteria mentioned in the “NOHA Master Thesis Assessment Form”. Both the first and the second supervisor will assess the Master Thesis on the basis of these criteria and after having reached mutual agreement, the supervisors will provide a joint written justification through the means of the “NOHA Master Thesis Assessment Form”. Grades can be deducted for excessive supervision and not meeting with agreed deadlines.