



UNIVERSITÀ
DI PAVIA

Your graduation journey: thesis kickstart

Session 1 · Tutoring activity for Master's students

MSc in Psychology, Neuroscience and Human Sciences (PNH) · University of Pavia

Tutor: Federica Salmaso

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Welcome

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Types of theses

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Supervisor and
search

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Integrity and
defense

Today's agenda

Part	Content	Time
1	Welcome and overview of the thesis journey	15 min
2	Types of theses and choosing your path	30 min
3	Finding a supervisor, a topic and bibliographical search	30 min
4	Official guidelines, formatting and writing best practices	30 min
5	Critical rules, academic integrity and Q&A	15 min

Total: about 2 hours

Welcome and the graduation journey

- Writing your thesis is a major milestone of your Master's degree
- The project can take up to one year: begin planning and identifying your path near the end of your first year
- Master's theses are often embedded in larger, ongoing research projects developed by your supervisor and their research team
- Always clearly distinguish your individual contribution
- Discuss any future presentation or publication with your supervisor before taking action

Who owns what?

You: your specific sub-project or analysis

The laboratory: the overarching ideas, methodology and data



Professional relationship and working rules

1. Follow the work plan

- At the start, your supervisor gives you a work plan and a timeline
- Stick to it and follow requests through to completion
- Changing supervisor: only in exceptional, justified circumstances

2. Do not disappear

- Keep regular contact and update your supervisor step by step
- Working in isolation and showing up with a complete draft at the very end is not allowed
- It leads to severe delays

3. Plan ahead for reviews

- Supervisors need enough time to read, correct and give feedback
- Never expect immediate turnarounds
- Review and integrate all corrections before submitting a new draft

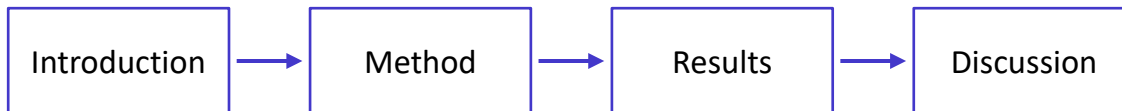
4. Use your institutional email

- For all official communications use @unipv.it or @universitadipavia.it
- Do not use personal addresses

Experimental vs bibliographic/theoretical thesis

Experimental thesis

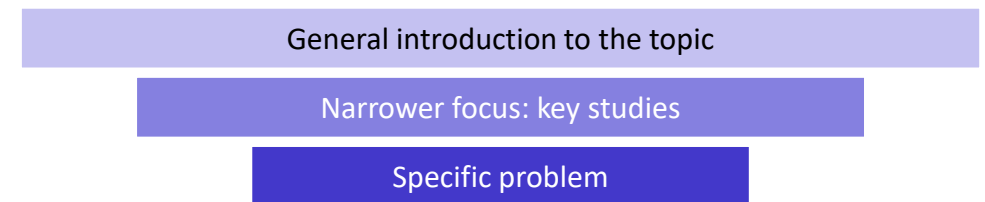
- Follows a precise scheme, similar to a scientific article
- Empirical research with quantitative or qualitative tests, using scientific methods and analysis software
- Emphasis on empirical data, participant characteristics, tools and data analysis



Structure of an experimental thesis

Bibliographic/theoretical thesis

- Collects, synthesizes and reworks the scientific literature on a specific topic
- Highlights critical points and suggests future research directions
- It is not just a set of summaries
- Hourglass structure: from a general introduction to a specific problem, logically connecting studies



Hourglass structure: from general to specific

Deep dive: systematic reviews and meta-analyses (experimental thesis)

Goal: evaluate the state of the art systematically

- Identify strengths and weaknesses in the existing literature
- Link studies together chronologically or thematically, using clear transitional phrasing
- Present a personal commentary aimed at filling the research gaps you identified

Useful transitional phrases

- *“To overcome this inconvenience, other authors...”*
- *“In the following years...”*

Evaluation criteria (both types of thesis)

- 1 Work autonomy
- 2 Originality
- 3 Systematic bibliographic research
- 4 Logical-lexical skills

Finding a supervisor and a topic

When	Near the end of your first year, look for a type of thesis and a project to work on
Where	Search the Psychology, Neuroscience and Human Sciences (PNH) website for professors and topics
Who	Contact professors whose active research matches your specific field of interest
How	Be proactive, professional and clear about your motivations

PNH website: <https://psychology.cdl.unipv.it/en/graduating/final-thesis>

External supervisors

You may choose an external professor (someone who does not teach a formal course in this Master) as your thesis supervisor...

...provided an internal faculty member acts as your official supervisor or co-supervisor

The list of lecturers and their research topics follows on the next slides.

Lecturers and research topics (1/5)

Lecturer	Research topics	Contact
Bambini Valentina	Experimental pragmatics, pragmatic language disorder in clinical populations, pragmatics in children and older adults, behavioral and electrophysiological correlates of pragmatic abilities, relationship between pragmatics and Theory of Mind, metaphor and humor in communication	valentina.bambini@iusspavia.it
Barello Serena	Health psychology and communication (patient–doctor communication, stigma and health-related language, patient advocacy); patient/public engagement and decision making (shared decision making, PROMs/PREMs, citizen science); healthcare systems and professionals (healthcare professionals' identity); digital health and innovation (AI in healthcare communication); public health psychology and behavioural change (climate change and health, vaccine hesitancy, antimicrobial stewardship)	serena.barello@unipv.it
Bottini Gabriella	Neurophysiological and pathological aspects of body representation, Unilateral Spatial Neglect, body awareness and interoception, metaphor interpretation, dementia, neurolaw, exploration of cognitive functioning through functional neuroimaging, electrodermal activity, tDCS, Caloric Vestibular Stimulation	g.bottini@unipv.it
Canessa Nicola	Behavioral, neuroimaging and neuromodulation studies in healthy individuals; areas of interest: neuroeconomics, social neuroscience	nicola.canessa@iusspavia.it
Casellato Claudia	Computational neuroscience, cerebellum, neural networks, spiking, sensorimotor tasks, plasticity and learning	claudia.casellato@unipv.it
Castelli Fulvia	Theory of mind, empathy, social cognition, suicide prevention, couple relationship and infidelity, ASD in women	fulvia.castelli@unipv.it

Lecturers and research topics (2/5)

Lecturer	Research topics	Contact
Catricalà Eleonora	Language and semantic memory in healthy participants and neurodegenerative patients; behavioural, neuromodulation and imaging studies	eleonora.catricala@iusspavia.it francesca.conca@iusspavia.it
Cerami Chiara	Digital and remote neuropsychology, digital cognitive rehabilitation, impact of digital technologies on dementia care systems, behavioral interaction data (e.g. gaze, voice) as cognitive markers in neurocognitive disorders, cognitive phenotyping in dementia	chiara.cerami@iusspavia.it
Chesi Cristiano	Computational modeling of linguistic processing, computational complexity and difficulty perceived in language understanding and production, linguistic acquisition and degeneration	cristiano.chesi@iusspavia.it
Chierchia Gabriele Sam	Decision making, development, adolescence, cooperation, behavioural economics, computational modelling, social behaviour and social development	gabrielesam.chierchia@unipv.it
Ferrari Chiara	Social cognition, empathy, mentalizing, emotional perception and regulation, TMS, tDCS, tACS	chiara.ferrari@unipv.it
Ferreri Laura	Music cognition studies on reward, emotion, learning, and memory processes	laura.ferreri@iusspavia.it

Lecturers and research topics (3/5)

Lecturer	Research topics	Contact
Gandola Martina	Behavioural, neuromodulation (tDCS and TMS), and fMRI studies in body representation and spatial cognition, anatomical studies in patients with spatial neglect, deficits of motor awareness and body ownership	gandola@unipv.it
Greco Matteo Paolo	Theoretical linguistics, experimental syntax, eye-tracking methodology, self-paced reading paradigm	matteo.greco@iusspavia.it
Lavazza Andrea	Neuroethics, bioethics, memory modulation, human enhancement, cerebral organoids, neurolaw, ethics of neurotechnology	andrea.lavazza@unipv.it
Lecce Serena	Theory of mind in children, adolescents, adults and older adults, socio-cognitive training, social relationships, social media, executive functions, social communication, conversations	serena.lecce@unipv.it serenamaria.stagnitto01@universitadi pavia.it
Lega Carlotta	Music cognition, sensorimotor processes, brain stimulation, time perception	carlotta.lega@unipv.it
Lionetti Francesca	Environmental sensitivity/differential susceptibility, socio-emotional development, parenting, attachment, individual-environment interaction	francesca.lionetti@unipv.it

Lecturers and research topics (4/5)

Lecturer	Research topics	Contact
Mascheretti Sara	Specific learning disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, neurobiological correlates	sara.mascheretti@unipv.it sara.mascheretti@gmail.com
Mattavelli Giulia	Neuromodulation, electroencephalography and behavioral studies in healthy individuals; areas of interest: eating behaviour, decision-making and reward, inhibitory control	giulia.mattavelli@iusspavia.it
Pischedda Doris	Multiscale brain modeling, schizophrenia, Parkinson's disease, fMRI, Brain Digital Twins	doris.pischedda@unipv.it
Provenzi Livio	Behavioral epigenetics, biobehavioral synchrony, blindness and low-vision, developmental disability, family-centered intervention, parent-infant interaction, preterm birth, stress regulation, video-feedback intervention	livio.provenzi@unipv.it
Rinaldi Luca	Semantic memory, distributional semantic models, language statistics, associative learning, embodied cognition, spatial representations, numerical cognition, time representation, sensorimotor experience	luca.rinaldi@unipv.it

Lecturers and research topics (5/5)

Lecturer	Research topics	Contact
Russo Riccardo	Impact of brain neuromodulation on cognitive functioning in young and elderly people as well as on cognitive aging, particularly with respect to decision-making	riccardo.russo@unipv.it
Salvato Gerardo	Body representation in healthy and pathological brain, thermoregulation and thermoception, interoception, memory-guided attention, decision-making, neuropsychology, dementia, stroke, epilepsy, functional and structural MRI, physiological measures	gerardo.salvato@unipv.it
Santosuosso Amedeo	Neuroethics, artificial intelligence and neuroscience, ethical aspects of brain-computer interfaces, speech acts, neurotechnologies	a.santosuosso@unipv.it
Sereni Andrea	Epistemology, theory of knowledge, philosophy of language, philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of logic	andrea.sereni@iusspavia.it
Tomasetta Alfredo	Philosophy of science, (in)formal logic, philosophy of mind, philosophical theories of consciousness, personal identity, mind and self in classical Indian philosophy	alfredo.tomasetta@iusspavia.it

Mastering bibliographical searches

Why scientific articles?

- Up-to-date information
- Complete information
- Varied information
- Diverse points of view

How to access databases

- PsycInfo, PubMed, Scopus, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar
- Cannot find an article? Request it through the **NILDE UNIPV** service
 - <https://biblioteche.unipv.it/home/servizi/fornitura-articoli>
- Free on the university Wi-Fi
- From home: activate the UNIPV Proxy
 - Unipv › Ateneo › Libraries › Resources › Databases

Search strategies

- Identify specific keywords
- Search by main authors
- Scan the reference lists of recent reviews and meta-analyses
- Track citation counts

Managing your references

Do not manage references manually: use a reference manager from day one

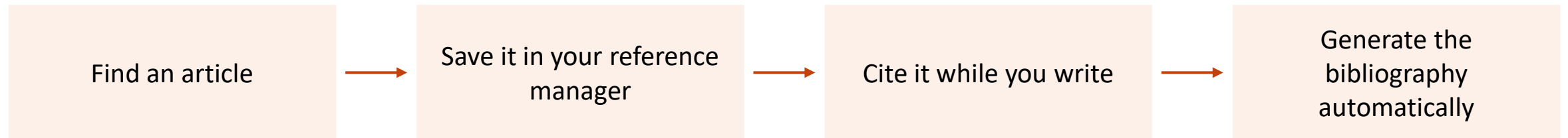
Mendeley

EndNote

Zotero

Google Drive (structured)

A simple workflow



Benefit: you will save an immense amount of time when formatting your final bibliography.

General formatting rules

~100

pages, excluding attachments
and appendices

12 pt

body text, Times New Roman or
Arial

1.5 or 2

line spacing

2.5 or 3 cm

margins

Quality over quantity

- More pages does not mean a better thesis
- A short, well-organized thesis with clear, logically structured parts is always preferred

Acronyms

- First time: write the term in full, with the acronym in parentheses
 - Afterwards: use only the acronym
- e.g. "Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)... later: MCI"*

Structure of the manuscript: front matter

Front page

- University logo and name
- Department and degree course
- Thesis title and subtitle
- Student name and registration number
- Supervisor and co-supervisor names
- Academic year

Abstract

- Short: 150–300 words
- Method
- Objectives
- Conclusions
- Keywords

Introduction

- Justify the existence of your work
- Highlight a “niche” (a gap in the literature) to be filled
- Explain your objectives
- Briefly outline how the thesis is articulated

Typical order of an experimental thesis



Experimental structure: method, results and discussion

Method

Participants: sample size, demographics, recruitment

Procedure: conditions, instructions, duration

Tools / questionnaires: cite original and Italian versions; constructs, number of items, sub-dimensions, Likert scales, examples

Results

Descriptives: means, standard deviations

Tests: ANOVA, t-tests, correlations, regressions, chi-square, in standard format

Format: italicize test names, report degrees of freedom and precise p-values

Graphs and tables: always with captions; never repeat table data in the text

e.g. $F(2, 57) = 4.31, p = .018$

Discussion and conclusion

Goals: revisit your initial goals and hypotheses

Interpretation: read your data against the literature

Evaluation: outline strengths and weaknesses

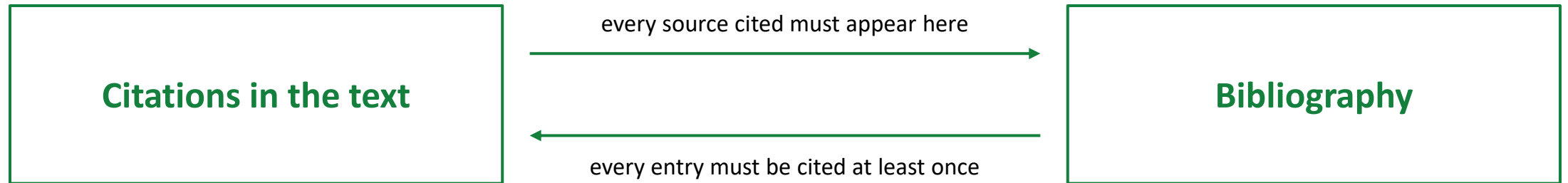
Future: propose future research directions

Conclusion: summarize your main achievements in the past tense, with no new information

Bibliography and citations (APA style)

The adoption of APA style is strongly suggested

The golden rule of citations



- Proceed in parallel with your text file and your bibliography file, so you never lose track

APA style guidelines: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines>

Zero tolerance for academic misconduct

Academic integrity is non-negotiable

Plagiarism

Copying text, data, figures or ideas without proper citation is severe academic dishonesty

Fabricating references or data

Inventing sources or using unverified AI-generated citations (“hallucinations”) violates scientific integrity

AI misuse

Generating thesis text with AI tools instead of writing it yourself is strictly prohibited: your work must be entirely original

Consequences: any form of academic misconduct is reported immediately to the Academic Board (*Consiglio Didattico*).

Administrative safety and final deadlines

Residence permit (Permesso di Soggiorno)

- Make sure it remains fully valid throughout your thesis work, study abroad periods and graduation session
- Never leave Italy with an expired residence permit or during the pending receipt (ricevuta) phase
- This can cause border re-entry bans and severe graduation delays

Final deadlines

- Do not submit unreviewed drafts at the last minute
- Supervisors are not obligated to accept last-minute work
- Plan your final drafts backwards from the graduation session, leaving time for review

Preparing your presentation and defense

Your slides

- Concise: 5 to 15 slides in total
- Short bullet points: max 3–4 lines per slide
- Prioritize figures over tables
- Focus on your critical and original work; avoid overly broad general introductions

Timing



Committee members can ask questions during the discussion.

“Nobody knows your work better than you!”

Practical arrangements

- Bring your presentation files a couple of days early to the Central University entrance to test compatibility
- Need audio equipment? Notify pnh@unipv.it at least one week before

TUTORS



Welcome Tutoring

Elvis Kurtisi

welcomingtutors@gmail.com



Master Thesis Guidance

Federica Salmaso

thesis.tutors.pnh@gmail.com



Internship Guidance And Support

Doroteja Stamenkovic

internshipguidance@gmail.com

Join the mailing list





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Questions?

Topics · Supervisors · Formatting · Administrative procedures

PNH final thesis page: <https://psychology.cdl.unipv.it/en/graduating/final-thesis>

Contact: thesis.tutors.pnh@gmail.com

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