Syllabus
Final Dissertation

Guidelines for Preparing the Final Dissertation

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Introduction

The Syllabus for the Final Dissertation represents the compass and orientation map to best understand, address and implement the final examination provided by the Bachelor's Degree. It is a reference tool for students, but also for the tutors who will assist them in the realization of the test and for the lecturers who will be called upon to evaluate the final paper. To best represent the meaning of the final dissertation to everyone, some crucial questions are taken up.

1. What is the purpose of the final examination?

The Bachelor's Degree Programme in Psychology concludes with a final examination, worth 4 university credits (CFU/ECTS), based on the preparation of a written dissertation that demonstrates the student's ability to undertake an independent process of study and research. The final dissertation is formally assessed and contributes to determining the student's final degree grade.

The final examination represents the culmination of an undergraduate educational programme designed to support students in acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to independently undertake a focused process of study and research within a clearly defined and manageable scope.

The main objective is to develop students' ability to take an active and independent approach to studying, critically exploring, and engaging with theoretical or research topics relevant to the disciplines covered by the degree programme. From this perspective, the content of the final dissertation should be regarded as a means of demonstrating the skills and competencies acquired throughout this process, rather than as an end in itself. This does not, of course, diminish the importance of selecting a topic that is personally meaningful and intellectually stimulating for the student.

The quality of the final dissertation will therefore be assessed by considering both the learning process demonstrated by the student throughout its development and the quality of the dissertation itself. Particular attention will be paid to the extent to which the final work reflects the student's progress towards the educational objectives outlined above.

2. What is NOT the final dissertation?

The final dissertation is not a "thesis," i.e., it is something different from the final dissertation of the Master's Degree; it is not a kind of first proof ("a small thesis") or an anticipation of a moment that requires a further process of cultural, scientific and human maturation to be addressed.

3. What will you learn through the experience of the final dissertation?

The final examination will focus on a theoretical topic and will provide students with the opportunity to develop skills in exploring scientific literature in the field of psychology, as well as in critically analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant research findings. Throughout this process, students will learn how to engage with scientific literature in a systematic and reflective manner and how to effectively communicate the outcomes of their independent study. More specifically, the development of the final dissertation will involve the following steps, each designed to foster specific competencies aligned with the learning objectives outlined above:

- **Identify a broad thematic area of interest** as a starting point for further exploration. The list of topics and topics provided in the Syllabus serves as a useful reference for identifying an initial area of interest.
- **Define a specific topic for in-depth exploration** within the broader thematic area. This step involves learning how to search for and consult relevant scientific literature using academic databases and search tools (e.g., Scopus, PsycINFO, Google Scholar). Through this process, students will progressively narrow their focus, identify a specific topic of interest, and define a clear direction for their independent study.
- **Select, analyze, and systematically organize relevant scientific literature.** Students will learn how to identify and select the most relevant scientific sources, critically examine their content, and systematically extract and organize key information from each source. This process will support the development of a structured reference bibliography and a comprehensive understanding of the selected topic.
- **Develop a preliminary and logically structured outline of the dissertation.** Based on the literature reviewed, students will learn how to organize the main topics and topics into a coherent structure. The outline will be progressively refined as their understanding of the topic develops and additional relevant literature is examined.
- **Develop and refine a detailed plan for presenting and discussing the literature.** This step involves organizing the selected evidence and arguments into a coherent narrative, refining the structure and sequence of the dissertation's sections, and ensuring logical connections between the different topics addressed.
- **Produce a clear, coherent, and academically appropriate written dissertation.** Students will learn how to communicate scientific knowledge effectively, following the conventions of academic writing and scientific reporting in psychology. Particular attention will be given to clarity and accuracy of expression, appropriate use and citation of scientific sources, logical organization of arguments, and the ability to critically reflect on and synthesize the literature reviewed.

4. How is the final dissertation process organized?

The development of the final dissertation is structured around three main stages:

- **Identification of a topic of interest** in collaboration with one of the designated faculty lecturers available to supervise the final dissertation process.
- **Participation in a mentor-guided working group**, in which students will be supported in progressively developing their final dissertation by following the steps outlined in the previous section.
- **Evaluation of the final dissertation** by the designated faculty lecturer.

Each stage will be assessed according to specific criteria, and the overall evaluation will contribute to determining the student's final degree grade.

The process of the final dissertation

The final dissertation represents the culmination of the Bachelor's Degree Programme and provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to independently plan, develop, and complete an original piece of academic work grounded in scientific literature. Throughout this process, students are expected to exercise autonomy, apply the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies, and demonstrate their ability to critically engage with a topic of interest. The following sections outline the main stages involved in developing and completing the final dissertation.

a) Selecting a Topic of Interest and a Faculty Lecturer

Students should first consult the list of dissertation topics published on the University website and identify a broad thematic area that aligns with their interests. Each topic is associated with faculty lecturers who have expertise in that specific area. Once a topic has been selected, students must access the dedicated Final Dissertation platform and choose one of the available faculty lecturers. To ensure appropriate guidance and support, each lecturer can supervise a limited number of students.

The proposed topics are intentionally broad, allowing students to explore different perspectives and identify a more specific topic that reflects their personal interests and academic background. Students are responsible for narrowing down the selected topic into a focused and manageable topic that can be adequately addressed within the scope of a Bachelor's final dissertation. The chosen topic must be related to the knowledge and subject areas covered during the degree programme.

Following their assignment, students are expected to contact their designated faculty lecturer to arrange an initial meeting, during which they will discuss and agree on the specific topic to be developed in their final dissertation.

Students enrolled in the Honors Track who choose to write their Final Dissertation on a topic proposed by their Honors Track supervisor are exempt from the online faculty lecturer/topic selection procedure. These students will be registered in the system by office.

b) Tutor-Supervised Group Meetings

To support students throughout the development of their final dissertation, the University provides a structured guidance programme consisting of a series of group meetings supervised by a dedicated tutor. The Faculty will assign each student to a tutor, who will supervise a group of approximately 15–20 students.

Tutors will ensure that students have access to the resources and guidance necessary to complete their final dissertation. In particular, tutors will play a key role in helping students refine and focus their chosen topic, guiding them through the literature search process, and supporting them in addressing any unexpected challenges or difficulties that may arise throughout the development of their dissertation.

Students enrolled in the Honors Track are also encouraged to attend the first two meetings of the programme and will therefore be assigned to a tutor-supervised group by office.

The tutor will contact students via their institutional email address (@icatt.it) to communicate the date and time of the first meeting. This meeting will be scheduled taking into account the available time slots within the academic timetable. Any scheduling difficulties concerning subsequent meetings can be discussed directly with the tutor.

The final dissertation should reflect their academic and personal development, as well as their ability to critically engage with and independently elaborate on the selected topic. Tutor-supervised group meetings therefore represent an essential opportunity for discussion, exchange, and mutual learning, both with the tutor and with fellow students undertaking the same process. Although students will explore different topics, they will all go through similar stages and are likely to encounter comparable challenges. The group thus provides a supportive environment in which students can share ideas, experiences, strategies, and possible solutions.

It is important to emphasize that the final dissertation is an individual assignment, not a group project. Each student is responsible for selecting and exploring a specific topic, developing their own research strategy, and producing an original written dissertation.

c) Writing the final dissertation

Once the topic has been defined, students will begin exploring the relevant scientific literature, drawing on the knowledge acquired during their undergraduate studies and using academic databases and resources available through the University (e.g., Scopus, PsycINFO, Google Scholar). This process involves identifying appropriate search keywords, selecting reliable and relevant scientific sources, and systematically organizing the information collected. Students are encouraged to keep track of their bibliographic searches and progressively refine their research questions as their understanding of the topic develops.

Based on the literature reviewed, students will develop a coherent and logically structured dissertation, organized into an introduction, main sections or chapters, and conclusions. The dissertation should go beyond a simple summary of existing literature, demonstrating the ability to critically integrate and synthesize different scientific contributions, identify similarities and differences across findings and theoretical perspectives, and develop a reasoned discussion of the selected topic.

Throughout the writing process, students are expected to progressively refine the structure and content of their dissertation, ensuring that the arguments presented are clearly connected to the initial objectives and research questions. Particular attention should be given to clarity, coherence, conciseness, appropriate scientific language, accurate referencing, and adherence to academic writing conventions. Before submission, students should carefully review their work to ensure both scientific accuracy and formal correctness.

d) Evaluation of the final dissertation

The evaluation of the final dissertation considers both the learning process undertaken by the student and the quality of the final written dissertation. Assessment is carried out by two evaluators: the group tutor and the faculty evaluator.

The group tutor assesses the student's engagement and active participation throughout the process, ability to define a clear and manageable research topic, autonomy in searching for and critically reviewing scientific literature, ability to organize and progressively develop a coherent dissertation, and adherence to agreed deadlines. The tutor's assessment is based on the student's progress throughout the group meetings and the final work submitted.

The faculty lecturer assesses the final written dissertation, focusing on its structural and organizational quality, clarity and coherence of arguments, ability to critically synthesize relevant literature, and scientific accuracy and relevance of the content. Particular attention is given to the appropriate use of scientific sources, academic writing conventions, and the student's ability to address the objectives and research questions identified.

Both evaluations contribute to the overall final dissertation grade, with scores ranging from 0 to 3. A satisfactory assessment by the group tutor is required before the dissertation can be submitted to the faculty evaluator. Academic integrity is expected throughout the process, and plagiarism may result in the rejection of the dissertation.

Timeline and Organization of the Final Dissertation Process

a) Registration for the Final Dissertation

Students are eligible to register for the Final Dissertation only if they are enrolled in the third year of the Bachelor's Degree Programme and have earned at least 116 university credits (CFU/ECTS). These credits must be included in the official study plan; any additional credits earned beyond the degree requirements will not be considered.

During registration, students must select a faculty lecturer associated with their preferred thematic area through the dedicated Final Dissertation platform. Students must access the dedicated registration link to check whether the selected lecturer has available places. **If the lecturer is no longer available, students can return to the thematic map and select another lecturer.** Once an available lecturer has been identified, students can proceed with their registration.

Registration deadlines are mandatory, and late registrations will not be accepted. Students are responsible for verifying that their registration has been successfully completed by downloading and retaining the registration confirmation receipt, which serves as official proof of registration.

b) Assignment to Tutor-Supervised Groups

Following registration, students will be assigned to groups of approximately 15–20 students, based on their selected thematic areas and intended graduation session. Each group will be supervised by a dedicated tutor, who will guide students through the different stages of developing their dissertation.

Students enrolled in the Honors Track are also encouraged to attend the first two meetings of the programme and will therefore be assigned to a tutor-supervised group.

c) Initial Meeting with the Faculty Lecturer

After selecting their faculty lecturer and receiving communication from their assigned tutor, students must contact the lecturer via email to arrange an initial meeting. During this meeting, students will discuss their general area of interest and work with the lecturer to define a more specific and manageable topic, identifying the main objectives and potential research questions that will guide their dissertation. Following this initial meeting, the group tutor will become the primary point of reference for the organization, development, and writing of the final dissertation.

Important: All official communications concerning the Final Dissertation will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email address (@icatt.it), including messages from tutors, administrative offices, and Final Dissertation coordinators. Students are therefore required to activate and regularly check their institutional email accounts.

Failure to read official communications may result in missed meetings, delays in the dissertation process, and consequently the postponement of graduation. Following registration, students will also have access to a dedicated Blackboard course page, where relevant information, materials, and announcements may be published. Students are expected to check this page regularly.

d) Tutor-Supervised Meetings

The tutor will organize four group meetings to support students throughout the main stages of the dissertation process, from bibliographic research to the preparation and revision of the final written work. Attendance at group meetings is mandatory. Any exceptions must be agreed upon with the tutor and the relevant Final Dissertation Committee.

The tutor-supervised programme consists of four meetings, generally organized around the following stages. The specific activities and requirements may be adapted by each tutor according to the needs of the group.

First Meeting – Defining the Topic and Conducting a Literature Search

The first meeting introduces students to the dissertation development process and the main principles of scientific literature searching. Students are expected to attend this meeting having carefully read the Final Dissertation Syllabus and having already met with their faculty lecturer to define their topic. They should be prepared to present their selected topic, preliminary research questions, and any relevant bibliographic suggestions received from the lecturer.

During the meeting, the tutor will provide guidance on searching for scientific literature using the University's library resources and academic databases (e.g., OPAC, electronic journals, Google Scholar). Students will also be introduced to methods for systematically reviewing and organizing bibliographic materials.

Second Meeting – Reviewing the Literature and Structuring the Dissertation

The second meeting focuses on critically reviewing the scientific literature collected and organizing the dissertation's content. The tutor will provide feedback on the bibliographic materials and structured summaries prepared by students, helping them identify the most relevant sources and develop a coherent outline for their dissertation. Students will also receive guidance on the structure of academic writing, appropriate citation practices, and the preparation of reference lists according to APA style.

Third and Fourth Meetings – Reviewing Drafts and Finalizing the Dissertation

The two final meetings focus on reviewing students' dissertation drafts and providing individualized feedback on their progress. The tutor will address questions and difficulties related to the organization, clarity, coherence, and scientific quality of the written work, as well as compliance with academic writing and formatting requirements.

These meetings provide students with the opportunity to discuss revisions and progressively improve their dissertations in preparation for final submission. Following these meetings students will revise and finalize their dissertations based on the feedback received and submit the completed work to their tutor for evaluation, in accordance with the established deadlines.

e) Submission Deadlines and University Credits

Submission deadlines are established by the Faculty and may vary depending on the selected graduation session. The overall time available for completing the dissertation will be organized to ensure comparable working periods across the four annual graduation sessions. The tutor will assess the student's progress throughout the process, while the faculty evaluator will assess the completed dissertation. Successful completion of the Final Dissertation corresponds to 4 university credits (CFU/ECTS).

Structure and Formatting Guidelines for the Final Dissertation

The final dissertation must follow a clear and coherent structure and comply with the formatting guidelines outlined below. All dissertations must include a title page, table of contents, abstract, main text, and reference list. Additional elements, such as tables, figures, and appendices, may be included where appropriate.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation should be organized in the following order:

a) Title page
b) Table of Contents
c) Abstract
d) Main text
e) References
f) Appendices (if applicable)

Each main section should generally begin on a new page. Tables and figures may be embedded within the main text, preferably near their first mention, or presented on separate pages after the references. Footnotes, if needed, should be inserted using the appropriate function of the word-processing software.

a) Title Page

The title page is the first page of the dissertation and must be identical to its cover. It must include the following information:

- Name of the University
- Name of the Faculty

- Name of the Degree Programme
- Title of the dissertation
- Student's full name and student identification number
- Full name and title (Prof.) of the faculty evaluator
- Academic year of graduation

A title page template is provided at the end of the Syllabus.

b) Table of Contents

The table of contents should provide a clear overview of the dissertation's structure, listing its main sections, chapters, and subsections, together with their corresponding page numbers. Students are encouraged to avoid excessive subdivision of chapters to ensure that the overall structure remains clear and coherent. The table of contents may be progressively revised as the dissertation develops. It is recommended to use the automatic table of contents function available in Microsoft Word or similar software to ensure accurate and consistent page numbering.

c) Abstract

The abstract should provide a concise overview of the dissertation, briefly presenting the selected topic, the main objectives, and the overall structure and content of the work. The abstract must not exceed 200 words.

d) Main Text

The main text should be organized into an introduction, a series of logically structured chapters or sections, and a conclusion. Depending on the nature of the dissertation, additional sections (e.g., methodology and results) may be included where appropriate.

Introduction. The introduction should clearly present the selected topic, the objectives and research questions guiding the dissertation, and the relevant theoretical context. It should also provide a brief overview of the dissertation's structure, allowing readers to understand the purpose and logical development of the work. Students are encouraged to finalize the introduction after completing the main body of the dissertation to ensure consistency with its overall content.

Main chapters. The central sections should provide a coherent and critical examination of the relevant scientific literature. Chapters and subsections should follow a clear logical progression, integrating different theoretical perspectives and research findings rather than simply summarizing individual sources. Each section should contribute to addressing the dissertation's overall objectives.

Conclusions. The concluding section should provide a reasoned synthesis of the main points discussed throughout the dissertation, highlighting how the initial objectives and research questions have been addressed. Students may also include critical reflections, limitations of the existing literature, and possible directions for future research, where relevant.

e) References

All sources cited in the dissertation must be included in a reference list at the end of the main text. Both in-text citations and reference entries must follow the **APA Style guidelines (7th edition)**. Students are

responsible for ensuring the accuracy, completeness, and consistency of their references. For detailed instructions, please refer to the official APA Style guidelines.

f) Appendices

Appendices may be included when supplementary materials are necessary to support the dissertation but would interrupt the flow of the main text. These may include additional tables, figures, or other relevant documentation. Each appendix should be clearly identified and referenced in the main text.

Formatting Requirements

The final dissertation must comply with the following requirements:

Element	Requirement
Length	40,000–50,000 characters, excluding spaces, table of contents, references, and structured literature summaries
Literature review	At least 7 scientific sources must be systematically reviewed and summarized, including no more than 2 theoretical articles, book chapters, or essays
Margins	3.5 cm on all sides
Font	Times New Roman, 12 pt
Line spacing	1.5 throughout the main text
Text alignment	Justified
Footnotes	Times New Roman, 11 pt, single-spaced
Page numbering	Bottom-right corner, on all pages
Tables and figures	Numbered by chapter and accompanied by appropriate captions
Citation and references	APA Style, 7th edition

Final Review

Before submission, students are expected to carefully review their dissertation to ensure clarity, coherence, scientific accuracy, and formal correctness. Particular attention should be paid to grammar, spelling, punctuation, formatting consistency, and the correct presentation of citations and references.



UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA

DEL SACRO CUORE DI MILANO

Faculty of Psychology

Bachelor's degree in Psychology

[insert here the title of the final dissertation]

Supervisor:

……

Candidate:

Name and Surname ..……

Student ID …….

Academic Year: xxxx/xxxx