OÑATI INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR THE SOCIOLOGY OF LAW
–
OÑATIKO LEGE-SOZIOLOGIAKO
NAZIOARTEKO ERAKUNDEA
–
INSTITUTO INTERNACIONAL
DE SOCIOLOGÍA JURÍDICA DE OÑATI

INFORMATION FOR SUPERVISORS AND EXAMINERS: MASTER´S THESES

Thank you for accepting our invitation to supervise or examine one or more Master's theses of the present cohort. The Master Coordination Team (master@iisj.es) will be available to answer questions and may ask you to complete a digital form or return a document by email confirming your assignment.[1]

To facilitate communication and document exchange, we will use the Moodle learning platform. The Master Coordination Team will give supervisors and examiners access to this platform, provide guidance on how to use it, and support you with any questions as needed.

Introductory remarks

The IISL's International Master's in Sociology of Law consists of two components.

1. First, students attend intensive courses from the last week of September to the last week of March. Students will have two assessment periods for each subject. The ordinary call will take place at the end of the course, and the extraordinary call will be held from May 5 to 15.
2. Secondly, students work on their master's thesis projects at the end of the academic year and will be entitled to two official calls in each academic year, the first call in July and the second in September. Students who have not defended or have failed their work in the calls established for the academic year must re-enroll in the following academic year.

The following guidelines provide useful background information for supervisors and examiners concerning the Master's thesis process, from the research proposal to thesis submission and defence. See the last page for important dates!

Form and scope of the thesis

The thesis accounts for one-third of the degree credits (20 ECTS). It is graded separately, and the thesis grade is stated on the degree certificate.

The thesis should be of the style and content of a substantial academic journal article. It should have a maximum word length of 15,000 words, including footnotes and bibliography, but excluding Appendices. Students are therefore strongly encouraged to adopt a concise writing style, focusing on what is essential to the thesis. If a thesis exceeds the word limit without good reasons, which are to be discussed with the IISL Scientific Director beforehand (e.g., length requirements regarding the recognition of the degree in certain countries of origin), this may be considered as a "malus" and negatively affect the grading process.

The thesis should be written in English. The use of official languages may be approved if supervision and examination can be arranged.

The IISL accepts different citation styles but expects coherence throughout the thesis. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. We advise to consult the guidelines on the use of Artificial Intelligence.

[1] http://www.iisj.net/en/socio-legal-master/teachers-supervisors-and-examiners-application-form

Thesis research proposal

The main period for researching and writing the thesis is from April to the end of July. Students are encouraged to start conceptualizing their research early in the context of the thesis research seminar, which runs parallel to the courses from late September to late March.

To facilitate this, students are required to submit a provisional thesis title and a short outline at the end of January or the beginning of February, and then a second research proposal at the end of March. The longer proposal provides a brief background to the topic, explains the aims of the research and a proposed methodology. The thesis research proposal is assessed by the Scientific Director as part of the thesis research seminar.

Supervision of the theses

Each student is appointed one or, exceptionally, two individual supervisors, or a supervisor and a co-supervisor. For the most part, supervisors will be teachers of the IISL Master's, although students wishing to conduct research on a topic that falls outside the courses taught and/or requires particular expertise or contextualization may be appointed an external supervisor.

Supervision may entail helping students focus on a suitable topic, suggesting literature and other sources, discussing the theoretical approach and methodology in relation to the research questions, commenting on the student's literature review and other draft chapters of the thesis, and approving the final draft for submission. Students are asked to maintain regular contact with the supervisors, face-to-face or virtually, and to agree with them on a timeline for the various stages in accordance with the general deadlines below. The individual timeline should allow sufficient time for the supervisor to comment on drafts according to their own schedules.

Students receive citation and referencing training in the thesis seminar and have the opportunity to practice academic writing across the different courses. However, during the stressful period of thesis writing, there may still be a risk of conscious or unconscious plagiarism. We therefore ask you to be alert and follow up with students on any untransparent or dubitable working practices. Please flag to us if you are unsure about the quality of the work in this regard once you notice irregularities.

Please note that, at the IISL, we have a policy for the use of AI (https://www.iisj.net/sites/default/files/guidance_on_the_use_of_artificial_intelligence_final_version.pdf). Please review it, and if you have any questions, reach out to our team.

Supervisors are not asked to examine the thesis. This is the task of the Board of Examiners. However, supervisors will be asked to produce a short report (no more than 1 page) upon submission of the thesis. The report should include the supervisor's view of the quality of the thesis, as well as any issues or circumstances that the supervisor feels relevant to be considered in the defence (e.g., unforeseen problems in collecting data, which should be mentioned in the thesis as well). This report will be forwarded through the Master Coordination Team to the examiners, and the student will not have access to it.

Submission of Master's theses

According to general regulations applied by the University of the Basque Country, students shall benefit from two assessment calls (*convocatoria*) per academic year to submit and defend their Master's theses. As the Master's thesis project is the final assignment after all the coursework is completed, the two assessment calls we hold are targeted for thesis submission towards the end of the academic year, with thesis submission being due either in June (1st call) or July (2nd call) and

defences taking place respectively right before summer break (mid-July) or right after (early September). The calendar at the end of this document considers dates for both calls. The specific dates will be agreed with the examiners.

Examination of Master's Theses

Board of Examiners: The thesis is to be graded by three examiners: two "internal" examiners (e.g. the Scientific Director, the Scientific Coordinator of the Master or a professor of the University of the Basque Country), and one "external" examiner who is an international scholar that is no a UPV/EHU faculty member. An additional internal examiner may be nominated as a substitute. Supervisors may attend the defence but are not jury members.

Please raise any suspicion of dubitable citation practices and plagiarism or unauthorized use of AI in the thesis examination process, at best by notifying the Scientific Director well before the scheduled defence. The Scientific Director may investigate the case by any means considered appropriate, and depending on the severity of the case may compose an ad hoc reviewing committee, in order to impose a penalty in line with UPV/EHU regulations. The findings and decision will be shared with the examiners and reported to the Academic Committee of the Master's programme. In less severe cases, a decision in the Board of Examiners may be taken to downgrade the thesis in line with the grading criteria.

The master's thesis defence takes place in the form of an **oral defence**, which can be organised **face-to-face** (on-site at the IISL), **virtually** (using a video-conferencing platform), or in a **dual mode** (i.e., hybrid, with some participants being on-site and others online). For the oral defence, a day and time will be arranged with the Master Coordination Team, at which all parties are available, including the Board of Examiners, the candidate in question, as well as IISL support staff. Two video-conference rooms will be used: one for the public act, which the student will be able to share with up to twenty people (who must remain silent throughout the event), and a second, which will be accessed only by the Board of Examiners for their deliberation.

The oral defence procedure will take approximately 90 minutes.

The scheme will be as follows:

(1) words of welcome by the Scientific Director and a decision on who is chairing the defence;

(2) summary of the most relevant aspects of the thesis by the candidate (ca. 15 minutes);

(3) interventions by examiners (no more than 10 minutes each);

(4) candidate's response to examiners' comments and remarks (up to 30 minutes and, if needed, additional but short comments by examiners);

(5) the examiners deliberate for no more than 15 minutes;

(6) the examiners return to the room and the Scientific Director or the chair of the defence communicates the result of the deliberation, i.e., the final grade of the thesis;

Grading of Master's theses

In the evaluation of the thesis, please consider all the criteria presented in the grading sheet, which you will receive separately or be able to download from our electronic learning platform Moodle (**see IISL Grading Sheet for Thesis)**. According to the Spanish grading scale, the grade awarded to a student should be a numerical grade out of 10, with 5 being the passing mark.

There is no direct equivalence between the Spanish grading scale and the ECTS grading scale (European Credit Transfer System). However, this table may give international teachers some orientation in grading Master's students' assignments according to the Spanish grading scale.

Spanish Grading Scale		**ECTS Grading Scale**		
Grade	*Range*	*Grade*	*Percent*	*Description*
Sobresaliente (SB)	9.0-10.0	A	10%	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors
Notable (NT)	8.5-8.9	B	25%	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors
	7.0-8.4	C	30%	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors
Aprobado (AP)	6.0-6.9	D	25%	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings
	5.0-5.9	E	10%	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria
Suspenso (SS)	2.5-4.9	FX		Fail – some more work is required before the credit can be awarded
	0.0-2.4	F		Fail – considerable further work is required

If some students' performance is in the top ten percent of a cohort, they should be awarded a grade between 9.0 and 10.0 (~A). If their work is clearly above average but still shows some deficiencies, they should get 8.5 or a little above (~B), and so on. If some students' performance is just sufficient to pass the course, their grade should be 5.0 or 5.5. Normally, grades should be a whole or half integer (i.e., 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; or 5.5, 6.5 etc.), unless there is a very good reason for a more subtle variation (e.g., 6.8), such as when different assessment components are weighted in the final grade or a ranking of students seems appropriate.

IMPORTANT DATES 2026

February 9th, until 11:00pm	**Provisional thesis title and short outline** by students submitted to Moodle
March 27th, until 11:00pm	**Thesis research proposal** by students submitted to Moodle; students announce whether they will take the 1st or 2nd call; based on this: appointment of supervisors & examiners for the respective periods
May 15th, until 11:00 pm	**First progress report** by students submitted to Moodle (supervisors download them from Moodle themselves)
June 15th, until 11:00 pm	**Second progress report** by students submitted to Moodle (supervisors download them from Moodle themselves)
1st call: 26th June, until 11:00pm	**Final thesis submission by students who opted for the 1st call** to Moodle (supervisors and examiners can download the theses from Moodle on their own, examiners begin reading); no submission needed if students have opted for the 2nd call
1st call: period for oral defences 13th to 17th July	For students in the 1st call only: **oral defences** in person or online to be scheduled within this period; finalisation of the grades by the examiners
2nd call: July 24th, until 11:00 pm	**Final thesis submission by students in the 2nd call** to Moodle (supervisors and examiners can download the theses from Moodle on their own, examiners begin reading)
1st call: July 27th	IISL sends grades of the 1st call to UPV/EHU administration, and prepares preliminary certificates if requested
2nd call: period for oral defences September 1st to 11th	**Oral defences** in person or online to be scheduled within this period; finalisation of the grades by the examiners
2nd call: September 15th	IISL sends grades & documentation of the 2nd call to UPV/EHU administration