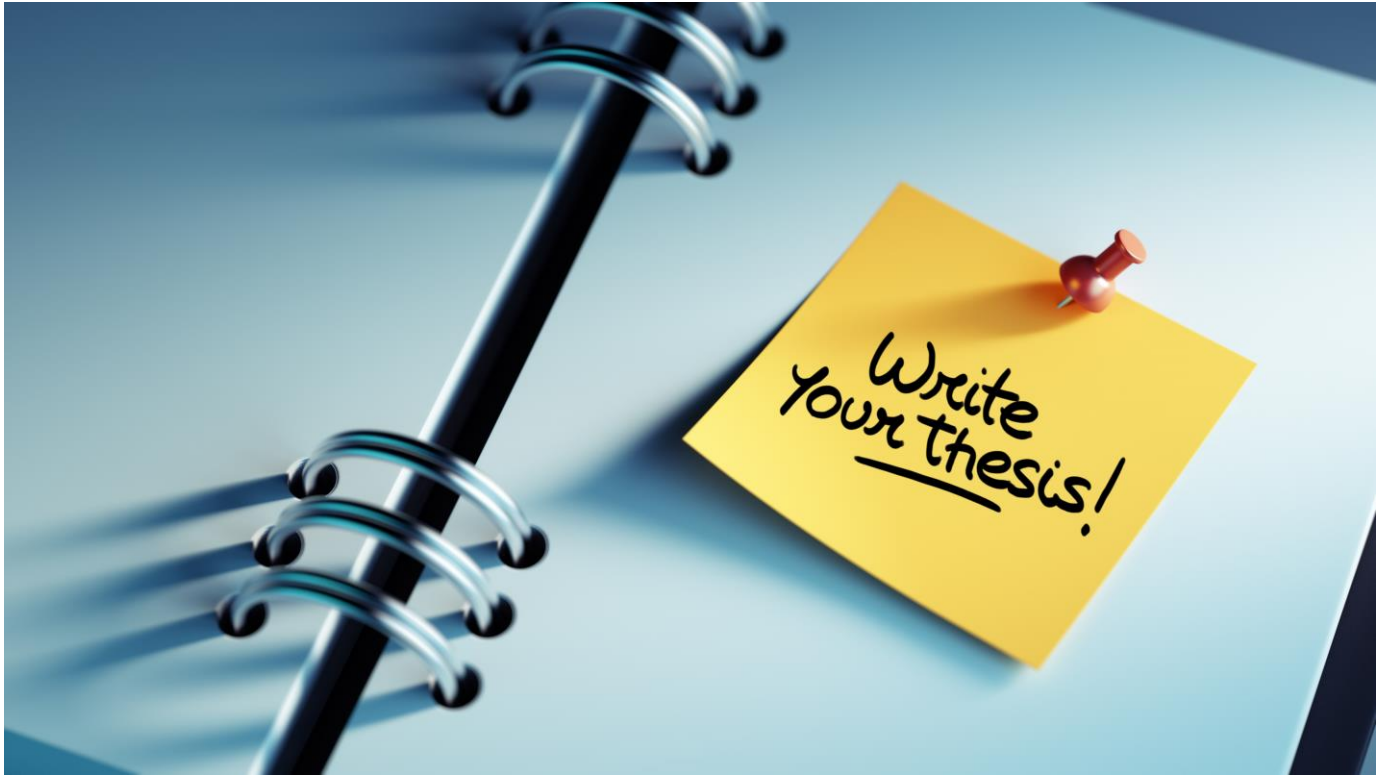


Part-time Executive MSc in Corporate Communication



Master Thesis Manual
Thesis trajectory 2024

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1. Introduction

This manual is especially tailor-made for students studying for the Part-time Executive Master of Science in Corporate Communication (MCC) at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

When following an MSc programme at RSM, students are required to conduct independent, individual research in the academic field of their chosen master programme. Students should be able to report the entire research process leading to the master thesis, from problem formulation to describing findings, conclusions and recommendations. The aim of the master thesis is to provide master students with insights, experiences and tips for improving their skills in practical scientific, business and management research. The master thesis stands for 15 ECTS and forms an integral and important part of all MSc programmes. This manual gives detailed requirements for the structure, content and assessment of the master thesis.

Students may refer to the Examination Administration (EA) website www.rsm.nl/masterthesis for general procedures, rules and regulations. Please note that the procedures for the specific Master of Science in Corporate Communication deviate to some extent from the RSM standards.

In case of any questions, please contact the programme coordinator at ccc@rsm.nl.

Check www.rsm.nl/masterthesis for more information.

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Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University

2. Activities overview

What	When	Time	Where
1. Choosing your research topic (Session 1)	November 30, 2023	13.00-16.00	Virtual session (ZOOM)
2. Thesis topic assignment	January 19, 2024	Before 16.00pm	One pager, send to CCC@rsm.nl
3. Thesis topic & Thesis writing (Session 2)	January 25, 2024	13.00-16.00	Virtual session (ZOOM)
4. Qualitative research session (Session 3)	February 28, 2024	13.00-16.00	Virtual session (ZOOM)
5. Confirmation coach and co-reader	March 1, 2024	Before 16.00pm	CCC will send you a mail
6. Quantitative research session (Session 4)	March 7, 2024	13.00-16.00	Virtual session (ZOOM)
7. Draft proposal	March 29, 2024	Before 16.00pm	7-8 pages, send by mail to your coach, co-reader and copy to CCC@rsm.nl
8. Plenary feedback session (Session 5)	April 4, 2024	13.00-16.00	Virtual session (ZOOM)
9. Final thesis proposal	May 3, 2024	Before 16.00pm	7-8 pages, submit on RSM TOP system (top.rsm.nl)
10. Draft thesis	November 1, 2024	Before 16.00pm	40-50 pages, send by mail to your coach, co-reader and a copy to CCC@rsm.nl
11. Final thesis	December 6, 2024	Before 16.00pm	40-50 pages, send to RSM TOP system
12. Master thesis presentation and oral defence	Before January 17, 2025	Before 16.00pm	Virtual session (ZOOM)
13. Graduation ceremony	February 13, 2025	Start at 14.00pm	Van der Goot Building (M)

2.1 Choosing your research topic (Session 1)

When: November 30, 2023

Where: Virtual session (ZOOM)

Time: 13.00-16.00

You are responsible for finding and developing a topic that fits the themes of the Master of Science in Corporate Communication programme. It is important that you choose a topic that is of personal interest to you.

This first session will dive into how to find the right thesis topic for you!

Saunders and Lewis (2018) define multiple ways to generate ideas for thesis topics. In no particular order, the techniques are:

- Thinking
- Looking at past project titles
- You can browse or search book of abstracts of MSc in Corporate Communication graduates from the past years. See <https://www.rsm.nl/research/centres/corporate-communication-centre/education/book-of-abstracts/>
- Using past projects from the university library
- You can browse or search approved theses in the Erasmus repository. See <https://thesis.eur.nl/>
- Using past course assignments
- Using relevant literature
- You can look up topics in the university library. You can access the library only with your ERNA account and password. See <https://www.eur.nl/en/library/>
- Following the news media
- Brainstorming
- Concept mapping
- Making a note of ideas
- Discussion with colleagues, other students, alumni, etc.

More detailed information specifically on finding your thesis topic can be found in Chapter 1 of Saunders and Lewis (2018).

Readings: Chapter 1 of the book: Saunders, M.N. K., & Lewis, P. (2018). *Doing research in business and management: An essential guide to planning your project*. Pearson.

2.2 Thesis topic assignment

Deliverable: Pre-assignment

Length: One pager

Deadline: January 19, 2024

Deliverable: Assignment

- Find a thesis topic and formulate the central issue (What broad question or problem will you be researching?)
- Find four to five academic articles and analyse the different perspectives on your question/problem, and indicate what we know but also do not yet know about your topic.
- Write a one-pager describing your thesis topic, central issue and a review of the different perspectives on the issue, and indicate the gaps (what we do not know yet) in the literature.

Deliverable and deadline

Assessment type:	Individual assignment
Language:	English
Font and style:	Word, Font size 11 points, type Arial preferably (or Times New Roman), line spacing should be 1.5 points
Max. number of pages:	1 page max
References and citations:	Please make sure that you refer correctly in your document. See appendix 1 of Saunders and Lewis (2018). Also, see the citing information on the website of Erasmus University, see here .
Deadline:	January 19, 2024 (submit to ccc@rsm.nl) with subject line: Assignment thesis topic

Good luck!

2.3 Thesis topic & Thesis writing (Session 2)

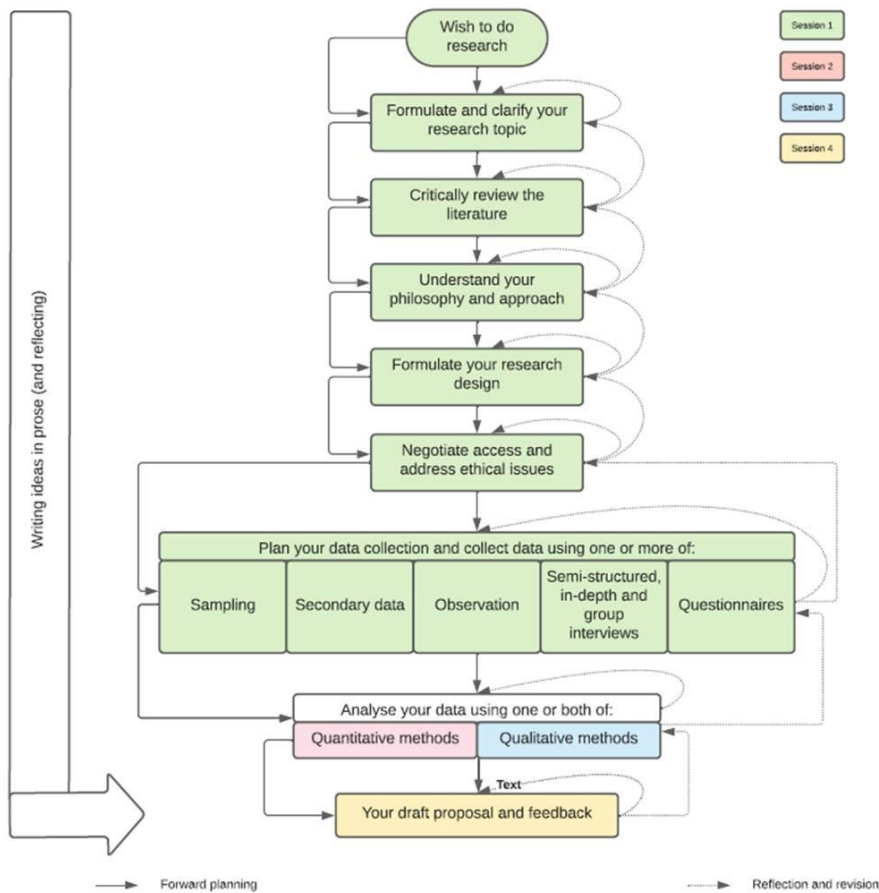
When: January 25, 2024

Where: Virtual session (ZOOM)

Time: 13.00-16.00

Programme

13.00-14.30 Lecture on: The research process - how to write a thesis?



14.30-16.00 Work in groups per topic. You will be led by a coach to help redfine your topic. Define next steps for writing your thesis proposal and thesis.

Pre-reading: Chapter 8 of the book: Saunders, M.N. K., & Lewis, P. (2018). *Doing research in business and management: An essential guide to planning your project*. Pearson.

Please be sure to prepare thoroughly for this meeting and plan to do all of the readings.

Deliverable: Kick-off meeting

Students leave the meeting with a clear understanding of their topic, possible research question(s), and how they can write a strong thesis proposal.

2.4 Qualitative research methods (Session 3)

When: February 28, 2024

Where: Virtual session (ZOOM)

Time: 13.00-16.00

Programme

13.00-16.00 Lecture on the following qualitative research methods:

- "Classic" data collection methods (Interviews, observations)
- Grounded Theory Research
- Discourse Analysis
- Content Analysis
- Case study approach

Pre-reading: Chapters 5 and 7 (*Analysing qualitative data*) of the book: Saunders, M.N. K., & Lewis, P. (2018). *Doing research in business and management: An essential guide to planning your project*. Pearson.

Please be sure to prepare thoroughly for this meeting and plan to do all of the readings.

Deliverable: Session 3

Students will leave the meeting with a clear understanding of common qualitative research methods. As always, there will be plenty of opportunity to discuss the students' progress and questions.

2.5 Confirmation coach and co-reader

When: February 28, 2024

Where: CCC sends you a mail

CCC will send you a mail confirming your coach and co-reader for your thesis trajectory.

The master thesis coach has the responsibility to:

- approve the thesis proposal, together with the co-reader;
- agree with the student on the planning of the trajectory, such as deadlines, drafts, and feedback;
- provide guidance on all activities in the context of the master thesis;
- offer regular assessments of draft versions of the proposal and thesis;
- be available to provide timely feedback;
- award the final grade, together with co-reader.

The co-reader has the responsibility to:

- assist the coach in providing guidance to the overall thesis process;
- provide alternative perspectives on the research;
- discuss fundamental criticism on the master thesis;
- give advice in case of major differences of opinion between coach and student;
- approve the thesis proposal, together with the coach;
- award the final grade, together with the coach.

The student has the responsibility to:

- take active charge of their own thesis process;
- dedicate themselves fully and invest sufficient time for their research;
- communicate timely to coach and co-reader when feedback or guidance is required and initiate meetings to this end;
- adhere to deadlines;
- abide by RSM's code of conduct (see [here](#));
- successfully complete the master thesis.

Reading: Chapter 3 of the book: Saunders, M.N. K., & Lewis, P. (2018). *Doing research in business and management: An essential guide to planning your project.*

2.6 Quantitative research methods (Session 4)

When: March 7, 2024

Where: Virtual session (ZOOM)

Time: 13.00-16.00

Programme

13.00-16.00 Lecture on the following quantitative research methods:

- How to collect quantitative data? Sample size, how to design questions, and more!
- OLS Regression: allows the prediction of one dependent variable as a function of one independent variable
- (One way) ANOVA: allows comparison of the means of two or more samples

Pre-reading: Chapters 5, 6 and 7 (*Analysing quantitative data*) of the book: Saunders, M.N. K., & Lewis, P. (2018). *Doing research in business and management: An essential guide to planning your project*. Pearson.

Please be sure to prepare thoroughly for this meeting and plan to do all of the readings.

Deliverable: Session 4

Students will leave the meeting with a clear understanding of common quantitative research methods. Special attention will be paid to assuring students are able to distinguish between different kinds of variables and to connecting the discussed methods with the field of communication science.

As always, there will be plenty of opportunity to discuss the students' progress and questions.

2.7 Draft proposal

Deliverable: Hand-in draft proposal

Length: 7-8 pages

Deadline: March 29, 2024

The next formal step is to submit the thesis proposal. The proposal must be professionally presented (typed) and should be approximately 7 to 8 pages.

According to Saunders and Lewis (2018), a thesis proposal should broadly include the following:

- Research overview
- Title (content of the proposal)
- Introduction to the research: demonstrating the relevance of your research questions
- Research question(s)
- Literature review: providing an overview of what is known about your research question and what is not known
- Research objectives: clarifying how your research builds on the literature, specifying your study as either [1] theory-building (aimed at developing new theory), [2] theory-testing (aimed at testing hypotheses derived from theory) or [3] practice-oriented (aimed at contributing to the solution of a practical problem for a specific organisation)
- Method: research strategy/design, data collection methods, data analysis methods
- Timescale
- Resources (e.g., access to organisations, databases)
- References

More detailed information specifically on writing a proposal can be found in Chapter 8 of Saunders and Lewis (2018).

Readings: Chapter 8 of the book: Saunders, M.N. K., & Lewis, P. (2018). *Doing research in business and management: An essential guide to planning your project*. Pearson.

Deliverables and deadline

Assessment type:	Individual assignment
Language:	English
Font and style:	Word, Font size 11 points, type Arial preferably (or Times New Roman), line spacing should be 1.5 points
Max. number of pages:	8 pages max
References and citations :	Please make sure that you refer correctly in your document. See appendix 1 of Saunders and Lewis (2018). Also, see the citing information on the website of Erasmus University, see here .
Deadline:	March 29, 2024 (submit to your coach, co-reader and a copy to ccc@rsm.nl)

Good luck!

2.8 Plenary feedback session (Session 5)

When: April 4, 2024

Where: Virtual session (ZOOM)

Time: 13.00-16.00

Programme

13.00-16.00 Plenary session "*Feedback on your proposal drafts*"

Pre-assignment: students have to hand in their **draft proposal** at the latest on **March 29, 2024**.

Deliverable: Session 5

After having handed in their proposal draft, students will receive feedback on an aggregated level. This means that we will not discuss individual proposals in great detail, but focus on feedback that pertains to all proposal drafts to a lesser or larger degree. After session 5 students should have a clear understanding in which area(s) their proposal draft requires more work and improvements so that a seamless transition to their actual thesis supervisors will be possible.

2.9 Final thesis proposal

Deliverable: Hand-in final thesis proposal

Length: 7-8 pages

Deadline: May 3, 2024

RSM makes use of an online platform to support the thesis process, called Thesis Online Platform (TOP): <https://top.rsm.nl/>. Students will submit their final proposal and final thesis in the system. In the end, the final assessment and grading is also recorded in TOP.

You should submit your proposal via Thesis Online Platform (TOP). If the initial proposal is of adequate standard, the coach and co-reader will give a pass in the system and allow you to continue. If your proposal is considered inadequate, you will be required to resubmit an improved proposal that meets their requirements within four weeks of receiving the request from your coach to resubmit.

Deliverables and deadline

Assessment type: Individual assignment

Language: English

Font and style: Word, Font size 11 points, type Arial preferably (or Times New Roman), line spacing should be 1.5 points

Max. number of pages: 8 pages max

References and citations: Please make sure that you refer correctly in your document. See appendix 1 of Saunders and Lewis (2018). Also, see the citing information on the website of Erasmus University, [here](#).

Deadline: May 3, 2024 (submit your proposal in TOP)

Good luck!

2.10 Draft thesis

Deliverable: Hand-in draft thesis

Length: 40-50 pages

Deadline: November 1, 2024

The draft is a complete version of your full thesis, including appendices and reference list. The coach and co-reader will review and provide feedback on the draft. The draft should be submitted to your coach, co-reader and a copy to CCC by October 31, 2022. This allows sufficient time for you to incorporate the feedback into the final report.

Helpful hint: Break your thesis down into chapters and accordingly send draft chapters to your coach and co-reader in between. Consequently, they can give you timely feedback and keep you on the right track.

The thesis requires that the reader be informed through a clear structure that has a beginning, middle and an end. The "beginning" is an executive summary and introduction, the "middle" reports the literature review, methodology, and analysis & results, and the "end" draws the report together in the conclusions and recommendations.

Structure of the thesis:

Cover page (1 page)

The cover page should include the title of the thesis, your name, student number, MSc in Corporate Communication programme, full names of coach and co-reader, and date of submission.

Preface (1 page)

The preface should state that: "The copyright of the Master Thesis rests with the author. The author is responsible for its contents. RSM is only responsible for the educational coaching and cannot be held liable for the content." You can also include acknowledgements and other personal reflections here.

Executive summary (1 page)

The report should begin with an executive summary, which:

- States the research question and shortly describes its context.
- Shortly explains the main steps taken which have led to the conclusions and

recommendations.

- Summarizes/explains the main conclusions and recommendations.

The executive summary should contain no tables, charts or diagrams.

Helpful hint: Saunders and Lewis (2018) suggest that you start with writing your abstract, so that you have got your storyline abundantly clear in your mind.

Introduction (about 3 -5 pages)

The introduction should cover the following points:

- Start by explaining the central issue in your research.
- Explain the importance and urgency of addressing this topic, and for whom (refer to other sources where needed).
- Formulate your research question(s).
- When your research is practice-oriented, include relevant background information about the organisation (such as history, size, products and services).
- Provide a 'roadmap to guide the reader through the rest of the report.

Literature review (about 4 to 8 pages)

The goal of the literature review is to provide an overview of what is known in the literature about your research question(s) – and what is not yet known. It should provide a comprehensive discussion of relevant literature, in which you synthesize the literature, rather than discussing individual articles one by one. Saunders and Lewis (2018) provide useful tips for creating such a synthesis in section 2.6 of their book.

For theory-testing and practice-oriented research, it is often useful to draw a conceptual framework that represents the insights from the literature, and to describe/discuss the elements in this framework (theoretical concepts, relations between concepts, etc.). For theory-testing research, it is also customary to formulate concrete testable hypotheses.

Methods (about 4 to 8 pages)

This chapter provides (1) explication and (2) justification of all steps you took. The method statement must carefully describe the research procedures and techniques that have been adopted and it should include (at least) the following components:

- The research design or strategy: what strategy have you used to answer your research question(s) (e.g., survey, experiment, case study), and why is this an appropriate strategy? See also Saunders and Lewis (2018), section 5.5.
- The specifics of the data collection: how has data been collected, from where/whom, and why (justification)?

- What did you do to increase the validity and reliability of your results?
- What are the analysis procedures and techniques, and (if they are non-standard techniques) why are these appropriate (justification)?

Being transparent about your methodologies is crucial for correctly interpreting your results.

Findings & Results (about 5 to 15 pages)

The exact structure and types of content of this chapter will vary depending most notably on the nature of the research undertaken and the specific procedures and techniques. The data analyses and presentation of the results are key

In general, the findings and results section should contain the following information:

- Report the results of the empirical analyses intended to answer your research question(s). In a theory-testing study, you test the formulated hypotheses. In a theory-building study, you can develop a conceptual model visualizing the themes that emerge from your analyses. A practice-oriented study can also either test hypotheses or develop a conceptual model based on the analyses, depending on the research strategy chosen. You can use tables and figures to display the results where necessary and clearly explain how these tables/figures should be read. Please make proper tables and figures rather than copying output from statistical software, for example.
- Interpret what the results imply/mean for the research question(s).
- Discuss the relation between your findings and the findings of the relevant literature. Are the results consistent with or contradictory to what others have found? Explain why this may be the case.

Conclusions and recommendations section (about 3 to 5 pages)

This section deals with the conclusion of the whole project and the implications. According to Saunders and Lewis. (2018), it should:

- Briefly describe the main findings of your research.
- Discuss how your research has answered your research question(s) and met your research objectives.
- Describe your recommendations for practice based on the conclusions you have drawn. What are the concrete recommendations to managers or other practitioners to solve/address the issue/question?
- Indicate directions for future research. Which research problems logically follow from the research? What are the most important open issues that need to be addressed?

Reading: Chapters 6 and 7 of the book: Saunders, M.N. K., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2018). *Research methods for business and students* (7th ed.). Harlow, United Kingdom: Pearson.

Deliverables and deadline

Assessment type:	Individual assignment
Language:	English
Font and style:	Word, Font size 11 points, type Arial preferably (or Times New Roman), line spacing should be 1.5 points
Max. number of pages:	40 to 50 pages
References and citations:	Please make sure that you refer correctly in your document. See appendix 1 of Saunders and Lewis (2018). Also, see the citing information on the website of Erasmus University, here .
Deadline:	November 1, 2024 (submit to your coach, co-reader and a copy to ccc@rsm.nl)

Good luck!

2.11 Final thesis

Deliverable: Final thesis

Length: 40-50 pages

Deadline: December 6, 2024

Submit your final thesis in which you have incorporated your coach's and co-reader's feedback.

Deliverables and deadline

Assessment type:	Individual assignment
Language:	English
Font and style:	Word, Font size 11 points, type Arial preferably (or Times New Roman), line spacing should be 1.5 points
Max. number of pages:	40 to 50 pages
References and citations	Please make sure that you refer correctly in your document. See appendix 1 of Saunders and Lewis (2018). Also, see the citing information on the website of Erasmus University here .
Deadline:	December 6, 2024 (submit your final thesis in TOP)

2.12 Defence

Deliverable: Master thesis presentation and oral defence

Deadline: Before January 17, 2025

The Master's thesis defence is an integral part of the educational journey, requiring each student to individually and vocally defend their thesis work. The defence comes at the end of the thesis trajectory, once the work has been completed and the thesis has been approved by the coaches and handed in for assessment.

As part of the defence session, students are encouraged to provide a concise yet comprehensive presentation summarizing their research and the primary conclusions that they have drawn. It is recommended to use a maximum of approximately 10 PowerPoint slides to aid in clearly conveying the key points of their research.

Students are required to coordinate with both their coach and co-reader to agree on a suitable date and time for the defence. Students are also required to send the coach and co-reader the invite for ZOOM or Teams for the oral defence.

Please note that the defence will be conducted online.

The total duration of the oral defence is approximately one hour, structured as follows:

- The coach commences the session with an introductory speech.
- The student is given a 10-minute slot to present the subject, findings, and primary conclusions of their Master's thesis.
- The coach and co-reader engage the student in a rigorous 35-minute questioning session.
- The coach and co-reader then withdraw for a 10-minute consultation to determine the student's final grade and degree classification (referred to as 'judicium' in Dutch).
- The coach concludes the oral defence by explaining the assigned grade.
- Upon completion of the defence, the coach and co-reader will record your final grade and feedback in TOP, our grading system. The diploma documents will then be prepared in time for the graduation ceremony.

2.13 Graduation Ceremony

When: February, 13, 2025

Where: Van der Goot Building (M), Erasmus University

Time: 14.00-19.00

The graduation ceremony will take place at Erasmus University, in the Forum Hall (M3-15), at the Van der Goot Building (former M-Building).

You are expected at 14.00, in the restaurant close to the Forum hall room. Your guests are invited to have coffee and tea in the restaurant, while we will start preparing you for your entrance to the official academic ceremony. The ceremony starts at 15.00 and ends at 17.00 and thereafter we have a celebration party at the restaurant in the Van der Goot Building (M) until 19.00!

During the ceremony, two awards will be made available:

- **Cees van Riel Award for impact in Corporate Communication** for the most impactful and best ranked thesis in the Master of Science in Corporate Communication programme of 2022.
- **Andreas Award for Innovation in Corporate Communication** for the most innovatively ranked thesis in the Master of Science in Corporate Communication programme of 2022.

3. Roles and responsibilities

As stated in the previous section, you are required to submit the pre-assignment. RSM uses the information to assign a coach and co-reader. While the coach/co-reader may not necessarily be a specialist in your project area, they will be able to effectively guide you in further developing the scope of the project and providing advice in the research process.

The main role of the coach is to provide constructive critique on the work delivered in order to guide you towards submitting a final report that meets the academic requirements set out by RSM. The main responsibility of the co-reader is to assist the coach in providing guidance to the overall thesis process. The responsibility for the final report is yours.

Although the level of guidance may vary across the coaches/co-readers and students, RSM anticipates that you will communicate with your coach about six times over the course of the trajectory and about three times with your co-reader. It is expected that a coach will devote approximately 10-12 hours of his/her time, and a co-reader 5-6 hours to assist you with your thesis. Please note that this time includes reviews of the material that you have submitted.

The following are suggested as appropriate communication points:

- Your first contact with your coach will be used to discuss your ideas about the project proposal (please see above for an explication of the key elements of the proposal). Importantly, you set the parameters of your topic within the context of the organisation, decide upon the fundamental research question, and explicate the conceptual and empirical steps to be taken during the project. At this time, you should also agree with your coach on how you plan to communicate with each other and set out the deadlines for this process. After this first contact you finalize the project proposal.
- Prior to the next meeting with your coach, you will have completed and written up some key components of your thesis: the Introduction, Literature section, and some parts of the Empirical section (notably the methodology as well as some first data analyses). By doing this you will provide the coach with material that will enable them to assess the quality of your presentation of factual material, analysis, and written presentation. It is important for you to try to solicit clear feedback in order to ensure that you are on the right track.
- Your final contact with your coach and co-reader will occur no later than four weeks prior to the submission deadline for your final report. By this time you will have submitted a draft version of your report. The feedback provided can then give you a good indication of final quality.

Please remember that your coach and co-reader may be working with a number of students. You therefore should avoid sending repeated volumes of substantially the same work with only slight amendments. It is preferable that you ask focused questions and submit components of the work that will enable the reader to direct the broad scope of the topic. You could even take steps to facilitate this process by, for example color-highlighting text that you would like your advisor to review, such as improvements or additions from the last version they reviewed. Finally, please be aware that the objective of the coach in providing feedback is to ensure that your work meets the standards required by RSM. You cannot presume that feedback from the reader indicating that the progress is acceptable up to that point is indicative of, or suggests, the final grade.

Helpful hint: Communicate, communicate, communicate with your coach and co-reader. If you encounter problems/challenges in your project, let your coach know. Your coach may be able to help navigate through the challenge.

4. Writing style and submission format

The presentation format of your final report will influence your final mark. This does not refer to your use of elaborate graphics or font types, but to the coherence of the arguments that you present and the writing style employed.

Further detail on the requirements of the thesis is presented in Appendix A. In summary, you are required to write in prose so as to build an effective argument and not only resort to “bullet points”. The writing style must remain analytical and precise. Keeping your sentences relatively short is a good way to avoid unnecessary words and maximize effect. Graphs and pictures should be relevant, meaningful and clearly linked to the text. The analytical format means that, for example, writing “a strong rebound in sales” is less attractive than “sales are expected to increase by 5% in the Dutch market in the next 12 months”.

The following guidelines are recommended for formatting the document: The report should have 1.5 line-spacing, font size 11 and the font type should be clear and legible (such as Arial or Times New Roman). The left side margin should be approximately 2.5 cm to account for binding, and the right margin should not be smaller than 1 cm.

5. Deadlines

In May, students will have to confirm whether they will hand in their final thesis on December 1st 2024. Upon confirmation, RSM will assume that the student will graduate and the student takes responsibility to graduate. Accordingly, the deadlines in the overview of the course duration are strictly adhered to.

Only in the following exceptional situations, deviations from thesis deadlines are possible:

1. An ambitious or extensive thesis

An extension may be granted by the relevant MSc-programme (by the Academic Director and/or Thesis Coordinator) on the following grounds:

- The student is an excellent student who has undertaken a research project of which the importance transcends a 'normal' MSc thesis;
- This research project is too ambitious or extensive to be completed within the normal deadlines;
- Coach and co-reader need to agree upon the necessity and desirability for an extension, referring to the talents of the students, the context in which this research takes place and the significance of the endeavour either for RSM or for the research field as a whole.

2. Special circumstances

The Examination Board may grant an exemption from the final thesis deadline in case a student has met with unfortunate circumstances beyond their control. The Examination Board will only take requests into consideration which include positive advice of a Coach in case of personal circumstances as well as the confirmation of the an co-reader that:

- the student has worked hard during the spring trajectory and has been on time with deliverables (if possible given the circumstances);
- the extension in order to finish the thesis is no longer than approximately one month;
- the coach and co-reader are willing and have the opportunity to supervise the student for the extension period.

Timely and well-documented requests will be ruled upon as soon as possible, preferably within two weeks, and ultimately within four weeks.

If an extension request is granted, you will be liable for the submission extension fee as given in the table below.

Submission Extension Fees for session 2023-2024

Extension Length	Extension Fee
Up to 3 months	€500
From 4 to 6 months	€750
From 7 to 9 months	€1000
10 months upwards	€1250

To apply for an extension, please use the form in Appendix B.

If the Participant finishes later than the appointed date without an approved extension, the Participant will be required to pay the fee for the Thesis again

6. Complaints

If a student is dissatisfied with the guidance of a coach and/or co-reader, it is important to address the issues directly with the coach and/or co-reader and/or thesis coordinator as soon as possible and well before the thesis will be graded. After grading, nothing can be adjusted anymore. Also keep in mind that the management of the process is a component of the assessment matrix: the student is supposed to take charge of the thesis process and to plan sufficient meetings with the coach and co-reader.

If the issues are not resolved by the informal approach, a student can submit a formal complaint to the Examination Board via its web portal. All relevant applicable documents, such as the coach and/or co-reader's and/or thesis coordinator's response, must be attached to this submission. The Examination Board will investigate the complaint on the basis of the submitted documents and will conduct its own research in conjunction with these. Both the complainant and the involved examiners will be heard in the following investigation. Within six weeks of lodging the complaint, the Examination Board will inform the complainant of its subsequent findings and any conclusions that may have been drawn.

Please note: A complaint cannot concern the grade awarded. If the grade does not live up to expectations, the student may lodge an appeal with the Examination Appeals Board via the EUR Legal Protection Facility: legal.protection@eur.nl. The appeal has to be submitted within six weeks of the announcement of the grade.

7. Assessment

Seven dimensions to evaluate and assess a master thesis

Each master thesis of the MCC program at RSM will be assessed and evaluated according to the criteria formulated in the diagram in Appendix C. Each column in the diagram represents a dimension of performance in the master thesis. Please note that the dimensions correspond to the seven paragraphs of the 'Content' chapter. Each row corresponds to a level of achievement. The combined dimensions constitute the basis for the final master thesis grade. The diagram is not imperative but rather guiding. The items mentioned under a dimension/column corresponding to a grade level are by no means exhaustive and determination of a grade level includes further interpretation.

The master thesis committee will use the diagram to determine the grade of the master thesis. Students are advised to check this diagram in the early stages of conceptualizing their master thesis.

8. RSM code of conduct

Whichever research methodology or method is used, students intending to gather empirical material should always announce they are master students from RSM in the process of preparing their master thesis. Students should take care to avoid giving the impression that data collection is for research by RSM faculty. Students cannot use RSM's official logo, letter headings or stationary. The thesis cannot be used towards the purpose of any other degree programme, at RSM or otherwise.

9. Plagiarism

The thesis must consist exclusively of the student's original work, and must be unique to the student and programme in question. In all cases, the thesis author assumes responsibility for its content.

In cases where the work cites, builds on or uses research or data provided by others, the report should acknowledge and reference this in accordance with recognized reference styles as referred to in the [Erasmus University Citing Information](#). Inadequate referencing will be considered plagiarism. Please note that all theses (final proposal and final thesis) will be scanned for plagiarism. Every case of plagiarism shall be reported to the Examination Board. The Examination Board may impose a sanction, which varies from reprimand to exclusion from examinations for up to one year.

Relevant digital documents towards communicating the rights and obligations of students are:

- [RSM Code of Conduct](#);
- [Scientific Integrity: EUR.nl](#);
- [Erasmus University Citing Information](#);
- [Brochure Cheating and Plagiarism](#);
- [Student Charter: EUR.nl](#).

10. Other master thesis issues

1. Thesis Online Platform (TOP)

RSM makes use of an online platform to support the thesis process, called Thesis Online Platform (TOP): <https://top.rsm.nl/>. Students will submit their final proposal and final thesis in the system. Coaches and co-readers will approve or disapprove the documents in TOP. At the end, the final assessment and grading is also recorded in TOP. Please note that there is no defence

For more information on TOP, please see [here](#).

2. Student evaluation of the thesis trajectory

Upon submission of the final thesis in TOP, students are asked to complete an evaluation of the thesis trajectory, their coach, and their co-reader. Students should give their honest and professional opinion. The results will only be made available to the coaches and co-readers after the final thesis grade has been registered in Osiris. Students thus need not fear for their thesis grade when being critical.

3. Judicium: classifications of the Master of Science degree

A master thesis can be graded from 5.5 to 10 in half-point increments. All master core courses and master electives, including the master thesis, and other courses that appear on the list of grades, will be factored into the determination of the grade point average (GPA). The GPA is calculated by multiplying the grade of an individual course by the number of ECTS of that course and then dividing the total by the total number of ECTS. Courses for which no grade is determined, such as tests assessed with a 'pass' or 'fail', are excluded from the GPA calculation.

The judicium is a classification of the GPA. The classification cum laude will be awarded if the student has fulfilled at least the following conditions:

- a. the average of the grades for the examinations under the Dutch grading system as displayed on the list of grades, weighted on the basis of the credits, is an 8.25 or higher;
- b. the grade for the examination of the thesis trajectory is at least an 8.0;
- c. no more than one examination or test (i.e. an officially recorded grade in Osiris) has been taken more than once (this applies from cohort 2013-2014 onwards). The thesis proposal is excluded from this rule.

The classification summa cum laude will be awarded if the student has fulfilled at least the following conditions:

- a. the average of the grades for the examinations under the Dutch grading system as displayed on the list of grades, weighted on the basis of the credits is an 9.0 or higher;
- b. the grade for the examination of the thesis trajectory is at least an 9.0, and
- c. no examination or test (i.e. an officially recorded grade in Osiris) has been taken more than once. The thesis proposal is excluded from this rule.

4. Graduation in pairs

A master thesis is considered an individual project. Students may not complete a thesis project jointly with a classmate or fellow student.

5. Thesis repository

After graduation the master thesis is stored in the Erasmus University Thesis Repository and is publicly accessible via thesis.eur.nl. The user can view the title, name of the author and keywords. ERNA login credentials are required for the document download.

6. Company confidentiality

Keep in mind that a thesis is a publicly accessible document: research results must be publicly accessible in order to be verified, discussed and opposed. Therefore, a thesis may not include any confidential information. In very special cases an exemption can be made. Please talk to your coach and co-reader about how to deal with confidentiality issue.

Please refer to programme management (ccc@rsm.nl) if you require any further support.

APPENDIX A Requirements of a thesis

The thesis within the curriculum of the Master of Science in Corporate Communication programme is required to be of a certain type and standard. For this purpose, we have collated some guidelines concerning its requirements. Ultimately, only the written report will be graded and it is imperative that this document be written in a professional manner in English. In this context, professional means that it meets the requirements of logical argumentation, and not that it is a business report.

Arguments will need to be coherently structured. Conclusions drawn will have to be justified from data that is presented in thesis and from legitimate analysis thereof.

References will need to be provided that show that sources are demonstrably valid. For example, exclusive referencing to the Internet, popular magazines and newspapers is not sufficient, particularly when these articles are often written by journalists who, themselves, are referencing unnamed and unverified data sources. See appendix 1 of Saunders and Lewis (2018). Also, make sure to avoid (accidental) plagiarism, see [Erasmus University Citing Information](#).

The thesis must be written in prose and preferably in the third person. You cannot rely on the reader to link disjointed and unconnected ideas. Writing in prose means that paragraphs consist of a collection of sentences dealing with a common theme or idea. In addition you will need to link your ideas from one paragraph to the next. A series of numbered bullet points or a power point presentation format are not sufficient to meet this goal. Special care must be taken not to rely on the latest buzzwords to carry your argument for you or use terminology of acronyms that are organisation-specific without adequately defining them.

Deconstructing and critically examining the latest fashions should be an attitude running through your entire report. Keep in mind that you are producing a work of academic as much as commercial worth.

A thesis is a structured document with major and minor headings that guide the reader through the essential components of the text. These techniques contribute to the readability of the message and your report should consist of a few major sections with headings and sub-headings. Each of these headings and sub-headings should be followed by stretches of continuous prose relying on carefully chosen discourse to guide the reader. The reader has to be led through each stage of your analysis and be convinced of the validity of your findings. Logical argument is therefore imperative. At the end of each section there should be a short section summarising the most important points from within the text of that section. This helps the reader quickly locate pertinent information while reading the document.

You should write in a clear, formal style with a well-chosen vocabulary and use carefully constructed sentences. The following elements are important in making the message both easy to read and appealing to the eye:

- Layout
- Appropriate use of headings and sub-headings to guide the reader
- Choice of vocabulary
- Sentence structure and length of sentences
- Paragraph structure and length of paragraphs
- Use of links between paragraphs
- Use of clear discourse
- Numbering and titles of graphic devices
- Integration of graphic devices into the text

APPENDIX B Extension Request Form

Part A – Request (to be completed by the student)

Full name:

Student ID number:

Date of extension request:

Please continue on separate sheet if necessary

Please give a detailed account of the present state of the thesis and clear reasons of why the completion might be delayed.

Signed Date

DD / MM / YY

APPENDIX C Master Thesis Assessment Matrix

	1. Identify research question and project design	2. Write a critical review	3. Define working concepts and conceptual frameworks
Excellent	Well-balanced and innovative composition of research question, project design and research method.	Literature review itself is a significant contribution, well described and evaluated from new or complex perspectives.	Significant additions to the theoretical and conceptual understanding of the subject.
Good	Well-defined research question, sensible project design and clear plans for conducting research.	Literature cogently evaluated using positions already available in literature.	Attempt, maybe not wholly successful, made to theorise beyond current state of literature.
Satisfactory	Explicit ideas but there are some doubts about relation between question, design and methods.	Good description of appropriate fields and some general criticisms made, but no close evaluation of concepts.	Concepts defined and conceptual framework is developed. Or existing conceptual framework adapted, in context of evaluated literature.
Unsatisfactory	Identified interesting topic but research question is too broad, while design and methods are vague.	Limited description of literature, or no criticism or evaluation.	Definition and use of theoretical concepts is confused and no attempt made to theoretical synthesis or evaluation.

4. Collect and analyse research data	5. Define, validate and evaluate solutions and models, interpret findings sensitively as a basis for making recommendations	6. Write persuasive, well-structured master thesis	7. Research ethics and management of relationships and processes
Contribution to development and methods for collecting and analysing research material and methodological debate.	Sophisticated interpretation of the material. The conclusions are based on the findings but transcend them.	Work of art written with style and with strong arguments.	Student has independently managed the project extremely well, <i>with careful consideration for potential conflicts of interest</i> , and has maintained excellent relationships with its stakeholders, including coach and co-reader.
Modifies and develops research methods reflecting methodological understanding.	Sophisticated interpretation of findings and conclusions are firmly based but show a creative spark. Conclusions based well on findings.	Clear, persuasive and well-structured document.	Researcher manages the project carefully and sensitively with open mindedness in the face of interests of parties in the research (including the thesis committee).
Methods for gathering and analysing research are used competently.	Uses techniques for interpretation in a mechanical way. Findings are treated as straight forward and unproblematic. Conclusions have some connection with the findings.	Expressed well or technically correct, but not both. Clear structure adequately argued.	Research is managed straightforwardly but has not explicitly addressed issues of contextual interests and concerns.
Methods for gathering data and analysing research material are confusing and unsystematically used.	Occasional insight takes the place of interpretation and conclusions have a tenuous link with findings.	Adequate expression but several mistakes. Argumentation sometimes replaced by assumption or assertion. Using bullets to disguise lack of arguments.	Student has managed the project poorly or unethically, with little contact with or concerns for the parties involved, including coach and co-reader.

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Accredited by:

