Master Thesis

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Office hours: by appointment
Course Type: Compulsory
Credits: 6 ECTS
Term: 1^{st}, 2^{nd} & 3^{rd}

Course Description

The Final Master Thesis (FMT) is an essential learning activity in the Master's program. It allows students to study a topic of their interest in-depth and will enable them to develop important capacities such as planning, problem-solving, information analysis, and result interpretation.

The FMT comprises 6 ECTS credits out of the 60 that are earned by completing the Master. The FMT's goal is for students to produce a high-quality academic/practical research project or marketing plan that they can be proud of.

For students interested in pursuing an academic career (by following up with a Master of Research or a Ph.D.), the FMT represents an opportunity to confirm their interest in a particular topic and their ability to contribute to the existing body of knowledge of said topic.

For the faculty staff, the FMT is an opportunity to interact with students differently; instead of teaching students the knowledge they have acquired through the years, teachers work together with students to produce new knowledge and help students make a contribution.

Methodology

M4. Individual assignments (preparation of keynote presentations, reading of specialized readings, comments on suggested readings.)

M6. Group work (assignments, presentation of cases and discussion of topics by students, etc.)

M9. Face-to-face activities dedicated to solving practical exercises based on the data provided by the professor (work with companies to solve specific cases, analysis of brands, among others.)

M3. Face-to-face tutoring to personalize the learning process, consultations with the assigned Mentor, internal or external. And support from the Mentor throughout the entire process.

The competences, the learning outcomes, the assessment elements, and the quality of the learning process included in this Teaching Plan will not be affected if, during the academic trimester, the teaching model has to switch either to a hybrid model (a combination of face-to-face and online sessions) or to a completely online model.

General Competencies

CE3. Apply the practical tools and theoretical models to the research results for the selection of markets and the strategic planning of marketing management.

CE5. Plan through the domain of specific techniques, the different elements of the marketing mix that are connected to the marketing of a company

CE7. Incorporate the different techniques and decision-making models of the marketing mix elements in the development of a complete marketing plan.

CE8. Apply market implementation techniques for the design and implementation of an action plan at the point of sale.

Learning Outcomes

CE7.

R1. Integrate all the elements of the marketing mix into a marketing plan.

R2. Measure market potential and estimate sales.

R3. Estimate the economic cost of a given marketing mix planning.

R4. Make a complete marketing plan.

CE3.

R1. Analyze data from market research with diverse methodologies.

R2. Differentiate between methods of analysis to identify the most appropriate to perform the selection and planning of markets.

R3. Select tools and methods for analyzing market opportunities and for making the market selection.

R4. Use planning tools for market entry decision making.

CE5.

R1. Discriminate between the various decisions that make up the marketing mix for its execution.

R2. Apply analysis techniques to facilitate decision-making corresponding to the elements of the marketing mix based on the results.

R3. Make management recommendations for all aspects of the marketing mix.

CE8.

R1. Differentiate between the different tactical possibilities of implementing the marketing plan.

R2. Develop a promotional plan.

R3. Make an action plan at the point of sale.

Calendar and Contents

The Final Master Thesis

1. The Master's Thesis will consist of a Marketing Plan, a Research Project, or a Case Study that will be carried out throughout the academic year.

2. In the Case of marketing plans, a real company or product must be chosen and preferably accessible to the student. In the case of research papers, they must be related to a marketing topic and work with a professor who is familiar with the research line or issue to be investigated. In the Case of study cases, it should be considered around a dilemma to be solved in real life.

Individual or Team master theses

The FMT can be done individually or in a group of maximum two people.

In the case of carrying out the FMT in group, the presentation will be made individually in front of the evaluation committee.

Submission and Defense of the FMT

The FMT will be presented and publicly defended. The report will be evaluated by an Evaluation Commission chaired by the program directors.

The Master Thesis defense will take place after finishing the exams of the 3rd term. The final version of the FMT must be submitted at least one week before the presentations.

Annex 1 specifies the general guidelines for the structure of the FMT.

Seminars for the preparation and monitoring of the FMT

The goal of the 'Preparation and Monitoring Sessions of the FMT' is to guide and support students by completing the FMT. With the help of those sessions, students will learn:

- How to design a Marketing Plan, Research Project or Case Study.[1]
- How to narrow down the topics that interest them.
- How to produce a high-quality report that reflects such interests.
- How to find relevant information on the chosen topic considering the research that has already been conducted on said topic.
- How to apply a methodology that can be easily replicated by others in other fields or circumstances.
- How to analyze relevant data and use that information to support their conclusions.
- Connect with professors from the UPF and the Barcelona School of Management further than mere class attendance.
- Get a feeling of intellectual achievement.

The 'Preparation and Monitoring Sessions of the FMT' will also allow students to connect with the teachers from UPF and BSM outside the classroom, allowing for networking opportunities.

[1] Annex 2 shows samples of structure for the three typologies of FMT.

Follow-up presentations to present FMT milestones

The goal of the 'Follow-up presentations' is to allow students to present their progress on the FMT to their classmates, and then receive feedback.

Two progress-sharing sessions will take place throughout the academic year, in those sessions:

- Each student will do a public keynote presentation of their progress in front of their classmates. Highlighting the milestones they have reached so far.
- The classmates listening to the presentations will work in small groups to give feedback on each presentation.

Complementary and support activities

During the Master's completion, activities related to various aspects of Marketing will be carried out, and that may be useful to be applied in the FMT. These activities may be seminars, special guests and companies, or field trips. Attendance at these activities constitutes 5% of the total grade of the Master Thesis.

IMPORTANT: You must meet a minimum of 80% attendance at these activities to have 5% of the grade. If total attendance at these activities is less than 80%, the final grade of this section will be zero (0)

Mentors or Advisors

Mentors are professors from the UPF or BSM, or they can also be professionals with proven record and knowledge on the subject. Their role is to guide the student during the FMT preparation and support them in the search for information, design of models, analysis of results, and future lines of research. Students will propose the topics to be developed or choose any of the ones presented by the mentors. The Advisor has the power to accept or refuse a proposed topic.

Each participant will be assigned a project Mentor with whom they will carry out monthly individualized review sessions according to the project's progress.

The Advisor will be in charge of evaluating the Master Thesis content and may be present on the day of the final presentation altogether with the Evaluation Committee. Communication between the Mentor and the student throughout the academic year will be agreed upon for each particular case. In any case, there must be at least one (1) face-to-face meeting, individual per quarter between both parties.

For those FMTs conducted in groups, the mentors will evaluate each student individually the personal aspects individually.

The responsibilities of students and mentors are specified in the following table:

TERM	STUDENT	ADVISOR/PROGRAM DIRECTORS
1	Selection of the topic (it can be a company/product if you are designing a marketing plan or another topic related to marketing if you are going to do a research project or a specific case for case studies)	PD: During the first term, concurrent sessions will be held to explain FMT types and help the student select their topic.
	Present the work in front of classmates and directors.	PD: A Mentor will be assigned for each Master Thesis.
2	Get in contact with the assigned Mentor.	A: Evaluates the topic proposed by the student. First Feedback.

TERM	STUDENT	ADVISOR/PROGRAM DIRECTORS
	Attending the following face-to-face meetings with the Advisor: - Project startup meeting. - Progress review meeting. Reporting and discussing the progress made on the FMT (at least once per month) **In all cases, it is the student who must contact the Advisor.**	A: Assist individually in person or remotely to clarify doubts and indicate the work guidelines. At least one face-to-face meeting during the term is recommended.
	Submission of the first milestone of the FMT following disclosed deadlines and formatting guidelines.	Reviewing and evaluating the first milestone of the FMT according to the evaluation criteria included in this guide.
3	Attending the face-to-face meetings with the Advisor (at least once per term). Reporting and discussing the progress made on the FMT (at least once per month) **In all cases, it is the student who must contact the Advisor.**	A: Attend individually to the student to clarify doubts and to indicate the work guidelines in the monthly follow-up meetings (At least one face-to-face in the term)
	Submitting the final report of the FMT following disclosed deadlines and formatting guidelines.	Reviewing and evaluating the second draft of the FMT according to the evaluation criteria included in this guide.
	Defending the FMT before the assigned evaluation committee.	Attend to the defense of the FMT (optional)

Evaluation criteria

The criteria taken into account for the evaluation of the TFM is the following:

Attendance at the seminars for the preparation and follow-up of the Master's Thesis: They will be held throughout the academic year and announced promptly.

Attendance and participation in the activities prepared around the Master's Thesis: these activities can be seminars, specialist conferences, visits, etc. They will be held throughout the academic year and will be announced promptly

Assessment of work methodology: punctuality and rigor in deliveries, interpersonal relationships, organization, and planning

Report development:

• **Overall:** structure, rigor in writing, clarity of presentation, capacity for analysis, and synthesis.

• **Background:** application of general skills acquired in the Master, technical quality, creativity, documentary search, and sources of information.

• **Defense before the committee:** presentation, oratory, answer to questions, respect for the allotted time, etc.

Deliverables:

There will be three milestones of the FMT throughout the academic year and a final presentation. The Mentor will review the progress and give the student feedback on the project's progress and evaluate the submissions according to the evaluation form. The evaluation committee will grade the presentation and defense of the FMT. The evaluation of each submission will represent a percentage of the final grade.

Evaluation	Date	% of the Final Grade
Attendance + Participation in FMT seminars	Throughout the year	10%
Participation during follow-up presentations	2nd and 3rd term.	10% (5% each)
Attendance to Special Activities	Throughout the year	5% *(You should attend at least 80% of the activities to get that 5%)*
First Milestone: Topic presentation.	End of the first term	5%
Second Milestone of the FMT	End of the second term	15%
Third Milestone: FMT final report	End of the third term	15%
Defense	End of the third term	40%

IMPORTANT: If the EVALUATION COMMITTEE does not approve the Master Thesis, the FMT is suspended and must re-take to be submitted until July 31st of the current year. The program directors will evaluate the recovery submission.

Tardiness in delivery submission

If any of the submissions are not made or are made past the deadlines, it will be penalized with 5% of the FMT's final grade.

Changing FMT Topic

Students are allowed to change the topic of their FMT once as long as the following requirements are fulfilled:

1) The student's advisor has approved the change of topic.
2) The request to change topics was made before the fifth week of the second term (the exact date will be provided later).

Note: changing topics after the fifth week of the second term is technically possible but will result in (cumulative) 5% penalty in the FMT's final grade. The Advisor's permission must be received in all cases.

Changing Advisor

Switching to another advisor is not allowed unless any of the following circumstances occur:

1) The current Advisor decides, for personal or professional reasons, to stop advising a student.

2) The Advisor announces that he or she cannot supervise the topic proposed by the student.

3) There is a substantiated incompatibility between the ideas or style of the Advisor and those of the student.

Any advisor changes from the second term onwards will be managed by the Masters' directors who will search the most convenient solution for the student.

Term	Activity
1	Presenting the TFM proposal to classmates and professors. This presentation will be recorded. The details are specified in the document called 'Guide for the presentation of the Idea' on the eCampus.
	Mentor assignment
2	Project review meetings with the Advisor (at least one face-to-face)
	Online DPC module: **Methodology for information collection and management.** **(Participation in this module is required to obtain a passing grade in the second draft)**
	Submission of the First Milestone. For Marketing Plans • Introduction.

Term	Activity
	• Data sources. • Brief description of the current situation of the company or product. • Strategic objective of the company (Possible target, place (physical or virtual)). • Analysis of the current situation, external and internal. • SWOT matrix. • Definition of commercial objective, targeting, and positioning strategies. For Research Projects • A question to answer or hypothesis. • Theoretical framework and data sources. • Presentation of measurement instruments such as surveys, interviews, questionnaires, comparative tables, etc. • Presentation of the first results (if any) and comments on the process of research. For Case Studies • Statement of the problem or dilemma to be solved, presentation of the Case, historical framework, or background. • General description of the sector and the competition. • Description of the current situation of the company. • Description of the areas or people involved in the Case. • Case closure. • Appendix. • Reflection questions.
	• Presentation of First Milestone on follow-up presentations.
3	Project review meetings with the Advisor (at least one face-to-face)
	Submission of the final report. For Marketing Plans • Marketing Mix. • Budget. • Sales plan. • Schedule.

Term	Activity
	• KPIs. • Conclusions. • Appendix. For Research Projects • Analysis and interpretation of results. (Discussion) • Conclusions. • Following research lines. • Appendix. For Case Studies • Pedagogical note: o Synopsis. o Learning objectives. o Areas of application. o Knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students should have. o Questions for discussion. o Possible answers. o Pedagogical suggestions, aids, and timing. **Important**: The final report will be validated with the copyright prevention tool Turnitin.
	Follow-up presentation.
	Defense of the FMT before the Evaluation Committee.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – FMT general guidelines

The following general guidelines should be followed for the preparation of the TFM document:

General Structure of the Master Thesis

- **Cover page:** name of the student, name of the Mentor, the title of the TFM, date of presentation, and the heading "Universitat Pompeu Fabra- Barcelona

School of Management - Master's Degree in Marketing." A template will be provided with the logo that will be made available in the Aula Global.

- **Second page:** title of the work, a summary of approximately 300 words (Abstract or Executive Summary). The abstract is a brief sample of what the whole study is. It should include the purpose of the selected topic, the applied methodology, the results obtained, and the contributions and importance of the research work.

  In the final part of the abstract, and presented as an additional paragraph, it is suggested to include the essential terms of the study in a maximum of two lines; these words usually emerge from the title of the TFM. These terms, in some cases, are also known as "Descriptors."

- **Third page:** Acknowledgments (optional)
- **Fourth page:** Table of contents (other indexes referring to tables, graphs, and annexes may also be included). The index (s) refers to a list of each of the titles and subtitles used throughout the study. The page numbers of each specified point must be recorded in this relationship.
- **The body of the report** should begin on page 5. It starts with an introduction, ends with a conclusion, and proposes an orderly and clear argument for the reader. The body of the TFM consists of the following parts:
- **Justification** of the work and motivation: The reason why the topic and practical objective of the work was selected
- **Sections**: Varies depending on the type of FMT.
- **References**. It includes all the sources consulted throughout the study, arranged under clear criteria. It will be indicated in the online Professional Competences course, "Research Methodologies."
- **Appendix** (if necessary): these are materials that serve to expand the information described in the FMT; it is not a compilation of unnecessary material that only helps to bulk up your research.

Formatting

- The text's body style must use Times New Roman or Arial, size 12, line spacing 1.5. Pages must be numbered.

- The document's introductory section should explain the context, interest, and importance of the question under study.
- Sections, titles, and subtitles should be identifiable (for example, using the numbering system of 1 below, then 1.1 1.1.1, etc.)
- Tables and figures must be numbered, and the legend must go at the bottom. An index is recommended for tables, graphs, and figures, respectively.
- References to authors should be indicated in the text, at the end of a sentence or in a logical jump in the sentence. References must be cited using the APA format (see research methodology course)
- The suggested length of the body of the work (without bibliography and annexes) is the following:
- Extension for Marketing plans and research works: between 35 and 50 pages.
- For case studies: 10-15 pages for the student case, 15-20 pages for the teacher's notes.

Appendix 2 – Sample structure of Master Theses

For each type of TFM, there are structures that we suggest below. These may vary depending on the Mentor's methodologies or recommendations but are shown below to give an idea. The proposed outlines should not limit the creative work of the authors.

1. Research Projects

If the research work is based on a review of the literature (bibliometrics), a theoretical work, empirical or applied research work, the report should consider the following questions:

- What is the field of research?
- What is the research question? (Hypothesis)
- Why is it relevant? What is your motivation?
- What is the status of the issue?
- What methodology is used?
- What results are obtained?
- Why are these results contributing to the field of research?
- What are the limitations of the research?
- What is expected to be learned?
- How can I move on?

A structure of a research paper can have the following form:

- Problem Statement. The points of support of the approach are:
    - Theoretical assumptions, which are the general theories related to the problem under study.
    - Specific data are the figures of other studies or investigations that serve as support to our approach.
    - Real situation studied or definition of the problem.

In addition to these points, the work hypotheses (if any) or the research questions should be included at the end of the statement, which should be precise and reflect as clearly as possible.

- Goals. They reflect the actual purposes of the investigation.

- Justification. It explains aspects such as the purpose of the research, the study's convenience, social contributions, practical implication, theoretical contribution, or methodological utility, depending on the research in question.
- Background or status of the issue. It is the presentation of previous works related to the topic that is being investigated.
- Theoretical bases or Theoretical framework. It is a contrast and analysis of theories and research related to the study.
- Applied methodology. This is a detailed description of the method used to solve the problem. Methods, techniques, and procedures used in the study are necessarily included here but supported by authors. It may be useful to refer to the definition of variables and indicators, population and sample (if available), the focus of work: model of applied methods, data analysis techniques, data collection instruments, reliability ...
- Limitations. They are the restrictions that have been found when carrying out the research work, referring to procedures, methods, techniques, interpretation of results, selection of the population, and sample.
- Analysis and interpretation of results.
- Conclusions. It is the endpoint of the investigation carried out. In general terms, the conclusion should include aspects such as the work's achievements, relevant ideas that have emerged in the different chapters elaborated, general findings of the selected central theme.

2. Marketing Plans

The marketing plan is like a document for internal use of the company that analyzes the environment, defines the strategy, and designs the actions to achieve the strategy's objective.

For these FMTs, we will work with the following methodologies and authors:

- For the analysis of the environment (internal and external), a SWOT matrix (Weaknesses, Threats, Strengths, and Opportunities) will be prepared. Author: Albert Humphrey, Stanford Research Institute (1960)
- For internal and external analysis, the Michael Porter methodology on the company's value chain will be used. Reference "Michael E. Porter, Competitive Advantage, CECSA, Mexico, 1987, pages 51 to 78."
- For the external analysis, a combination of
- PESTLE/STEEPLED analysis (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental factors), Alan Chapman "Analysis of the environment." PEST analysis. 2008
- The quadrilateral by Michael Porter in his book "Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance, 1985."
- We will work with Philip Kotler's methodology set out in his book, Marketing Management, latest edition for the Marketing and Marketing Mix strategies.

An outline of a marketing plan has the following structure:

i. Executive summary (to be prepared once the report is completed)

1. Introduction:

• Justification and motivation

• Brief description of the current situation of the company or product

• Strategic objective (Possible target, place (physical or virtual))

• Estimated size of the market to justify why it is an excellent opportunity

2. Internal Analysis

2.1. Mission, vision, values, and corporate philosophy

2.2. Brief history of the company

2.3. Organization: style and approach

2.4. Company resources. Which ones add value and which ones take away value to deliver to the Productive customer capacity

2.5. Analysis of the product portfolio and its contribution to billing.

2.6. Distribution channels used by the company

2.7. Current customers (how they contribute to revenue)

2.8. Communication policy

3. External Analysis

3.1. Macro-environment analysis

3.1.1 Segment demographics (Focused on whether it is B2C or B2B)

3.1.2 Changes and trends in the social and cultural environment

3.1.3 Changes and trends in the economic environment

3.1.4 Changes and trends in the legal and regulatory environment

3.1.5 Changes and trends in the technological environment

3.1.6 Ecological and environmental aspects

3.2. Microenvironment analysis

3.2.1. General analysis of the sector

3.2.2 Competitor analysis

3.2.3 Analysis of the sector's distribution channels

3.2.4 Market analysis: segmentation analysis and estimated market share calculation to aspire

3.2.5 Analysis of consumer/user behavior

4. SWOT matrix

5. Business objective

6. Basic strategies

6.1 Selection of the target audience (targeting)

6.2 Positioning strategies

7. Marketing mix

7.1 Product actions

7.2 Price actions

7.3 Distribution actions

7.4 Promotion and communication actions

8. Implementation and action plan

8.1 Budget and sales plan

8.2 Break-even analysis

8.3 Forecast income statement

8.4 Organization and timing of the actions

9. Monitoring and control

10. Conclusions

11. References

12. Appendix

3. Case Studies

Suppose you decide to analyze a particular situation (person, team, company, industry, etc.) within a specific time frame, around a topic, or focused on a particular decision. In that case, this is called a case study. The idea is to explain how a point in time has been reached and what lessons can be learned from the situation described.

For the FMTs, we will use the case method that has been applied at Harvard Business School since the 1920s. It is based on a process of analysis and discussion of real cases faced by companies or people. It is accompanied by a Pedagogical Note that serves as a guideline for use in class.

The idea is that the students live the experience of addressing management and administration issues to make decisions and solve problems. It is usually a reasonably effective and enjoyable teaching method.

The structure of a case study with Harvard methodology usually includes:

The Case's document:

It is the document that the student reads where the whole story is described. The structure usually has the following form:

- **An Introduction:** There is usually a character belonging to an organization and a critical context or moment.
- **Sections:** the sections put the reader in the context of the Case by explaining things like market aspects, competition, financial data, other organizations, etc.
- **Characters:** there is usually a protagonist who guides the Case. However, other characters have also often presented that complement the situation being analyzed.
- **Preceding events:** explanations that lead to the critical moment.
- **"Turning point":** decision situation that must be taken to resolve the issue raised.
- **Closing:** usually with a question that invites discussion.
- **The character and "their situation":** what she must solve; In what conditions; what kind of response.
- **Appendix:** documents and data that facilitate the discussion and understanding of the Case.

The Pedagogical Note (Teaching Note)

It is the document that the teacher, professor, or instructor will use as support for the resolution of the Case in the classroom and consists of the following parts:

- **Synopsis:** a brief account of what the Case is about to put the reader in context. It is usually presented to the main character, the sector where the Case is developed, and the situation facing the company or the person.
- **Learning objectives:** explain how to use the Case and for what purpose.
- Application: describes the thematic areas or programs where the Case can be used.
- **Knowledge:** explains the conceptual frameworks that must be taken into account and the theoretical concepts to be applied.
- **Competencies:** recommends analytical techniques and strategies for the Case.
- **Attitudes:** explains the behaviors that the main character has, which must be understood by the student, such as dealing with values, attitudes, or resistance to change.
- **Questions:** they are the basis for discussion and allow the objectives to be achieved.
- **Analysis:** these are the possible answers to the questions and the development of the topics.
- **Pedagogical suggestions (Teaching note):** they represent the teacher's roadmap since they give the guidelines to follow during the Case's resolution.
- Additional elements that give the teacher support while the Case is solved, such as a blackboard map, role play, etc.
- **Timing:** duration of the case solution session specifying the times for each of the parties to be dealt with.

Bio of Professor

Alberto Lempira Guevara is a Marketing & Business Development Consultant. He is a Ph.D. in Business candidate at the Barcelona University (Spain), MSc. In Marketing from Pompeu Fabra University (Spain), he has a Postgraduate degree from Tecnocampus-UPF (Spain) in Digital Marketing, two Postgraduate degrees from INESDI Online Business School (Spain) in Inbound Marketing, Transmedia Storytelling/Branded Content and he has a Bachelor's degree in Production Engineering by Metropolitan University (Venezuela).

Alberto worked in Political Marketing for more than five years. He has also been working on user acquisition, CRO, digital strategy, and advertisement for the last eight years. He has worked as a consultant for the past years and is re-launching the consulting agency BoostingOut. He is the host of the @NotYourMarketer podcast.

Alberto is currently the academic coordinator of the Master of Science in Marketing at the Pompeu Fabra University.