

MSc in International Business (2023/24)

Master Thesis

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Office hours: Monday, from 14 h to 15 h (prior appointment required)

Course Type: Compulsory

Credits: 6 ECTS

Term: 1st, 2nd and 3rd

1. COURSE PRESENTATION

Course Description

The Master's Thesis (MT) is an original written work, prepared by students in groups, that integrates and develops the training, competencies and skills acquired along the MSc IB. The MT is a 6 ECTS course and, in terms of individual student time dedication, it requires a 150-hour workload. The MT will be defended before and Examination Committee in June.

Each group works in the MT project under the direct supervision of a faculty member, acting as the group Supervisor. Another faculty member is appointed as MT Coordinator, with the role of coordinating and overseeing the development of the whole course and for all MSc IB students, as well as providing general guidance and training about the MT. The MT Coordinator will set up several MT lectures throughout the year to assess the progress of the work done by groups and to address potential difficulties.

The MT can be, among other possibilities:

- a full-fledged internationalization plan for an existing company;
- a detailed proposal for the creation of a new company with an international vision;
- an in-depth study of the business implications of an international/multinational trend.

Objectives

The MT should allow the students to put in practice the knowledge acquired throughout the Master in a real or simulated situation.

The work necessarily needs to be done from a business perspective and with an international dimension.

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Competences/Learning Objectives

BASIC COMPETENCES

CB6. Possess and understand the knowledge that provides a basis or an opportunity to be original in the development or application of ideas, often in a research context.

CB7. That students know how to apply the acquired knowledge and their ability to solve problems in new or little-known environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their area of study.

CB8. That students are able to integrate knowledge and face the complexity of formulating judgments based on information that, being incomplete or limited, includes reflections on the social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments.

CB9. That students know how to communicate their conclusions and their knowledge and reasons that support them to specialized and non-specialized audiences in a clear and unambiguous way.

CB10. That students possess the learning skills that allow them to continue studying in a way that will be largely self-directed or autonomous.

GENERAL COMPETENCES

Instrumental skills

G1. Search, analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information. Managing the information acquired from its analysis, its assessment and the synthesis of that information.

G2. Relate concepts, knowledge and tools from different areas.

G3. Communicate orally and in writing in English

Personal generic competencies

G4. Leadership and management capacity of multicultural, interdisciplinary, competitive, changing and complex groups.

G5. PERSUASION. Detect customer needs and supplier requirements to adapt the products and services offered.

G6. Put into practice the essential elements to be able to carry out a negotiation.

Systemic generic competencies

G7. Understand an organization with a global perspective.

G8. Implement initiatives and changes within an organization.

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G9. Promote respect for multicultural values: equality, solidarity, commitment.

Competencies for applicability

G10. Make the knowledge and skills acquired effective in an advanced way.

G11. Apply quantitative criteria and qualitative aspects in decision making.

G12. Apply the concept of networking through the use of the Internet and other networking techniques.

G13. Organize and manage time efficiently in the development of tasks.

SPECIFIC COMPETENCES

E1. Identify the phases of internationalization of a company (expansion, internationalization, and rationalization of activities).

E2. Mastering the internal analysis of the company to diagnose the viability of starting the first phase of internationalization and consolidating the process

E3. Train to diagnose the viability of rationalizing the internationalization resources of the multinational company.

E4. Analyze, synthesize and interpret the data and master its application in the analysis of the business potential of the country.

E5. Interpret the current and future situation of the international economic, legal, social, and political environment.

E6. Recognize and identify sources of information and international documentation (public and private) on the business potential of a country and a sector of economic activity.

E7. Evaluate and select the pool of countries with potential for the internationalization of the company, identifying the strategic fit of the company with the opportunity that each one represents.

E8. Advanced ability to use and develop information synthesis and communication tools for international companies.

E9. Analyze in depth the sector, competition, market, consumer, and distribution of each preselected country.

E10. Evaluate the selection of the appropriate country to develop the process of internationalization of the company.

E11. Design the international logistics network to support internationalization.

E12. Integrate the corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies of the company in the

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internationalization process.

E13. Define and develop a market research project for decision making in an international business environment.

E14. Design, organize and manage the sales force that will be deployed in new markets.

E15. Integrate the different areas of the company in business decision making in a simulated international environment.

E16. Master and resolve the legal-administrative procedures and procedures required in the internationalization process.

E17. Recognize and apply financial information, systems, and models to develop international financial operations.

E18. Select, organize, motivate, and lead the human resources of the company in an international environment.

E19. Mastering the tools and advanced capacity to successfully develop a negotiation at an international level, taking into account the importance of the specific socio-cultural aspects of each region.

E20. Master and know how to use the different forms of organization of the international company.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Recognize relationships between the different managers in an international company.
- Master the preparation of a capacity diagnosis.
- Recognize the formal structure of a business plan, improvement plan for company internationalization and / or an applied research study on a specific topic.
- Master the tools to successfully negotiate with agents and distributors.
- Master the tools to develop a successful price negotiation.
- Mastering the preparation of a report on the country and sector of economic activity.
- Evaluate information on export conditions.
- Recognize business opportunities in foreign markets.
- Mastering the structure of the balance sheet of the international company.

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- Establish the appropriate guide to analyze the solvency of a company.
- Mastering the development of the financial part of a business plan.
- Know the financing instruments for international operations.
- Recognize the financial risks associated with international operations.
- Locate the importance of logistics in foreign trade.
- Mastering the components of the merchandise supply chain.
- Understand the importance of culture in the international negotiation process.
- Recognize the importance of intercultural negotiation.
- Distinguish the different forms of organization of the international company.
- Mastering the scope of globalization in small and medium-sized businesses

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Related SDGs

SDG 1: No poverty

SDG 2: zero hunger

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

SDG 4: Quality education

SDG 5: Gender equality

SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure

SDG 10: Reduce inequalities

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

SDG 13: Climate action

SDG 14: Life below water

SDG 15: Life on land

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and strong institutions

SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals

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2. COURSE LEARNING PLAN

Methodology

Organization

The MT is to be done in groups of **two or three** students.

The MT Coordinator will ask the MSc IB faculty for proposals of projects and, after examination and consultation with the Program Director, shall produce a short list of those. In the first MT lecture, the MT Coordinator will inform students about the MT projects proposed by the faculty. Students can choose one of those projects or make a MT project proposal on their own. In any case, preferences over an MT project will only be accepted for consideration if they are submitted by a full team of students, that is, each comprised of three or four people.

By the second MT lecture, all students will need to be assigned to a group and to a MT project. The formation of student groups, the authorization to perform a particular MT project and the assignment of a MT Supervisor are tasks that will be led and managed by the MT Coordinator in communication with the Program Director.

Students need to hand in two progress reports during the year and inform the MT Coordinator of the meetings they have with the Supervisor. For the MT to be presented and defended, the Supervisor needs to authorize it.

MT Paper

The MT final report's maximum extension will be 25 pages, inclusive of an Executive Summary (2 pages maximum) the tables and figures which are considered particularly relevant; i.e. references to tables or figures outside the main text in the report should be kept to a strict minimum. Additional material can be relegated to the appendix, without any further limitation on length; as a reference, appendices are expected to be between 30 and 50 pages long. The following fields are necessary: title, abstract, and keywords. All pages must be numbered, the typography shall be Arial, Calibri or Times of size 12 and the maximum interline space is 1.5. The cover page needs to follow a template and simple style documents are preferred.

Submission

Students need to submit the following **three items**.

As a group:

- the final version of the master thesis, in electronic and paper versions

Individually:

- the co-evaluation of the group peers

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- the individual learning report on the MT

The submission of these three elements is unitary and failure to submit any of those may result in the student failing the course.

NB. 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 (combination of face-to-face and on-line sessions) or to a complete on-line model.

Student workload (including self-study) 150 hours

Evaluation criteria

Students work in the MT in groups but grades are individual to each student, i.e. members of a given group might get different grades if there are signals of different effort and involvement. To individualize the grades, all members of the group will be requested, **anonymously and individually**,

- to cross evaluate their group peers
- to submit an individual report on their individual learning experience.

Individual student grades will be determined according to these elements:

| Assessment element | Weight |
|--|--------|
| Continuous assessment | |
| It includes three elements: a) attendance to sessions and the proper submission of all required reports; b) input from the co-evaluation by peers; c) the assessment of the individual learning report | 30 % |
| Final work and presentation | |
| It includes five elements: a) motivation and relevance; b) methodology and results; c) discussion and conclusions; d) written style and clarity; e) degree of internationalization and scope for applicability | 50% |
| Oral presentation | |
| The main assessment criteria will be clarity in the exposition and the ability to answer the questions from the evaluation committee. | 20 % |

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Retake conditions

Students that fail the evaluation of the course will have a retake exam opportunity that will be programmed in accordance with the academic calendar. If a student has to retake the exam, his **maximal grade for the course will be a 5,0 (out of 10,0)**.

If all members of a group fail the master thesis course in the regular examination, the entire group will be asked to submit a new master thesis. The new submission will preferably be about an entirely new topic although it is also possible to resubmit a complete revision of the project presented in the regular evaluation, only if this explicitly authorized by the program Director. In any case, the new submission must meet the formal criteria of a master thesis, i.e., it must be an original work corresponding to a 6 ECTS course of individual workload. The submission needs to be 25 pages long (excluding appendices) and between 50 – 60 pages long (all material included).

If in a group, some members do not pass the course, the student(s) who has(ve) failed will be asked to prepare a 10 page (excluding appendices) individual paper. The new work shall be an original contribution that:

- either extends the submitted master thesis in the regular evaluation, e.g., focusing on one of the functional dimensions of the project (financial, marketing, logistics, operations, etc.) or extending the analysis to a different territory;
- or, an entirely new project about international business that shows the student has acquired the contents, skills and competences of the MSc IB program.

In both cases:

- The Program Director and the MT Coordinator will appoint a supervisor for the new project.
- The new submission will take place in early December and the new presentation before the examination committee in mid-December.
- In all cases, the originality of the new submission will be carefully examined, and it cannot reproduce any content of a previous submission.

General Issues

Students are required to attend 80% of classes. Failing to do so without justified reason will imply a Zero grade in the participation/attendance evaluation item and may lead to suspension from the program.

Students who fail the course during the regular evaluation are allowed ONE re-take of the evaluation, in the conditions specified above. If the course is again failed after the retake, the student will have to register again for the course the following year.

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In case of a justified no-show to an exam, the student must inform the corresponding faculty member and the director(s) of the program so that they study the possibility of rescheduling the exam (one possibility being during the “Retake” period). In the meantime, the student will get an “incomplete”, which will be replaced by the actual grade after the final exam is taken. The “incomplete” will not be reflected on the student’s Academic Transcript.

Plagiarism is to use another’s work and to present it as one’s own without acknowledging the sources in the correct way. All essays, reports or projects handed in by a student must be original work completed by the student. By enrolling at ESCI UPF BSM Master of Science and signing the “Honor Code,” students acknowledge that they understand the schools’ policy on plagiarism and certify that all course assignments will be their own work, except where indicated, by correct referencing. Failing to do so may result in automatic expulsion from the program.”

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Content and learning activities

First Term, 2023

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| First MT Lecture | September 28, 14:30 h. |
| Group Formation Deadline | November 1 |
| Second MT Lecture | November 9, 14:30 h. |

Second Term, 2024

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Third MT Lecture - Workshop (online) | January 29, 15 h. |
| First Progress Report Deadline | February 15 |
| Fourth MT Lecture incl. Finance Module | March 11, 15 h. |

Third Term, 2024

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Fifth MT Lecture | April 29, 13.15 h. |
| Second Progress Report Deadline | May 1 |
| Sixth MT Lecture | May 27, 13.15 h. |
| MT Submission Deadline | June 7, 12 h. |
| MT Presentations | June 20 and June 21 |

Total student workload (including self-study): 150 hours

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3. PROFESSOR

Ramon Xifré is Associate Professor of Economics at ESCI–UPF, Faculty at UPF Barcelona School of Management, and Policy Research Fellow in the Public-Private Sector Research Center at IESE Business School.

His main interest is the competitiveness of the Spanish and EU economies and the related policies and structural reforms on issues like business environment, internationalization, R&D&I and industrial policy. He has led and participated in numerous research projects on these areas, commissioned both by public and private organizations, and he has published one book and dozens of articles on these topics. He collaborates regularly with the ESCI-UPF UNESCO Chair in Life Cycle and Climate Change, FUNCAS and Fundación COTEC.

From January 2009 to December 2011, he was on leave serving as Senior Economic Policy Advisor at the Spanish Prime Minister Economic Bureau. He has been member of Board of Directors of ICEX and regularly addresses international audiences on investment climate and competitiveness issues for Spain and the EU.

He holds a BA from Universitat Pompeu Fabra, MSc from the London School of Economics, was “Marie Curie” Fellow at the University of Munich (LMU) and he received his Economics PhD from Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY/RESOURCES/ READING MATERIALS

They will be provided throughout the course on an individual basis.