



**FREDERICK UNIVERSITY**

SCHOOL OF ARTS, COMMUNICATION & CULTURAL STUDIES

### **Thesis Guidelines**

Department of Arts and Communication

Program of Study:

Journalism and Media Communication

1. BA in Journalism
2. BA in Public Relations and Communications

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to provide students with the guidelines for the final year Thesis, which is part of the requirements for obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in one of the specializations of the Journalism and Media Communication program of undergraduate programs of study.

The program of Journalism and Media Communication provides the opportunity of following one of the two specializations offered as follows: BA in Journalism and BA in Public Relations and Communications.

Thesis is a monograph, which incorporates elements of originality in the fields of communication, journalism and/or public relations. Originality may lie in the emergence of new knowledge about a subject, the implementation of a research technique or the exercise of independent critical thinking. It offers the opportunity to assess students' skills in the design, implementation and publication of research reports or theoretical projects in the form of a thesis with requirements set by the University.

The Thesis is the final project where students act as individuals in an investigation of any topic they decide to work upon, as long as it is related to their respective domains of journalism or public relations and communication. The ultimate scope is to conduct an extensive research into the subject, utilizing all conventional or not media and prepare an academic text based on their research findings and analysis. Furthermore, students are required to empirically translate and apply their research in their chosen topic and through the special language of their field of specialization and main disciplines of their respective program of study.

Upon completion of the thesis students are expected to be able to:

1. Formulate research objectives, research questions or hypotheses.
2. Select an appropriate research design, research strategy and data collection method according to the research objective and questions/hypotheses.
3. Implement the research design and collect research data.
4. Critically and creatively evaluate prior knowledge and effectively use available theoretical approaches and research findings.
5. Present a research report or theoretical paper, following all the standards of scientific writing.
6. Have all the necessary requirements to continue their studies at postgraduate level if they wish to do so.
7. Have the ability to work effectively in research projects and activities.
8. Formulate and propose integrated and evidence-based strategies to relevant stakeholders.
9. Resolve, in a scientifically sound manner, the potential dysfunctions created by the prominent role of the media and journalism in their area of expertise.

The Thesis experience entails dedication and diligence. Students are expected to utilise and demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have accumulated throughout the years of their undergraduate studies. It is an opportunity for developing analytical and problem solving skills in addition to other skills that cannot be taught in classrooms. This course involves students in academic research and research methodology. Students are trained in individual systematic design processes and methods and writing with supervisory assistance.

The Thesis requires the completion of two parts:

1. Theoretical Part: A Written Dissertation based on bibliographical study

2. Empirical Part: Qualitative or quantitative Research or a Multimedia Based Project (for example: transformation of the gained knowledge in the specific topic, applied in the form of a documentary film, the creation of a political campaign, making usage of a multimedia framework in order to present or analyse the topic, creation of a television spot, creation of a radio program, or a podcast transmission, creation of a site and/or a photographic work, etc.)

The two parts are completed in one course (JOU481/ PRC481) for each specialization of the program of study in Semester 8.

BA Journalism and Media Communication students (in both specializations) must successfully complete in Semester 7 the course COM353 (Communicational Research Methods) that functions as a preparatory course for JOU481/ PRC481.

### **Project topics and selection procedures**

The content of the course is adapted according to the needs of each student's thesis. In practice, the appropriate guidance is provided in all steps of the thesis, from identifying the topic to the presentation of the thesis. The topic, which must be related to the field of study, is chosen by the student himself/herself and in consultation with the supervisor, he/she organizes and implements the thesis.

The thesis topics may be of any nature/idea/concept taken from the relevant fields and must be closely related to their respective domains of practice. The final topic is selected after a process of discussion and solicitation of ideas during the course COM353 – Communicational Research Methodology. Depending on the topic and nature of the proposed research project, students must consult a specialised member of the faculty from the department who will act as their thesis supervisor and -thus together- they can finalize the topic that will constitute the final Dissertation.

The project selection procedure should conform to the following guidelines:

1. Initially, students must choose their topic and the broad field and pathway in which they are interested.
2. Subsequently, students must finalize their topic after consultation with a faculty member(s) with expertise in the field and the pathway they intent to pursue.

3. Once a project topic is agreed upon, a Letter of Intent is composed by the students addressed to the Department, which consists of the following elements:
  - a. Student Name and Registration Number
  - b. Date of Submittal
  - c. General Area of Study (i.e. specific Discipline(s))
  - d. Faculty Advisor(s) name(s)
  - e. Specific Project Title
  - f. Research proposal. A paragraph of interest for the proposed project.

The research proposal is a 500 to 600 word text specifying the topic and the research question, suggesting how the student intends to approach it. This proposal signals the beginning of the BA Thesis and will be the basis upon which the faculty reviews the topic and field/pathway selected. A Thesis is possible if the proposal is sufficiently coherent and feasible on the condition of prior consultation with the Faculty.

4. Upon acceptance of the Letter of Intent by the Department, the student must start working on his/her proposed project. By the end of the semester 7 during which Journalism, Public Relations and Communication students are enrolled for the COM353 – Communicational Research Methods course, a written thesis dissertation must be produced and presented to the Department for examination.

The dissertation should include the following parts:

- a. cover & title page (title, program of study, Department name, supervisor name, date etc.)
- b. table of contents
- c. list of images/figures
- d. executive summary
- e. introduction part that will include the project objectives, significance, and pertinent background
- f. theoretical overview, literature survey
- g. research methodology
- h. findings and data collection
- i. discussion and analysis leading to conclusion,
- j. properly formatted bibliographical references and appendices section (at least 15 different academic sources)

#### Dissertation Requirements (JOU481/ PRC481):

- Written dissertation of no less than 7000 words in a Bachelor academic level both conceptually and linguistically.
- A draft of the dissertation must be submitted to the supervisor before giving it to the committee members allowing time for comments, revisions and corrections.

- The dissertation must be submitted in three copies, for the committee members 15 days before the examination period of the semester.
- Students will be asked and must be ready to explain and defend their thesis dissertation during their assessment period.
- Further guidelines and advice regarding the writing of the dissertation are given separately.

#### Committee Selection:

For the monitoring and supervision of the dissertation, there will be a committee consisted of three advisors. The advisors individually and as a group will be responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the work.

#### Members of the advisory committee:

- i. The Thesis Supervisor who shall oversee, guide and coordinate the overall outcome of the thesis, deal with any arising problems, monitor timeline and deadlines, coordinate the programming and the various meetings, overall assisting/advising etc.
- ii. A selected member of staff who shall agree to participate as an advisor regarding the context of the work. Students are encouraged to present their proposals to members of the faculty that their proposal may fall in the field of their expertise and be asked to become members of the committee. Members of the faculty must agree freely to become part of the students' advisory committee and set -whenever necessary- specific requirements for the practical project.
- iii. A selected member of staff or an external examiner chosen by the faculty that will participate only in the evaluation of the work.

Each student works individually with his/her supervisor(s) with whom he/she is expected to have weekly meetings. Further guidelines and advice regarding their project will be given separately.

#### **Theoretical and empirical part – guidelines and format**

The theoretical part consists of a research hypothesis and a theoretical framework. The theoretical framework includes theoretical models, theories and concepts related to the topic of the paper, presented in an analytical and critical way. Relevant bibliography from previous research is discussed, starting from general aspects and developing into a more specific angle towards the research goal.

The research method is established and justified. The research process is presented, along with the reasons of the specific methodology, the wider spectrum of its logic and the tools needed for the research.

The findings of the research should be presented according to the type of research method chosen.

Commendation and critical interpretation of the findings, in accordance to the theoretical framework and discussion, should offer suggestions and comments upon limitations, problems and further research. Finally, the conclusion, a general appraisal, of the research questions is presented.

Note: In the quantitative approach the above mentioned order (findings, discussion) is strictly followed. In the qualitative approach, the findings are presented and interpreted simultaneously. If the research approach is mixed (quantitative and qualitative), each part follows its own form of presentation, in separated chapters. Finally, an extra chapter is added containing the general discussion and the results of the research.

The bibliography is comprised only of the sources used and not of all the relevant publications that he/she has read but not used.

The empirical part is divided in subchapters according to the tools and procedures used. Often an introductory chapter is included titled: Research design.

Within this chapter the method used has to be clarified:

- (a) The reason of choosing the specific method and the tools.
- (b) Research data collection ways.
- (c) In case of a survey consent should be asked. The survey should comply with the ethical standards of research, set by the university. Participants must be assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Further a protocol must be established regarding participant selection and approach, data collection and description of the various faces of the research.

Findings and Discussion (depending on the approach):

The way of presenting the results depend on the way the research questions have been expressed.

In the case of quantitative method:

Findings: In this case there is no comment on the results, just presentation of the data. Charts or tables with statistical significant findings (raw data) are presented.

Discussion: The findings are interpreted based on the theoretical framework and are used to elaborate on the research questions. Possible limitations of the research are considered and new research questions and topics are highlighted. This is the chapter of the paper where the author may present and creatively comment on his/her ideas born from the research, as they arise from the research.

The findings and the discussion may have more than one subchapters, according to the research questions placed at the beginning or according to the various topics addressed by the research.

In the case of qualitative method:

Findings and Discussion: At the beginning of every topic the categories of analysis are posed and every category is analysed. Here the findings are simultaneously presented with their interpretation.

Results: A synopsis of the research questions, the findings and their interpretation.

Bibliography: Following APA style, more details are given below.

Appendix: Comprises every relevant but not essential material.

Instead of the written part of the thesis dissertation students may choose to design and produce a multimedia-based project in response to and/or in conjunction with their theoretical research that will entail parameters of 1. Research, 2. Design intelligence, 3. Creativity and innovation 4. Advanced design / production skills, 5. Ability to handle large-scale practice based projects 6. Time management.

- The expected format and amount of work to be produced will be decided and agreed with the advisory committee in an effort for all students to perform similar amount of work and preserve similar level of standard.
- The process may be of any applied media nature, extending to digital, physical and/or rendering areas allowing room for exploring new and uncharted territories of practical work.
- Students are responsible for any required technical support and deal with production issues that may arise from their projects, however the advisory committee will offer support and advise whenever possible.
- The financial aspect of the practical based work is entirely up to the student, although students are advised to seek for sponsorships.
- Students must present and defend their work during the final presentation
- The works must be produced in the highest possible level, demonstrating final project propositions/products/applications etc.

**Deliverables**

COM353 – Communicational Research Methods

- Letter of Intent
- Written Dissertation
- Oral Defense

JOU481/ PRC481 – Thesis

- Theoretical Part
- Empirical Part (or Multimedia project)
- Presentation and Oral Defense

	Deliverable	Deadline
1	Letter of Intent	One month after enrolment
2	Written Dissertation/Interim Report/ Draft copies of the final dissertation	TBA with the Supervisor
3	Oral Defence	Final Assessment Day (Semester 7)
4	Theoretical Part	Final Assessment Day (Semester 8)
5	Empirical Part (or Multimedia project)	Final Assessment Day (Semester 8)
6	Presentation & Oral Defence	Final Assessment Day (Semester 8)
7	Digital copies with all the relevant project information	Final Assessment Day (Semester 8)

The student may employ a number of different aids during the presentation of his/her final project.

### Report Guidelines and Format

The following are general format elements to which the report should conform.

- The report should be typed using a word processor and printed on A4 paper with a 3 cm margin at the left hand side and 2.5 cm margin at the top, bottom and the right hand side.
- The font should be Arial, Cambria, and Calibri.
- The text must be in 11-point type and the headings in 14-point type with 1.5-line spacing.
- The headings are numbered according to the decimal system. Each main heading is a whole number and the sub-heading is numbered as a decimal of that.
- Each page of the report should be numbered in the bottom right-hand corner.
- The cover and title page must include the University name, program of study title, project title, student name, senior project supervisor name, date and place.
- All graphs should be produced using graphics software. All figures must have a caption and labels (below the figure).



- Each table must have a title (above the table), and all columns and rows should have appropriate headings.
- All figures and tables must be cited in the text.
- The reference list should be explicit with the author's name, title, publisher and date. References should be correctly cited following specified bibliographical style.
- Acknowledgments should be duly conferred and copied material should be duly credited.

The structure and the content of the final dissertation should include the following elements:

- Cover&title page
- Table of Contents
- List of Images/Figures
- List of Tables
- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Literature survey
- Research methodology
- Data collection (if any)
- Implementation and evaluation/project description
- Discussion and analysis
- Acknowledgments
- References: Books, papers, lecture notes, etc.
- Appendices: Relevant information listing all support material

## Grading

COM353			
Deliverable	Overall Grade weight	Responsible Party for assigning grade	Specific Grade weight
Letter of Intent	10%		

		Course Instructor	10%
Written Dissertation	60%	Course Instructor	20%
		Committee Members (2)	40%
Oral Defence	30%	SP Supervisor	15%
		Committee Members (2)	15%

JOU481/ PRC481			
Deliverable	Overall Grade weight	Responsible Party for assigning grade	Specific Grade weight
Theoretical Part	30%	SP Supervisor	20%
Empirical Part (or Multimedia project)	50%	SP Supervisor	40%
		Committee Members (2)	20%
Presentation & Oral Defence	20%	SP Supervisor	10%
		Committee Members (2)	10%

**Important Notes:**

- Late written submissions are penalized at 20% of the equivalent deliverable's grade per weekday.
- Failure to meet the pre-determined Oral Defence date will result in the complete loss of the deliverable's grade allocation.
- Specific rubrics on grading will be developed and used by Faculty Members, for both the written and the oral deliverables expected of students. These rubrics will be communicated to students early during their SP effort.