

Master's Dissertation

Code: 44035
ECTS Credits: 12

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
4313228 Social Policy, Employment and Welfare	OB	0	A

Contact

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Use of Languages

Principal working language: spanish (spa)

Teachers

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Prerequisites

The Master's Degree Dissertation integrates the content from different courses of the Master's program. In order to be able to properly develop this project, it is essential to have taken or to be taking the module on Social Research Methods and the theoretical modules which are related to the subject matter of study. It is also recommended to be taking the course on Advanced Social Research Methods, if the objective of the MDD is also to develop and expand the knowledge of applied research methods in the social sciences.

Objectives and Contextualisation

The Master's Degree Dissertation (MD) aims at the students to apply the appropriate theoretical and methodological knowledge acquired during the master's degree to carry out a small research project, design a social intervention project or produce a small evaluation of any social policy. This work will be guided by a supervisor expert on the chosen topic, who will provide ongoing advice. In addition, the students must present the progress of their work in two follow-up sessions and finally make the oral defence before a tribunal. In the MD it will be necessary to justify the object of research, define the conceptual framework and the methodological design and use correctly the appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods to produce the relevant information and analyze it.

Competences

- Communicate and justify conclusions clearly and unambiguously to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Design and conduct research projects on work, gender and social policy, using advanced qualitative and quantitative research techniques.

- Integrate knowledge and use it to make judgements in complex situations, with incomplete information, while keeping in mind social and ethical responsibilities.
- Put forward innovative proposals for the relevant field of study.
- Solve problems in new or little-known situations within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to the field of study.
- Use and manage bibliography and IT resources in the field of study.

Learning Outcomes

1. Communicate and justify conclusions clearly and unambiguously to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
2. Defend a research project orally before a specialist audience.
3. Design social research projects, showing the ability to identify the root of a problem, define research hypotheses and put forward an appropriate methodological design.
4. Draft a research project report in accordance with formal academic structure and criteria.
5. Evaluate the practical implications of empirical research in terms of timing and costs.
6. Integrate knowledge and use it to make judgements in complex situations, with incomplete information, while keeping in mind social and ethical responsibilities.
7. Interpret, apply and identify the repercussions of the different methodological paradigms and their specific methods of social research, for the research model and design and, in particular, to put together a mixed design.
8. Put forward innovative proposals for the relevant field of study.
9. Solve problems in new or little-known situations within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to the field of study.
10. Use and manage bibliography and IT resources in the field of study.

Content

Depending on the contents and objectives of the MD, the Final Report may have three types of structure, which are presented below. One of them should be chosen accordingly.

A. If the MD is oriented to the development of a small research, it will consist of the following parts:

1. Presentation of the research question and objectives

The initial research question and the construction of the research problem will be presented. The interest of the research will also be justified, and the general and specific objectives will be presented.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework will present, *a priori*, two types of content. On the one hand, the state of the question addressed will be shown, that is, those scientific publications that deal with the object of study and/or problems raised in the TFM will be reviewed. On the other hand, the relevant theoretical concepts will be reviewed and the theoretical construction of the problem to be studied will be addressed. These two parts are flexible, and the tutor can recommend, depending on the existing literature or depending on the problem addressed, to give more focus to one or the other; or even concentrate only on one of the two parts.

3. Analysis Model

In this section, the research questions or hypotheses will be presented. These questions or hypotheses must be explicitly stated and explained, and must be susceptible to empirical testing. In addition, a diagram of the analysis model will be presented in which the relationships between the main concepts used in the work are made explicit. This diagram of the analysis model may also represent the main hypotheses of the work, in the case of proposing hypotheses in the MD. In case of using quantitative methods, the operationalization of the main concepts will also be presented in this section. In case of using qualitative methods, the main blocks of the interview, discussion group or observation protocol will be presented.

4. Methodology

In this section the type of research design that has been carried out (qualitative, quantitative or mixed) will be explained. The section will present also what have been the most important decisions of this research design and how these decisions are justified. In relation to data collection methods, these may be of a statistical nature, or be based on the use of documents, interviews, discussion groups or observations. The section must explicitly justify why the chosen methods are used, as well as the methodological advantages and disadvantages of the decisions adopted. It will also be necessary to describe the field work carried out, in case of using your own data. In relation to the data analysis, it will be necessary to explicitly indicate what type of specific analysis has been adopted and what has been the procedure followed.

5. Analysis / Results

In this section, all the data processing carried out must appear. If the length of the analysis implies exceeding the number of pages recommended for the report a short summary will be presented and the complete analysis will appear in an annex. The data analysis should lead to a concrete answer to the research questions posed (or to verify the hypotheses of the research).

6. Conclusions

In this section, the argumentation made in the theoretical section of work should be summarized and a summary and discussion of the results should be presented. The elements that have not been empirically verified and the theoretical and methodological issues that remain open for a possible future development of new research should also be pointed out.

7. Bibliography

8. Appendix

It should contain: Statistical sources: variables, tables, graphs. Register of any qualitative information used. Analysis carried out in the case where only a summary has been presented in the results section.

Length (excluding Appendix): 10,000 words (30-35 pages with 1.5 line spacing).

B. A. If the MD is oriented to the evaluation of a policy, it will consist of the following parts:

1. Presentation of the research question and objectives of the study

The construction of the problem and the objectives of the evaluation will be presented. The interest of the evaluation, its relevance and some general and specific objectives will also be justified.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework will contain, *a priori*, two types of information. On the one hand, the state of the issue addressed will be shown, that is, those scientific publications that deal with the object of study and/or problems raised in the MD will be reviewed. On the other hand, the relevant theoretical concepts will be reviewed and the theoretical construction of the core problem on which the evaluation is to be carried out will be addressed. These two parts are flexible, and the tutor can recommend, depending on the existing literature or depending on the problem addressed, giving more focus to one or the other, or even concentrating only on one of the two parts.

3. Theory of change

In this section the pertinent evaluation questions will be presented, consistent with the problems raised. The theory of change will also be developed (summary of the elements to be considered in the construction of the intervention, target population, inputs, outputs, outcomes...).

4. Methodology

This section will present, first, the type of methodological design of the evaluation carried out (qualitative, quantitative or mixed) and what the most important decisions of this design have been. As for the sources of

information (data collection), these may be of a statistical nature, based on the use of documents, interviews, discussion groups or observations. The section must explicitly justify why these sources are used, as well as the methodological advantages and disadvantages of the decisions adopted. It will also be necessary to describe the field work carried out, in case of using own data. In relation to the analysis of the data obtained, it should also be explicitly stated what type of orientation has been adopted and what has been the procedure followed.

5. Analysis / Results Obtained

In this section, all the data processing carried out should appear. If this analysis involves exceeding the number of pages indicated for the report, a summary will be presented (in this second case, the complete analysis will appear in the appendix). The data analysis should lead to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluated public policy, based on the variables identified in the literature.

6. Conclusions

They should summarize the objectives of the evaluation carried out and explain to what extent these objectives have been achieved. You should also point out the elements that have not been empirically verified and the (possible) limitations of the work. It will also be necessary to compare the results obtained with the reviewed literature and discuss the (possible) differences detected.

7. Bibliography

8. Appendix

They must contain: Statistical sources: variables, tables, graphs. Recording of any qualitative information used. Analysis performed in the case where only a summary has been presented in the results section.

Length (excluding Appendix): 10,000 words (30-35 pages one and a half spaces).

C. If the MD is oriented to the elaboration of an intervention project, the work will consist of the following parts:

1. Presentation of the research problem and justification of its interest

Every intervention project starts with a concern and / or need. The first section of the MD must contextualize the relevance of the topic and define the intervention assignment (objectives, priorities...).

2. Theoretical basis of the intervention

This section will address the theoretical perspective that guides the intervention. In other words, this is the place where the review of the literature that will guide the design of the intervention will be presented. On the one hand, the state of the issue addressed will be shown, that is, those scientific publications that deal with the problems raised in the MD will be reviewed. On the other hand, the relevant theoretical concepts will be reviewed and the theoretical construction of the core problem on which it is desired to intervene will be addressed. These two parts are flexible and the tutor may recommend, depending on the existing literature or depending on the problem addressed, giving more focus to one or the other, or even concentrating only on one of the two parts.

3. Methodology

This section will explain what type of methodological design (qualitative, quantitative or mixed) has been followed to identify the problem or need on which it is desired to intervene and the most important decisions of this methodological design. Regarding the sources of information (data collection), these may be of a statistical nature, based on the use of documents, interviews, discussion groups or observations. The section must explicitly justify why these sources are used, as well as the methodological advantages and disadvantages of the decisions adopted.

4. Diagnosis

The diagnosis will include the characterization of the phenomenon or situation on which it is proposed to intervene, the identification of the actors involved and other contextual information that is relevant, based on

secondary data, documentary analysis and, if necessary, interviews with the actors. This section should identify also the critical points that justify the need for intervention. If pertinent, references to previous experiences related to the phenomenon addressed, both in the context object of the work and in others, will be included.

5. Intervention plan or programme

This section should show how the needs identified in the intervention context are met, based on the variables identified in the literature. It will contain a presentation of the proposed policy or program, objectives, definition of the target population, details of the projects and actions that it comprises, its content, its timing and the actors involved in its implementation. It is advisable to synthesize this section, where appropriate, in tables, graphs or infographics, for example, making a diagram that explains the theory of change that is the basis of the intervention.

6. Design of the programme evaluation

This section will describe the type of evaluation proposed (on the implementation, outcome or impact of the program) and will briefly introduce its proposed design, methods and evaluation tools.

7. Bibliography

8. Appendix

Statistical sources: variables, tables, graphs. Record of any qualitative information used. Detail of the actions of the intervention programme, if applicable.

Length (excluding Appendix): 10,000 words (30-35 pages with 1.5 line spacing).

Methodology

The learning activity of this module is based on the orientation and individualised follow-up of the MD by the supervisor assigned by the coordination of the module. However, a series of *collective moments* in which all the students meet with the teaching team that coordinates the MD are also part of the activities of the module. These *collective moments* consist of three plenary sessions (meetings) and two follow-up sessions. The defence of the final dissertation is individual, and the date is agreed with the two members of the tribunal that will evaluate it.

The dates of the collective moments and the handing of assignments will be communicated at the beginning of the course.

I. Collective Moments

First plenary meeting

Presentation of the module and the contents and organization of the MD.

Second plenary meeting

Presentation of the Sociology Department's research groups and its lines of research.

Third plenary meeting

Choice of the topic of the dissertation and brief oral presentation. Assignment of supervisors.

First follow-up session

Individual and public presentation of the basic lines of the dissertation (objectives, state of the art, theoretical framework, hypothesis and research design, methods and techniques, and bibliography), previously agreed with the supervisor. Hand the supervisor a research project of about 1,500 words.

Second follow-up session

Individual and public presentation of the theoretical framework and the research design of the intervention or evaluation. The contents of the presentation will be based on the guidelines received by the supervisor. Hand the supervisor the theoretical framework and research design of the MD (5,000 words)

II. Assignments

Assignment 1: Research / evaluation / intervention project (1,500 words).

Assignment 2: Theoretical framework and design of the research/ evaluation / theoretical basis of the intervention (5,000 words).

Assignment 3: Draft of the Final research report / evaluation / of the intervention programme (10,000 words).

Assignment 4: Final report / evaluation / intervention programme (10,000 words).

The Final Report may be delivered and presented either in June or in September. The deadline for submitting this final report will be announced at the beginning of the course.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Supervised			
Preparing the partial assignments, the public defense and the dissertation	298	11.92	5, 2, 3, 7, 8, 6, 9, 1, 4, 10

Assessment

The final grading of the MD will be the result of the following evidence of evaluation: Defence at the First Follow-Up Session (5%), Defence at the Second Follow-Up Session (5%), Written Final Report (75%) and Oral Defence before the evaluation board (15%).

The defence before the evaluation board will be made within a period of ten days after the final report delivery. The board will be formed by the supervisor of the MD and a member of the teaching staff of the module (called *methodological evaluator*). The specific date and time for the defence will be agreed between the tutor, the methodological evaluator and the student; therefore, it will be flexible and can be adapted to the student's availability, as long as it is done within the period set by the Faculty.

The defence of the MD will consist of an oral presentation of a maximum of 20 minutes. The members of the board will then ask their questions, and after the intervention of the board the student will have a turn of reply. Finally, the board will deliberate and notify the result of the evaluation.

Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Defence of the work progress at the First Follow-Up Session	5%	0.5	0.02	5, 2, 3, 7, 8, 6, 9, 1, 4,

				10
Defence of the work progress at the Second Follow-Up Session	5%	0.5	0.02	5, 2, 3, 7, 8, 6, 9, 1, 4, 10
Oral Defence before the evaluation board	15%	1	0.04	2, 1
Written Final Report	75%	0	0	5, 2, 3, 7, 8, 6, 9, 1, 4, 10

Bibliography

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Software

This module does not use any specific software