MBI thesis, old protocol (1-phase, 40EC)
Reference for students who have already started their project with the old system

This page is the starting point for any MBI student to start the graduation project. If any questions is still pending after reading this page, the graduation coordinator (currently, Dr. Fabiano Dalpiaz) should be contacted: graduateMBI@cs.uu.nl.

In the MBI Master's, the thesis project counts for 40 EC; the remaining 5 EC consist of the MBI Colloquium (4 EC), and the Introduction to Business Informatics (1 EC) course.

The thesis project generally consists of a trinity: a project idea, a graduation advisor, and a graduation project facilitator. In the MBI the project facilitator can either be a company or the university. Predeveloped project ideas have been proposed by professors. Original ideas are welcome too. Companies can propose ideas by contacting the graduation coordinator: graduateMBI@cs.uu.nl

This page contains (almost) all the required information concerning the set up, conduction, and wrap up of an MBI thesis. Please bear in mind, however, that specific details on what is expected in a thesis project are defined in accordance with the thesis supervisor(s), as they cannot be generalized.

**Procedure.** An MBI thesis project consists of three phases, described in the following: set-up, execution, and wrap-up. **When can a thesis be started?** As soon as all the courses are successfully completed. An exception for students with one pending course is usually granted; consult the MBI programme coordinator (Dr. Slinger Jansen) for further information.
Procedure

Set up

This phase includes all the preliminaries that need to be executed before diving deep into the research work for the thesis. The duration of this phase is variable, and largely depends on how quickly a supervisor is found and a topic is agreed upon.

1. **Define a topic**: the topic has to be agreed with the department member who will act as a first supervisor. This is typically a member of the O&I (Organisatie and Informatie) group, but exceptions are possible. Arrange meetings with staff members to discuss possible options, based on their research interests (look at their webpages, their google scholar profile, or ask the graduation coordinator). If unsure about possible topics, please arrange a meeting with the graduation coordinator. A non-comprehensive list of available thesis projects is [here](#). Students can also try to arrange a project that fits within an internship with a company. However, students always need to identify a first supervisor who guarantees for the scientific quality of the thesis project.

2. **Registration in OSIRIS**: enroll in the MBI thesis project as well as in the MBI colloquium. Regular and active participation in the colloquium is compulsory part of the MBI thesis project; exceptions can be made for students conducting their thesis project outside the Netherlands. For questions on the colloquium, please consult the MBI colloquium webpage and/or contact the MBI colloquium coordinator (currently, João Pizani Flor)

3. **Write and get graduation request approved (a.k.a., short proposal)**: together with the first supervisor, assemble the short proposal document using the template, which formalizes the topic of the thesis project. Once the supervisor agrees with the short proposal, send the short
proposal digitally to the graduation coordinator, who has to approve it. Typically, this is a pro-forma step, but this is put in place to ensure high standards for thesis projects.

4. **Subscribe to the mailing list:** this is used to reach all students currently doing their thesis. Important communications will go through this channel. Subscribe [here](#)

5. **Formalize the graduation with the programme coordinator:** after the short proposal gets approved, print it, sign it, obtain the supervisor’s signature, and hand it in to the MBI programme coordinator (Dr. Slinger Jansen), by dropping it to his mailbox in the 5th floor coffee room. Also, deliver a completed study plan showing that the prerequisites for starting a thesis project are met, i.e., that the necessary MBI programme courses are passed. The following template should be used. The Master's programme coordinator will deliver these two documents to the student administration.

**Execution**

This phase is the central and most lengthy one. It starts right after the short proposal has been approved and the graduation has been formalized with the product coordinator. It includes carrying out the research for the thesis, guided by the supervisors. An integral part of this phase is regular attendance in the MBI colloquium, for graduation is not possible unless at least 12 attendance tokens are obtained. The steps below summarize the formalities, but always remember that the main activity has to be conducting research!

6. **Write long proposal:** this is a document that outlines the research project. A second thesis supervisor is included at this stage, with a minor involvement in the thesis project. The long proposal is complete when both supervisors approve it. *The long proposal should contain at least:* problem statement, research questions, research approach (detailed), main deliverables,
evaluation method, relevance, most important literature, planning and deliverables (short), communication, supervisors, references (max 20 pag). An example of a good long proposal is here.

7. **First presentation in MBI colloquium**: given soon after the long proposal is approved, describes the context of the thesis, research questions, envisaged method and artifact(s). More details can be obtained by asking the supervisor.

8. **Second presentation in MBI colloquium**: reports on the key work that has been conducted during the thesis, and possibly obtained results (to the extent they are complete); it is given approximately between 1 and 3 months before graduation. More details can be obtained by asking the supervisor.

9. **Write thesis document**: the thesis document is the artifact that will ultimately be graded, and will report on the findings from the project. More details can be obtained by asking the supervisor.

10. **Write scientific paper (optional)**: the paper is compulsory to obtain a grade of 8.0 or above; optional otherwise. The details of the paper are to be agreed with the supervisor(s). A summary of the thesis is not a research paper, and the paper could actually focus on sub-parts of the thesis. If written, the scientific paper ought to appear as an appendix of the final thesis document.

Wrap up

When approaching the finalization of the thesis and the scientific paper (i.e, when the supervisors think so!), it is time to wrap up the project and graduate.

11. **Set date for graduation**: both supervisors should agree on the date, including the time.
12. **Ask for MBI Colloquium EC:** obtain 4 EC for the MBI colloquium by sending a message to the MBI colloquium coordinator.

13. **Arrange room and beamer:** send an e-mail to [Geraldine Leebeek](mailto:Geraldine.Leebeek@leidenuniv.nl) to arrange for a room and a beamer, if not included in the room, where the defense will take place. Please make sure to include the time, date, name of the thesis, supervisor, and the number of expected attendees.

14. **Deliver printed copies of the thesis to the supervisors:** at least one week before the defense; this is compulsory, unless the supervisors explicitly tell they don't want the printed copies.

15. **Thesis defense:** the student gives a presentation of 25 minutes, followed by a question-and-answer session that typically lasts about 15-20 minutes. A grade will be decided and probably announced afterwards. For the grading of your graduation project, please send a filled out [assessment form](#) to the supervisor at least two days before the defense.

16. **Publish thesis to "Osiris Scripties":** [Website](#)

17. **Graduation ceremony:** an official ceremony, held in the Academiegebouw in Domplein, where the diplomas are handed out. The dates are available [here](#)

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**Further information**

**Links**

- **Short proposal template** - The student-supervisor-(company) agreement on the topic of the thesis.

- **Study plan template** - Necessary for the MBI programme coordinator to approve the request of initiating a thesis project.
• **Evaluation form template** - The student shall precompile it and bring it to the first supervisor at least two days before the defense.

• **Previous theses** - See previous MBI theses.

• **When does a thesis idea qualify as a possible MBI thesis?**

• **MBI Colloquium webpage**

• **Scientific paper** - Information on writing a scientific paper. Always consult with the first supervisor first, because (s)he may require a different writing style.

• **Reference contract for companies**

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**Constraints**

**TIME LIMITS AND PART-TIME THESIS**

Please note that increasingly, there is pressure for students to finish their projects sooner. As such, the following rules have been introduced. The effective, full-time duration for a graduation project is 30 weeks. In practice, considering vacations and other unforeseen events, the typical graduation process takes 8 to 9 months. Further extensions (beyond the 9-months limit) require approval on part of the graduation coordinator, and are not automatically granted. An automatic reminder will be sent prior to that. In case of poor performance of the student, the supervisor has the right to send the student's file to the student administration with or without a sufficient grade.

The MBI programme is a full-time one. As such, thesis projects should not be seen as a side-project next to a part time job, for the duration of 30 weeks is defined based on a full-time basis. In case a project is started next to a job, both supervisor and the graduation coordinator have to be informed promptly; they will examine the situation and decide on whether an extension can be granted. For instance, if a student is working 1 day per week, the project would typically become 25 percent longer. Failing to register part time at the start of the project may result in cancellation.
of the project. Professors are entitled to reject a student's application for them to be a supervisor, if the student wants to finish a graduation project next to a job.

SCOPE

It is highly recommended that the scope of the final thesis project fits the interests of the O&I group. For an overview, either see the slides of an introductory thesis meeting, or check the websites of the group members. Notice that internships offered by companies do not automatically constitute a thesis topic; that has to be agreed with a supervisor from the O&I group.

ADMISSION

In principle, admission to start the final thesis project officially is permitted when all courses are passed and is confirmed by the (likely) supervisor of the student, after the supervisor has approved the short proposal. Exceptions can be granted when only one course is pending and close to completion; however, expectations are left to the discretion of the MBI programme coordinator.

Doing your thesis outside the Netherlands

It is possible for highly-motivated students that aim at high-quality projects to conduct their thesis outside the Netherlands, either at a company or in a university. The O&I group has excellent international links, and students intended to spend time abroad are welcome. The same rules on the quality of the project and the availability of a first supervisor apply to projects abroad too. A supervisor may decline to serve as supervisor for a project abroad, whenever (s)he finds the risk of project failure too high. Students doing their thesis abroad are exempted from attending the MBI colloquium.
Frequently Asked Questions

HOW TO STUDY THE LITERATURE?

Different methods are available, and the choice is left to the discretion of the supervisor and student. Systematic literature reviews are possible, as well as snowballing, and others.

WHAT ARE THE EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR AN MBI THESIS?

There are four main aspects that are evaluated: research proposal, results of the research, presentation of the results, attitude and motivation of the student. The specific criteria are explained in the assessment form.

WHAT LANGUAGE SHOULD THE THESIS BE WRITTEN IN?

In English, being part of the MBI Master's.

WHERE CAN I DO MY GRADUATION PROJECT?

Students can perform their thesis project internally (Utrecht University), or at an external organization. As for external projects, the O&I group has good contacts with several companies. Please ask supervisor(s) for hints.

WHAT TO DO IF I AM UNABLE TO WRITE A THESIS?

Please note that there exist specific courses, offered by the university for free (or cheap), that teach how to plan and write a thesis.

WHAT IS NOT A GOOD TIME TO START APPLYING FOR INTERNSHIPS?

Summer is a bad time: generally people are on holidays throughout July and August, slowing down the process by a month or two. If interested in starting in September, please contact companies in May or June.