

Master's Thesis – Information for UPF supervisors (EPS, Erasmus Mundus Program European Politics & Society) – Academic year 2023-2024

Key dates for Master Thesis Supervisors

By June 14th, 2024: deadline for students to submit their final thesis project.

June 28th: deadline for the evaluation by all supervisors

From June 28th to July 1st : agreement with second reviewers and/or second supervisors on a final grade

July 2nd : EPS Students will receive their grade.

July 4th : the oral defense will take place on this date.

Formal requirements – Length of the Thesis

For **EPS students (Erasmus Mundus students)** the Master's thesis **has to be 12 000 words** ($\pm 10\%$ **including footnotes and bibliography and excluding appendixes**). The cover page of the MA thesis should include the number of words. This is a highly relevant issue, particularly for EPS – Erasmus students.

Assessment and grading

For the EPS students the following are the official assessment criteria they have in their handbook. Therefore, the evaluation and the report should mention this type of criteria. At UPF we need a numerical evaluation from 0 to 10. In addition, this numerical evaluation is translated in some universities into a non-numerical grade.

Grades for EPS – Erasmus Mundus students

A: All elements of a thesis are combined in an effective and convincing form. The case for the research question or hypothesis is well-made and grounded in a significant and topical issue, whether derived from the literature or empirics. The thesis delivers excellent, powerful engagement with the literature, suggesting full mastery of academic and/or empirical debates. The thesis conveys an excellent understanding of how to design and conduct research. The selected method aligns with the research question/hypothesis, and the student evidences a fulsome understanding of it, both at the abstract and applied level. The thesis offers an original answer based on an outstanding analysis of relevant sources, primary as well as secondary where appropriate, that advances our understanding of the matter. It is well-structured and shows excellent awareness of the need to account for the audience. Additionally, the thesis must demonstrate a full understanding of and compliance with academic conventions, including but not limited to the presentation, referencing and

use of footnotes. A thesis performing at this level should be considered to be exceptional, indicative of a student ready to begin doctoral research or high-level professional work.

B: The thesis covers all the issues mentioned in the description of thesis elements above but does not meet the exceptional standard above. It will be excellent, at least in part, with relatively minor deficiencies that do not compromise the research design and the relevance of the answer. The research question or hypothesis will be of significance, and the student will deliver an original contribution to knowledge by answering it. The thesis will be grounded in a very good or excellent evaluation of an appropriate body of literature, discussing key concepts and debates maturely and convincingly. The student will demonstrate a very good facility with the demands of good research design. The selected method will align with the research question/hypothesis and the student evidence a good understanding of it, both at the abstract and applied levels. The thesis offers an original answer based on a very good analysis of relevant sources, primary as well as secondary where appropriate, that goes some way to advance our understanding of the matter. Additionally, the thesis must demonstrate a full understanding of and compliance with academic conventions, including but not limited to the presentation, referencing and use of footnotes.

C: The thesis covers all the issues mentioned in the description of thesis elements above but with some significant deficiencies. The research question and corresponding hypotheses are developed according to academic standards and linked to the scholarly literature but do not appear entirely convincing. The answer offered is not fully persuasive but offers relevant insight into the topic. The thesis will be referring to an adequate amount of literature, but the reference and the contribution to the academic debate are not really insightful. The research methods show interesting and innovative ideas, but there are some doubts about their development. The thesis still demonstrates knowledge and application of academic conventions (including, but not limited to the presentation, referencing and the use of footnotes), but there are apparent issues with their employment and/or a lack of attention to detail.

D: The thesis covers most issues mentioned in the description of thesis elements above, but it is relatively pedestrian, particularly in relation to the embedding of the research question. There is some engagement with the literature, identification of the method and operationalisation of that method to the research. The analysis is present but not fully developed. The selected research method may be of dubious utility, suggesting the student has an imperfect understanding of research design. The question or hypothesis is answered/ tested but not in a very compelling fashion. The thesis is vulnerable to criticism that it is derivative and descriptive, with opportunities for delivering critical analysis not exploited. Peripheral but important issues such as presentation and referencing are problematic, and the student does not always comply with other forms of academic convention.

E: The thesis does not cover all the issues mentioned in the description of thesis elements above but offers a structured piece of relevant analysis that is embedded in the literature and provides an answer to a research question. The method of analysis is explained, albeit not fully developed and persuasive. The thesis is pedestrian, descriptive and unoriginal in form.

F: The thesis does not represent a piece of independent research as far as it does not formulate a straightforward research question and/or lacks engagement with the literature and/or the method of inquiry and/or does not provide an answer based on the critical analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Evaluation procedure for students with second reviewer and/or second supervisor

EPS students - Erasmus Mundus students will have a second reviewer of their Master Theses (from Prague, Krakov or Leiden). Both reviewers, the UPF supervisor and the second reviewers from the previously mentioned universities will have to agree the common final grade. This means that they will have to be in touch either by email and, if necessary, through skype and/or zoom. According to the EPS-Erasmus Mundus rules, students have the right to see their evaluation of both reviewers before their oral defence. This means that in this current year your evaluation should be available by June 28th and then exchange this information with the second reviewer and to agree on a final grade by July 1st.

Oral defence of the thesis

The oral defence of the Master thesis will take place this year on July 4th in the classroom 20.053. The oral defence is 20 % of the final grade. This 20 % of the final grade is not so much about the quality of their work as for their capacity to do a good presentation to show their proficiency when presenting their research as well as providing convincing arguments when reacting to questions made by the Tribunal.

EVALUATION

Please be aware that in order to be able to go to the defense (on July 4th), Erasmus Mundus Students need to pass (5 out of 10 as agreed evaluation grade between both reviewers, the supervisor and the second reviewer).

Annex 1 – Template Dissertation Report EPS



Joint Dissertation Review

Name of the student:	Gabriel Capitolo
Title of the thesis:	Exploring the Variation in the Inclusion of Non-Trade Policy in EU External Trade Agreements
Reviewer:	Dennie Oude Nijhuis

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

This thesis seeks to investigate the factors that determine the inclusion of non-trade policy objectives in EU external relations. This is an interesting and academically relevant topic, although I do think that the thesis could have been a bit more precise on the extent of the research gap in this area. It also feels that the author has the tendency to overstate the originality of the thesis somewhat (I would for instance be quite surprised if other studies have not also shown that not all commercial agreements include the same standards or same policy in certain policy areas, page 6, and this thesis is not the first to “reveal” (page 33) the increasing politicization of EU trade policy. The research question is clear although somewhat broadly defined.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The thesis looks at a broad set of agreements, which is excellent, and is clearly based on a large number of sources, although it could have been clearer on which sources were used exactly and how these enable the author to answer specific parts of the research question. I for instance wondered how many interviews were done and how they complemented the quantitative analysis exactly (the research method section gives the impression that a lot of interviews were done but the bibliography only lists 2).

The main shortcoming of the thesis in my view is that it does not systematically outline on which determinants/factors it focuses. The literature review does outline a fair number of these factors (e.g. domestic actors, foreign actors, the balance of power, economic factors), but it does not explain these factors in detail (e.g. which domestic and foreign actors may matter the most?) and how it aims to explain which of these factors played a role in the decision to exclude or include a particular non-trade policy objective (I for instance assume that certain factors are more important to the inclusion of some non-trade policy objectives than others).

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

There can be no doubt that the author is knowledgeable on the subject. As the thesis looks at a large number of trade agreements it is also quite broad in its scope, which is impressive. At the same time, the analysis lacks depth, in part because of the exclusion of a systematic outline of the factors on which it aims to focus (see above).

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The thesis is well-structured and clearly organized. The use of language is sufficient and the thesis is an easy read, although it does contain a number of mistakes, including the conflation of past and present tenses, incorrect punctuation and some missing words. The use of references is excellent

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

This is an interesting and original thesis. A somewhat stronger methodological approach would have made the thesis even stronger.

Grade (A-F)	B- (7,5)
Date	Signature
DD/MM/AAAA	

GRADE CONVERSION MA EPS

Percentile	Prague	Krakow	Leiden	Barcelona
A (91-100)	91-100 %	4,51-5,00	8.0-10	9-10
B (81-90)	81-90 %	4,21-4,50	7.5-7.9	8-8,9
C (71-80)	71-80 %	3,71-4,20	7-7.4	7-7,9
D (61-70)	61-70 %	3,21-3,7	6.5-6.9	6-6,9
E (51-60)	51-60 %	3,00-3,20	6-6.4	5-5,9

Assessment criteria:

Excellent (A): 'Outstanding performance with only minor errors';

Very good (B): 'Above the average standard but with some errors';

Good (C): 'Generally sound work but with a number of notable errors';

Satisfactory (D): 'Fair but with significant shortcomings';

Sufficient (E): 'Performance meets the minimum criteria';

Fail: 'Some/considerable more work required before the credit can be awarded'.