

UNIQUE EUROPEAN MASTER'S PROGRAMME
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ROTTERDAM

**The European Master in
Health Economics & Management**
coordinated by:

Erasmus University Rotterdam
Burgemeester Oudlaan 50
3062 PA Rotterdam
The Netherlands

tel: +3110 - 408 8575
e-mail: esc@eshpm.eur.nl

www.eu-hem.eu

Master Thesis Guidelines 2020-2022



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA



UiO : University of Oslo

Erasmus School of
Health Policy
& Management



This document is drafted by the Eu-HEM Consortium Board, in which the Erasmus University Rotterdam, the University of Oslo, the University of Bologna and the Management Center Innsbruck are represented.

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Section 1 – DEFINITIONS

<i>Local EU-HEM Coordinator</i>	<i>person responsible for the management and administration of the processes related to the study program (one for each university)</i>
<i>Examination Committee</i>	<i>the persons (one for each university) who ensure that the assessment process of the thesis is conducted in accordance with the joint regulations</i>
<i>External Assessor</i>	<i>a member of the academic staff from a track specific Eu-HEM partner university who co-reads the thesis and participates in the Thesis Examination Committee. The External Assessor should meet the academic requirements mentioned under paragraph 4.3.</i>
<i>Final Exam</i>	<i>the presentation and defense of the thesis</i>
<i>Supervisor</i>	<i>a member of the academic staff of one of the EU-HEM partner universities involved in the specific track the student is taking who guides a student during his/her thesis process and participates in the thesis Examination Committee. The Supervisor should meet the academic requirements mentioned under paragraph 4.3</i>
<i>Thesis Examination Committee</i>	<i>committee of the persons present during the final exam and responsible for the grading of the thesis and exam</i>
<i>Thesis Proposal</i>	<i>a document which identifies a research problem, gives a preliminary view of existing research on the problem, identifies resources needed and sets down the schedule for the research and writing process</i>
<i>Track Committee</i>	<i>the members of academic staff who are appointed responsible for the harmonized context of a specific Eu-HEM track. Each specialization track has a committee consisting of two persons (one per partner university being assigned to the track).</i>

Section 2 – GENERAL PROVISIONS

These Master Thesis Guidelines are applicable to the thesis of the European Master programme in Health Economics and Management, hereinafter referred to as ‘Eu-HEM’, offered by University of Bologna, hereinafter referred to as ‘UniBo’, Management Center Innsbruck, hereinafter referred to as ‘MCI’, University of Oslo, hereinafter referred to as ‘UiO’ and Erasmus University Rotterdam, hereinafter referred to as ‘EUR’. When any case regards the programme as a whole, the Eu-HEM Examination Committee is responsible. For any aspect not covered by these guidelines, and in case of conflict with the national and local binding laws, the latter apply.

Section 3 – MASTER THESIS

3.1 Learning goals

The learning goals of the Eu-HEM Master Thesis and the final exam are:

- To explore an area of health economics and/or health management in depth, to synthesize the main theories and models, and to discuss their applicability.
- To perform scientific research on a topic approved by the study program individually and to report the study and its conclusions in a clear way.
- To make an appropriate use of all the relevant knowledge and skills acquired in the study program, and not only of the specific topic covered by the thesis.
- To consider the ethical implications of the research question and methodological approach applied.
- To explain the possible societal or policy impact of the outcomes of the study, based on the specific institutional settings.
- To acquire and demonstrate skills in scientific writing.

3.2 Entry level

Students should at least have obtained 60 ECTS of Eu-HEM courses before their research proposal can be considered. This is checked by the Eu-HEM International Programme Coordinator before sending the proposals to the Track Committees.

The defense can only take place once all courses and the thesis are successfully completed! The thesis defense must be the final exam.

3.3 Format

There are two possible alternatives of writing a Eu-HEM master thesis:

A – “standard/monograph” thesis of maximum 20.000 words including abstract (summary) *excluding titlepage, declaration of oath, table of contents, tables, references and appendices.*

B – a research paper “ready for submission” + appendices and an extensive introduction. The paper should have a maximum of 6000 words *excluding* appendices and references.

Accurate referencing and a bibliography are important elements of the thesis. Students should adopt a standard citation system (e.g. Harvard, Vancouver, etc.) and bibliography format. Students are advised to discuss with their thesis supervisor what style to use and use this consistently throughout the thesis.

3.4 Layout and content

The thesis must be written in English and include a number of elements:

- **Title page:** a concise and attractive title without acronyms. The title should make clear what the thesis is about. Students also state their name, student number, name of thesis supervisor, place, and date.
- **Declaration in lieu of oath page:** a separate sheet containing a signed declaration in lieu of oath must be included in the thesis. A template is provided in Annex 2.
- **Summary or abstract page:** a separate sheet containing an abstract (summary) of maximum 350 words must be included in the thesis. The content should include the research question/motivation; methodology; most important findings/solution to the problem. It must be self-contained, i.e. clear to someone who has not read the whole thesis. Therefore, it should not refer to the text of the thesis, and not include references to the literature, quotations, tables or figures.
- **Table of contents:** chapter titles and section headings to permit the reader to get a good impression of the structure of the document at a glance.
- **Chapter 1. Introduction:** introductory chapter, description of the topic of the thesis, the rationale for this topic, and point and its relevance. The chapter concludes with the research question and a short overview of the chapters.
- **Chapter 2. Theoretical framework.** This chapter makes clear what is already known on the subject and what knowledge is lacking. Any contradictory results from previous studies in the field are discussed as well (although this could be put in the discussion chapter). Based on the literature the thesis question is further explored and elaborated on. Within the theoretical framework the student addresses the main concepts from the thesis question (for example choice of definitions) and describes the interrelations between these concepts. This may result in a conceptual model. The student will further develop the (theoretical) perspective using brief summaries of known studies and then position his/her study in the debate. Based on this knowledge the thesis question may be broken down into a number of sub-questions. Depending on the nature of the research and the sub-questions, these questions may be included in the introduction.
- **Chapter 3. Research methods:** This chapter describes the approach to answer the thesis question and sub-questions. It should describe the complete setup of the study including justification of all the choices made. For example, for empirical studies, students describe the relevant characteristics of the study population, the variables that were used, selection and drop-out of subjects or respondents, the materials or instruments that were used, the procedures and interventions, the manner of data collection, the statistical models, and so on. Thesis in disciplines and topics, which do not involve empirical research, should also clearly explain and provide full details on the adopted framework, disciplinary setting and research method, following the standards of research (ethics) in the relevant discipline.
- **Chapter 4. Results/findings:** Description of what the study eventually revealed, and presentation of the data collected, if any. The research outputs should be presented in a concise way and neatly arranged in tables and figures, if relevant. The text is restricted mainly to the most important and most striking findings, as identified by the research question and the theory. The student demonstrates how he or she made use of the theoretical concepts in the analysis, reflects critically on the interpretation that he or she provides. For empirical studies, it should be clearly stated that

the data cannot be used to trace recognizable persons unless the student has obtained prior consent from the persons in question.

- **Chapter 5. Discussion and conclusion:** In the discussion, chapter students broaden the view from the minute details of their work to focus on its general relevance. This chapter gives the writer the opportunity to interpret the results by linking them to the thesis question, the literature and theoretical framework. For research in which theory formation was the primary goal, a conceptual model is developed and discussed because of the study results. Any limitations of the study are addressed. This chapter discusses how far the findings of the study are valid in the light of the limitations. The question is to what extent (and why) specific limitations have far-reaching consequences, or not, for the value of the results. This chapter contains recommendations: What could others learn from this study? Are there any practical recommendations after answering the thesis question? Only recommendations that clearly follow from the results obtained should be provided. What further studies would be needed? What are possible ethical considerations?
- **References:** All literature sources referred to in the text should be compiled in the list of references. Various reference styles are possible and include the APA style, which is mostly used in the social sciences: the Vancouver style, notably used in the biomedical sciences; and the Chicago style (author-date system). Students discuss at an early stage with their thesis supervisor what style to use.
- **Appendices (optional):** Students may add appendices to present information that is too long or too detailed for the main body of the text, but still relevant to the assessment of the research. For example, the questionnaires or topic lists/interview schedules applied, or one or two large tables.

3.5 Workload

The thesis will be awarded with 30 ECTS and the required workload is estimated for at least 20 weeks (750 – 900 hours).

Section 4 – THESIS PROCESS

4.1 Thesis topics, proposal, and Track Committee

Students write their thesis under supervision of a member of the academic staff of one of the universities represented in their track who meets the requirements under paragraph 4.3. Every track has a Track Committee (TC), which ensures the harmonized content of the track.

There are two possible ways for a student to find a thesis supervisor and topic

- The student chooses a topic him/herself and tries to involve a qualified supervisor either by him/herself or via the TC
- The TC offer a list of thesis topics/supervisors and the student chooses one of them

The topic should be related to the course content belonging to their chosen track.

Students should find a thesis topic and supervisor before 1 November 2021. They should inform the Eu-HEM International Programme Coordinator (Victoria Lorenzo Sanchez) who informs the TC's so they will be able to check if the topic and supervisor meet the Eu-HEM requirements. For the fourth semester the student will be registered at the university where the supervisor is located. In case the student is too late informing the Track Committee about a topic, the Track Committee may take extra time in finding a supervisor.

The student submits the thesis proposal (annex 1) to the Eu-HEM International Programme Coordinator before the 15 January deadline. The proposals will then be forwarded to the respective TC.

The supervisor and the TC have to approve the proposal, and may require revisions and resubmission within two weeks from the first submission. The TC will appoint the external assessors latest in June, who will be from the other university than the supervisor. Annex 3 gives an overview of all TC members.

4.2 Research assignment

While an internship may result in valuable work experience, an internship usually does not result in material relevant for a thesis. This is only the case if the internship has a clear research assignment which includes:

- 1) A short overview of the current state of the literature.
- 2) A claim on how the study attempts to theorize beyond the current state of literature. 3) A research objective. 4) A research method.
- 5) A brief outlook on ethical implications/ considerations regarding the own research.
- 6) An overview of the data that you will have access to.
- 7) A statement of the company that the thesis can be published.
- 8) A description of the experts and researchers that will be involved.
- 9) A description of other deliverables than the thesis if relevant.

The assignment needs to be approved by the track committee member of the relevant track from the university where the student is registered.

4.3 Supervision

For thesis supervisors and external assessors, the following qualifications apply.

Supervisors:

- are part of the academic staff at one of the partner universities,
- have obtained a doctorate degree, or have had a substantial contribution to the writing of at least 3 papers accepted in international peer reviewed journals in the last 5 years -
- are experts in the relevant (content and methodological) field.

Thesis supervisors carry out the following tasks:

- advise on the relevance and practicality of the research proposal,
- aid in refining the choice of research topic,
- give advice on relevant literature,
- discuss the design of the research and the proposed research method,
- agree on the timetable,
- discuss the problems, and
- take part in the Thesis Examination Committee.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to inform the Track Committees of inadequate progress, serious slippage from the agreed timetable, serious disagreement concerning quality/ relevance/ direction of the research and any other issues that could endanger the in-time completion of the master thesis.

Disclaimer: once a student gets a supervisor assigned it's not possible to change to another supervisor in the middle of the year. Should changing of supervisor be needed, always consult the Track Committee first! Please be aware that it cannot be guaranteed that a replacing supervisor can be found in the middle of the academic year.

4.4 Deadlines

Students must submit their thesis proposal before 15 January 2022. You will receive instructions on how to submit the proposal by December at the latest. In case revisions are required, the deadline for resubmission is 5 February 2022. The final thesis must be formally submitted by 30 June 2022. Students will receive the detailed submission instructions by email in Spring 2022. The thesis exam takes place no later than 31 August 2022. If students do not pass the thesis within the given deadlines, they will have to extend their enrolment in the Eu-HEM programme, pay the participation fee again, and submit their thesis between 1 September and 1 November 2022. If a student submits earlier than the second deadline, we cannot guarantee that the defense can be scheduled and thesis to be assessed before November 1st. Annex 4 gives an overview of all relevant dates.

4.5 Delay in thesis process

Students are recommended to discuss any bottlenecks in the time planning of their thesis writing process with their thesis supervisor. If students are unable to finish their thesis by the first submission deadline in June, or if a thesis is granted a NO-GO, they should keep in mind that there is only one second deadline for resubmitting your thesis in November. If students submit their thesis before the November deadline, they should be aware that they need to re-enroll for a new academic year and pay the participation fee. If a student misses this second deadline, he or she will need to follow the thesis deadlines of the next cohort. Should personal circumstances occur that influence the thesis planning, students are advised to contact their local coordinator.

Section 5 – GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

5.1 Credits

In order to obtain the Eu-HEM degree students will have to acquire 120 credits:

- 60 credits for compulsory courses during their first year,
- 30 credits for compulsory courses during their second year
- 30 credits for their master thesis.

5.2 Assessment guidelines

The thesis will be assessed on the following guidelines:

- research question: the objective addresses a clearly delineated problem in healthcare from an economic, policy or management perspective and is scientifically relevant; there is a clear research question (including secondary questions), problem analysis, theoretical framework, empirical research, conclusion;
- method: the empirical research meets the scientific criteria (is methodologically correct);

- argumentation: the empirical research actually answers the thesis question in a clear and efficient manner;
- research ethics: The student considers the specific ethical implications of the research question and methodological approach applied.
- format: the thesis document is written in English and meets the academic standards with regard to style and deepening of the subject.

What determines the grade?

- structure and length of the thesis must meet the requirements mentioned in the previous pages;
- the research must be methodologically sound;
- there must be critical reflection:
 - o the student must be able to indicate what he or she has learned or what he or she would do differently in a next study (note: this is not a matter of personal experiences but of academic insights);
 - o The student is able to reflect on ethical implications of his or her doing according the research standards. The student must be capable of arguing in a logical and clear manner;
- the student must be able to work independently (processing suggestions from the supervisor and solving any problems during the data collection on their own);
- presentation and oral defense;
- the extent to which the thesis yields new scholarly insights.

5.3 Final exam

The final exam (thesis defense) shall take place at the university where the student is registered in the fourth semester. It includes a 15-minute presentation by the student followed by a set of questions from and a discussion with the Thesis Examination Committee, the latter part lasting approximately 30 minutes.

All Thesis Examination Committees include the supervisor and external assessor from the other Eu-HEM partner university in the track appointed by the Track Committee. For all other provisions, local rules apply.

After having defended their thesis, students must be prepared to answer additional questions by the Thesis Examination Committee and discuss topics covered by the Eu-HEM programme of study.

Therefore the examination will include the following components which also be documented in the examination protocol;

- Presentation of the master thesis
- Discussion/Defense of thesis
- Discussion of other topics relevant to the Eu-HEM study program

Please be aware that the focus of this exam will be on the thesis presentation and defense.

5.4 Grading

Students will receive one joint grade for both the written thesis and the oral exam. The Thesis Examination Committee uses the European grading system to decide on the final local grade. The final overall grade is published in the Diploma Supplement in the local grading system of the supervisor's university.

5.5 Plagiarism and fraud

Concepts and statements taken from the literature should be appropriately reworded and referenced. Exact citations should be clearly highlighted (e.g. between inverted commas or through a different font) and the source should include the page number. Online sources are admissible when they are appropriate and meet the required scientific, but generic sources such as Wikipedia are not necessarily scientific and critically assessed and should be avoided or only used with extreme care and parsimony. Similar rules for references apply for online resources as for academic publications. The theses will be checked upon plagiarism, using anti-plagiarism software. Plagiarism is taken very seriously and will have legal implications. The legal implications and actions follow the local laws and regulations.

5.6 Hardship clause

In very exceptional individual circumstances where the application of one or more provisions in these Master Thesis Guidelines would lead to unreasonable and/or unfair situations with respect to a student, a student may submit a written and reasoned application for a departure from the provision(s) in question to the Examination Committee.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Eu-HEM template for designing thesis proposals

Annex 2 - Declaration in lieu of oath

Annex 3 – Overview members Track Committees

Annex 4 – Thesis timeline

Annex 1 - Eu-HEM template for designing thesis proposals

The format is a tool. Using the template is recommended, but not a requirement. Students are advised to discuss at an early stage with their thesis supervisor what template they should use.

A thesis proposal starts with formulating a clear and relevant thesis question embedded within a broader theoretical framework. The thesis proposal provides an outline of the empirical research that will be performed and that may hold the answer to the thesis question. The thesis reports the results of the empirical research and discusses them in the light of the theoretical framework. Finally, an answer to the thesis question is formulated. The empirical research therefore is essential to answer the thesis question and is described in the methods and results section of the thesis. The thesis proposal may consist of a maximum of 2,500 words.

Name:	
Specialisation:	
Title:	
<p>1. Introduction and background (Key elements: describe your research topic, including a preliminary project title; establish common ground – refer to relevant literature – place the study in a research field; state the scientific relevance/significance of the planned research)</p>	
<p>2. The research question(s) and objectives (Key elements: defining research questions and/or list of hypothesis – what is the puzzle to be addressed? state the aim of the study – what to achieve/what knowledge to produce?)</p>	
<p>3. Analytical approach (Key elements: place study in a theoretical/conceptual framework (e.g. principal/agent theory, game theory, contractual theory, cost/benefit analysis, ideal types, organizational theory etc.); refer to relevant theoretical literature – define concepts and provide theoretical/conceptual base for your research question, hypothesis etc.)</p>	
<p>4. Methods and data (Key elements: specify whether the data are quantitative or qualitative (registration data, survey data, interviews, observations, field work, public documents, historical material etc.); show which methods to be used to analyze the data (such as regression analysis, factor analysis, document/content analysis, literature reviews, comparative methods etc.); explain why the data are fit to address the research question). Where necessary explain, consider ethical implications.</p>	

5. Study design + limitations of the study

(Key elements: is this a descriptive; correlational; explanatory; interpretative; theory generating etc. study?; is this a cross-sectional; before and after; longitudinal; case-study; experimental study, systematic literature review etc.?; comparative study? defining the case and/or sample/population; refer to possible problems and limitations of the study)

6. Proposed timeline

(Key elements: what you plan to do and when you plan to do it; the need for resources and logistical arrangements; approval of the use and storage of data/data-sets)

7. List of references

The thesis proposal will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Is the thesis question relevant?
- Is the literature relevant?
- Is the theoretical framework appropriate?
- Is the proposed method scientifically valid and ethical justifiable?
- Is the project feasible (given the timeline)?

Annex 2 - Declaration in lieu of oath

With this declaration, the student confirms having written the thesis him or herself without any outside help. Others' thoughts and ideas are clearly marked as such and the master thesis has not been handed in during the course of another program and has not yet been published. Each master's thesis needs to contain such a declaration and has to be signed by the student in person. An electronic signature cannot be accepted. Exact formulation of this declaration:

“DECLARATION IN LIEU OF OATH

I hereby declare, under oath, that this master thesis has been my independent work and has not been aided with any prohibited means. I declare, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that all passages taken from published and unpublished sources or documents have been reproduced whether as original, slightly changed or in thought, have been mentioned as such at the corresponding places of the thesis, by citation, where the extent of the original quotes is indicated.

The paper has not been submitted for evaluation to another examination authority or has been published in this form or another.”

SIGNATURE	
date and signature of student	date and signature of supervisor

Annex 3 - Track Committee members

Management of Healthcare Institutions	Member from UiO	Member from MCI
	Terje P. Hagen	Raffael Heiss
Email:	t.p.hagen@medisin.uio.no	raffael.heiss@mci.edu
Economic Evaluation in Healthcare	Member from EUR	Member from UiO
	Margreet Franken	Eline Aas
Email:	franken@imta.eur.nl	eline.aas@medisin.uio.no
Health Economics and Policy	Member from UiO	Member from UniBo
	Knut Reidar Wangen	Daniele Fabbri
Email:	k.r.wangen@medisin.uio.no	d.fabbri@unibo.it
Decision Making in Healthcare	Member from EUR	Member from MCI
	Margreet Franken	Claudia Zoller
Email:	franken@imta.eur.nl	Claudia.zoller@mci.edu
Global Health	Member from EUR	Member from UniBo
	Igna Bonfrer	Davide Dragone
Email:	bonfrer@eshpm.eur.nl	davide.dragone@unibo.it
Healthcare Finance and Management	Member from UniBo	Member from MCI
	Emanuele Padovani	Armin Fidler
Email:	emanuele.padovani@unibo.it	arminfidler@icloud.com

Annex 4 – Thesis timeline

