

# **Research Project Report and Master's Thesis Overview**

## **STUDENT VERSION**

Version 4.0, March 2, 2022

### **Introduction:**

The Master's Thesis or Research Project Report is the ultimate educational outcome of our 2-Year MBA and reflects the academic training and research skill of the student as well as the level of critical thinking, analytical inquiry and presentation skills provided by our program.

### **Master's Thesis Track or Research Project Report Track:**

Before the end of Master's and Research Project Seminar II, students must choose to follow either (1) The Research Project Report track, or (2) The Master's Thesis track. As both are expected to be conducted according to globally acceptable master-level research standards, neither of these tracks is considered by the Global MBA faculty to be "better" than the other. Irrespective of which track is chosen, all Global MBA students must participate in the Critical and Analytical Thinking course, and enroll in each of the Master's Thesis and Research Report Seminars (I, II & III).

While taking Master Thesis and Research Project I – III, students will consider their individual paths for their future careers and receive guidance from their supervisor regarding whether the research theme they are pursuing is most appropriate for a Research Project Report or Master's Thesis.

### **Research Project Report Track**

A research project report is practical research focused on existing challenges in global management. Students may choose to conduct research in one, or a combination of the three focus areas of the Global MBA (Sustainability and Green Business, Culture and Creativity, or Business in Asia) or another area of study relevant to the student's future career plans. Based upon this foundation, research may be conducted through the lenses of topic areas such as strategic management, organizational behavior, human resource management, marketing, accounting, finance, operations management, or management ethics. In keeping with the educational goals of the Global MBA, rather than focusing solely on "desk research" and research surveys, we encourage students to personally visit companies and conduct their research on real problems that these companies or organizations are facing. Towards this end, case study research is one recommended approach to completing the Research Project Report.

## **Master's Thesis Track**

For those students who would like to delve more deeply into a specific topic or subject area in order to further enhance their expertise and knowledge in this area, the Master's Thesis track offers students the opportunity to do so. Master's Thesis Track students may choose to conduct empirical research or engage in the development of mathematical or business models within one, or a combination of the three focus areas of the Global MBA (Sustainability and Green Business, Culture and Creativity, or Business in Asia) or another area of study relevant to the student's future career plans. Irrespective of the approach taken, students in the Master's Thesis track will (1) exhibit a thorough understanding of the scholarly and practical thinking within their chosen area, and (2) add an important new perspective to that existing body of knowledge. As with the Research Project Report, Master's Thesis research may be conducted through the lenses of topic areas such as strategic management, organizational behavior, human resource management, marketing, accounting, finance, operations management, or management ethics.

## **Course Recommendations**

Students are strongly recommended to take **Business Research Methods** and **Statistics** Course for both tracks.

## **Roles of Supervisors:**

### **Main Supervisor (1<sup>st</sup> Supervisor):**

The Main Supervisor will be responsible for the overall guidance, supervision and grading of the student researcher over the course of their final three semesters of study. In principle, the main supervisor will have deep knowledge of the topic or area of study undertaken by the student for their Research Project Report or Master's Thesis. However, the spirit of the Doshisha University Global MBA is one of collaboration and support amongst all faculty members and students, and faculty members are dedicated to enhancing their knowledge and skills beyond their individual focus areas. In light of this, supervisors may be allocated as the Main Supervisor even though he or she may not a specialist within the exact area, with the understanding that the 2nd supervisor and other colleagues within the Global MBA will support in giving constructive feedback and guidance to a student and main supervisor throughout the report-writing process.

#### Responsibilities of the Main Supervisor include:

- 1) Meeting with each supervisee for the equivalent of 15, 90-minute sessions throughout each semester
- 2) Providing guidance for the Research Project Report or Master's Thesis related to:
  - A) The final topic of research.
  - B) The appropriate research track for this research topic.
  - C) The content, structure, methodology and style of the research undertaken by the student.
  - D) The style, structure and format of all written and oral presentations
- 3) In extraordinary situations, agreeing with the student to change the topic of the Master's Thesis or Research Project Report.

### **2nd Supervisor**

The role of the 2nd supervisor is to provide constructive feedback and support for the student researcher and main supervisor on an ad hoc basis as needed.

The role of the 2nd supervisor should be considered a supporting role, and the expected contribution is much lower in terms of hours spent and effort contributed to an individual student's work vis-a-vis the main supervisor.

Please note that meetings between the 2<sup>nd</sup> supervisor and student cannot be counted towards the 15, 90-minute meeting requirements that are the responsibility of the main supervisor.

# Research Project Report and Master's Thesis Evaluation Process

## STUDENT VERSION

Version 5.0, March 6, 2024

### **Introduction:**

The Global MBA (GMBA) faculty within Doshisha University's Graduate School of Business are committed to providing our students with a fair, transparent and professionally managed evaluation process for their Master's Thesis and Research Project Report efforts. Towards this end, these evaluation criteria are meant to serve as guides for our review and assessment of the quality of work and level of thoughtful inquiry each individual student has invested into their graduation research report. The GMBA faculty have agreed to use this assessment framework to judge the overall, holistic body of work presented by the student, and because of this, they will not attach separate grades to the oral or written materials.

### **Evaluation Criteria for Master's Thesis and Research Project Report:**

#### 1) Master's Thesis

**Overview:** The Master Thesis (MT) serves as a critical project that synthesizes and applies the comprehensive knowledge and skills acquired throughout the graduate program, challenging students to conduct in-depth research on a topic of their choice. Through the process of developing and completing their MT, students learn to critically engage with literature, employ rigorous research methodologies, and contribute original insights to their field of study, thereby enhancing their expertise and preparing them for advanced professional or academic pursuits. The MT is evaluated as follows.

**Research Objective(s):** The evaluation emphasizes clear, relevant, and original research questions and objectives, grounded in literature. It expects the thesis to offer new insights, critique existing models, and produce research that is both valuable and tailored to its intended audience.

**Logic and Validity of Analysis and Findings:** This category focuses on the thesis's ability to provide a coherent and insightful analysis that comprehensively covers the topic. A successful thesis will demonstrate logical progression and critical evaluation, resulting in a well-structured narrative and a succinct summary of findings and limitations.

**Validity, Credibility, and Choice of Research Methods:** Assessments in this area scrutinize the choice and implementation of research methods for their appropriateness and accuracy, emphasizing meticulous planning, source selection, and alignment with research objectives. The thesis must acknowledge methodological limitations and ethical considerations to ensure its credibility.

**Academic Characteristics and Significance of Research:** This criterion considers the thesis's impact on academic and business spheres, highlighting the importance of independent research, risk-taking, and the integration of program learning. The thesis should showcase the program's strengths and address its weaknesses, highlighting its academic and practical significance.

## 2) Research Project Report

**Overview:** The aim of the Research Project Report (RPR) is to enable students to apply their comprehensive knowledge and skills to address complex issues in their field of study, demonstrating the ability to conduct in-depth research and analysis. Through this process, students learn to critically evaluate existing literature, develop and test hypotheses using appropriate methodologies, and effectively communicate their findings and implications. This hands-on experience not only enhances their research capabilities but also prepares them for future academic or professional challenges by fostering problem-solving skills and practical application of theoretical concepts. The RPR is evaluated as follows.

**Originality:** The criterion for originality evaluates the report's approach to tackling a unique research question and its contribution to the field. It stresses the need for proper citation, the application of existing frameworks to new business contexts, and the encouragement of readers to question established beliefs. A report excelling in originality reveals new insights, positively impacting the reader's understanding and reflecting the Master's program's strengths.

**Logic:** Logic assesses the report's clarity and understanding of the topic, ensuring the research is well-structured and logically argued from start to finish. It requires a solid introduction, a critical review of literature, and a conclusion that ties everything together, emphasizing planning and methodological rigor.

**Problem Solving Skills:** This evaluates the report's ability to define and solve the research problem effectively. It looks for comprehensive use of sources, accurate data analysis, and results that offer practical solutions and critique existing models. The report should propose improvements for future business practices.

**Practicality and Feasibility:** This focuses on the report's real-world applicability, examining how it addresses practical implementation issues and offers viable solutions. It values contributions that draw from the entire program's learnings, provide strategic advice to practitioners, and critically implement supervisory feedback.

### **Evaluation Scores:**

Each Master's Thesis or Research Project Report will be scored by a panel of three faculty members, which includes the main supervisor plus an additional two faculty members who have, in principal, been chosen for their expertise or knowledge in the area of research conducted by the student. Upon objective evaluation of both the written report and oral defense as a holistic body of work, students will receive one of the following results:

### **Distinction (All reviewers score 90 or more points, and within approximately top 10% of all submitted papers)**

This paper is truly outstanding, and worthy of commendation. Not only does it meet the requirements for a final research report, but it also stands within approximately top 10% of all submitted papers within this academic year. In addition, this work is at a level where it could be presented at an international conference or be submitted to an international academic or business journal for publication.

Please note that:

- A) In principal, approximately 10% of students will be given this distinction grade.
- B) Distinction will be decided by the entire Global MBA faculty rather than the 3-member evaluation committee and will be discussed after all scores for all students and the recommendation reports have been submitted to the DBS office.

### **Pass (70 points or higher)**

This paper meets all requirements set forth in the guidelines for a final research report. Although there may be minor adjustments or changes required, these changes relate to issues such as punctuation, spelling or referencing, and do not stand in the way of the student receiving a passing grade for this work.

Note:

If students decide to make additional modifications to their written reports beyond these minor changes, they cannot qualify for distinction.

### **Minor Revision (Less than 70 points, but can be modified within 2 weeks)**

This paper does not yet meet all requirements set forth in the guidelines for an acceptable final Research Project Report or Master's Thesis. However, with minor revisions made the paper and overall work will be deemed eligible to pass. Required changes are not expected to take more than the required time for final resubmission (i.e. two weeks) as outlined in the finalized schedule for resubmission of such papers.

Notes:

- A) Although these papers will be reassessed after they are resubmitted, a paper that receives this "Minor Revision" assessment will not be eligible for consideration for distinction.
- B) While no strict "floor" will be given to works that fall into this category, in principal, the lowest reasonable score to qualify for Minor Revisions is considered to be 60 points.

Minor Revisions may include:

1. Formatting or structural changes to the body of the paper
2. Incomplete or missing references, or other oversights related to referencing
3. Argument Structure
4. Other changes deemed necessary to achieve a passing score.

## **Major Revisions (less than 70 points, and requires significant changes expected to take longer than 2 weeks)**

In its current form, this paper does not meet the requirements for an acceptable research report. The revisions stipulated by the review committee are major, and will require a significant amount of work prior to resubmission. This paper is not eligible for resubmission with the current academic semester, and will only be eligible for resubmission next semester at the earliest.

### **Evaluation Process Flow:**

The basic process that we will follow in evaluating student research reports will be as follows:

#### Phase 1: Master's Thesis and Research Project Report I, II & III

Within this phase, students will work together with their supervisors to complete their research and report writing efforts to reach the level that the main supervisor feels confident that the student has a chance of passing the defense of their written and presented work. The basis for this decision will be the results of all previous workshops, individual and group consultations, and most importantly, the final rough draft submitted by the student to the main supervisor.

#### Phase 2: Before the Defense

After the successful submission of the research report, the three faculty members assigned to the student's review panel will independently assess the submitted materials.

#### Phase 3: Assessment Decision

The three member faculty panel will meet and agree to the final assessment result for each student's performance. If necessary, the main supervisor will collect all revision requests from faculty panel members, and provide an aggregated list of the requested changes in the form of a "requested revisions" document that will be submitted to the DBS Office and then provided to all students on the date outlined in the specific schedule for that specific academic year.

### **Extended Process for "minor revision" students:**

For students who receive a "Minor Revisions" result, they will have approximately two weeks to make these changes and resubmit them to the DBS office. The exact schedule for this process will vary year to year based on the Doshisha Business School schedule, but in general these changes are expected to be resubmitted within two weeks of receiving the evaluation results.

Upon receipt of these revised papers, the original 3-member faculty evaluation panel will review these revised materials, and will reach a final decision as to whether the student has made the appropriate level of revisions required to pass the Master's Thesis/Research Project Report.

If the review panel does not feel that the student has adequately revised their paper according to the written feedback that was provided to them, then this student will fail the Master's Thesis/Research Project Report, and will need to revise and resubmit their paper with an adequate level of changes made by the next semester deadlines at the very earliest.