

Due to the Covid-19 health emergency, on April 6, 2020 the board of the Master in Cellular and Molecular Biology decided to temporarily modify the current rules to prepare the Master thesis. Specifically, the Student's guide was modified as follows:

Due to the Covid-19 health emergency, the laboratory activity (both in Italy and abroad) has been interrupted from February 24, 2020, making impossible for students to work on their experimental thesis. For this reason, in both Summer and Autumn degree sessions, thesis not conforming to the schedule reported above will be accepted. In this regard, no specific standard is required: the final dissertation might remain an experimental thesis (wherever possible), or might be a review of existing literature, or a research project, or the critical analysis of existing data, etc. It is however mandatory that the thesis reflects the student's original contribution. No thesis proposal form is required for Summer and Autumn sessions.

Whatever the form chosen, it must be approved by the Supervisor and by the local tutor, if any. Few guidelines to prepare the Master thesis according to the newly introduced changes will be described here below.

Experimental thesis

This form should be adopted whenever possible, provided it is supported by the thesis Supervisor who surveys data availability and quality, also taking into account the not favorable contingent situation.

Experimental thesis on already existing data

The experimental nature of this type of thesis is provided by the critical analysis of already existing datasets. In this regard, the student is required to: a) describe the background from which the data derive, clearly stating that she/he did not contribute to data production; b) decide and justify the analytic tools to use; c) perform the analysis; d) discuss the results; e) provide a conclusion.

Review of existing literature

While allowed, such option should be chosen when no other possibility exists (experimental data not at all available due to the impossibility to start working in the laboratory as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic). Indeed, a revision of the existing literature offers less opportunities to reflect the student original contribution than an experimental thesis. Nevertheless, this is not impossible, as shown by the following few examples:

- the revision of the existing literature can be associated with personal interpretations and/or criticisms, resembling the 'Expert Opinion' section that can be found in reviews published on international journals;
- the thesis could present a meta-analysis (combining data from multiple published studies);
- starting from reviewing the literature, the thesis could focus on a specific aspect and define a research project that could be useful to clarify the point (more or less resembling the structure proposed by the optional MRE)

Mixed modality

The thesis could contain a rather extended introduction reviewing the existing literature on a specific problem and a second part in which few related original experimental data produced by the student are shown, analyzed and discussed.

THE THESIS WILL BE EVALUATED AS REPORTED ON THE STUDENT'S GUIDE, IRRESPECTIVE OF THE MODALITY CHOSEN.