Thesis Manual and Academic Skills Guide-
Research Masters International
Development Studies 2013-2015 Cohort
Fieldwork and Thesis Manual, Scientific Article and Portfolio

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August 2013
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**INTRODUCTION**

The research master program (ResMa) International Development Studies (IDS) of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) is a two year program. In the first year students develop in depth knowledge of core debates and research methods in IDS through a variety of courses. In addition they shape an individual profile through electives, both thematic and research methods related. The second year further develops students’ academic skills and profiling through an individual field research and thesis project and the writing of an academic article. In both years, students undertake portfolio activities that provide them with experience in the practice of research and knowledge in IDS.

This document gives guidelines on the fieldwork and thesis project, the academic article and the portfolio. In addition it gives insight in the timing and deadline of these program components in the overall curriculum.

**WHO IS WHO**

The *programme director* of the cluster Research Masters of GSSS, Prof. dr. Wouter van der Brug is responsible for the program set-up, the organization, execution and quality of the program, within the context of the Graduate School of Social Sciences.

The *adjunct programme director* IDS, Dr. Michaela Hordijk, similar to the programme director, is responsible for the program set-up, the organization, execution and quality of the program with the only difference that he or she is mandated by the programme director and responsible for the Research Master IDS (hereon referred to as ResMa-IDS).

The *academic advisor*, Dr. Yves van Leynseele is responsible for the student’s academic guidance, specifically concerning the fieldwork and portfolio project. He advises students on a purely academic level and approves the choice of the supervisors in the thesis-writing stage. Together with the study advisor he organises intake meetings and mid-term meetings with students.

The *study coordinator*, Drs. Edwin van der Vlist, is together with the (adjunct) programme director, in charge of organizing and co-ordinating the programme.

The *study advisor*, Drs. Edwin van der Vlist, is the person who is in charge of study advice to the students of the programme; he monitors the study progress of each student and has frequent study progress meetings with students. Together with the academic advisor he organises intake meetings and mid-term meetings with students.

The *information desk* is located in the Bushuis F.1.11A for practical matters. Please visit the office or contact Rebecca Lobry (gsss@uva.nl) for specific questions.
# Research Master Timeline - Cohort 2013-2015

## Year 1

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<tr>
<th>Semester 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Block 1</strong></td>
<td>Contemporary Issues in IDS Part 1 (6EC)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Block 2</strong></td>
<td>Contemporary Issues in IDS Part 2 (6 EC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Block 3</strong></td>
<td>Intro GIS OR Interviewing and Focus Groups OR Theory of Ethnographic Research (all 6EC)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Semester 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Block 4</strong></td>
<td>Contemporary Issues in IDS – ADVANCED course (6 EC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced Geographical Information Systems OR Qualitative Data Analysis I OR Policy-Oriented Research (6EC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Block 5</strong></td>
<td>Advanced Network Analysis OR Qualitative Data Analysis II OR Advanced Geographical Information Systems (6 EC)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Block 6</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YEAR 1: ACTIVITIES REGARDING FIELDWORK, THESIS, ARTICLE, PORTFOLIO

SEPTEMBER 2013

Intake meetings: (first and second week) with Academic advisor and study advisor (general intake and discussion on student interests and ideas for fieldwork, electives, and portfolio)

GiD meetings: monthly GiD meetings take off (see portfolio activities) for which students will be invited

Fieldwork Market (mid-September): Visit market regular MA-IDS for orientation on fieldwork positions and staff interests. Final fieldwork market for RMIDS students will be organised in mid-February 2014.

Methods Electives Meeting: End of September RMIDS students have a Methods Electives Meeting together with the students of the research masters Social Sciences and Urban Studies. During the meeting the lecturers of the methods electives offered in the third, fourth and fifth block of the academic year 13-14 will shortly present their courses and the programme directors of the respective research master programmes explain how the methods electives relate to each other and how students can make strategical choices for methods electives in their respective programmes.

FEBRUARY 2014

Fieldwork Market (Mid-February 2014): Visit market together with Ma-IDS students for final orientation fieldwork.

MARCH 2014

Make final Choice fieldwork location and supervisor (March 5th): report to academic advisor.

APRIL 2014

Information fieldwork practicalities (first week): by the study advisor.

Writing Preliminary Proposal for thesis research.

MAY 2014

Writing preliminary proposal: deadline 30th May

JUNE 2014

Mid-term meeting (early June): with academic advisor and study advisor discuss study progress, fieldwork and portfolio.

Research proposal workshops as part of the course Undertaking Fieldwork in Developing Countries: 3 sessions and 1 presentation seminar

Writing final research proposal: deadline June 27th. Insufficient proposals need to be revised and resubmitted on August 18th (NB Supervision may not be available over the summer and students are not allowed to leave for the field without an approved research proposal).

Final Portfolio plan (submit June 30): propose portfolio activities. Need to be approved by academic advisor.

JULY-AUGUST 2014

No curricular activities. Students can undertake activities related to fieldwork and portfolio. However, supervision is not guaranteed during the summer holidays.

PORTFOLIO ACTIVITIES

Portfolio activities can be carried out throughout the year. A plan for the activities needs to be approved by academic advisor at the end of June ultimately.
**YEAR 2**

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<td><strong>Block 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Block 4</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Block 5</strong></td>
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**YEAR 2: ACTIVITIES REGARDING FIELDWORK, THESIS, ARTICLE, PORTFOLIO**

**SEPTEMBER-JANUARY 2015 (SEMESTER 3: BLOCK 1-3)**

Thesis and fieldwork project part 1: fieldwork and initial analysis. Fieldwork is conducted for 12-14 weeks. Students can leave for the field after approval of proposal. **Last moment to return from the Field:** January 11th. The month of January is used to meet supervisor, do initial data analysis and make a work plan.

Portfolio activities (in the field or elsewhere according to approved plan). Portfolio activities can take place throughout the two years but those activities carried out in the field or internships are scheduled in this period or the summer before.

**JANUARY 2015**

Return from field (NO LATER THAN January 11th)

Thesis seminar 1 (January 15th). Submit back from field report.

**FEBRUARY 2015**

Thesis seminar 2 (first week in February). Thesis writing

Thesis seminar 3 (third week in February). Thesis writing

**MARCH 2015**

Thesis seminar 4 (mid-March). Thesis writing

¹ PhD level course can be chosen pending approval of the Research Master exam committee
MAY 2015
Deadline thesis: May 31\textsuperscript{st} (second chance: June 30th)

Start writing Scientific Article

JUNE 2015 (ALL GRADES MUST BE IN BY 20 JULY 2015 TO GRADUATE IN AUGUST; SECOND DEADLINE IS 18\textsuperscript{TH} OF AUGUST TO GRADUATE IN OCTOBER 2015)

Thesis defence (before mid-June; second chance before mid-July)

Writing scientific Article: deadline June 18 – In case of failure students can resubmit their article (date to be agreed with supervisor: grades need to be in before August 18\textsuperscript{th}, 2015). NB supervision is not guaranteed during the summer holidays, graduation will then be in October

Portfolio completion: deadline June 30\textsuperscript{th} - In case of failure students can resubmit their portfolio around mid-August (date to be agreed with Yves van Leynseele: grades need to be in before August 18\textsuperscript{th}, 2015. NB supervision is not guaranteed during the summer holidays, graduation will then be in October

JULY-AUGUST 2015

Thesis seminar 5: (early July) Organised by students and open to supervisors, UvA faculty, family members, and friends. Simulation of academic conference: panels and presentations of article and papers. Followed by good-bye drinks.

Graduation ceremony at the end of August

Students submitting their scientific article or portfolio in August have to set specific submission dates with supervisor (in case of scientific article) or Academic Advisor (in case of portfolio). Please note that all grades have to be in by August 18\textsuperscript{th} 2014 to be able to graduate this academic year. The graduation ceremony for these students is in October 2014\textsuperscript{th}.

PORTFOLIO ACTIVITIES

Portfolio activities can be carried out throughout the year.
In the curriculum the Fieldwork and Thesis take a core position. The aim of the fieldwork and thesis project is that students:

- Know how to independently carry out a substantive research endeavour which contributes to the advancement of knowledge and practice in international development studies;
- Know how to organise effectively the collection of primary and secondary data and analyse data independently;
- Are able to produce written text (in English) consistent with prevailing scientific standards;
- Are able to evaluate findings and results and discuss them in the context of scientific debates.

1. CONTENTS

During the fieldwork and thesis project, a student is responsible for the design and implementation of research culminating in a master's thesis of 25,000-30,000 words. The thesis is prepared under the direction of a thesis supervisor and involves sustained independent study on a topic appropriate in the field of International Development Studies. The objective is for a student to contribute to the knowledge base within this field through completion of a substantive research project. Students carry out their thesis fieldwork abroad. The term ‘research’ is defined broadly, including quantitative and qualitative methods. As a rule, the thesis features an empirical study including primary data collection by means of mixed research methods as well as secondary data sources. The outcome of the "Undertaking Fieldwork in Developing Countries" course serves as a research design for the thesis project.

2. ASSESSMENT

Generally speaking, a student has two supervisors. The thesis supervisor (a staff member within the field of specialisation from the UvA) will be the one responsible for working with the student throughout the process of proposal writing, research, and writing the thesis. The local supervisor (in the field) will provide guidance throughout the fieldwork and serve as a broker. The second reader (not a supervisor) will participate in final grading of the thesis.

The thesis will be evaluated by the thesis supervisor and the second reader. The student will be required to defend his/her thesis in front of both. The thesis supervisor and second reader will give a final assessment on the basis of the content of the thesis and the defence thereof.

3. TIMING

Students work on their fieldwork and thesis throughout the program. Orientation on fieldwork and supervision is scheduled in year 1, block 1-4. Actual fieldwork preparation through the writing of the preliminary and final proposal takes place in the 5th and 6th block of year 1. The fieldwork and thesis writing is scheduled for the first and most of the second semester of year 2. The fieldwork and initial data analysis take place in the first semester of year two. Students are expected to have ended their fieldwork on January 11th 2015 ultimately.
Block 4 and part of block 5 are scheduled for thesis writing. The Thesis Seminars in February, March and April will support this writing. Writing the thesis continues until May 31st when the thesis is handed in.

4. Important dates

- March 5th 2014: final decision fieldwork and supervisor
- May 30th 2014: hand in preliminary research proposal to supervisor
- June 27th 2014: hand in final research proposal
- January 11th 2015: return from the field
- May 31st 2015: hand in final thesis (June 30th second deadline)
- June 18th, 2015: hand in scientific article (second deadline well before Aug 18th)
- June 30th, 2015: hand in portfolio reflection (second deadline well before Aug 18th)
- July 20th, 2015: all work must have been graded to complete the program (NB. Graduation ceremony will be in August 2015)
- August 18th, 2015: second deadline. All work must have been graded to complete the program (NB; graduation ceremony is in the fall)

5. Choosing research subject and site

Throughout their program, ResMa students have the opportunity to create a personal curriculum. Through individual thematic electives, methodological specialization, portfolio activities and their field work and thesis topic and theme, unique profiles are developed which provide each student with particular labor market opportunities. Students’ fieldwork and thesis are an important element in these profiles. Linking up with an ongoing research project within the department or picking a theme that is currently debated in academic circles, are strategic choices to enhance access to a professional network.

The twice-yearly provided fieldwork-guide offers students a wide variety of countries and themes to choose from. All these themes are directly linked to currently debated topics in the field of International Development Studies. ResMa students can select a topic from the guide but can also develop themes independently, in collaboration with their preferred supervisor. Supervisors are in principle located within the department of Geography, Planning and International Development Studies. Only if no appropriate supervision can be arranged within the department, can external supervisor be approved. When choosing a research subject and site, please consider:

- Applicability of research topic to research site
- Preference for an individually designed and conducted research project or inclination for participation within the framework of a larger project
- Preference for urban or rural settings
- Timing of research in relation to local circumstances (holidays, climate)?
- Language
- Costs

Students are invited for the fieldwork market in September and March but are strongly advised to discuss fieldwork opportunities with staff members and their academic advisor. Participation in monthly GID-meetings and other academic events of the GID or GOG groups is strongly recommended to become familiar with ongoing research.
6. FIELDWORK PREPARATIONS
Fieldwork preparation consists of practical and theoretical preparations. Practical preparations include arranging a visa, vaccinations, purchasing tickets and sometimes finding accommodation. Theoretical preparations include increasing knowledge of the theme of choice, reading about the selected topic in the country of choice, and gathering general information about the country/region. In addition, a local supervisor needs to be identified to support the fieldwork process. In order to explain the role of the local supervisor ‘in the field’ to a local supervisor, one can download the ‘letter local supervisor’:

7. THE PRELIMINARY AND FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL
Writing the research proposal is one of the major preparations to complete before students will able to sign thesis-contracts, receive permission to leave to the field and to receive a fieldwork subsidy.

Developing a research proposal is one of the major aspects of the Undertaking Fieldwork Class. Remember: The better your proposal, the easier the thesis writing process will be!

!!!!!! WRITING A GOOD RESEARCH PROPOSAL REQUIRES A MINIMUM OF 4 WEEKS FULL-TIME WORK!!!!!!

The research proposal writing starts in April 2014 with the development of the preliminary proposal. This proposal is based on first thinking, exploring, narrowing down and then discussing matters with supervisors. When the research proposal workshops start (in June 2014) students are expected to be 100% sure about the theme, have a general idea of the outline of a theoretical framework, and have general information about the specific local circumstances and the populations of the research.

7.1. PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL - (DUE 30TH MAY 2014)
At the department we make a distinction between the preliminary and the final research proposal. The preliminary proposal is an indication for staff and students that with a month of work they can develop this proposal into a good final proposal. The Preliminary Proposal needs to be approved (signed) by the supervisor BEFORE the research proposal workshops start. This means that on May 30th 2014 one should have a preliminary proposal approved by the supervisor. This is the moment tickets can be booked. Tickets cannot be booked without an approved preliminary proposal!

A crucial part of the proposal is the problem formulation. The problem formulation entails a specification of the topic, and makes clear exactly what the thesis will discuss or what the student will be researching. In the problem formulation one can also indicate why it is important to write a thesis about and/or research the chosen topic, i.e. the social and scientific relevance of their thesis and/or research. The problem formulation generally consists of a research question and a number of operational sub-questions that are derived from the research questions. The questions should be phrased in a way that they are possible to answer within the scope of the thesis.

• The research questions will often change during the writing process, but the student at all times should be able to formulate what he/she is looking for. Research questions will become more concrete through researching and writing.
• Students need to make sure that their questions asked can be covered. Time is quite short to finish the thesis. Students are reminded that the Master’s thesis is not a dissertation for a PhD! And to make sure their topic is specific and time bound.
The aim of the thesis should be clear as well as the topic that will be dealt with and why it is worth dealing with the specific topic. Which specific question will be answered?

Special attention should be paid to the delineation of the topic and problem formulation on the one hand, and the broader theoretical framework within which these should be seen on the other. For that purpose it is important that students inform themselves well about research that has already been conducted on the topic at hand or related topics. This information can, for example, be found in recent editions of relevant journals.

A research question can be explorative for instance, descriptive or explanatory. Each type of question asks for a different approach within the research and thesis. Students need to make sure the research fits the type of question posed.

The preliminary proposal should include:

1. First outline of a theoretical framework
2. Preliminary Research questions
3. Optional: Conceptual scheme
4. Research location and unit of analysis
5. Time-planning and budget

Wordcount: 3000 (+/- 10%)

7.2. Final Research Proposal – (Due June 27th 2014)

The month of June 2014 is reserved for developing the final research proposal. If used efficiently, this period will allow to have completed the bulk of the theoretical chapter for the final thesis. The writing of the final research proposal is supported by 3 proposal writing workshops in June which guide the student step by step (theoretical chapter & research questions; operationalisation; unit of analysis and fieldwork methodologies) through their writing. Final research proposal presentations are scheduled at the end of June. During the final presentation session, students and staff provide feedback to each proposal.

The final Research Proposal should include:

1. Introduction
2. Theoretical Framework
3. Research Question and Sub questions
4. Conceptual scheme
5. Operationalization of major concepts (variables, dimensions and indicators)
6. Short description of research location
7. Unit of analysis
8. Research Methodologies
9. Data-analysis
10. Outline of thesis-chapters
11. Planning and Budget
12. Literature list

The final order of these elements is different in each research proposal.
Assessment of final research proposal

The lecturer of the Undertaking Fieldwork course will grade the final research proposal. Within two weeks of submission he/she will provide feedback and a grade for the proposal. The grade accounts for 50% of the Undertaking Fieldwork course. Generally speaking, there are three major criteria on the basis of which the proposal is judged:

- Academic and Societal relevance
- Coherence (theory-research questions-operationalization and methodology)
- Feasibility

Students receive feedback by use of a grading form, which can be found on the next page.

8. FROM PROPOSAL TO DEPARTURE

Before students leave to the field, the student’s thesis supervisor and the academic advisor have to approve the final research proposal. Together with their thesis supervisor and the academic advisor, students need to sign the thesis proposal form and thesis contract (administered by the registrar of GSSS). BEFORE STUDENTS LEAVE TO THE FIELD the completed and signed thesis proposal form and thesis agreement should be scanned and sent to registrar-gsss@uva.nl. If the research proposal is not considered to be of sufficient quality, a rewritten research proposal has to be submitted to the lecturer of the Undertaking Fieldwork Course. The deadline for this rewritten proposal is August 18th, 2014. The lecturer will reassess the framework and approve the revised version, provided the quality is sufficient. Without an approved research proposal, students do not receive the fieldwork-subsidy and are not allowed to start the fieldwork.

9. FIELDWORK AND THESIS AGREEMENT FORM AND FINANCIAL GRANTS

Before leaving for the field, the student, his/her thesis supervisor and academic advisor sign the thesis proposal form and thesis contract. The thesis proposal form and thesis contract can be downloaded from the following link: http://student.uva.nl/rmids/az/item/thesis.html#anker-thesis-proposal-forms

The thesis contract requires the following information:

- Indication that research proposal is already approved, or whether it still needs improvement, and if so when the final version will be submitted.
- The contact details of a local supervisor (if applicable)
- Health insurance policy number
- The period of fieldwork (date of departure and date of arrival)
- The final date of thesis submission
- What will happen if the thesis is not handed in on time.

If their fieldwork takes place outside the Netherlands students are able to apply for a fieldwork grant. If students have a local supervisor, there is a local supervision fee available of €300,-. For more information about fieldwork grants, local supervision fees, and how to apply for reimbursement, please check: http://student.uva.nl/rmids/az/item/fieldwork.html

The above-mentioned website should be checked carefully on which documents have to be handed in for application for the GSSS fieldwork subsidy and for the local supervision fee. Both subsidies are managed by the GSSS International Office, which will ensure that this subsidy is transferred to the student account.
Please note that by signing the thesis contract students agree to finish their thesis, excluding the defense, before May 31st 2015 and their scientific article before June 18th. A second chance for the thesis is granted June 30th 2015 and for the scientific article before August 18th. If you foresee that you may go beyond the second deadline for the scientific article, permission for an extension of the nominal study period (research masters= two years) needs to be requested from the IDS Examination Board. This request should include a motivation, an overview of attained courses, and a new study plan approved and discussed with the study advisor. Please be aware that passing these set deadlines could have repercussions in terms of supervision.
Grading Final Research Proposal IDS

Name:
Final grade:

The following elements should be present, although not necessarily in this order.

- Special focus on:
  - Relevance
  - Coherence (theory-research questions-operationalization and methodology)
  - Feasibility

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<td>1. Introduction</td>
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<td>2. Theoretical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Framework</td>
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<td>3. Research Questions</td>
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<td>and Sub-questions</td>
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General comments
FIELD WORK AND THESIS AGREEMENT
RESEARCH MASTER PROGRAMME INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
STUDENT BATCH 2013-15

Student name and number: ...........................................................................................................

Address: ....................................................................................................................................

Phone number: ............................................................................................................................

Email: ...........................................................................................................................................

Preliminary Title of Thesis: ...........................................................................................................

...................................................................................................................................................

Three key words describing your thesis (to be used for future reference):

1. .............................................................................................................................................. 2. .............................................................................................................................................. 3. ..............................................................................................................................................

Thesis Supervisor name: ............................................................................................................

Email: ...........................................................................................................................................

Department: .................................................................................................................................

Starting Date Fieldwork: .............................................................................................................

End Date Fieldwork: ....................................................................................................................

(To be filled out by the student!)

Deadline Fieldwork/ starting date Thesis: 11 January 2015


Deadline Thesis Defence: 15 June 2015

Deadline Portfolio and report: 30 June 2015
Deadline Scientific Article: 18 June 2015

Planned Way of Supervision (i.e. number of meetings/months etc.): ..........................................

Signatures for approval of attached thesis proposal (please note that another signature is required on the last page of the agreement):

_________________________  ________________
signature thesis supervisor  signature academic advisor

_________________________
date

This fieldwork and thesis agreement has to be handed in at the GSSS registrar’s office [registrar-gsss@uva.nl] BEFORE you leave for your fieldwork

Please turn over page
THESIS AGREEMENT

1. The primary data gathering (fieldwork) for this research project will take place
from (date) .......................................................... until (date) ..........................................................
in ...........................................................(place/country)

2. Before leaving, the student and supervisor have agreed on a time-scheme (please attach!) signed by the
supervisor and the student. After the agreed deadline as stated in this time-scheme, the student is no longer
entitled to supervision by the programme, unless the examination committee allows an extension. In order to
request such an extension, the student is required to file a written request to the examination committee.

3. The student has taken out an adequate insurance to cover health and repatriation costs for the period of his
fieldwork.

Name of insurance company: .........................................................

Policy number.................................................................

4. The student declares that he/she is in good health and has taken all necessary precautions (including
relevant vaccinations) to safeguard his/her health in the field.

5. Local supervision (if applicable) will be provided by:

Name: ......................................................................................

Position: ......................................................................................

Contact details: .................................................................

.................................................................(email/fax)
6. The local supervisor has been contacted by the academic advisor, and has formally agreed to be the student’s local supervisor?

[ ] yes
[ ] no
[ ] not applicable

7. When special circumstances force the student to return from the field at an earlier date, the programme in principle allows the thesis to be written on this topic based on secondary sources. An expansion of the theoretical component might be required in this case. The student will have to submit a revised thesis proposal within six weeks of return from the field for these reasons. If needed, the examination committee can extend this period upon a motivated request. The revised proposal needs approval of the supervisors and academic advisor.

8. If the primary data-gathering takes place outside the Netherlands students of the research master International Development Studies are eligible for the GSSS fieldwork subsidy. The GSSS fieldwork subsidy provides the student with a subsidy ranging from €250 to a maximum of €550, depending on the destination, covering as well accommodation and travel costs.

In order to have the GSSS fieldwork subsidy transferred to the student’s account the following documents need to be submitted to the International Office Social Sciences mailbox at the GSSS information desk:

- an application form for the GSSS fieldwork subsidy, to be downloaded at [www.student.uva.nl/mhs](http://www.student.uva.nl/mhs), A-Z list, F of Fieldwork, Fieldwork subsidy GSSS
- a photocopy of the signed fieldwork and thesis agreement
- a (copy of your) budget

The programme furthermore provides a lump sum subsidy of € 300 for local supervision, provided that the academic advisor has approved the local supervision. The student pays the local supervisor when in the field and back in the Netherlands he/she can reimburse the supervision fee through the financial department of the GSSS. To complete this transaction, the following forms are required:

1. Form reclaiming supervision fee; a letter in which your local supervisor confirms that he/she received the supervision fee, to be downloaded via [www.student.uva.nl/mhs](http://www.student.uva.nl/mhs), A-Z list, F of Fieldwork, Local Supervisors Fee.


Both forms can be sent to:

International Office Social Sciences
Kloveniersburgwal 48
1012 CX, Amsterdam
9. Has the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised against travel to the country/region where the fieldwork takes place?

[ ] yes

[ ] no

If yes: please read and sign the UvA’s liability form.

10. During the entire fieldwork period the student has to be enrolled at the Universiteit van Amsterdam to participate in the Research Master Programme in International Development Studies of the GSSS.

11. Students need to be back from the field before 10 January 2014. The month of January is used to meet the thesis supervisor, do initial data analysis and make a work plan.

12. The student is entitled to a maximum of eight meetings with his/her first supervisor to discuss data-analysis, chapters, the final draft or other issues the student or supervisor considers relevant. The date of submission of the thesis, the date of the thesis defence and planned graduation date have to be carefully coordinated with the thesis supervisor and second reader, to ensure their availability in the planned period.

13. The student should respect local ethics and institutional principles when carrying out the field-research project. The student should adhere to responsible and deferential behaviour vis-a-vis all people and institutions encountered during the field-research at all times whilst representing the RMIDS programme of the UvA.

14. The student should submit the final version of the thesis before 31 May 2015. In case of failure students have a chance for a re-sit/ second deadline. The second and final deadline for handing in the thesis is 30 June 2015 to both the thesis supervisor and second reader (in paper) and to the Registrar’s Office (digitally).

15. If the student neglects, misuses or does not meet the conditions stated in this agreement, the GSSS has the right to order the student to repay the fieldwork subsidy.

Signatures for agreement on/approval of the thesis agreement:

__________________________  _______________________
signature thesis supervisor    signature academic advisor
Academic Advisor: Please do not sign the form until the thesis supervisor has given the approval by signing the form. Also make sure that you have read the proposal and the time-scheme before signing. By signing this form you approve of the topic of the thesis (this being indeed a topic that leads to the degree the student is a candidate for), the time schedule, and of the conditions stated in the agreement.

Thesis Supervisor: Please read the proposal and the agreement with care before signing. Make sure you agree with the content, the time schedule the student has planned, the manner of supervision and the conditions stated in the thesis agreement. The grade for the thesis has to be handed in to the Registrar. The thesis supervisor and the second reader have to agree on the grade and both sign an exam slip and evaluation form. The thesis supervisor is asked to attend the graduation ceremony to sign the diploma and to address a few words to the student. More information on the GSSS graduation procedures and dates of the ceremonies please have a look at www.student.uva.nl/mhs, A-Z list, G of Graduation, Graduation.

Student: Please hand in this fieldwork and thesis agreement at the registrar’s office (registrar-gsss@uva.nl). Make sure that all required signatures are on the form and agreement and all the required information is complete before submitting them.

10. Fieldwork and Writing up the Thesis

In contrast to the one-year IDS program, the Research Master allows for more extensive time in the field and students are expected to collect a breadth and depth of data following one or a combination of research methodologies.

Successful research depends mostly on good planning. It is central to set a clear calendar in which students include not only the amount of time invested in doing literature research, but also (if possible/necessary) alternative methods for gathering information including interviews, questionnaires, through focus groups or observations among many others.

Before starting, students should always pay attention to three central issues:

- The translation of theoretical insights and concepts into research steps (the operationalisation of concepts, problems of validity and reliability).
- The nature of the empirical material (defining and delineating the research population, the selection of cases, representativeness of the data).
- The nature of the research techniques. Choices will always have shortcomings or problems related to their nature and these should be accounted for as good as possible.
• Students need to make sure to plan practical issues like housing visas, local supervisor, health insurance, vaccines, etc. well in advance. It is also very important to have a clear idea of the possible dangers or difficulties that students may face in the country of visit. Contacting the local supervisor well in advance helps to avoid unnecessary stress (and time lost) before the date of departure as well as during the first few weeks in the field. Asking the thesis supervisor questions about these practicalities can also help as most are familiar with the necessities of preparing for the field.
• Asking (thesis) supervisors, local supervisors, or previous students how they travelled in the locality, how they came to find a research assistant/translator for example if necessary, if they would recommend to bring anything (i.e. mosquito nets).

10.1. WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A SUPERVISOR?
Thesis supervisors have a maximum of 50 hours available for supervision of fieldwork and the thesis (35hrs), support the development of the portfolio and support the writing of the scientific article (15hrs). The 35 hours for the fieldwork and thesis supervision include his/her time for the development of a research proposal, supervision during the fieldwork (email/Skype), reading chapters, the final version of a thesis and attending and commenting upon the final presentation/discussion of a thesis. This means that he/she only has a limited number of sessions with the student. Typically, this amounts to three sessions before leaving for the field, four sessions to discuss chapters (normally two together) and the final draft, and the final presentation. Of course, this can differ depending on the needs of the student and availability of the thesis supervisor. ResMa thesis supervisors are also expected to point students to academic and popular activities within their field of interest. These include conferences, lectures, calls for abstracts for conferences etc.

In this time available thesis supervisors are expected to:
• Give indications on improvement of proposal/chapters, narrow down a topic, indicate relevant literature and comment on the outline of a surveys/interview-guide. It is also the role of the thesis supervisor to indicate whether a proposal is feasible (given the amount of time and money available) and relevant. A thesis supervisor has the right to turn a preliminary proposal down because it is either too ambitious, irrelevant, or both.
• Engage in discussions on problems and dilemma’s encountered by the student, either in the field or while writing.

Chapters do not need to be perfect before they are handed in, as thesis supervisors are there to improve the quality of written work. Yet their time is limited and precious, so students are expected to present something that is worth to discuss, preferably already with indications where one feels specific help is needed. It is also worthwhile to specifically indicate the topics to be discussed during the meetings.

10.2. IN THE FIELD
A successful field research is all about establishing the right contacts, and about working towards the final product through asking for feedback.
• Contacts with the local supervisor: Students are advised to make contact with a local supervisor while still in the Netherlands. There is a fee of € 300,- available for local research supervision (see: http://student.uva.nl/rmids/a-z/a-z/content-2/folder-2/fieldwork/fieldwork.html ). Local supervisors can be approached to discuss research dilemmas but also research memos and chapters. We strongly recommend students to ask advice from local experts, whether within universities, in NGO’s or in the government. People are often happy to share their experiences with an interested outsider.
• Contacts with the local population: The more one reaches out, the more one learns. The most interesting research findings are often not done in a formal research setting but while hanging around
waiting for the bus, attending a wedding or a church session or sipping tea with some locals. Try to allow space for such encounters, even if there is always a certain temptation to ‘hide behind one’s project’ in a context in which so much is new. It is through going out and immersing oneself as much as possible in local life – whether this is about hanging out at an NGO expat-party or attending a birthday party – that fieldwork becomes a fully gratifying and edifying experience.

- **Contacts with Dutch supervisors and the wider (academic) community:** In these days, email allows one to communicate easily with the rest of the world. Students are advised to send their supervisor reports and ask advice in uncertain situations. Questions and drafts can also be sent to other experts in their scientific fields; researchers are more often than happy to communicate with someone ‘in the field’. One can also consider setting up a web page with information on projects, both for peers and for interested friends and family. For topics relevant to a wider audience, publishing a more journalistic article in the faculty newsletter, the Folia, a magazine on International Development Cooperation or a local or Dutch newspaper can be considered. These count for the portfolio as well!

- **Working towards a final product:** as the saying goes, ‘Begin with the end in mind’. Students have to submit their final thesis May 31th. The best way to prepare for this is to start writing up parts of the thesis while in the field. Ideally one writes up drafts of the answers to (parts of) research questions. This saves a great deal of work once back in the Netherlands and also allows to see what type of information is still missing!

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**Some tips from Bonang Lewis, a 2011-2013 RMIDS student who conducted research in South Africa where she took a justice perspective to look at water and sanitation service delivery in eThekwini.**

- Be open minded, even if you think you know the situation within your case-study, be prepared for a different reality
- Start organising and analysing your data as soon as possible
- Write every day – keep a field-note diary which reflects your experiences, ideas and opinions
- Find a clear, strong and evidenced storyline as the basis of your thesis (try and have a clear idea of this when you return from the field)
- Don’t be scared to start writing your thesis, it doesn’t have to be perfect the first time, remember this is a learning process
- Share and discuss your work with peers, this will really help you to formulate and strengthen your argument
- Work to deadlines, they are there for a reason
- It’s okay to doubt yourself but try and stay motivated and don’t let things get on top of you

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**Some tips from Anna-Lisa Noack, a 2011-2013 RMIDS student, who conducted research in rural southwest Kenya where she linked the transitioning food plate to Food and Nutrition Security.**

- Choose a topic that you know you are completely passionate about. Nearly a year and a half will be spent on your thesis and this is where you will have credentials after you complete the program. It’s the opportunity of a lifetime to spend time and energy on a question you want to answer!
- If you have the chance, attend conferences or guest lectures to gain exposure to other methodologies and to meet people also working on your topic/in your geographical area before handing in your final research proposal.
- Keep your thesis supervisor up-to-date with any and all progress, questions etc. This will allow for more discussion but will also push you to stay on track and constantly (re)set your deadlines.
- Finish your transcriptions in the field and enter any quantitative data into SPSS before you return to Amsterdam if possible. This will ease your writing process immensely!
- Make a mind map to illustrate your main point and how each chapter will contribute to this main message. This will help you stay on track while writing your thesis.
• Don’t be afraid to make drastic changes with regards to thesis organization, research questions, or cutting out of sections. You will only use a small fraction of the data you collected but make sure you focus in on questions that you have fully developed and have answers to. The more specific and focused you can become the better.

• Work chapter by chapter rather than on the whole thesis. This will allow you to remain productive, maintain a feeling of accomplishment, and keep you on-track.

• And remember, you are not solving the world’s problems. Focus on small sections, take time to relax, and discuss with peers!

10.3. Writing up the thesis

Students come back to the Netherlands with a computer and notebooks full of interesting interviews, research observations and initial analysis. How to rework all these experiences into a thesis? It is strongly recommended for students to read one of the many good guides available on this topic. Some often-used Dutch titles are M. Aalbersberg Het afstudeerproject; U. Eco Het schrijven van een scriptie; H. Oost Hoe schrijf ik een betere scriptie. The thesis is not just a long paper. It may seem that way, but the scope is quite different. Writing a thesis is the final process for the completion of your Master’s degree. Therefore, it must reflect a thorough understanding of the theories relevant to their topic and be based on original research. The thesis should show students’ ability to carry out research. It is an academic project, but for most students it turns out to be a personal project as well. Next to academic skills it takes self-discipline and good planning to complete a thesis in a satisfactory manner. Writing a thesis is a way to enhance and display knowledge of and insight in a particular topic within International Development Studies. Moreover, it is an opportunity to practise one of the skills that will be of great importance for student’s later career: setting up and writing a clear, systematic argument. This makes the thesis the most important and challenging part of a Master’s study.

Generally speaking, a thesis has the following aims and objectives:

• To formulate and limit a research question and independently set up a research plan including a clear research strategy and time planning.
• To creatively use theoretical insights relevant to the problem at hand.
• To independently conduct social-scientific research targeted at a certain problem, whereby sound methodological principles and research techniques are used, so that the reliability and validity of the research is guaranteed.
• To be able to draw conclusions from your own research and to generate new knowledge about the issues addressed.
• To report the research and the results clearly and systematically.
• To be able to phrase the theoretical-scientific and the practical-social meaning (and relevance) of the research results.

GETTING STARTED

After months of fieldwork and reflection, it may seem an overwhelming task to focus on just one (or more) findings. Most students live among their sample population or nearby, which delivers a lot of depth but also allows for a lot of breadth of information. One cannot summarize one’s whole stay and everything discovered in the field in a thesis!

To begin, it is important to transcribe interviews and insert data (if applicable) into SPSS for example. This process can take weeks and therefore it is advisable to begin doing so already in the field. Once students have
completed this step it will be possible to proceed with the coding, which will henceforth allow one to focus on certain points, draw connections, and begin preliminary analysis. The back-from-the-field report due on January 15th will allow students to submit and discuss these preliminary findings with their supervisor and peers. It is a significant leap to produce a one-page outline of main findings from the pile of data collected and to ultimately verbalize this to someone who is perhaps less familiar with the research context.

**OUTLINE OF THESIS**

Upon returning to the Netherlands, students discuss with your supervisor the main findings and ideas that they have developed during their fieldwork. They consider whether the necessary information has been collected and whether there are any gaps. If so, they discuss with their supervisor possible alternatives to overcome this problem. In some cases, students find it difficult to start writing. We advise to go back to the proposal and to start building the thesis from there.

**A thesis is usually composed of 8-9 chapters (with several sub-chapters within each chapter) that should include the following elements:** (the order can be changed to fit a particular study):

- Title page (title, and if applicable subtitle; your name; UvA student ID number; the name of the programme; the name of the department (= GSSS); the name of supervisors; date and place of submission).
- *Optional: Foreword*
- Abstract (it is sometimes good to start with an abstract to concretise one’s thoughts)
- Table of contents
- Introduction
- Theoretical Framework
- Research Design where the epistemological position, methodology, methods, ethics, and limitations are explained
- Research context where a general overview of the research area is provided, describing only that which is necessary to make the case and point.
- Findings chapters divided into two or three chapters where students present empirical data, analysis, and make their argument
- *Optional: Discussion section. Here students can make a theoretical or policy suggestion or draw findings together to make a larger analysis. Some students prefer to place this in a larger concluding chapter.*
- Conclusion. This is where theoretical and empirical findings come together, where research questions are answered, methodological reflections are made, policy are suggested, and further research recommendations are made.
- References. Can include footnotes, endnotes or references in the text.
- Bibliography.
- *Optional: Annexes/Appendix to include extra maps, charts, figures, or relevant pictures.*

**A thesis which has a heading or subheading on almost every page is usually the most pleasant to read.**

The next step is then to make a skeletal outline of the thesis where a certain word-count is allotted to each chapter. This allows to then sub-divide each chapter into a reasonable amount of sections. The findings chapters will most likely be lengthier than the methodology section.

**BUILDING-UP THE ARGUMENT**
Students should strive for a systematically elaborated argument. Problem formulation, literature review and theory, and empirical results should be understandably and usefully related to each other. The thesis should have a clear line of argumentation, with explicit “thinking steps” and clear and logical transitions from one paragraph and chapter to the next. Each chapter should begin with a 1-2 sentence introduction where the purpose and scope of the chapter is stated as well as the data and methods used, and a chapter outline briefly listing the chapter sub-sections. The chapter should conclude by a concluding section summarizing (not repeating) the main findings.

The following paragraphs provide some tips to go about shaping your core thesis chapters.

Introduction

- Always try to keep the introduction concise. Whatever choices, the introduction should always have a clear statement of what the topic is, why it is relevant, and how the student is planning to develop the argument(s). Students should try to argue why a particular approach and not an alternative route was chosen. Always remember the larger theoretical framework.
- The introduction should tell the reader straight away what the thesis is about. This can be done in many different ways. One can take a straightforward approach, immediately sharing the topic’, or one can do it in a more playful way, by starting with an anecdote, a citation or anything else that leads to the subject, and then state the problem that will be dealt with.
- History: one can furthermore explain why a particular topic is chosen, why it is a challenge and how the student got interested in it. This can also motivate the reader to go on.
- Central Concepts: Give a short explanation of the approach (and briefly the methods) and try to argue why this approach has been taken. What are the central concepts? Try to situate these within the research context.
- Problem Formulation: State the questions and sub-questions (this can also be incorporated fluidly within a paragraph in the introduction and then later presented in a clear skeletal fashion in the Research Design chapter)

DO NOT use the introduction to describe in a lengthy way what is not done and why. This is not interesting for the reader. Everybody knows that in a limited time and with limited space that one cannot include everything. Readers are interested in the student’s achievements, not in the shortcomings.

Theoretical Chapter

This chapter is generally comprised of a literature and theoretical review where it is presented what other researchers have said about the topic of study. In this review one can express which problems (or gaps) arise from existing approaches or subscribe to one. Always remember that the work should try to expand existing knowledge; if one only presents other people’s ideas without critical thinking, the work will be incomplete. Try to be creative, and although it is not expected from students to develop a completely new theory, the originality of arguments is crucial. Theoretical choices have to be accounted for.

Research Design

This chapter should provide a concise overview of the methods chosen, how they were carried out, and why. The section should begin with the students’ general epistemological positioning followed by the methodology. This chapter can also include research questions and sub-questions, a section on the concepts deployed, which can be followed by a conceptual scheme if applicable and/or operationalization table (one can either reference this table and include it in the appendix or describe the concepts, variables etc. in the concepts section), methods deployed (if a mixed-methods approach is use for example, why and how?), sampling
method (possibly several for various methods so explain this), research limitations (keep this concise), ethics (very important!), and tools for analysis.

Context

It is important to cater this section to the specific study. Upon returning from the field, it often seems as if the whole area’s history, geography, culture etc. needs to be understood in order to explain the findings. Try to be very concise and only include information that is REQUIRED in order to understand the studies’ findings (and what is explained later in the text). One should base this section on secondary literature and not include any findings. Some students like to begin their chapter on an inter/national level for example and then zoom into the area where the fieldwork was conducted. This allows one to conclude the section with some population characteristics for example that may be excessive to place in the findings chapters but are important to include. For example age ranges, schooling level, livelihoods etc. could be important depending on the topic tackled.

Findings/Results Chapters

Another important part of the thesis is the presentation of the findings and its analysis. Here one is expected not only to present the data gathered during the research period, but also show what/how it has been analysed or processed. Students build on the previous three chapters about theory, methodology, and context and can reference these throughout. Most importantly, one needs to clearly indicate how the data can be linked to the theoretical section of the thesis/research. One will have much more data than can fit into a thesis and so it is crucial to focus on a line of argument rather than provide an entire overview of how people are living in a specific community for example. Drawing a diagram of reasoning (or mind map) can be helpful to make sure that each argument builds upon the last and tells a coherent story.

Always try to keep the reader interested and guided. Present arguments in a cohesive and organised manner. Because one has been working on the thesis for a long time, arguments might seem very clear to the student, but not necessarily to the writers. An interested reader should be able to understand the work without being a specialist on the subject.

Conclusion(s)

After the portrayal of the arguments and results of the research, the conclusions are presented. Here the questions asked in the problem formulation are explicitly answered. If students posed a hypothesis(es), this is the place to present whether the research results confirm or refute it/these.

In addition, students may consider answering the following questions:

- How far are the research results generalizable to other cases?
- How do the research results relate to the findings and conclusions of other authors? Where do results match, where do they differ, and how is this explained?
- What has the research added to the knowledge about the topic at hand?
- What future line of research does the work open? Depending on the aim of the thesis, it may also be valuable to provide an answer to (one or more) of the following questions:
  - What does the research say about the adequacy of the methods followed and the materials chosen? Can any methodological recommendations for future research be derived from this?
  - How could researchers do a better job in the future?
  - Which policy recommendations can be made on the basis of the research?
  - Which predictions can be made on the basis of the research?
Bibliography

An academic work should always include a bibliography where all secondary data is cited. The list should be ordered alphabetically following the authors' surnames. Articles from web pages without listed author should be included in the end. In the case that the document and/or web page comes from an organisation without listing the authors, the name of the organisation is considered the author.

Although there is no ONE correct way of doing it, you are expected to follow a single citation format throughout the whole thesis.

Quotes and Annotations

Annotation is the mentioning in text of the source from which a quote or finding is taken. It is preferred that students use the ‘Harvard Method’ of in-text annotation. In this style, one adds between brackets the author’s surname, year of publication, and page number(s) from which the quote or idea(s) came from. When using annotations and quotes in papers and the thesis, make sure it is always clear to the reader who is speaking, i.e. the writer or another author. Even though students are required to use sources in their thesis, it should be clear that students need to develop their own argument in their thesis! So, a good written paper and thesis is not just a repetition and listing of quotes from others. Students should try to say things in their own words as much as possible, but keep indicating where ideas have come from. Incorrect citation can result in plagiarism, which has serious repercussions. Please see UvA’s Plagiarism and Fraud Policy (http://student.uva.nl/rmids/az/item/plagiarism-and-fraud.html)

Generally a quote longer than three lines should have smaller margins than the general text and should be italicised. If the quote is shorter than three lines, one can place it as part of the main body of the work (in regular in-text font) and finish the quote with inverted commas.

If students want to add something or slightly modify the quote, it can be done between brackets [...]. And if students want to cut some part of the quote, three points are added. For example:

*World politics today is a matter of life and death ... for the whole human race. Nuclear holocaust remains a continual threat. At a less apocalyptical level, world politics has a daily impact on the lives of people [by modifying economic structures] throughout the globe (Keohane, 1986 : 1).*

STYLE AND FORMATING

- Type with 1,5 line distance on A4-sized paper, with sufficient margins to the left and right of the page.
- Write for a reader. Remember that the thesis demands the attention of another and that one will be responsible for someone's reading experience. Try to formulate clearly and avoid making style, grammar, or spelling errors. Avoid using sentences that are longer than three lines.
- Use a readable, consistent and clear layout and letter type. Most students use Times New Roman, Arial, Tahoma or Garamond 11 pt. In the end, it is not about how many pages one writes but how many words so use something that looks nice and is easy to read.
- Include page numbers and title and/or surname in a header or footer.
- Make sure the typography is consistent with respect to chapter- and paragraph headings.
- Check and re-check spelling, grammar and punctuation. If one is not an English native speaker, it might be a good idea to have the thesis proof-read by one.

GENERAL ADVICE
• Narrow the focus of the topic so that one is able to devote careful attention to all aspects of the argument.
• The thesis should be logical, consistent and comprehensive, in principle even without quotes, annotations, figures and tables.
• Please ensure that all statements are supported with arguments and evidence. Try to draw logical conclusions from the sources or theoretical reasoning. Also ensure that the build-up of the argument is structured and easy to follow.
• Keep the principle focus of the thesis in mind at all times. Whether or not one states a hypothesis explicitly, the entire thesis should be geared towards its elaboration and substantiation – towards answering the question(s) posed.
• This does NOT mean that information that counters the hypothesis should be left out and only information that supports it presented. Instead, students are expected to deal with various arguments and opinions, compare them, and explain carefully why they think some arguments are better than others.
• As the Guidelines for writing an academic essay state, revise deliberately and fully. It is up to the student to select structure and diction appropriate to the goal, but these are unlikely to come together in a first draft. Always remember that writing is re-writing, so even as one writes a first draft, be prepared to undertake genuine re-visions. When one revises, make sure that one does not repeat points unnecessarily and that readers are kept in the dark regarding the purpose and direction. (source: Guidelines for writing an academic essay http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/2/, visited on 25-07-13)
• Always keep the deadline in mind, try to be organised while working and always keep backups. Keep the supervisor informed on progress and try to stick to an agreed schedule. However, the writing progress will be different than expected undoubtedly so make sure to re-write a set of deadlines each time one changes in order to keep on track.
• NEVER THROW AWAY ANY RAW DATA!! If a reader from a journal questions the findings presented in an scientific article, one needs to have the evidence.

A few central points, however, are worth repeating:

• **Length**: a thesis is between 25,000 and 30,000 words. If work is longer than this, there is a real chance of it being turned down. If this becomes an issue, discuss this with the supervisor.
• **The importance of planning**: Be aware of the time constraints involved. While it is hard to offer a blueprint, a typical thesis consists of about eight chapters: an introduction, a theoretical chapter, an introduction to the research setting, a methodological chapter, three chapters with empirical findings and a conclusion. If one has three months to write up a thesis, this means that one has about one week to write up a draft chapter, and about a day per subsection. Planning from this angle helps to avoid spending too long on each chapter, or gathering a host of material that cannot be used anyway.
• **The importance of working neatly**: from day 1 of your project, try to establish clear procedures on archiving work. Be neat in copying quotations, add page numbers, and write down the full references of everything you need. Make regular back-ups! The use of Refworks, or another library program, can save an enormous amount of work in editing the library, and also the frustration of knowing that ‘there is this great quote but where, where did I leave it…’.
• **The importance of tidy references**: the thesis guides referred to provide information on how to present references. Now that ‘research by Google’ is on the rise, it is imperative to underline the importance of tidy referencing also – especially – when it comes to electronic references. All theses handed in are checked in Ephorus (http://www.ephorus.nl) and plagiarism leads to heavy sanctions.
The importance of relaxation: writing up a thesis is hard and often solitary work. It is important not to become completely enmeshed by it, but to also to relax at times, to keep one day each week free from working on the thesis, and to pick up sporting or another form of relaxation.

Never throw away any raw data (if interviews are completely transcribed this is fine) but survey data even when entered into SPSS needs to be kept.

10.4. Thesis Seminar

ResMa IDS Students complete their thesis after they have returned from their fieldwork. Usually they are well prepared for the field and collect their data based on a solid research proposal. Most students return from the field with enough time and data to complete their thesis in due time. From experience, the thesis-writing process takes more time than is available. Delays are often attributed to not knowing how to start and get going and how to make an argument out of a pile of data and experiences. This is where the Thesis Seminar comes in.

The goal of the Thesis Seminar is to enable students to speed up the thesis writing. This goal is accomplished by providing advice and information on various stages of the thesis writing to students and by facilitating in-depth discussion of written work with and between students. Practically, the thesis Seminar consists of three sessions of two hours each in February-April, and one 1-2 day seminar in June 2014.

The first three thesis seminar sessions in are planned:

- January 15th, 2014, location t.b.a
- First week February, 2014, location t.b.a.
- Third week February, 2014, location t.b.a.
- Mid-March, 2014, location t.b.a.

Final thesis presentations are with students from all three Research Master programmes. Students organise a conference-like event where each student presents his/her thesis or article in relevant panels to a critical audience. The Thesis seminar is evaluated with an AVV ("requirements being met") or NAVV (requirements not met).

10.5. Handing in the thesis and Thesis Defense

Students hand in a digital PDF version of their final thesis to the registrar’s office in PDF and two hard copies to the supervisors (one to the first and one to the second reader).

The final version of the thesis should be binded, which can be done at any copy shop. Both supervisor and second reader must receive a binded version. A digital version of the thesis needs to be handed in with the registrar of the GSSS (Iris Vuurmans I.Vuurmans@uva.nl). Be aware that a digital version of the thesis must always be available for supervisors and/or registrar upon request.

Submit the thesis on Blackboard for Ephorus (Plagiarism checking). The grading sheet cannot be submitted by the supervisor to the GSSS without percentage result generated by Ephorus. The thesis supervisor will then record the score generated by Ephorus on the grading sheet. At this point, a date is set for the final evaluation, which consists of an oral defense. The thesis defense takes 1 hour, and enables students to present findings orally to the thesis supervisor and second reader. The second reader will discuss a number of questions and observations. Since the thesis supervisor has been intensely involved in the process, his/her role in the thesis defense is more limited. See the next page for the Evaluation Form Research Master Thesis International Development Studies
The second reader will typically be selected in conjunction with the thesis supervisor and will only read the thesis in order to provide a second opinion in the grading process. There are instances, however, in which a second reader can play a larger role: if one has worked on a topic on which there is little expertise available in the Department, for instance, or when the local supervisor is the co-reader. In such a case the second supervisor will have read drafts as well.

The deadline for submitting the thesis is May 31st, 2015. In the first two weeks of June the defense will be scheduled. A second chance for submitting the thesis is June 30th, 2015 in which case the defense will be scheduled the first two weeks of July.
# Figure 2: Thesis Evaluation Form

**Thesis Evaluation Form Research Masters International Development Studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name student:</th>
<th>Student number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis title:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Date:** | **Ephorus score:** | **Grade:**

**This form has been filled in by:**

**Name supervisor:** | **Name second reader:**

**Signature:** | **Signature:**

The thesis is evaluated on the basis of ten aspects (eleven for the Research Master’s thesis). Underneath each aspect, special points of attention are listed. Each aspect separately (thus not each point) receives a score on a scale of 1 to 10, whereby 1 is very poor and 10 excellent. The supervisor and second reader may opt to fill in the evaluation form together or each one a separate form. A copy of the signed evaluation form should be submitted to the Academic Registrar of the ISHSS, accompanied by an exam slip.

### 1. Purpose and relevance of the research

- Is the purpose of the research clear?
- Does the research have scientific relevance?
- Does the research have social relevance?

### 2. Problem statement

- Is the problem statement clearly formulated?
- Are the main research question and sub-questions clearly defined?
- Can the questions be reasonably be answered/explored?
- Is the problem statement original?
- Is the main research question answered?

### 3. Theoretical knowledge and conceptual model

- Are scientific theories well elaborated and applied?
- Is the existing literature well used?
- Is there careful and purposeful use of data sources?
- Is there scientific responsible referencing and citation of other people’s work?
- Is there a conceptual model defined (and/visualized)?
- Does the conceptual model give direction to the research?
- Does the thesis contain own/original insights?
- Does the conclusion contain reflection on existing theories and knowledge?

### 4. Operationalization and data collection

- Are concepts correctly operationalized and assessed (measured)?
- Is the use of variables and indicators relevant and justified?
- Is the cultural/local context acknowledged in the operationalization process?
- Are generalisations justified?
- Are relevant and recent data sources used?
- Are the data collected in a reliable and responsible manner?
5. **Use of methods and techniques**:  
- Is there ample use of available empirical data (case-studies, policy-evaluations, surveys, statistical data)?
- Are the applied methods and techniques justified and suitable to the purpose of the research and research methodology?
- Is the data analysis correctly performed?
- Is the interpretation of outcomes and results justified?

6. **Argumentation**:  
- Is the line of argument clear and consistent?
- Do the conclusions follow from the findings?
- Can statements be checked?
- Are the conclusions relevant to the problem?
- Are the conclusions connected to the theory?

7. **Policy and/or research recommendations**:  
- Are the recommendations well formulated?
- Are the recommendations sufficiently sustained?
- Do the recommendations reflect a personal view?

8. **Composition, language, tables and graphics**:  
- Is the thesis well structured? (sufficient introduction and background, clear distinction between principal and secondary issues, report not too elaborate/concise)?
- Clear and concise writing, English grammar, correct sentences and spelling?
- Is the empirical situation well illustrated with maps, tables, figures and citations?
- Does the thesis look nice?

9. **The final defense**:  
- Is the student capable of critical reflection on his/her own thesis?
- Has the student defended his/her thesis well?

10. **Research process**:  
- Is the student capable to carry out research independently?

For the **Research Master’s thesis**:

11. **Embeddeness in international literature**:  
- Is the problem statement of the thesis sufficiently embedded in the international scientific debate?

**Remarks:**
The writing of scientific articles is a core activity in academic life. Articles are the main channels through which research findings are being distributed. As such, state of the art debates in academia are played out in academic journals and academics make name through journal articles. Therefore, being able to write a publishable article is a very important skill for researchers. The article is the culmination of the masters study and a stepping stone from the Master’s to either a career in academia or in the public/private sector.

The development of an academic article within the ResMa IDS program qualifies students to report on the main results of their master thesis research in the form of a publishable article for an international academic audience. In particular, it develops their skills to contribute to an article manuscript with sufficient quality to be considered for publication in a peer-reviewed international scientific journal. However, the article is NOT a summary of the thesis. Think of a clear point that one would like to bring across.

1. CONTENT

In the final phase of the master thesis, students start working on a research article based on the main result(s) of their master thesis research. Students will write this article in collaboration with one of the senior staff members of the research institute AISSR; most often this will be the lecturer that was already involved in the master thesis project as supervisor. The supervisor / co-author will introduce the student to the practice of getting an article published in an international peer-reviewed journal.

The quality criteria that international peer-reviewed journals generally apply, how the submission process works and what to expect of peer reviewing are some of the issues discussed with students. The supervisor will propose the journal that in his or her eyes is best suited to submit the article to and a clear division of writing tasks (who will write which parts) is agreed upon. During the article writing process, draft texts will be discussed, after which the student is asked to work on an improved draft working with the constructive criticism of the supervisor.

Although the main objective is to produce a publishable article for an international academic audience, the reviewing procedure of the journal (which often takes a long time and can have an unpredictable outcome) is not part of the assessment. We expect the student to write a substantial part of the research article and send drafts to the supervisor to be discussed at frequent intervals during the writing process.

2. ASSESSMENT

The final assessment is an article ready for submission to a peer reviewed journal. When the supervisor has reached the conclusion that the draft text has sufficient quality to submit to the journal, the supervisor judges the student’s contribution to this final draft. The criteria for this assessment are:

- The quality of the content the student has contributed to the article?
- The quantity of the contribution from the student to the article?
- The writing style of the content (language, structure, conciseness)?

The grading sheet can be found below.
3. Timing and Data

The scientific article will commence (usually but not necessarily) after completion of the thesis. The submittable article needs to be completed by June 18th 2015. If the quality is insufficient or the article is not ready for submission, students can revise and resubmit the article before August 28th 2015. The exact date it to be discussed with the supervisor. However, supervision during the summer break is not guaranteed.

4. Selecting a Journal

Because of the interdisciplinary character of IDS, studies within the field of International Development Studies can be published in a wide range of journals. Some of these are related to one of the academic disciplines that are related with IDS (e.g. American Anthropology or TESG), some are specifically oriented towards IDS (e.g. Development and Change, World Development or Progress in Development Studies) and some have a specific regional orientation (e.g. New West Indian Guide or Journal of Latin American Studies). The website of the research school Ceres provides an overview of relevant journals for IDS. The journals here are validated as well. Peer reviewed journals are those that are valued with A-C. A and B journals are ISI ranked, C-journals not, hence A and B are more prestigious. However, all A, B and C journal qualify for this curriculum aspect. The supervisor will propose a journal but students are advised to read through the websites of various journals to get a feel of the type of topics and articles these journals publish.

If students foresee that they may go beyond the second deadline of the Scientific Article they need to contact the Examination Board for an extension of the nominal study period within the research master IDS (research masters= 2 years). The request can be uploaded and sent online: http://student.uva.nl/rmids/az/item/examination-board-ids-resmas.html#anker-submitting-requests-and-appeals. The request should include a motivation, an overview of attained credits, and time planning previously discussed and approved by the study advisor.

5. Outline of an Article

Each journal has specific author guidelines and requirements regarding the content, organisation and format of the article. However, some general guideline can be given:

- Articles count between 6,000 and 10,000 words, depending on the journal

- Format:
  - Abstract
  - Introduction: provides the main question, problem statement and gives insight in the societal and theoretical relevance of the article
  - Theory: discusses the relevant theoretical debates, the gaps and contradictions existing and what the contribution of the article to the debate
  - Methodology (very short!)
  - Context (very short!)
  - Evidence/findings according to specific sub questions
  - Conclusion which answer the main question
  - References
  - Acknowledgements
6. **TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PUBLICATION OF AN ARTICLE**

- Start with writing the abstract. Make sure that the abstract **summarizes the main argument/key message of the article and highlights what is new/what the article contributes.** A good article has one main argument, one key message. If one has two key-messages, skip one and/or write two articles!
- Develop a structure/outline of the article and make sure that the compilation of sections allows to substantiate the argument summarized in the abstract.
- Carefully read the “Guidelines for Authors” of the journal chosen for submission, and stick to these guidelines (INCLUDING the word-limit and referencing style indicated by the journal etc).
- Review a number of volumes of the chosen journal, and read the articles that are vaguely related to the theme. *Keep in mind that authors that have published in a journal on “your” theme will probably be the ones asked to peer-review the article. Cite them and engage with their arguments.*
- Check whether journals in the field of interest have special issues planned that could fit the article. There might be better chances getting accepted if one aligns with their interests.
- Check the submission procedure before submission. Some journals require suggestions for possible referees. If this is the case, check with the supervisor, and inform the foreseen referees that they have been suggested.
- These are some examples of criteria the reviewers will be asked to comment on: **Whether it fits the focus of the journal; Quality of the piece; Focus; Suggestions for improvement; Should this be published?**
- In order to find a suitable journal for the article, students can of course discuss with their supervisor, but also try to network in a conference or seminar.

7. **HOW TO WRITE A SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE**

An article is not just ‘another’ academic paper. There are specific guidelines and expectations that must be followed in order to pass the editing process. The following pointers may provide some guidance.

**Introduction**

This is not a repetition of the abstract! This is where one problematizes, discusses which debate(s) one wants to contribute to, and how the existing gaps will be filled. End with an overview of the article’s structure / sections. Keep this section short (about 500 words depending on the journal)

**Theoretical Framework**

Introduce the main debates, controversies, and gaps: Try to avoid ‘name-dropping’: only use references one really needs. To embed the study in a larger debate, it is important to make this section coherent and concise. The length can vary between 1500-2000 words (but also depends on how much theory / earlier research there is to discuss and on the journal again).

**Methodology**

This can be very short and one can make reference to the thesis here for further clarification on how methods were carried out. However, one should explain the choice of methods. If one was inspired by an approach of earlier researchers or if a specific approach was adopted to better approach a gap in the existing research, explain this here. Mention the number of interviews, number of survey respondents, size of database etc. The length of this section can vary but should not exceed 1,000 words.

**Results and Analysis**
Do not try to summarise the thesis analysis chapters! Consider what are the most interesting / exciting / surprising results to focus on in the article. This can be divided into a few sections and one can insert tables, figures, maps, photos etc. to illustrate the point. Discuss with the supervisor which examples to include or how to focus in order to allow the reader to follow a red line. This section may range between 2500-3000 words.

**Discussion**

This is a culminating section that links the findings with the theory section/state of the art. It is a general reflection of what can be learned from these findings or what has been added to the existing literature/orthodox methods etc. by writing this article. No new issues, new literature references, or findings should be presented here. If possible/applicable, end this section with research and/or policy recommendations. This section may range between 500-1000 words.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion should be a short summary of what has been presented and suggested in the article and can end (if applicable) with a steps for further study/work.

**Figure 3: Scientific Article Grading Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Sheet Scientific Article Research Master (Vakkcode 750500050Y)</th>
<th>Final Grade:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title Article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-author(s)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment (if the article is co-authored please assess the quality of the contribution of the student to each of the sections)

<p>| Abstract Present/ Good word-count? Summarizes main argument/innovation? | Present |
| Keywords Present? Adequate? |  |
| Introduction Brings forward relevance and structure of article? |  |
| Theoretical framework Coherent/concise? Did student contribute relevant/recent theoretical insights to theoretical framework? |  |
| Methodology Is methodology well explained, as |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concise as possible?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Empirical section
Do the empirical data substantiate the argument?
Are they presented in a systematic manner? |
| Conclusions
Can the empirical conclusions be drawn from the empirical material presented?
Is there a contribution to theory? |
| Does article follow all stipulations (style, structure, referencing system etc, word count set for abstracts, keywords, article length etc) of the “author’s guidelines. |
| Remarks |
| Name Supervisor Article | Signature | Date |
The professional life of a researcher, whether working in a University, a governmental organisation, an NGO or in the private sector, consists of many different types of activities. What’s more, depending on the actual field students want to work in, they need specific skills and experiences. The portfolio allows students to gain experience in activities part of a researcher’s life and to further strengthen their skills in a specific field.

The portfolio reflects the students’ capacity to participate effectively in core academic activities such as seminars, lecture series, and conferences. Furthermore it trains student to report adequately about such activities to peers and supervisors. Students will have developed capabilities to establish links between relevant research themes in their programme to current academic activities (including seminars, conferences, lecture series, summer schools) and policy-related activities.

The thesis supervisor is supposed to inform students about interesting activities related to the students’ specific field of interest. However: students are advised to subscribe to mailing lists relevant for them.

Mailing lists ALL ResMa IDS students should subscribe to at least are the following:

The EADI newsletter (informs about everything going on at all IDS member institutions in Europe) (see www.eadi.org for more details).

The ISS newsletter: the Institute of Social Studies offers the broadest range of IDS activities in the Netherlands, see www.iss.org for more details.

Students with an interest in Latin America should register for the Cedla Mailing list (see www.cedla.uva.nl).

Students with an interest in Africa should register for the African Studies Centre newsletter: www.ascleiden.nl

And students with an interest in Asia should register for the IIAS newsletter, see http://www.iias.nl/.

1. Content

The portfolio consists of a variety of activities. These activities are generally:

Core academic activities including

- The attendance and participation of conferences and reading relevant papers. Students have to participate in at least one conference. An example is the Ceres Summer School. (Research School for Resource Studies for Development (CERES; see ‘summer school’ at http://ceres.fss.uu.nl/). Other suitable conferences include international conferences such as those by the International Geographical Union (IGU; see: http://www.igu-net.org/), the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI; see: http://eadi.org/), or the European Regional Science Association (ERSA; see: http://www.ersa.org/).
  - Attending the monthly meetings of the IDS research group called Governance for Inclusive Development (GID). In these meetings GID staff-members, guests and ResMa students present their (on-going) work. Students will be invited to these meetings on a regular basis.
  - Research internships: cooperating and participating in on-going research of AISSR staff-members.
  - Develop a ‘knowledge clip’ under supervision of a lecturer. Knowledge clips are short audiovisuals that present and discuss the core-characteristics of a certain phenomenon
- Attending a lecture series, and reading presented papers. There are several lecture series related to international development. Some appropriate lecture series are those coordinated by the research group Governance and Inclusive Development within the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR [www.aissr.uva.nl](http://www.aissr.uva.nl)).

- Participating in a Summer School or similar activity. Some exemplar activities include summer courses organised by the CERES, LOVA or various Universities. Please be reminded that it is not the theoretical knowledge gained here that qualifies it for a portfolio activity but the condensed ways of learning, interaction with peers and practical assignments that are usually part of summer school.

- Attending research program meetings within the AISSR, and reading relevant material. This activity involves active participation in meetings by one of the relevant research groups within the AISSR (i.e. Governance and Inclusive Development (GID): [www.aissr.uva.nl/gid](http://www.aissr.uva.nl/gid) and Geographies of Globalizations (GOG): [www.aissr.uva.nl/gog](http://www.aissr.uva.nl/gog)).

- Participating in research school sessions within CERES (Working Programmes; see: [http://ceres.fss.uu.nl](http://ceres.fss.uu.nl)).

- The organisation of lectures, conferences and seminars are relevant portfolio activities.

**Activities related to career options**

- An internship with a governmental organisation or an NGO (in the Netherlands or abroad), as long as the activities undertaken require academic skills. Many NGOs lack the manpower to systematize, monitor or substantiate the work they are undertaking. If students provide input in policy reports, key or fact-sheets, lobbying campaigns or are asked to develop a specific research, this can count as a portfolio activity. An interesting option is to combine fieldwork preparation or actual fieldwork with a portfolio activity at a local organisation. Some of the time available for portfolio activities can be devoted to getting familiar with the Dutch and international institutional organisation of social research. Internship is maximum of 10 EC.

- Developing a research proposal that can be used as a basis for a PhD thesis. An opportunity for a select group of highly motivated students is to participation in the CERES PhD- preparation program that guides you through writing such a proposal. This counts for 10 EC. Indicate your desire to participate during the mid-term meeting with academic advisor and study advisor.

- A policy recommendation to be submitted to a nationally or internationally pertinent policy-making organisation.

- Student-assistantship could also be considered

- Organisation of a debate for policy-makers, development workers etc.

- Writing of policy-related articles or popular media (e.g. the Broker)

The student will have to discuss his/her selection of activities with the academic advisor (who also acts as portfolio manager) and the staff member knowledgeable in the selected area (most often the thesis-supervisor). The student will carry out his/her activities by reading and analysing background materials, active attendance and participation in the activity, and reporting on the activity in writing afterwards. In such reporting, the student draws out the main analytical questions, the points of discussion, and the main implications for the theme(s) selected. A mid-term meeting with the academic advisors discusses the student’s initial plan after which they submit a plan in writing to the academic advisor that needs to be approved.
2. Assessment

The portfolio report consists of:

- A digital version of all products, such as conference papers policy briefs, reports, bibliographies, publications, PowerPoint presentations, invitations to events organized etc. as well as feedback on these.
- A written report reflecting what and how the activities were undertaken and how they contributed to the development of academic skills (max 3000 words, minimum 1800 words)
- An overview of hours spent per activity, and to how many ECTS this amounts to (this should not deviate too much from what has been agreed upon in the portfolio plan as handed in to the academic advisor on June 30th of the first ResMa year. Substantial deviation (more than 20%) will need prior approval from the academic advisor).

The criteria for assessment can be found below.

3. Timing and data

Portfolio activities are scheduled throughout the two years. A plan needs to be made and approved by the end of year 1 (however, activities can be undertaken before!). This plan needs to indicate the aim students have with their portfolio (what they want to learn and for long-term purpose) and the various activities (confirmed and planned) that will be part of it. The final portfolio report should be handed in by June 30th 2015. If it is not of sufficient quality or quantity, it will need to be resubmitted well before August 28th 2015 (date to be discussed with the academic advisor).

Figure 4: Grading Sheet Portfolio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Sheet Portfolio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content of the Portfolio</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation in skills developed (academic writing, presentation, engaging in academic debates, knowledge accumulation of new and relevant debates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the activities (tasks, responsibilities, goals/questions, criteria for success) Present? Adequate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the products (results, feedback, choices made)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantity of the Portfolio</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable amount of activities in relation to ECTS?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency of the portfolio activities: relation between the learning objectives and the activities carried out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does student express clear understanding of goals and acquired skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are choices, dilemma’s and reflection made explicit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REMARKS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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