

SECOND YEAR

MID-TERM REVIEW

When: Around the end of March

Guidelines for PhD candidates

Each year candidates submit their ongoing work on the PhD thesis to a committee consisting of Department members and PhD Board representatives, in order to assess the research progress.

The Mid-term reviews support the development of the doctoral path, thanks to the possibility to discuss the ongoing research with professors of the Design Department.

As second year PhD candidates, you are asked to have developed a precise idea of the whole research process, to be able to describe it clearly, and to have reached an intermediate stage of your work.

GUIDELINE

You are required to prepare a report describing in detail the research in progress: topic, approach, methodology, activities, references. To do so, please read carefully the following guidelines.

The document required must not exceed a maximal length of 25000 characters (spaces included), excluding tables and reference list.

It must be divided in the sections described below:

1. [Topic / Focus] max. 1500 characters

This is an introduction / abstract summarizing the subject of the research.

This section should be conceived as an explanation of the title for those who are not into the topic. You must be able to make any academic, regardless of his/her knowledge and area of interest, understand what you are dealing with - *the problem you want to face, the new knowledge you want to produce* - and your specific research perspective on the topic - *What kind of design? Which approach (empirical, theoretical or applied)? Are there any other discipline involved or humanistic / technical knowledge? What kind of results are intended to be produced? etc.*

2. [Literature review/Theoretical framework] max. 6000 characters

This section should illustrate in detail how your research is positioned within the existing knowledge on the same topic.

You have to show that your research and/or your specific approach are original (not already done by someone else), and that they are significant since filling a gap in the existing knowledge. To do so, you must describe the complex of knowledge available on your topic. Please focus on the fundamental questions and issues (those without which your research could not even begin), the most recent and innovative ones, and those closer to the specific focus of your research. It is called "literature review", but it should not be a kind of list of the sources and themes that you have explored so far. Instead, it has to show that your research owns a precise position in the field's landscape.

Therefore, you have to clearly illustrate the research community that you address with your work, who might be interested in your own topic, and who has already talked about it.

3. [Research question] max. 1000 characters

You are then required to make explicit your research questions. In fact, a research not only implies to identify an original topic to investigate, but also to have specific objectives to be achieved in terms of knowledge advancement. It is not enough to establish the problem area, but you must also be able to identify what specific aspect you want to analyse and to develop in terms of design research. The definition of one or more well-defined and justified research questions is a fundamental step for the fulfilment of a valuable doctoral research.

4. [Methodology/Planned actions] max. 6000 characters

A very important part of the report must be dedicated to the description of the research process. Once the research question has been explained and adequately justified, in fact, it is necessary to describe which actions are planned to answer those questions. The description of the methodology must be detailed, including precise data on timing, contexts, procedures applied and subjects involved. For example, stating that you will do some case studies or some experimentations is not enough if you do not say how many they will be and what actions they will entail. Furthermore, the methodology must be consistent with the research question, the available resources and the research objectives. In fact, not all methodologies are suitable to answer all research questions.

5. [Objectives/Expected results] max. 2000 characters

All research projects contain a description of the objectives and of the expected results. This is not a simple task. In fact, this section implies the capacity of reducing the margin of error and the uncertainty, which are core elements of any research activity and, in particular, of a doctoral research. However, an exercise in this sense is useful for you to better understand the meaning of your work and, for the evaluation committee, to better understand the stage of development of your work.

6. [State of the work/Early findings] max. 8000 characters

In principle, all the above sections could have been written even a year ago.

In this section, you should describe at which stage you are in the research process: which of the actions described in the Methodology you have already launched or finalised, if you already have achieved some preliminary results that confirm or question the expected results, and if the activities carried out till now are pushing you to review part of your research design.

7. [Plan of the next year/future activities] max. 1500 characters

Please briefly outline a plan of future activities to show that you will be able to complete all the planned activities in time to deliver the thesis by the end of your doctoral path.

DELIVERY PROCESS

Usually, by the middle of March:

Deadline to send by e-mail the final report to the members of your committee (cf. Committee file) and to the PhD candidate(s) in the same committee;

Usually, after 10 days from the submission of the final report:

All the committee members will send you a written review of your report. This will give you the chance to reflect on their comments in advance and to make the discussion during the assessment more fruitful;

Assessment day (Usually, around the end of March):

The Mid-term review is structured as a discussion with the committee members, based on the written report by the candidate and on the written reviews. The Mid-term review is an occasion for the committee to ask for further explanations, to ask questions and to provide suggestions and critique on the research progress. Furthermore, it is an occasion for the candidates to ask for clarifications, to discuss the committee comments and to defend his/her work.

You are **not** required to prepare further documents or visual presentations for the assessment. After few days, you will receive a final and official review by the committee.

Peer-to-peer activities:

In each of the committee, all 3/4 PhD candidates join the discussion: you are in fact invited to provide suggestions or comments to your colleague(s) in order also to make the Mid-term review an occasion to develop a critical approach.

For this reason, we suggest you to freely organize peer-to-peer moments of discussion and exchange with your colleague(s) between the submission of the report and the day of the assessment.

COMMITTEE

The evaluation committee is composed by 3/4 professors with skills as much as possible related to the theme you are presenting.

Your supervisor is asked to join the assessment.

Each committee will assess 3/4 candidates.

EVALUATION

The committee will report a written evaluation that will be part of the documentation of the Annual Assessment in October (cf. Welcome Kit).

In case of negative evaluation in the March assessment, the candidate will be required to repeat this assessment, with the same procedure, in October.