

# Guidelines for designing final project courses

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2. Not all final projects are the same
3. Structure
4. Design guidelines and examples

## Appendix



# 1. Defining features<sup>1</sup>

Under Spain's **Royal Decree 822/2021**, of 28 September, establishing the structure of official university degrees, doing a final project is a **mandatory requirement for obtaining a university degree**. Master's and bachelor's degree studies therefore conclude with a final project course worth between 6 and 30 ECTS credits.

## Characteristics of final projects

- At the UOC, bachelor's and master's degree final project courses are worth between **6 and 18 ECTS credits**.
- Their aim is to **test the competencies acquired during the training programme** and demonstrate that the student has achieved the main learning outcomes. Therefore, successfully completing a final project means that the student has acquired the desired level of competencies that can be put into practice in the workplace.
- Students who successfully complete their final project must have acquired the **basic, general, specific and interdisciplinary** competencies defined for the degree programme.
- To pass, students must **individually and independently carry out a project or produce a report, product** or other type of scientific-academic result by applying, integrating and developing the knowledge, competencies and skills acquired during the degree.
- The **final project must be carried out during the final part of the degree**. The final project can be carried out over one or two semesters and, in order to be able to do it, students must meet the academic requirements applicable to each training programme.
- Final project courses must be designed based on the levels set for each programme by the Spanish Higher Education Qualifications Framework (MECES):

Bachelor's degree final project: **MECES level 2**

Master's degree final project: **MECES level 3**

<sup>1</sup> Information based on the internal document "Final projects at the UOC. Reference framework for the design and teaching coordination of final project courses" produced by the Final Project Working Group (various authors, 2018).



Although bachelor's and master's degree final projects (in both official degrees and lifelong learning programmes) can have the same structure, the competencies must be defined in accordance with the programme level (bachelor's or master's degree) and the specific context of the field of knowledge.

## 2. Not all final projects are the same

### Types

There are two types of final project at the UOC:

Profession-focused	Research-focused
These projects aim to describe, analyse, assess or propose solutions to real situations or problems linked to professional practice in one or more specific fields of work and disciplines.	These projects focus on beginning or enhancing basic or applied research aimed at obtaining and analysing information or solving scientific problems or approaches, which may take place in one or more disciplines.



In either of the above categories, students at the UOC can do a final project linked to an organization. These are known as **participatory final projects** and are an alternative option under which students can carry out a professional activity or conduct applied research. The aim is to propose solutions or recommendations to specific societal problems.

### Formats

The final deliverables can be submitted in the following formats<sup>2</sup>:

AQU (Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency) formats	UOC formats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journal article</li> <li>Essay</li> <li>Classic research report</li> <li>Product proposal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case analysis</li> <li>Legal opinion</li> <li>Implementation of an intervention proposal</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Table based on the document: "Final projects at the UOC. Reference framework for the design and teaching coordination of final project courses" produced by the Final Project Working Group (various authors, 2018).

- Research report
- Professional report
- Product report
- Report on an intervention proposal
- Bibliographic review

## 3. Structure

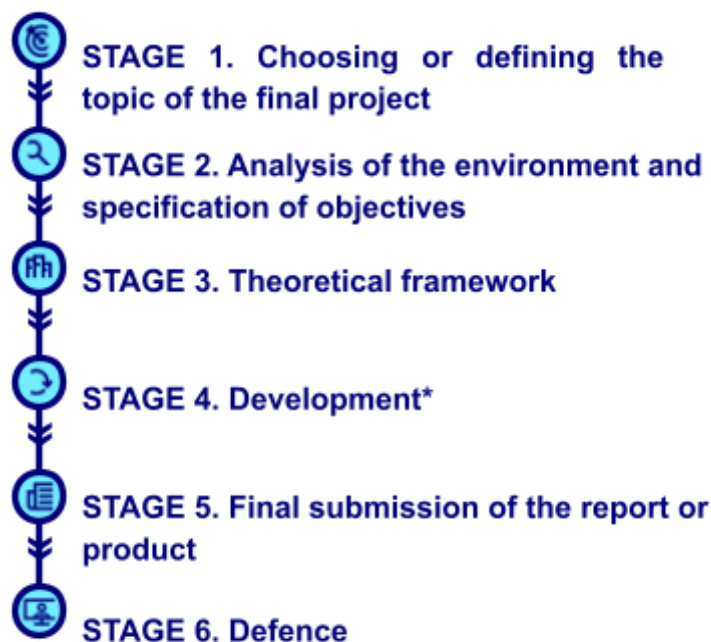
### Parts

Final project courses (for both bachelor's and master's degrees) are structured to help students organize their project information and present it in a structured way. Although this varies between programmes and fields of knowledge, the project is usually presented in **three parts**:

1. The report (profession-focused, research-focused or other).
2. An associated product (only for some degrees, mainly technical ones).
3. Public presentation.

### Stages

In addition, in terms of the general progress of the work, the project can be split into the following **stages**<sup>3</sup>:



<sup>3</sup> \* *STAGE 4. Development* often requires interim submissions due to its length and associated workload. This way, students can receive continuous formative feedback.

## 4. Design guidelines and examples

These stages can also be used to guide the design of the final project course. The first step is to identify the competencies and learning outcomes to be worked on, as well as a context or challenge for each stage.

Guidelines to be followed:

- 1. Distribution of ECTS credits.** Split the total number of ECTS credits to be given for the final project between its stages, based on the complexity and amount of work involved in each stage.
- 2. Contextualization of the stages of the work.** Using a stepped challenge can be useful for putting into context the different stages of the work when viewed as a project.
- 3. Distribution of competencies.** Assign to each stage the competencies to be assessed in it.
- 4. Definition of learning outcomes.** Write down the learning outcomes to be achieved based on the level of the programme (bachelor's or master's degree) and what you expect students to learn from the stage in question, based on the specific context.
- 5. Allocation of learning resources.** Select and guide the use of learning resources, specifying the resource(s) for each of the stages of the work you have defined.

Below are a few examples of how guidelines 1 ("Distribution of ECTS credits"), 2 ("Contextualization of the stages of the work") and 4 ("Definition of learning outcomes") can be applied:

### Guideline 1 examples. Distribution of ECTS credits

**Example 1. Final project course for the postgraduate programme in Applied E-health.** (Carme Carrión)

Stage	ECTS credits	Planning
Stage 1: What do you want to research?	1	2 weeks
Stage 2: How are you carrying out the project?	3	8 weeks
Stage 3: Tell us about your project	1	2 weeks

Stage 4: What will be the impact of your project?	1	2 weeks
<b>Total</b>	6	14 weeks (3.5 months)

### Example 2. Final project course for the University Master's Degree in Translation and Technologies. (Carles Prado)

Stage	ECTS credits	Planning
Stage 1: Proposal	1.2	2 weeks
Stage 2: Writing	7	First draft: 4 weeks Second draft: 4 weeks Final draft: 3 weeks
Stage 3: Presentation and publication	1.8	3 weeks
<b>Total</b>	10	16 weeks (4 months)

### Example 3. Final project course for the University Master's Degree in Social Media: Management and Strategy. (Sílvia Sivera and Sílvia Martínez)

Stage	ECTS credits	Planning
<b>Challenge: The final project is here</b>		
Stage 1. Making a choice means giving something up	0.5	1 week (practical)
Stage 2. Design: exploring ideas	0.5	1 week
Stage 3. Draft: writing to make progress	2	3.5 weeks
Stage 4. Final draft: completing the final project	2	5.5 weeks
Stage 5. Presentation	0.5	1.5 weeks
Stage 6. Defence	0.5	3.5 weeks
<b>Total</b>	6	16 weeks (4 months)

## Guideline 2 examples. Contextualizing the stages of the work

### Example 1. Final project course for the University Master's Degree in Social Media: Management and Strategy. (Sílvia Sivera and Sílvia Martínez)



#SteppedChallenge

#### Presentation of the final project course: general proposal for the challenge

**Title: The final project course is here**

##### Proposal

You've reached the home stretch of the programme, but this project may lead to something else, such as a doctoral thesis, a profession-focused project or a social media idea for use in the workplace.

You'll be supported in this journey by a team of teachers, including the coordinating professor, your tutor and the members of the board who will assess your project.

Your final project tutor will guide your progress. You should establish good communication with them to ensure you successfully complete each stage of the project. You'll have your own working group space to communicate with your tutor. You can also use the discussion forum and keep an eye on the information posted on the noticeboard, which will be common to all students doing a master's degree final project.

It'll be worth the effort, and at the end you'll feel proud of your work. The perfect ending to a master's programme in which the teaching staff have given their all to ensure you enjoy learning about the exciting world of social media.

#### Stage 1

**Title: Making a choice means giving something up**

##### Proposal

Choosing a topic for your final project means giving up many other options. This also means trying to stay on point and not deviate from your chosen topic over the following months.

During this first stage, you should choose a topic (beyond the initial choice of area) with potential for academic, professional or personal development, and which also showcases everything you've learned during the master's programme. Above all, it should be something you're interested in.

This is when you need to decide which type of final project you want to do:

- A research project
- A practical project

Make sure you take into account all the new developments and possibilities in the world of social media when choosing the topic, approach and objective. (...)

## Stage 2

### Title: Design: exploring ideas

#### Proposal

It's time to design your final project. This involves proposing a work plan that enables you to manage the project, demonstrating that you have the necessary resources to complete it and that you're aware of the commitment required to do a final project.

The work plan must include:

- The title of the final project
- An explanation of why you're interested in your chosen topic
- Aims
- Reference framework
- Methodology
- Expected results
- Planning
- (...)

**Example 2. Final project course for the University Master's Degree in Translation and Technologies.** (Carles Prado)



*#SteppedChallenge*

## Stage 1

### Title: Design and conceptualization

#### Proposal

Now that you've reached the end of the programme, it's time for the final project. This is your chance to put all the competencies and knowledge you've acquired to good use. You'll have to apply all this to design a small original research study, carry it out with the support of an expert and, finally, present it to both a specialized audience and, of course, a general one. This involves three stages: a design and conceptualization stage; a research stage and a presentation and publication stage.

In this first stage, you'll have to define your project proposal. Remember that you can choose between two formats for your project: an academic assignment or a paper for potential publication in a scientific journal.



## Stage 2

### Title: Writing

#### Proposal

This stage begins once the proposal has been reviewed and your project has been given the go-ahead. You'll be supported by a member of teaching staff who will supervise this task. This means that, over the next few weeks, you'll have to do the research and write up the assignment or academic paper that you've agreed to do for your project. In addition to the final submission, you'll have to make two preliminary partial submissions to your supervisor.

## Stage 3

### Title: Presentation and publication

#### Proposal

You've managed to complete your project. Congratulations! Now you have to present it to both specialist and general audiences. Over the next few weeks, you must achieve the following goals:

- Prepare a short oral presentation (10 minutes) simulating a talk at an academic or scientific conference. Include the most relevant aspects of your project, the most significant findings and what you've personally got out of this small research project.
- Draft a short text (around 300-400 words) for a popular science blog explaining your research to a general (non-specialized) audience.

## Guideline 4 examples. Definition of learning outcomes

### Stage 1. Choosing or defining the topic of the final project

#### *Possible learning outcomes*

- Analysing the suitability and relevance of the project based on the needs identified in the academic context of the field of study.
- Clearly and specifically defining the topic, subject matter or problem to be studied.
- Presenting an original and innovative topic within the field of study.
- Choosing a specific type of final project that enables you to achieve its aim.
- Searching for information in professional and academic databases and external and open resources to decide whether a given topic is suitable and appropriate for the project. (...)

### Stage 2. Analysis of the environment and specification of objectives

#### *Possible learning outcomes*

- Designing a practical or innovative proposal addressing a need identified in the field of knowledge.
- Showing that the idea for the research-focused or profession-focused project relates to an actual opportunity.
- Designing an initial proposal or outline of the innovative project in accordance with the field of study or professional environment concerned.
- Setting a feasible and realistic work schedule for the project.
- Laying down the foundations for ensuring that the master's degree final project includes the right content and is submitted within the applicable deadlines.
- Using an online project management tool to identify the stages and schedule for the project.
- Selecting the most suitable tools and instruments to achieve the proposed aims.
- Selecting sources of information in accordance with the aims and needs identified.
- Proposing a work plan, based on the curation and decisions made in the previous stage, to enable you to manage the project.
- Proving to the final project supervisor that you have the necessary resources of your own to successfully complete the project.

### Stage 3. Theoretical framework

#### *Possible learning outcomes*

- Presenting the theoretical foundations of the project to be carried out, as well as the techniques and criteria to be used to collect the necessary information.
- Conducting a preliminary review of the current state of the subject to be covered; this will help refine the thesis or question for your research project.
- Describing your chosen research methodology comprehensively and in detail. (...)

### Stage 4. Development

#### *Possible learning outcomes*

- Verifying the feasibility of the project design and the suitability of the tools selected to carry it out.
- Ensuring that the basis of the project and the procedure to be followed adhere to legal and ethical regulations.
- Contacting the sources of information needed to achieve the aims of the master's degree final project, making use of (professional and academic) knowledge networks.
- Carrying out the plan step by step, assuming leadership and responsibility for the project.
- Carrying out the work plan as per the initial proposal.
- Applying methodological strategies for data collection and analysis.
- Carrying out a research-focused or critical reflection project independently and in a realistic, creative and innovative way.
- Collecting data in accordance with strict ethical criteria and respecting the confidentiality of personal data.
- Analysing data, drawing conclusions and making recommendations. (...)

### Stage 5. Final submission of the report or product

#### *Possible learning outcomes*

- Presenting the theoretical foundations of the project, as well as the information collection techniques and criteria.

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- Drawing conclusions linking theory to evidence while bringing something new to the field of knowledge.
  - Analysing the main theories consulted through a critical lens.
  - Knowing the terminology used in the relevant discipline and using it appropriately.
  - Making value judgments about your theoretical and practical experiences during the master's degree.
  - Structuring a report or project in a consistent manner.
  - Summarizing ideas and arguments related to the subjects of study in the discipline.
  - Clearly, rigorously and precisely conveying ideas and arguments related to the subjects of study in the discipline.
  - Citing sources appropriately through a consistent use of bibliographic conventions, and using citations within your own arguments.
  - Producing clear, cohesive and properly structured written texts based on a set of parameters, in accordance with a pre-established social or professional register and with prospective readers' needs and characteristics.
  - Producing normatively correct and formally consistent oral and written texts (in accordance with the best-known and most widely accepted stylistic conventions). (...)
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## Stage 6. Defence

### *Possible learning outcomes*

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- Setting out complex ideas in a clear, consistent and persuasive manner.
  - Making an appropriate use of ICT as required for the presentation of the project.
  - Expressing your own ideas clearly and in a structured manner.
  - Summarizing ideas and arguments related to the subjects of study in the discipline.
  - Clearly, rigorously and precisely conveying ideas and arguments related to the subjects of study in the discipline.
  - Drafting a presentation document summarizing the final project in an interesting way.
  - Effectively presenting the final project to the specialized board in charge of grading it. (...)
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## Appendix

The UOC Library has produced "Complete your final project", a resource for students with various tips and tools for each stage of the project, which can also come in handy at the design stage.

You'll find this resource at the following link:

<https://biblioteca.uoc.edu/en/students/successfull>



[y-pass-activities-and-final-assignments/complete-your-final-project/index.html](https://biblioteca.uoc.edu/en/students/successfull)