

Notes about the Master SIM

This year SIM started with a slightly revised curriculum. We have listened carefully to the experiences of both professors and students and to the outcomes of the evaluation of June 2009. One of the complaints of students was that the course that trains them in designing research requires knowledge about theories that are not fully clear to students. The most important change, therefore, is that the course Mastering Theories of Technology and Innovation now has moved to the very beginning of SIM. Students now start with a rigorous overview of theories of innovation, both at business level (Innovation & Organization) and at societal level (Mastering Theories). After this theoretical introduction the focus shifts to methodological issues: how to proceed with innovation questions. These methods are taught in Measuring and Modeling Innovation. The course Designing Innovation Research is now after both theoretical and methodological courses and directly prepares for the Project Innovation Management at the end of the first year. In this latter course, there will be more choice in topic. Not every student will work on the same innovation problem. Another change in response to requests of students is that the two 'big' courses of 15 ECTS have been split in two, to fit better the flexible agendas and planning of students. We think that we have developed a very interesting program that challenges the critical and creative talents of students and provides them with a solid background for an independent contribution to innovation topics.

The Master Thesis is a big part of SIM to train and show such contribution. It requires attention and planning. The following is to guide students in their preparation and choices. Internships are seen as valuable, but not obligatory for SIM, a research master. So, yes, it is possible to graduate without doing an internship. Note that it is also possible to have internships in other formats than 3 months: some weeks, half a year, etc. It is also possible to have more than one internship. When internships are intended to be part of the Thesis project, they should connect to the overall ambition and research question of the Thesis; as a rule: to get data). When the overlap is about 50% that should be OK. So, students are allowed to do other things as well at the organisation. As always, setting up an internship requires negotiation and creativity to satisfy all three parties (university, student, external organisation). In principle, a lot is possible. Students should take the initiative, but could expect some support from supervisor.

Moreover, writing a proposal is part of the Thesis project, a very important and difficult part. Supervision starts when student and supervisor agree about a rough first idea (a few sentences) and the student starts with preparing a proposal: problems, theories, questions, methods, data, planning including intended internships. The time to write a proposal is set on 2 months. The time left to work on the thesis after approval of 2nd reader is 6 months. (The master thesis is 45 ECTS, that is 8 months). Supervisor and student should meet regularly and set milestones during the preparation of a proposal as well, such as a concept proposal after one month. When students do not conform to the milestone of 2 months for the proposal, the supervisor might decide to stop the project in case of insufficient progress and outlook. When the supervisor still sees the project as promising and grants more than 2 months, the expected time to spend on the thesis after approval remains the same 6 months. The student will present two times his/her work: one halfway ('trial') and one at the end (to be graded). While this may sound scary, the main message is: don't hesitate to approach staff with your ideas or questions!

Harro van Lente