



Rural Sociology |
Sociology of Development and Change
2019-2020

MSc Thesis Guidelines

MID | MCH | MDR | MFT | MLP | MOA | MTO

Jessica de Koning | September 2019

Highlights & Content

1. Information on thesis requirements for doing a thesis with RSO and SDC
 2. Step-by-step information on thesis process including a checklist
 3. Practical issues of doing a thesis with RSO and SDC.
- Students with an interest and expertise in qualitative social sciences and with the right educational background are very welcome to do their thesis with either RSO and SDC.*

Although themes and topics of RSO and SDC overlap we make a general distinction:

RSO - Thesis topics related to the sociology of food, agriculture, and place. RSO focusses on transition processes and dynamics surrounding these three themes.

SDC - Thesis topics related to sociology and anthropology of development, political ecology, anthropology of law in the context of international development. SDC focusses on change processes in relation to inequality and marginalization.

Both chair groups have a global expertise and allow for both Dutch as well as international thesis projects.

Contents

Highlights & Content.....	2
Quick facts.....	3
Thesis at Rural Sociology (RSO) and Sociology of Development and Change (SDC).....	4
The thesis process: step-by-step.....	7
Preparatory phase.....	7
Proposal phase.....	8
Fieldwork phase	10
Assessment phase.....	11
Support from RSO and SDC.....	12

Quick facts

Language thesis	English
Credits	24-39 ECTs 36 ECTs as standard thesis
Period	1-6
Contact person for supervision	Jessica de Koning (jessica.dekoning@wur.nl)
Secretariat	Office.rso@wur.nl Office.sdc@wur.nl
Required reading	MSc Thesis Protocol for Social Sciences (MID, MCH, MDR) MSC thesis course guide (MFT, MOA) MSc Thesis Guidelines for RSO and SDC (this document)
More information on RSO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.wur.eu/rso (click on Education to find information for master students)• www.ruralsociologywageningen.nl
More information on SDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.wur.eu/sdc ((click on Education to find information for master students)• www.developmentandchange.org

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Thesis at Rural Sociology (RSO) and Sociology of Development and Change (SDC)

The requirements for a thesis with RSO or SDC depend on the master programmes and the thesis tracks. A thesis track is a trajectory of courses in combination with a thesis. Thesis tracks are the requirements of the chair groups to do a thesis with them.

Master program	Specialization	Supervision
Master International Development Studies (MID)	A Sociology of Development	RSO/SDC
	D Politics and Governance of Development	SDC
Master Applied Communication Sciences (MCS)	B Health and Society	RSO
Master Development and Rural Innovation (MDR)		RSO/SDC
Master Food Technology (MFT)	I Gastronomy	RSO
Master Landscape Architecture and Planning (MLP)*		RSO/SDC
Master Organic Agriculture (MOA)	B Sustainable food systems	RSO/SDC
Master Tourism, Society and the Environment (MTO)		SDC

* Only minor thesis possibilities

Within the different master program, students can follow different tracks that will allow them to do an MSc thesis Rural Sociology or MSc thesis Sociology of Development and Change. Please note that overviews below only highlight the thesis track and not the program requirements.

Master International Development Studies (MID)

MID specialization A

Thesis Track Rural Sociology

RSO-31806 Sociology of Food and Place

RSO-80436 MSc thesis Rural Sociology

Thesis Track Sociology of Development and Change

SDC-32306 Anthropology and Development

SDC-80436 MSc thesis Sociology of Development and Change

Thesis Track Disaster Studies

SDC-34306 Studying Crisis: Conflict, Disaster and the Social

SDC-80736 MSc Thesis Disaster studies

MID Specialization D

Thesis Track Sociology of Development and Change

SDC-35806 Politics of Development: State, Property and Resistance

SDC-80436 MSc thesis Sociology of Development and Change

Master Applied Communication Science (MCH)

MCH specialization B

Thesis Track Rural Sociology

RSO-33306	Food, Health and Society: An Integrated Socio-Political Perspective
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RSO-80436	MSc Thesis Rural Sociology
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MSc Development and Rural Innovation (MDR)

MDR

Thesis Track Rural Sociology

RSO-31806	Sociology of Food and Place
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RSO-80436	MSc thesis Rural Sociology
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Thesis Track Sociology of Development and Change

SDC-21804	Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge and Development
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SDC-33306	Methodology for Field Research in the Social Sciences
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SDC-30806	Political Ecologies of Natural Resource Distribution
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SDC-80436	MSc thesis Sociology of Development and Change
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Master Food Technology (MFT)

MFT –Specialization I

Thesis Track Rural Sociology

RSO-21806	Origin Food: A Market for Identity
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RSO-22306	Food Culture and Customs
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RSO-80436	MSc Thesis Rural Sociology
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YRM-60806	<i>Qualitative Data Analysis: Procedures and Strategies*</i>
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** Strongly advised methodology course for MFT students. Alternatively, we can set up a capita selecta.*

Master Landscape Architecture and Planning (MLP)

MLP

Minor thesis Track Rural Sociology

GEO-37306	Global Landscapes and Place-Making
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RSO-31806	Sociology of Food and Place
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RSO-80424	MSc Thesis Rural Sociology (minor thesis)
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Minor thesis Track Sociology of Development

SDC-32306	Anthropology and Development
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SDC-80424	MSc Thesis Sociology of Development and Change (minor thesis)
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Master Organic Agriculture (MOA)

MOA –Specialization B

Thesis Track Rural Sociology

RSO-30806	The Sociology of Farming and Rural Life OR
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RSO-31806	Sociology of Food and Place
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RSO-80433	MSc Thesis Rural Sociology
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RSO-22306	<i>Food Culture and Customs*</i>
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ENP-31806	<i>Globalization and Sustainability of Food Production and Consumption*</i>
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Thesis Track Sociology of Development

SDC-30806	Political Ecologies of Natural Resource Distribution
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SDC-80436	MSc Thesis Sociology of Development and Change
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RSO-30806	<i>The Sociology of Farming and Rural Life*</i>
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SDC-21806	<i>Introduction to Sociology of Knowledge and Development M*</i>
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SDC-32806	<i>Sociology in Development: Towards a Critical Perspective*</i>
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** Advised courses*

Master Tourism, Society and the Environment (MTO)

MTO

Thesis Track Sociology of Development and Change

SDC-32306	Anthropology and Development
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OR

SDC-30806	Political Ecologies of Natural Resource Distribution
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OR

SDC-34306	Studying Crisis: Conflict, Disaster and the Social
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SDC-80436	MSc thesis Sociology of Development and Change
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The thesis process: step-by-step

Once a student is enrolled in a thesis track and have passed the required courses, the thesis process starts. There are several phases that are specific for RSO/SDC thesis students:

1. Preparatory phase
2. Proposal phase
3. Assessment phase

These phases indicate several mostly administrative and procedural phases of the thesis. The different phases are explained below. Please note that the textboxes in orange are mandatory steps to take.

Preparatory phase

1. Thesis topic
2. Study plan
3. Intake meeting

There are 3 major steps that each student needs to take before starting the proposal. Once they are done, students can contact their supervisor and move on to the next phase

Thesis Topics

Thesis topic ideas should be developed well in advance of the actual thesis. About 6 months before starting the thesis, a student should have a broad idea. This can be further developed by actively brainstorming, reading articles and newspapers, or following courses. In general, students develop their own ideas on thesis topic. RSO and SDC sometimes advertise thesis vacancies online via their social media channels.

For topic inspiration, check out the website of RSO and SDC as well as the social media channels Facebook and Instagram (see Quick Facts for where you can find us).

Study plan

Meet with your **study advisor** to discuss your study progress and your thesis plans. Make sure you meet the official requirements of an RSO or SDC thesis.

Intake meeting

The intake is mandatory. Students need to plan an intake meeting with **education coordinator** Jessica de Koning. During this intake, the education coordinator talks about the specifics of doing a thesis at RSO or SDC. She will also assign students a supervisor.

Please note that there is a general summer stop in the holidays.

Proposal phase

1. Thesis agreement
2. Risk assessment
3. Proposal presentation
4. Research Permits
5. Letter of support
6. Vaccinations
7. Ethics

These are the elements that each student must arrange before leaving for the field.

Plan your proposal phase carefully as some of these elements take time.

You are not allowed to leave to the field without an approved risk assessment. Leaving without an approved risk assessment can lead to the cancellation of your thesis.

Master thesis agreement

Master thesis agreement is a mandatory document that needs to be filled and handed to the RSO/SDC secretariat and study advisor before the student starts fieldwork (see for more information MSc Thesis Protocol for Social Sciences /MSc Thesis Course Guide). Three copies are needed:

1. Supervisor sends 1 copy to RSO/SDC secretariat
2. Student sends 1 copy to the study advisor
3. Student keeps 1 copy for himself.

Security protocol/ Risk assessment

The risk assessment is mandatory. All students going abroad to a country of risk require explicit and formal permission. Whether or not a country is of risk can be found at the website of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/reisadviezen>)

- Countries with Green classification: no risk, no security protocol required
- Countries with Yellow classification: there is an increased risk, security protocol required
- Countries with Orange: there is a high risk, security protocol required, travel only allowed for students of the thesis track Disaster and Conflict (MID-A specialization)
- Countries with Red: very high risk, no travel allowed.

Without an approved risk assessment, students are not allowed to leave for fieldwork. Calculate a minimum of two weeks for submitting the security protocol. As the university has the right to decline your travel, please do not book any tickets unless you are sure you can go.

More information <https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/Current-Students/Travel-policy-for-students.htm>

Proposal presentation

All RSO/SDC students are required to present their work 2 times during a RSO/SDC student seminar:

- 1 proposal presentation (before going to the field)
- 1 end-of-work presentation

The RSO/SDC student seminars take place every third Tuesday of every month. To plan a seminar presentation, contact the secretariat.

Contact: office.rso@wur.nl or office.sdc@wur.nl

Research permits & Visa

Students check before they leave if they need a research permit for doing research. Find out by asking around, talking to experts that have recent work experience in your country of research or by talking to fellow students that are there or just came back.

Letter of support

If the research requires a letter of support that students can present to their contact persons in the field, students need to indicate this in time to their supervisor.

Vaccinations

Students need to check what vaccinations they need. If vaccinations are needed, students need to arrange these themselves in time. For students from MID and MDR there are special compensation regulations in place to get a reimbursement, check with your study advisor or the education coordinator about these regulations.

Ethics

Sometimes, the research proposal requires the approval of an ethics committee. The WASS Graduate School offers the possibility to check your proposal for ethics. Allow for 2 weeks to get the approval.

Fieldwork phase

1. Communication
2. Contact persons
3. Post fieldwork

The fieldwork is an independent phase where there is less contact with the supervisor. But it remains very important to keep in touch and have clear contact persons during and after your fieldwork.

Communication

Students decide on the communication channels with their supervisor in terms of frequency and way. Any changes in the plan should be communicated directly to the supervisor

Contact persons

If students have a contact person in the field, set up a plan with this contact person with regards to their role, how you communicate and what the planning is.

Post fieldwork

As soon as students are back, they contact their supervisor and set up a planning for their thesis writing.

Assessment phase

1. End presentation
2. Thesis in pdf
3. Final check

After your fieldwork there are a few steps to take before the assessment.

Discuss the end planning of your thesis carefully with your supervisor. If you plan to finish the thesis in a holiday period, realize that your supervisor might be unavailable around that time and that your assessment may be delayed because of this. Avoid finalizing your thesis in August if you can.

End of work presentation

Each Master programme has its own specific requirements for student seminars. Regardless of this, RSO/SDC students are required to present their work 2 times during a RSO/SDC student seminar:

- 1 proposal presentation (before going to the field)
- 1 end-of-work presentation

The end of work presentation will be graded as part of your final assessment. Without a presentation, a student cannot complete the thesis.

The RSO/SDC student seminars take place every third Tuesday of every month. To plan a seminar presentation, contact the RSO/SDC secretariat.

Contact: office.rso@wur.nl or office.sdc@wur.nl

Thesis in pdf

Students hand in their thesis digitally (in pdf) to their supervisors. The timing of handing in the final version and the planning of your final evaluation meeting needs to be discussed with your supervisor. Take in mind that two weeks can be a necessary amount of time needed by your supervisor and a second reader to evaluate your report, plan the final meeting. Please note that as we do not request hard copies of the thesis, we also do not reimburse thesis printing costs.

Final check

Students make sure that when the assessment is done, the supervisor has the complete set of documents:

- Thesis proposal
- Master thesis agreement
- Risk assessment
- Thesis in pdf

The grade will be registered when the set is complete. Realize that grades will only be entered into the system on working days, and there are specific deadlines attached to filing the grades into the system and your participation in the graduation ceremony (See [MSc Graduation Schedule](#) for specific data).

Support from RSO and SDC

1. Brightspace Thesis Skills

RSO and SDC offer an online environment in Brightspace for students to get extra support on writing and research skills.

2. Checklist

Use the handy checklist to make sure you fulfilled all the logistical requirements for successfully completing your thesis.

RSO and SDC have arranged a support system for students doing their thesis at these chair groups.

If for some reason, students need more support and struggle through the thesis process, they must contact their supervisor or the education coordinator to let them know. We will try to find solutions that will fit the specific problems.

Brightspace Thesis Skills

For students who prefer extra support in the writing and research skills, RSO and SDC offer an online teaching environment in Brightspace where students can improve their writing and research skills. This online teaching platform is called Thesis Skills. Via self-assessments and modules, students get more information for example on how to structure a thesis, how to formulate a research question and how to act in the field. Students then make assignments to apply their knowledge. These assignments produce text that can go straight in your thesis or which you can discuss with your own supervisor. In other words, Thesis Skills allow you to determine what you need, when you need it and let's you practice with elements of the thesis at your own pace.

Thesis Skills also offers the possibility to connect to other students, to share stories and to create a community of thesis students.

We highly recommend Thesis Skills for any thesis student of RSO and SDC.

For registration to Thesis Skills, contact Jessica de Koning.

Handy print outs

The following pages contain checklists and handy flowcharts that you can print out

Checklist thesis process	
Preparatory Phase	Who responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Read required documents for the thesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSc Thesis Protocol for Social Sciences (for MID, MCH, MDR, MTO)/MSc Thesis Course Guide (for MFT, MOA) • MSc thesis Guidelines RSO SDC (this document) 	Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Think about a topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write if needed a one pager on your topic 	Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Plan intake meeting with education coordinator Jessica de Koning	Student
Proposal Phase	
<input type="checkbox"/> Fill in Master thesis agreement	Student and supervisor
<input type="checkbox"/> Fill in risk assessment	Student and supervisor
<input type="checkbox"/> Present proposal	Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange research permit (if needed)	Student (with input from supervisor)
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange letter of support (if needed)	Student (with input from supervisor)
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange vaccinations (if needed)	Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange ethics approval (if needed)	Student (with input from supervisor)
<input type="checkbox"/> Register at Brightspace Thesis skills (optional)	Student
Fieldwork Phase	
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange communication during fieldwork	Student and supervisor
<input type="checkbox"/> Organize communication with contact person (if applicable)	Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Contact supervisor and plan your writing after the fieldwork	Student
Assessment phase	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present final thesis during seminar	Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Produce a pdf version of thesis	Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Do the final check: are the following document signed and sent to supervisor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master thesis agreement • Risk assessment • Pdf version of thesis 	Student and supervisor
<input type="checkbox"/> Check if grade is registered in SSC (allow for a few days)	Student