

GUIDELINES/Master's thesis

Introduction

These guidelines encompass **general** instructions to master's and advanced studies theses. More detailed thesis instructions are available at the study plans and separate guidelines of degree programmes and major subjects.

According to statute 15 § by the Finnish Government (2004/794), a thesis with the scope of at the minimum 20 study points and at the maximum 40 study points must be completed as the part of the advanced studies of the degree of a major subject, an equivalent study module or a degree programme. Master's theses and other final theses/written dissertations are public documents.

A thesis is part of the advanced studies of a major subject and indicates the student's capacity for scientific thought, his/her mastery of research methods, acquaintance with the topic of their thesis, and ability to communicate in a scientific and academic manner. The scope of a thesis ranges between 30 and 40 study points for others, and between 20 and 30 (25) points for the advanced studies in medicine and dentistry. In addition to a literature-based study, a thesis may include an empirical section. The empirical section may be completed as a part of a research project in which the student must have an unambiguous and independent role that lends itself to assessment. Students must write their literature-based theses independently (Regulations regarding degrees and studies at the Faculty of Health Sciences 7 §).

The aim of the thesis is to develop students' readiness for, e.g., independent information retrieval, analysis and critical assessment of data and information, planning and realization of research, utilization of scientific methods, and production and application of information. The goal is for students to be able to complete a thesis that fulfils scientific criteria.

Thesis Forms

There are specific regulations on the acceptable forms of theses in the study plans or separate thesis instructions of each degree programme or major subject. Based on the guidelines of different subjects, a thesis can be completed in one or several of the following methods:

- 1) **Conducting experimental, clinical or other empirical research and writing a report on the research work.** The study report must follow the principles of scientific writing.
- 2) **An original article published in a refereed scientific publication series or sent for publication in a scientific publication series and a review (report) independently written by the student.** The article must include the central topics of the study (e.g., aims, background, research methods, target group, theoretical foundation, results and a list of references). In addition to the article, the student must also formulate a separate review that includes a literature review, and in which he/she describes the premises and realization of the study, and considers the significance of research findings in more detail than is possible within the scope of the article. As a rule, the author of the thesis must function as the first author of the article.

If the article is a shared publication, the thesis must include a report signed by all of the authors of the publication stating the role and proportion of work of the thesis author in the shared article. The author of a thesis in the article form must be able to express their competence in managing the research process.

In cases when there is a plan to publish an article based on the research later or if there is unwillingness to submit an article for publication at the time of completion, the thesis must be finished in the report form named above in item 1).

3) An extensive, systematic literature review.

Approximate thesis lengths:

- 20 study points – approx. 40 – 60 pages
- 30 study points – approx. 50 – 80 pages
- 40 study points – approx. 60 – 90 pages
- the length can differ according to scientific field and the scope of thesis in study points

For example, 30 study points are equivalent to approx. 800 hours (approx. 0.5 years of full-time work).

The completion of a thesis may also include methodological studies defined in the study plan or agreed on with the supervisor.

More detailed instructions on the thesis form and contents are provided in the study plans and separate guidelines of major subjects.

Thesis Supervision and Responsibilities

2-3 supervisors are named to each thesis (with the form Proposal for Instructors and Examiners of the Master`s Thesis), favoured by the person in charge of the subject. The proposal is approved by the head of department.

The student agrees with his/her supervisors on the supervision and guidance process of their thesis. Together, the student and his/her supervisors fill in a Thesis Supervision Plan and Personal Study Plan for Thesis.

It is possible to change supervisors with a decision confirmed by the head of department, e.g., in case:

- when a supervisor is no longer available (moved into a different position, retired etc.)
- the thesis is not progressing
- there has been a conflict.

The purpose of the thesis is to signify the student`s maturity in conducting independent research and demonstrate his/her competence. The student bears the responsibility for the completion and results of their thesis. Supervisors support the student in achieving the goals set for the thesis. The student receives guidance on the special questions regarding his/her thesis on meetings set with the supervisors.

Thesis Examination

Based on a proposition by thesis instructors and the person in charge of the subject, the head of department approves two examiners for each thesis. The first of them also acts as a supervisor for the thesis and the second is a representative of the subject, department, or scientific field. The first instructor fills out the Proposition for Instructors and Examiners of the Master`s Thesis form and asks for the proposal by the person in charge of the subject and forwards the proposition to the head of department for approval.

The head of department must nominate the examiners at the latest when a thesis is submitted for examination. According to clause 35 of the University of Eastern Finland`s General Regulations on Degrees, *“an examiner must be appointed as soon as possible after the student has submitted the final version of his/her thesis for examination”*. The student must submit the finished, electronic version of their thesis to

their study subject and to the Administration Service Centre of the Faculty (to amanuensis Arja Afflekt) at the same time. The file is to be named according to the student's name and year of completion of the thesis (Lastname Firstname20XX). The PDF file's security settings must all be set to 'allow'.

An electronic version of the thesis will be sent to the examiners from the study subject.

The examiners then evaluate the thesis, fill out an examination form, give their proposal on the grade of the thesis, and provide a separate sheet of written evaluation. General reasons for evaluation and evaluation forms for master's thesis are in use at the Faculty of Health Sciences. According to clause 35 of the University of Eastern Finland's General Regulations on Degrees "*...the examiners must produce a written statement on the thesis, and, in the case of master's theses, also a proposal for the grade to the faculty within one month of the appointment of examiners*".

The examiners evaluate the thesis on the scale of 1-5 (sufficient, satisfactory, good, very good, and excellent). Students have the opportunity to reply to the evaluation before making the final decision on approving the thesis. The head of department approves the thesis.

The student notifies the examiners on whether he or she approves of the evaluation or whether he or she would like to discontinue the process of evaluation. According to clause 35 of the University of Eastern Finland's General Regulations on Degrees "*the student may ask for the cancellation of the evaluation process of a master's thesis. It is possible to suspend the evaluation process for one time only*". In order to resume the evaluation process, the student must have at least partially rewritten his or her thesis or subjected it to extensive amendments.

A student dissatisfied with the evaluation of their thesis may appeal in writing for a rectification from the Board of Appeal of the University of Eastern Finland within fourteen days after having received the decision.

Publication of Theses

Beginning from 1 January 2012, all theses completed at the University of Eastern Finland are to be published in an electronic form and are made available at the University Library website if the student has granted his/her written permission for it (using a separate form). If the student does not permit e-publication of his or her thesis, an electronic version of the thesis can be read on site at campus libraries (but cannot be borrowed or downloaded) (decision by the UEF academic rector, dno. 1671/12.02.01.02/2011).