

## **ESTABLISHED GUIDELINES FOR THE MASTERS THESIS IN JEMES PROGRAMME AT THE UAB (May, 2009, adapted December 2, 2009)**

The objective of the research project is to prepare students for future research that might be, for example, a doctoral thesis or an R + D project in a company. Assessment of a student's research project is not based solely on the contents of their document (the research project itself), consequently, this also takes into account other essential skills required by a researcher, such as the ability to synthesise information, discuss the results, prepare and give an oral defence and appropriate language use (written and spoken).

- Students are required to write a research document not exceeding 70<sup>1</sup> pages (including all sections such as the introduction, objectives, methodology, results, discussion, conclusions and works / sources used). This document must be handed in printed (hard-copy report) and follow the standard format requirements for articles published in a SCI or SSCI academic journal, to be selected and specified by the student.
  
- Students must hand in three copies of their research document to the ICTA secretary's office within the deadline established for each exam sitting. The tribunal reserves the right not to accept documents handed in after the deadline. Each printed copy of the document must be duly bound and under no circumstances can be handed in as unbound pages.
  
- Students are also required to send an exact copy of the printed version in PDF format file by email to [jemes.icta@uab.cat](mailto:jemes.icta@uab.cat). It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the electronic and paper versions of the report are identical. In order for a project to be considered submitted on time<sup>2</sup>, both the paper version and the electronic version must be submitted before the deadline. This email must be sent under the subject heading of "Research project" followed by the student's name. Electronic versions are accessible for everybody. If needed, it is possible to designate a project as being confidential.
  
- The research document must include:
  - Cover page with the following:
    - title of the research project
    - corresponding Masters Degree title
    - specialist field of study
    - host university
    - name of the Supervisor and University; Co-Supervisor and University; Department or Institute where the research has been carried out
    - date the document was handed in.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a maximum; the supervisor knows better the optimum.

<sup>2</sup> Course 2009-2010, submission date: 29/01/2010 ; 30/6/2010; 03/09/2010

- The page immediately following the cover page must include the following:
  - A description of no more than 500 words describing the work done by the student on the research document they are presenting, specifying their contribution.
  - Optionally, a description of no more than 500 words of how this project fits within the research of the research group when the student had been working in (if appropriate)..

- After that, it will typically consist of a number of interrelated chapters of the following contents:

**Abstract**

A summary of maximum 250 words describing the context of the thesis, its objective, findings, and contribution to current research debates.

**1. Introduction including scope of the thesis**

Outline of background for, and context of, the analysis.

Formulation of research question.

Outline of general analytical framework applied to answer the research question.

Delimitation of the project (relevant issues not addressed in the report and causes for non-inclusion).

**2. Objectives**

**3. Theoretical framework and methods**

Discussion and choice of the theoretical framework(s) to be applied and concepts to be used in the analysis. In-depth presentation of the theories and concepts.

Discussion and presentation of data collection methods (if relevant).

**4. Analysis**

This part of the thesis should be divided into an appropriate number of sub-chapters, depending on the questions asked, and it may include a "discussion" sub-chapter at the end.

The analysis will consist of an empirical analysis of the chosen field of study related to the questions raised, based on and using the chosen concepts and theories. Each sub-chapter/part should end up with a small conclusion.

**5. Conclusion**

The conclusion is a summary of the sub-chapter/part-conclusions as above, which are the result of the analysis. The conclusion should always present answers to the research questions as well as a discussion of the validity of the results of the analysis. It could also contain a brief discussion in terms of the implications of the research in a wider context or policy relevance (if appropriate).

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 (furthermore, in this case, a part of introduction would be considered here) should be a paper for a SCI or SSCI academic journal, or and Extended Abstract for a Congress.

- The examination takes the form of an oral defence<sup>3</sup> based on the submitted thesis. Three examiners<sup>4</sup> will take part in the examination. The examination is individual.
- The oral presentation of the research project is limited to a maximum of 20 minutes, after which the tribunal will be allowed 25 minutes to ask questions about the research project and what the student has learned in their particular Masters specialised field.
- Assessment of the module is based on the academic tutor's monitoring reports and the tribunal's assessment of the research and oral defence. The final mark is the sum of the supervisors' marks (30%) and the mark assigned by the tribunal (70%). The supervisor's mark is available to the student upon request.
- It is essential that the research project director's assessment be given to the tribunal by the deadline for handing in documents. Failing this, a date cannot be set for the oral defence.
  - The schedule of the oral defense will be arranged between 10 and 15 days after the deadline for handling the memory. The students must consider this in order to guarantee his/her presence at the programmed day and hour.
- The supervisor's evaluation of the research project must take the following into consideration: initiative, responsibility, ability to interpret results, and any other criteria deemed relevant.
- The tribunal assesses:
  - For the written research document:
    - Appropriate use of language. The document can be only written in English. The tribunal will assess correct and appropriate use of the language chosen.
    - Format: how well this follows the "guidelines for papers" established by one journal chosen by the student.
    - Content and academic originality.
    - Conciseness and meeting the required length.
    - Ability to discuss and interpret the results of the research.
    - Interdisciplinary scope of the research.
  - For the oral defence:
    - The student's ability to articulate and express him/herself.
    - Conciseness and meeting the established time limit (20 minutes).
    - Quality of the presentation.
    - Ability to answer the questions asked by the tribunal.

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<sup>3</sup> Course 2009-2010, defence day: The schedule of the oral defense will be arranged between 10 and 15 days after the deadline for handling the memory. The students must consider this in order to guarantee his/her presence at the programmed day and hour.

<sup>4</sup> For the course 2009-2010: Dr Gara Villalba (UAB, industrial ecology), Dr Victòria Reyes (UAB, ecological economics) and Dr Maria Rosa Rovira (UAB,, transversal concepts).

“Appropriate use of language” and “Format” are fundamental qualifying requirements, which means that the tribunal can suspend evaluation of a research document if it does not meet minimum requirements in these two areas.

### **Important guidelines concerning plagiarism and proper referencing<sup>5</sup>**

The use of the internet makes it very easy to find sources and good texts describing issues relevant to your projects. Unfortunately, the internet also facilitates the misuse of such sources as everything can be copied directly into your own documents. This, however, is illegal plagiarism; it is seriously condemned and must at all costs be avoided.

Naturally, the same applies to sources in print. Generally, you should not use another author’s phrases unless there is a specific reason for doing so. In this case, the phrases must be clearly marked in the report using italics and/or quotation marks combined with a reference to the author. Failure to do so is plagiarism. Even if you did not intend to cheat.

We have adapted an Oxford University rule of thumb saying that “if six or more consecutive words are the same as the source”, then it must be marked as a quotation as described above and clearly referenced. Additionally – and again inspired by Oxford University – “fewer than 6 words should also be quoted when you borrow a particularly apt or striking phrase”.

Paraphrasing of other authors' work must also be properly referenced. Failure to do so is plagiarism. Even if you did not intend to cheat. It is not even acceptable to present another author’s idea without referring to the author. Failure to do so is plagiarism. In fact, making such references merely demonstrates that you are a well read student who knows the area of study. Diagrams, figures, tables, photos and other graphical representations not made by you must also be properly referenced. Failure to do so is plagiarism.

Plagiarism is utterly unacceptable and will lead to the rejection of the report.

The extensive use of properly referenced quotes from single sources - ~third of a page and up - on the grounds that “they write it better than we are able to” is not plagiarism and hence not illegal. However, it is poor judgement, considered poor student work and hence generally renders a poor impression. The extensive use of properly referenced quotes from single sources may of course be relevant under special circumstances, such as if you wish to discuss an EU directive, in which case, devoting e.g. a full page to the actual text may be appropriate.

If in doubt, please consult your supervisor.

Several reference systems exist. Use one system consequently throughout the whole report and throughout the entire process including drafts. Sloppy reference methodology in the preparation of drafts will cause problems in the writing of your final report. You will most likely forget that parts of your text are in fact quotations – and these parts will be considered plagiarism in your

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<sup>5</sup> Aalborg University, 4th semester Guidelines. [http://jemes.eu/downloads/Semester4-Aalborg\\_Master%20thesis.pdf](http://jemes.eu/downloads/Semester4-Aalborg_Master%20thesis.pdf)

submitted report. Below is a link to a description of the Chicago style (successor of Harvard) which we recommend you to use.

<http://www.lib.murdoch.edu.au/find/citation/chicago.html>

If concepts and use of theories differ from the way these concepts and theories are used in the sources cited, the thesis must clarify how, and the good thesis would also indicate why.

#### Other considerations

Any other assessment considerations not included in these guidelines will be established by the person responsible for the Research Project module and the coordinator for the Masters Degree in Environmental Studies, JEMES.

Bellaterra, May, 2009.



MASTERS DEGREE IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, JEMES  
Research Project  
Supervisor's assessment report

Student's name:
Supervisor's name:
Department/Institute:
Centre/University:
Study dates:

Report explaining the research project and research carried out:

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Overall mark (0-10):	Date and signature:
30% of the final mark	

Mail to [xavier.gabarrell@uab.cat](mailto:xavier.gabarrell@uab.cat)





JEMES - Joint European Master programme in Environmental Studies

Remarks:

The master thesis can only be started if all other examination performances are completed. Please check your ECTS in the examination office/local academic board before you start your thesis.

Registration of the Master thesis at \_\_\_\_\_

Mr / Ms \_\_\_\_\_, Passport number \_\_\_\_\_ has fulfilled the requirements for the beginning of his/her master thesis according to the examinations regulation of the Joint European Master in Environmental Studies in place in the JEMES consortium member universities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date/Signature of the registration office (Host University)

To be filled out by the supervisor only:

Topic (please write in block letter)

\_\_\_\_\_

Start of work: \_\_\_\_\_

End of work: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor and University \_\_\_\_\_ Co-Supervisor and University \_\_\_\_\_  
(the Co-Supervisor must be from a different partner / consortium university)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the supervisor

Assessment of the master thesis:

The master thesis was delivered on \_\_\_\_\_ The defence took place on \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Co-supervisor