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General guidelines for master's degree thesis

The following instructions are for the master's thesis in Coastal and Marine Management master's program (hereafter referred to as CMM) at the University Centre of the Westfjords (hereafter referred to as UW). They apply to students enrolled in the program in 2013 or later.

Scope

Thesis topics should have a focus on coastal and/or marine management issues/problems/projects, or have a very strong relevancy for that field of study. Thesis topics should be of a cross-disciplinary nature.

A master's thesis in Coastal and Marine Management, towards a 2.2 master's degree, as defined by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, earns 45 ECTS. This grading applies to students enrolled in the program in 2010 or later. This does not apply to students who were enrolled in the program in 2009 or 2008.

Goals

A master's thesis is the final project in the CMM master's program. It is the product of independent research, must be completed individually, and can be based on primary and/or secondary data. If collection of baseline data is a prominent factor in the research, it should, as always, focus on the management aspects of a chosen topic as well. The overall goal of the final project is to train students to employ academic working methods in an independent way.

Academic Honesty

All students must sign and follow the *University Centre's Academic Honour Pledge* and fully respect intellectual property rights when writing their thesis, as well as in all other study assignments.

Thesis Advisors

Students choose a thesis advisor in consultation with the program director. An instructor in the program may serve as an advisor. Students may also apply for an external advisor who fulfils the relevant conditions and requirements and has the necessary specialized knowledge and experience. The external advisor must be approved by the master's program committee, after consultation with the program director. In some cases, having two advisors may be recommended, but typically there should only be one advisor.

External/internal readers

All master's theses must be evaluated by the advisor and an external or internal reader. The master's program committee nominates readers. The guiding rules are: If the advisor is not an approved CMM instructor, the reader should be an instructor at the University Centre or an academic positioned at an Icelandic university. If the advisor does not have a PhD, the reader should have a PhD. Both advisor and reader should have specialized knowledge in the relevant field. Readers must have a master's or doctoral degree and have extensive experience in the field of academia.

If a thesis is allotted two advisors, both of them, plus a reader, will evaluate the thesis (25/25/50 per cent).

Program director's supervision of master's theses

The CMM master's program director oversees the procedures and content of all student theses. As such, the program director will be available to answer thesis related questions throughout the process. One of the program director's roles is to make first contact with the student group regarding requirements, guidelines and completion of the master's thesis proposal, as well as the master's thesis itself. This can be done in thesis sessions and workshops throughout the academic year.

In consultation with the program director, each student has considerable freedom to choose a topic within the field of coastal and marine management. Early in the process, the program director may present students with a list of available topics. However, it is the students' responsibility to make the choice and formulate a research idea. To that end, the student takes the initiative in contacting the program director for consultation. Students are also encouraged to identify and propose potential advisors to the program director.

In class group meetings, the program director outlines expectations regarding the thesis and related work. In private meetings between the program director and each student, individual situations are addressed. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that students are on track and ready to work on a successful thesis.

The primary duties of the program director regarding the master's thesis are:

- to take responsibility for the overall organization of the master's thesis process
- to maintain a list of master's theses including the names of each student, their advisor and reader
- to inform students of the rules regarding master's theses and take responsibility for helping students find advisors, which the master's program committee then has to approve of and nominate
- to give general guidance on choosing the best working methods
- to advise the master's program committee on the choice and nomination of readers
- to take responsibility for informing advisors and readers of program requirements, deadlines, and evaluation procedures
- to take responsibility for organizing public presentations (45 ECTS thesis) in consultation with the advisor, reader, relevant colleagues at the University Centre of the Westfjords, and the student involved
- to assure each thesis fulfils the formal requirements set by the master's program committee when it is sent to readers
- to resolve any matters in doubt, for example the choice of material/data or the division of duties between advisors (if there are two advisors)

If a formal or informal conflict of interests precludes the program director from fulfilling these duties in a given case, administrative rules (i. *stjórnsýslureglur*) apply and a substitute must be found to counsel the thesis process. If the program director is the thesis advisor, the master's program committee will assure that the tasks of the program director are fulfilled.

The master's program committee

The CMM master's program committee is the ultimate supervising body for academic quality matters concerning the CMM master's program. The program director executes the committee's decisions, or ensures that they are executed. Among the master's program committee's roles is to review study applications, approve study plans (including thesis proposals), assess the quality of instruction, approve/suggest instructors and advisors, nominate readers for exams and theses, and deal with other issues when so directed. The master's program committee decides on its own formal procedures.

Roles, responsibilities and relationship of thesis advisor and student

The master's thesis is the final project in the master's degree program and has its own applicable learning outcomes, see Box 2. Upon the completion of the thesis, each student should fulfil those learning outcomes.

Although the program director guides students towards a relevant and feasible topic until the advisor takes over, the student is always responsible for the selection of a topic as well as working on the chosen project.

In exceptional cases, with the approval of the program director and the master's program committee, two advisors may be assigned to a student. In such cases, one of them must be the primary advisor in terms of responsibility for the quality of the submitted thesis. It is important that the division of duties and rights is clear if a project has two advisors. This division may change throughout the process. If so, the program director and the director of teaching and education must be informed.

The thesis advisor

1. The advisor explains the general requirements for a final project at master's thesis level to the student and gives the student encouragement, guidance, and direction in his or her work. The advisor should always follow the frame of reference provided in his/her copy of the relevant CMM master's thesis directions.

2. The advisor gives the student guidance on the following matters:

- deciding on the scope of the topic
- finding appropriate sources
- defining the goals, aims and research questions¹

¹ This applies in particular if the advisor works with the student prior to the submission of the thesis proposal, although research questions may in some cases develop further throughout the research process.

- preparing a detailed research plan
 - gathering, processing, and analysing research data
 - presenting findings in a suitable manner and a clear style
 - constructing the thesis based on these directions
 - notifying relevant institutions when working with sensitive and/or personal data²
3. The advisor follows the project's progress and evaluates it with respect to the student's research and study plan.
 4. The advisor assists the student in resolving any problems which arise during the project, such as methodological issues.
 5. The advisor makes sure that the thesis is not prematurely handed in to the reader. This does not apply if that is the declared intention of the student.
 6. The advisor communicates to the program director if problems arise, e.g. if a student refuses to take advice, or fails to meet agreed deadlines.
 7. The advisor(s), along with a reader, is/are responsible for the final evaluation of the thesis (by 50% against that of the reader).

The student

1. Students are responsible for their studies, and they are expected to work independently and respect deadlines.
2. Students are responsible for keeping contact with the program director after the first meeting with their advisor, as well as updating the program director regarding the progress of their work.
3. Students prepare a detailed research plan in consultation with their thesis advisor, and create a schedule for the project and its completion.
4. Students, in consultation with their thesis advisor, determine what kind of guidance suits them best.
5. Students must take the initiative in negotiating meetings with their thesis advisor and in negotiating what work will take place between meetings.
6. Students complete the tasks which have been negotiated with their advisor within the agreed deadline, and respect their advice.
7. Students permit their advisors to follow the progress of their project. This also applies to those periods when the student and the advisor do not meet.
8. Students consult with their advisor and program director regarding submittal of thesis for evaluation.

Communication between program director, thesis advisors and students

There is no fixed schedule of communication for the student and his/her advisor. It is recommended that there should be approximately 60 minutes of meetings/communication a week while the thesis is in progress, for a total of no more than 26 meetings for a 45 ECTS thesis – 24 meetings before submission of the final full draft and two meetings before the submission of the revised final full draft. The advisor and student agree when to meet and how they communicate. All communication about the final project counts towards meeting time; including assistance, guidance, emailing, telephone calls, and so forth. For every hour of meeting time, it is estimated that the advisor will spend two hours on preparation.

In total, the advisor spends no less than 90 hours for communication and the final evaluation of a 45 ECTS thesis. If a thesis advisor has not advised a student on the program before, he/she must have a Skype meeting with the program director in the first weeks of the work.

² For example the Data Protection Authority (Persónuvernd), or other institutions dealing with the matter of ethics and justice (i.e. Vísindasiðanefnd, the National Bioethics Committee, www.vsn.is). The advisor should guide the student to receive any necessary research authorization, e.g. those needed for publication purposes in the respective field of study.

Communication difficulties

If difficulties arise in communication between a student and his/her thesis advisor, for example if a student feels that the advisor is not providing appropriate guidance or is treating the student unfairly, the student has the right to - and should - send a written complaint to the master's program committee.

If an advisor feels that the student is not responding to advice or not respecting deadlines, the advisor can - and should - notify the program director as soon as it becomes evident.

In both cases, the program director can and - and should - intervene as early as possible, with the aim of resolving the matter between the parties involved.

First steps of thesis work: Proposal, advisor and permits

In consultation with the program director, students submit the first draft of their research proposals for their master's theses to the master's program committee by the end of the Easter break each year (see table below). A revised research proposal is handed in before data collection/fieldwork starts (see Box 1 and table on next page).

The draft research proposal for the master's thesis

During the spring term, students start working on their draft proposal. Before first submission, they are strongly encouraged to hand in a draft to the program director for overall comments. Typically, the draft research proposal should be 500-1000 words. The draft proposal is evaluated by the master's program committee, mainly for its 1) topic relevance to coastal and marine management and 2) feasibility of suggested research design.

By the due date for the draft proposal, the student should ideally have identified a suitable thesis advisor. However, this is not a requirement. As soon as possible after the draft proposal has been approved by the program committee, the program director helps the student to find and contact a suitable thesis advisor. A student who has identified a thesis advisor should provide the program director with details and contact information for the suggested advisor. The program director then makes contact with him/her and confirms availability and qualifications.

An advisor is formally appointed by the master's program committee.

The revised research proposal for the master's thesis

Before the student may continue carrying out the suggested research, the master's program committee must approve the revised research proposal as well as the suggested advisor. This is typically done at the same time.

NB. Approval is always relative to current conditions and is valid until such time as the circumstances of the project require that the research proposal and project description be changed.

The revised research proposal is a formal declaration of how the student expects to carry out his or her research. The goal of the revised research proposal is to further define (or amend) the scope of the thesis, further define the research questions and explain the research methods. It also includes a revised timetable for the project and an explanation

Box 1: What should be in the revised research proposal?

The revised research proposal should include the following elements:

- Short description of the topic and delineation of its scope
- Explanation of the project's goals, aims, research questions, and the issues upon which the project is intended to cast light
- Explanation of the research methods that will be used, and how data will be collected, analysed and processed
- Explanation of laboratory and field research, if applicable
- Cover letter and questionnaire/structured interview questions, if applicable
- Discussion of ethical issues, if applicable, and of what permits will be obtained for the research, if applicable
- Description of the scientific or practical value of the project, strengths and weaknesses
- Project timetable
- Advisor's name and his/her approval of the research design (only in the revised proposal)

Proposals can include more elements if needed.

of its scientific and practical contribution, as well as strengths and weaknesses. Typically, the revised research proposal should be 1000-1500 words.

Master's thesis registration contract and progress report

After a revised research proposal has been approved, a master's thesis contract must be filled out by the Director of education and teaching and the advisor(s) in question. The contract 1) represents the approval of the project and the advisor, and 2) serves as a contractor agreement between the advisor and the University Centre of the Westfjords. If there are two advisors, the division of duties must be clear at this point.

Step		Deadline	Responsibility for completion
A	Research outline (500-1000 words), highlighting 1) topic relevance to coastal and marine management and 2) research design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scope and delineation, • research frame • preliminary research question(s) • suggested data and methodology • description of the scientific and practical value • assessment of strengths and weaknesses • suggested project time plan • suggested advisor 	End of Easter break	Student
B	Revised research outline/proposal (1000-1500 words), <u>approved by advisor</u> , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised scope and delineation • Revised research question(s) • Research methods which will be used • How data will be collected, analysed and processed • Brief explanation of laboratory and field research, if applicable • Cover letter³ and questionnaire/structured interview questions if applicable 	<u>Latest</u> one week after last day of teaching.	Student and advisor
C	Approval from Ethics Review Board (Vísindasiðanefnd) and other permits obtained for the research, if applicable ⁴	Before data collection/ fieldwork starts. <i>Note that this is optional in most cases.</i>	Student and advisor
D	A master's thesis contract is signed.	Before data collection/ fieldwork starts. <i>Can be revised during thesis work if conditions change.</i>	Advisor and Director for Teaching and Education
E	Progress report (see Appendix 3).	One month before handing in first full draft	Advisor

Writing a master's thesis: Frame

Research Journal

Students must, from the beginning of their research, keep a concise and specific journal of their work. It will include an overview of all sources and data, how they are preserved, and their access and location as well as interviews, the identity of those interviewed, the subjects discussed, and anything which might later need to be recalled at short notice. Interviews provided orally should be recorded, transcribed, and eventually approved by the source. The research journal is normally not turned in with the thesis, but is an important

³ The University Centre of the Westfjords provides a template for cover letters.

⁴ See section: The thesis advisor.

source for confirmation and validity of student's research work. The program director, thesis advisor and reader may, when necessary, require the student's research journal.

Format

The thesis must be turned in in book form (A4 size), written in English. The University Centre of the Westfjords provides a template and other print directions that must be used when handing in a final print copy. Theses at the CMM master's program must have a standardized look.

Students can apply to the master's program committee to write in Icelandic. In such cases, the student must submit an argument as to why it is relevant to write the thesis in Icelandic. If a thesis is written in Icelandic, it has to have an English summary, approximately one page or 200 words. If a thesis is written in English, an Icelandic abstract is preferable, but not mandatory.

The thesis cannot be written in languages other than English or Icelandic.

Length

There is no set length or fixed scope for the master's thesis and the advisor will guide the student towards an appropriate length and approach. The length of the thesis may depend upon many factors, such as the approach used or the amount of supporting data included. However, depending on the nature of the research, a typical 45 ECTS thesis in book form might be expected to be about 60-100 pages long, based on 250-300 words per text page. Normally, appendices and references do not count towards the above number of pages.

Organization and style

The University Centre has a standardized master's thesis template. Students must follow the outline set by the template, which includes 1) the front page, 2) the title page, abstract, contents, index of tables, index of figures, acknowledgements, list of abbreviations, etc. 3) the body of the thesis and 4) the list of references. Further details can be found in the template.

Please consult relevant literature and thesis advisor for acceptable thesis-style writing.

Source citations and references

Care and diligence is necessary in the presentation of the material, source citations, and references in a master's thesis. For citation questions and a reference list, students should consult with their advisor. To ensure consistency, the APA Harvard reference guidelines are preferred.

Writing a master's thesis: Contents

Introduction

The purpose of the introduction is to present the project and to show why it is important. The introduction gives the reasons why the author chose to carry out this research and discusses the purpose the research will serve. In the introduction the student places the issue/problem/project into the context of relevant literature with a brief but critical examination of the state of knowledge in the field including a description of local settings/issues/gaps in the literature. It is important to include research frame, the project's aims and research question(s), and present arguments for the research question(s) and project's aims with reference to previous studies and research. Research questions should present enough information to be able to stand alone (self-contained). Methods should be briefly explained. Research limitations should be presented. At the end of the introduction there is a short description of the organization and contents of the paper.

Theoretical overview

In this section, the theoretical foundations of the project are discussed in depth and critically explored. It includes 1) definition and explanation of terms and concepts and 2) literature review (through description of the state of knowledge in the research field, it explains the importance of the current project and the knowledge and understanding that it hopes to contribute).

Research methods

This section describes the premises for the research methods selected and how the research was carried out: what was done and how it was done. A detailed explanation of the methods used, why they were chosen and

their limitations is a necessary part of this section. Any deviations from previously published methods should be precisely described and reasons for the deviation explained.

The goal of the methods section in a research paper is to give the reader the information needed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the research results. The methods, procedures and data analysis must be thoroughly and clearly written so that they are repeatable.

Results

Here the data analysis and results are presented systematically. They should be presented in the same order as stated in the introduction. The text of the paper should present the results systematically, and data and main outcomes should be presented in figures and tables⁵, if applicable.

Any lengthy presentations of detailed data should be placed in an appendix, which allows the data to be used to confirm the accuracy of descriptions, calculations, and other observations.

Discussion/conclusions

This section discusses, evaluates and interprets the project results. Results should be discussed in reference to the research questions or problems that were laid out in the introduction, regardless of whether answers to them were found or whether the goals which the researcher set were reached. It is necessary to show and describe internal relationships between the research results and highlight unexpected conclusions. The results and conclusions have to be put into context with the scope of project/research and limitations of the applied research methods. It is important to take care not to repeat the research project's results, which should have been fully presented in the previous section.

Discussion of findings is a critical debate of the author's principal contribution with the research project. It reflects its outcomes with the stated purpose in the introduction and relevant literature review. It implies possible input for reconstruction of knowledge and practical solutions. This section must also discuss further research opportunities, which problems remain and how they might be addressed.

Box 2: Learning outcomes for 45 ECTS master's thesis and oral defense

Upon the completion of the thesis, each student must have:

Knowledge

- acquired knowledge through own desktop-based and/or field-based research
- ability to provide arguments for, and defend, their own findings, as well as providing constructive criticism for other people's findings and recommendations
- knowledge of science ethics, both in regards to their own scientific subjects and other members of the scientific community (e.g. plagiarism)

Skills

- ability to collect, analyze and evaluate scientific data as well and the quality of published work
- ability to develop projects and place them in context by applying methods based on scientific theories, policy instruments and management tools
- ability to effectively apply research methods and implement small-scale research projects
- ability to understand research and research findings

Competences

- developed the necessary learning skills and independence for further studies
- ability to initiate and lead projects within the field of coastal and marine management and be responsible for the work of individuals and groups
- ability to communicate complex scientific information, challenges and findings within the field of coastal and marine management to scholars as well as to general audiences
- capability of presenting and describing scientific issues and research findings using analytical and methodological terminology
- ability to make decisions in an independent, professional manner and defend them
- ability to present statistical information using tables and figures in a clear and effective manner

⁵ Figures and tables should be presented independently. However, they must be referred to in the main text. Figures and tables are to be numbered sequentially and must have legends and captions (including a title). Captions should present enough information to be able to stand alone (be self-contained).

Submission and graduation

First full draft handed in to the advisor

By the end of the student's fourth semester she/he is expected to hand in the first full draft of the thesis to the advisor and the program director. The due date for handing in the first full draft of the thesis is December 17th. Final full draft (which is graded) is handed in a month later (see below).

Last corrections of full draft

Within three weeks from December 17th (that is January 7th at the latest) the thesis advisor, through the program director, will announce to the student if the thesis is acceptable and fulfils the minimum requirements for the degree. At this point, the advisor can propose final corrections before examination. If prompted, the student should, in accordance with the advisor, make requested final adjustments to the thesis. If the student feels that the advisor's final requests and comments are not in accordance with previous guidance and comments, and cannot be address in approximately ten days, the student should notify the program director.

Final full draft handed in to advisor and reader

Two weeks before the submission date, the program director consults the advisor to decide whether the thesis will be ready by the due date, and thus, whether nomination of a reader should start.

When it has become evident that a student will enter the examination phase, a reader is formally nominated by the master's program committee. As previously stated, the guiding rules are: If the advisor is not an approved CMM instructor, the reader must be an approved CMM instructor (internal). If the advisor does not have a PhD, the reader must have a PhD.

The thesis is handed in again in two print copies, one to the reader and one to the thesis advisor, and mailed latest January 17th or the next working day after January 17th. Note: Print copies sent to advisor and reader at this stage should not be in spiral binding or other means of binding. An electronic version (PDF) is also emailed to the program director, the advisor and the reader.

At all stages of the master's examination (handing in of first full draft, final full draft and final print copy for approval), the program director must be co-copied.

If the nominated reader is not comfortable with proceeding after receiving the full draft, the student will be notified by the program director as soon as it comes up.

The formal evaluation and grading (for the full draft) needs to be done in a specific template/format; see appendix.

Evaluation work of advisor and reader is supposed to be finished before February 10th with a written evaluation of the thesis. The evaluation will be made in accordance with the evaluation guidelines given in this document and applicable learning outcomes for the thesis (see Box 2).

The advisor and the reader hand in a written evaluation of the thesis for the student based on a template provided by the program director. They are encouraged to give as detailed comments as possible.⁶

Along with the written evaluation, the student receives a grade breakdown for the thesis work. The grade registration form is eventually endorsed with the advisor's, reader's and program director's signatures. If the reader and the advisor cannot agree on the evaluation, the final grade will be an average of the grades they submit (if the student has two advisors, their evaluations jointly count as one vote of equal value to that of the reader).

Presentation and defence: Introduction of thesis topic and findings

In order to graduate, students doing a 45 ECTS project are obliged to give a presentation, open to the public, the advisor and the reader, where main findings of the project are introduced. This presentation and defence is a **requirement** for graduation, and counts separately as 10% of the final thesis grade. The student is

⁶ Ideally, print copies with written comments should be scanned and sent electronically as a PDF-file to the program director, who forwards the document to the student. Alternatively, the print copy can be sent by regular mail to UW, where it will be scanned and sent as a PDF-file to the student.

obliged to be available for presenting and defending his/her thesis during the thesis examination period, and cannot schedule periods where he/she will be unavailable during this time.

Timing and organization of the lecture will be set in cooperation with the program director, ideally soon after submitting the thesis for examination. The student gives the lecture at UW, either in person at the Centre or through a video-conference system, Skype, or similar. The student is expected to highlight the main aspects of the project, research question(s), methods, major findings, practical value, academic value, and summary of main conclusions (including strengths and weaknesses), in a 35 minute lecture supported with PowerPoint slides. Following the lecture, 30 minutes are left for questions and discussion: first questions and comments from advisor and reader, and then moving to the audience. The event is led by the program director.

Last corrections and preparation for final print copy

If the final evaluation is conditional in any way, requirements for revision must be laid out by the advisor and reader with the utmost clarity at that time. The student receives comments in a Word document via e-mail from the advisor and reader. Ideally, the previous print copies already received, with comments, should be returned to the UW.

If billed, postage costs are at the expense of the student.

The student is responsible for having access to his/her University Centre e-mail account during the master's examination period.

Nine (9) days after receiving evaluation reports from both advisor and reader, approximately mid-February, the student provides necessary corrections. The thesis advisor and the reader will then receive the revised copy and, if the requirements of conditions are met, notify the program director by email that the thesis is satisfactory for the amount of 45 ECTS.

Reading evaluation reports and responding adequately to requests for last corrections of the final copy for print is a **requirement** for graduation, but does not have a bearing on the thesis grade.

Handing in the final copy of the thesis and completion of the program

The final master's thesis must be submitted in PDF-format to the program director, and must be confirmed by the printer before the given deadline (see table for deadlines). It must be printed in triplicate format. One copy is for the University of Akureyri and two for the University Centre of the Westfjords. The printing of three copies is at the student's expense and the student is responsible for all contact with the printer regarding his or her thesis.

Handing in final print copies is a **requirement** for graduation.

Before graduation, a student has to submit an e-copy of the approved thesis to the Skemman database⁷. A member of UW staff provides students with sufficient guidelines.

Handing in the final copy of the thesis to the Skemman database is a **requirement** for graduation.

Upon request, a preliminary confirmation of completed 120 ECTS studies at master's level, a transcript of completed courses, can be sent by the director of teaching and education to students as soon as they are issued by the University of Akureyri.

Graduation ceremony

The University of Akureyri confers and awards the MRM degree. Students may want to attend the graduation ceremony in Akureyri in June. Furthermore, the University Centre may host its own graduation ceremony in the Westfjords, typically on June 17th.

If a student is not in the position to attend either ceremony, the graduation certificate, applicable learning outcomes for the program and a copy of the thesis (if not collected earlier) is sent to the student. The University Centre has permission to charge for delivery.

⁷ Skemman is the online institutional repository for all Icelandic universities. It houses students' digital theses and dissertations as well as articles and other research material from the universities' academic staff. The National and University Library supports a policy of open access to research made possible by public funding.

Extended deadline

Students can apply for an extended deadline of three months, whether before or during the examination phase. If granted, the following deadlines apply for the second deadline:

Step		First deadline	Second deadline (if granted)	Responsibility for meeting deadline
1	First full draft handed in for advisor.	December 17	March 12	Student
2	First full draft due back from advisor	January 7	March 26	Advisor
3	Revised full draft handed in for examination.	January 17	April 12	Student
4	Evaluation reports, specific comments and grade back from advisor and reader.	February 10	May 5	Advisor and reader
5	Revised final copy for print handed in for confirmation of it being satisfactory as a 45 ECTS thesis.	Mid-February - after receiving evaluation material from supervisory committee	Mid-May - after receiving evaluation material from supervisory committee	Student
6	After receiving confirmation, three (3) print copies are handed in to UW. A fourth copy is for the student and is optional.	February 28	May 28	Student
7	After receiving confirmation, student hands in an electronic copy of thesis to Skemman database.	March 28	May 28	Student
	Graduation ceremony in Akureyri (if preferred)	Second Saturday in June each year ⁸	Second Saturday in June each year	
	Graduation ceremony in Ísafjörður (if hosted)	June 17	June 17	

Note: A student who fails to complete step 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7 cannot graduate.

Publication

Within a month of graduation, titles and abstracts will be available on the University Centre's homepage. Students' entire theses will be made available on the University Centre homepage and Skemman database within one year of graduation. If the thesis findings are intended for publication in a scientific journal or comparable publications, the master's program committee can allow exception from publication on the University Centre's web site and Skemman database for a limited time, usually a year.

⁸ The University of Akureyri only graduates students once each year, in June

Thesis evaluation and grading: Frame of reference

In general, students who complete a 45 ECTS final project are pursuing a research degree and their final project involves scholarly research. In these projects a lot is expected of students in terms of research ability and methodological sophistication.

The advisor and reader read through the thesis, evaluate it and return a written evaluation that will form a base for its final grade. In evaluating a thesis, they must consider all the aspects outlined in the weighing of the thesis (see next page), as well as the thesis's learning outcomes (see Box 2). In addition, the following questions reflect the general criteria for evaluating master's theses:

1. Is the thesis topic introduced at the beginning of the thesis in a satisfactory way? Is the choice of topic and its importance justified?
2. Are the goals of the project clear? Are the questions or problems that the project attempts to resolve explained clearly?
3. Is the project placed in its theoretical context (or its historical or social context if appropriate)? Is the theoretical framework of the topic explained well? Are the unresolved issues connected to the subject matter discussed?
4. Does the author explain his or her connection to the topic and the way in which his or her perspectives and position might influence the work?
5. Are sources chosen and used appropriately?
6. Does the author clearly explain the research methods used, how the research was carried out, the participants in it and how the data was processed?
7. Is the data handled and processed in a careful, analytical, and critical way? Are conclusions drawn with due caution? Does the author explain the limitations of the project?
8. Do the data analysis sections give an informative description of the research results?
9. How good is the presentation of the material? Is the thesis organized in a logical way with good transitions between sections? Does the thesis form a unified whole? Are its goals achieved and its research questions answered? Are the most important results and lessons from the research summarized in a conclusion?
10. How is the writing and layout of the thesis? Is visual information well laid out and presented, if applicable?
11. Does the author demonstrate creativity and inventiveness, or shed new light on the subject? What is the value of the project? Does it make a contribution to knowledge in the field?
12. Are ethical matters or issues discussed, if applicable?

Criteria besides those mentioned here may depend on the nature of the subject matter. For example, differing criteria may apply to projects which involve qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Weighting

The following list gives more detailed directions on the grading aspects and weight of each part. An evaluation form can be found in the appendix.

The reader and the advisor submit to the program director a written evaluation of the thesis, and explain their reasoning consistent with the norms of the thesis evaluation. If the program director judges that master's projects have been graded in an inconsistent way, he/she makes suggestions in writing, explains the reasons and communicates them to the advisor and the reader. The advisor and the reader must reply to the program director's suggestions in writing before the grade can be posted, regardless of whether they put them into action.

As soon as grades arrive from the advisor and reader, the program director calculates the average, rectifies grading if needed (in consultation with reader and advisor), and seeks confirmation from the advisor and reader. Then the program director communicates the grades to UW's administrative director of education and teaching. Finally, the program director notifies the student of the grade. Typically, a student receives a grade for a final project a few days after he/she receives evaluation reports.

Grading

Consistency in grading is very important. The following frame of reference should be used:

Grade	Description	
10.0 (97.5-10)	Superb	Shows exceptional ability.
9,5 (92.5-97.4)	Excellent +	Exceeds basic requirements by far.
9.0 (87.5-92.4)	Excellent -	Exceeds basic requirements by far.
8.5 (82.5-87.4)	Very good +	Meets the requirements well.
8.0 (77.5-82.4)	Very good -	Meets the requirements well.
7.5 (72.5-77.4)	Good +	Meets the requirements.
7.0 (67.5-72.4)	Good -	Meets the requirements.
6.5 (62.5-67.4)	Fair +	Somewhat more than the minimum.
6.0 (57.5-62.4)	Fair -	Somewhat more than the minimum.
5.5 (52.5-57.4)	Acceptable +	Meets minimum requirements.*
5.0 (47.5-52.4)	Acceptable -	Meets minimum requirements.*
0-4.5 (0-47.4)	Unsatisfactory	Does not fulfil minimum requirements.

*Note: Students are advised to seek information regarding combined minimum average grade for courses and final project. If a combined average grade is lower than 6.0, an MRM-degree cannot be awarded.

Thesis	Weight
Research frame, scope, research questions.	10%
Theoretical foundation, literature review	10%
Choice of sources and methods	5%
Survey, data collection	15%
Project findings, academic and practical value	20%
Analysis, insights, discussion and conclusions, proposed further research	25%
Overall organisation and mechanics. Overall clarity and focus. Tables and figures.	15%
Presentation, defence	
Oral presentation and defence	10%
Calculation	
Combined grade (y) for:	
a. thesis (100%)	
b. presentation and defence (10%)	110%
$y / 110 * 100 =$ <p><i>final grade for thesis</i></p>	

Appendices

Appendix 1: Master's thesis evaluation form

Project title (in English):

Student:

Evaluation performed by:

Date:

Grade: See grade registration form

Evaluation category:	Well done:	In need of improvement:
Research frame, scope, research questions (10%)		
Theoretical foundation, literature review (10%)		
Choice of sources and methods (5%)		
Survey and data collection (15%)		

Project findings, academic and practical value (20%)		
Analysis, insights, discussion and conclusions, proposed further research (25%)		
Overall organisation and mechanics. Overall clarity and focus. Tables and figures. (15%)		
Oral presentation and defence (10%)		

University Centre of the Westfjords – Master's thesis evaluation form

Project title (in English):

Student:

Evaluation performed by:

Date:

Grade: See grade registration form

Specific comments (please refer to page numbers):

Appendix 2: Grade registration form



Grade registration form - 45 ECTS master's thesis

Coastal and Marine Management

Name of student:

Kennitala (ID):

	Weight (max)	Score - Advisor	Score - Reader	Average	%
Research design, theor. foundations	25	0,00	0,00	0	0,0%
Survey, data collection	15	0,00	0,00	0	0,0%
Findings, value	20	0,00	0,00	0	0,0%
Analysis, discussion, conclusions	25	0,00	0,00	0	0,0%
Overall organisation and mech.	15	0,00	0,00	0	0,0%
Total	100	0	0	0	
Master's defence	10	0	0	0	0,0%

	Weight (%)	Average
Thesis	100	0,00
Public presentation and master's def.	10	0,00
Combined grade thesis + pres. and def.	110	0,00
Combined grade / 110 * 100		0,00
Final grade for thesis		<input type="text"/>

Supervisory Committee, Signatures:

DATE/YEAR

xxxxx, Advisor

DATE/YEAR

xxxxxx, Reader

DATE/YEAR

xxxxx, Program Director

Appendix 3: Thesis Progress Report

Thesis Progress Report

First round, due November 17th 2015

Working title of thesis (45 ECTS):

Name of student:

Advisor:

To: Dagný Arnarsdóttir, Program Director (dagny@uwestfjords.is) or via mail: Háskólasetur Vestfjarða, Suðurgata 12, 400 Ísafjörður

Cc: Kristín Ósk Jónasdóttir, Director of Education and Teaching (kristin@uwestfjords.is)

My current advisory role started on _____ (month, year)

My responsibilities are shared/not shared with another advisor. My advisory role counts for ___%.

Means of communication to discuss the student's thesis project:

- Email
- Meetings in person
- Skype video conferences/Phone

As of today, how many hours have you spent guiding the student, including preparation time?

A brief description of the project:

Has the research been fully developed/designed, including research frame and research questions?

Has the student collected all primary data?

Has the student collected all secondary data?

Has the student started the writing process?

Has the student submitted regular drafts to you for comments?

In your opinion, will the student be able to hand in a full final draft for last revision to you before December 17?

Other comments:

Date

Signature

Important deadlines

December 17: Student hands in full final draft for last revision

January 7: The full final draft with comments returned to student who has ten days to address the advisor's final comments

January 17: Examination starts, student submits thesis to advisor(s) and reader. Thesis defence scheduled

January 17 to February 10: Communication with reader and writing of the evaluation report

February 10: Evaluation reports and thesis with comments returned to student

- Last corrections made by student, focussing on errors in thesis mechanics
- Student hands in a final copy in a PDF format to thesis supervisory committee, intended for print
- The advisor(s) and the reader confirm via email if final, intended print copy of the thesis is satisfactory and ready for print
- Student has the thesis printed