

## **Generic assessment guide for SUM4091 - Master's Thesis in Culture, Environment and Sustainability, spring 2019**

The program's interdisciplinarity is both a strength and a challenge for students as they research and write their theses. Students are invited to conduct their research with a broader and more critical understanding of their chosen subject than MA candidates who are used to monodisciplinary approaches and a fixed formula as to how to structure their research and their thesis. The thesis supervisor plays an important role in influencing the research design and the organization of the thesis itself. For example, a thesis within the eco-philosophical or cultural studies tradition might not have a 'methods' section, whereas the latter is usually quite important for a dissertation highlighting the social science approach. However, we require that the thesis be rigorous, as regards both logical argument and empirical basis, while recognizing that what counts as rigor differs somewhat between disciplines. We also expect that the thesis is well-written and demonstrates solid scholarship: it should reflect knowledge of the subject; have an element of originality (original voice); and be well argued. These points should form the basic criteria for evaluating the thesis and assessing a grade.

### **A thesis ought to consist of:**

- Problem statement; and clear research question(s);
- Coherent set of aims and objectives;
- Critical overview of the knowledge concerning this problem, using the (most) relevant literature;
- Lucid conceptual framework;
- Critical evaluation of the sources used;
- Description and justification of the research methods used;
- An analytically based presentation of the collected data or material under scrutiny, and an analysis of its implications for the research problem in accordance with the theoretical framework;
- Conclusions, including reflections on the added value of the study and potential contribution to knowledge on the topic;
- List of references

A more detailed assessment list can be found below:

### **A**

The highest mark. An excellent performance, clearly outstanding. The candidate demonstrates excellent judgment and high degree of independent thinking regarding the use of sources, analysis and presentation.

The candidate demonstrates excellent command of the methods, theories and concepts that needed to be taken into account to answer the research question posed in the thesis. The candidate shows an outstanding ability to apply the knowledge acquired during the process of writing the thesis in a remarkable and critical way when presenting, analyzing and discussing the findings of the thesis. The thesis documents advanced analytical skills, excellent

understanding of different concepts and theories and a high degree of creativity and independent and critical thinking. The student has a deep understanding of the significance and challenges of interdisciplinarity. References and sources are clearly incorporated in the students' text and narrative. The thesis is very well argued and well written.

Grade A is awarded for an outstanding academic thesis that shows an independent approach to the use of sources, analysis and presentation. An A-grade thesis should score high on all criteria of evaluation:

**The problem statement** should be clearly formulated and have clear relevance to the current status of knowledge in the relevant field.

**The theoretical framework and perspectives** should demonstrate an excellent understanding of relevant theory. The thesis should make active use of theory and concept relevant for the topic and be accompanied by a critical, independent and analytical discussion of the academic literature in the field.

**The research methodology and methods** should be presented in a clear manner, establishing direct relevance to the problem statement together with a clear operationalization of the research question(s).

**The empirical work** and primary and/or secondary sources should be utilized very well.

**The analysis** provides an excellent and reflective discussion of academic issues relating to the material, and shows an academically mature and independent ability to analyse and reflect on academic issues.

**The structure** of the thesis is very good, and connects the problem statement, theoretical discussion, empirical analysis and the conclusions.

**The language** is clear and well formulated and free from grammatical and stylistic errors.

**The References** have no significant omissions and displays wide scope.

## **B**

The second best mark. A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates very good judgement, a very good degree of independent thinking, regarding the use of sources, analysis and presentation. The candidate demonstrates sound mastery of the methods, theories and concepts that needed to be taken into account to answer the research question posed in the thesis. The candidate shows a very good ability to apply the knowledge acquired during the process of writing the thesis in a critical way when presenting, analyzing and discussing the findings of the thesis. The thesis documents advanced analytical skills, good understanding of different concepts and theories and a high degree of creativity and independent and critical thinking. The student has an advanced understanding of the significance of interdisciplinarity. References and sources are clearly incorporated in the students' text and narrative. The thesis is well argued and well written.

**The problem statement** should be clearly formulated and with a sound basis in the most significant literature in the field.

**The theoretical framework and perspectives** should demonstrate a broad knowledge of academic literature in the field; demonstrates independent discussion of and insight into theory, to the extent relevant to the topic.

**The research methodology and methods** should be presented in a clear manner, establishing direct relevance to the problem statement together with a discussion of strengths and weaknesses of chosen research method.

**The empirical work** and primary and/or secondary sources should be well utilized.

**The analysis** provides a reflective discussion of academic issues relating to the material, and shows a competent and independent ability to analyse and reflect on academic issues.

**The structure** of the thesis is good, and connects the problem statement, theoretical discussion, empirical analysis and the conclusions.

**The language** is good and free from grammatical and stylistic errors.

**The References** have no significant errors or omissions.

## C

Grade C is awarded to a thesis that shows a good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgment and independent thinking in most areas of the thesis. It is awarded for a consistently good academic thesis based on independent research with a sound basis in the most significant literature in the field and which, in addition to being satisfactorily formulated, makes satisfactory use of empirical observations, research method and analysis

**The problem statement** should be clearly formulated and with a basis in the most significant literature in the field.

**The theoretical framework and perspectives** shows awareness of necessary theoretical concepts and ability to apply them, and displays knowledge of relevant academic literature.

**The research methodology and methods** is presented, discussed and connected to the problem statement.

**The empirical work** and primary and/or secondary sources are adequately utilized.

**The analysis** provides a discussion of academic issues relating to the material, and shows competence in ability to reflect on academic issues.

**The structure** of the thesis connects the problem statement, theoretical discussion, empirical analysis and the conclusions in a satisfying manner.

**The language** is satisfactory, with no major errors or deficiencies.

**The References** have no significant errors.

## D

Grade D is awarded a thesis that has significant defects, but which is of serviceable quality. While a D-grade thesis will have obvious weaknesses, also in relation to evaluation criteria, the thesis will nevertheless perform strongly in some respects. D denotes a satisfactory, but below-average grade. It is a satisfactory performance but has significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates a limited degree of judgment and independent thinking. The student shows rather superficial knowledge of literature needed to be taken into account to answer the research question formulated in the thesis. The candidate does present an adequate overview of the state of the arts or in-depth understanding of the topic/discussion. Analytical skills and independent thinking is below average.

**The problem statement** should be clearly

**The theoretical framework and perspectives** displays knowledge of relevant academic literature.

**The research methodology and methods** is presented, and connected to the problem statement.

**The empirical work** and primary and/or secondary sources are utilized.

**The analysis** shows some ability to reflect on academic issues.

**The structure** of the thesis connects the problem statement, empirical analysis and the conclusions in a satisfying manner.

**The language** is satisfactory, with no major errors or deficiencies.

**The References** are provided, but may have errors and omissions.

**Grade E** is awarded a thesis that merely satisfies the minimum requirements, but that is still an attempt of some quality. The candidate demonstrates a very limited degree of judgment and independent thinking. An E-grade thesis will have obvious weaknesses with regard to most, but not all, assessment criteria.

**Grade F** is awarded for a thesis that fails to satisfy the minimum requirements and which evidences inadequate academic performance. An F-grade thesis will be weak in relation to all criteria or unsatisfactory in key areas.