

Regulations for master's theses for the international master's programmes¹ at the Faculty of Law

Adopted by the Programme Council for Master Programmes at the Faculty of Law 9 December 2014

Section 1 Introduction

1. Students must submit a substantial written work (master's theses) as part of the LL.M. or M.Phil. degrees.
2. Students may only submit a master's theses in the programme to which they have been admitted.
3. The master's theses for the LL.M. degrees carries 30 credits. For the M.Phil. degree, the students can choose to write a thesis that carries 30 or 60 credits.
4. The students must have completed a minimum of 30 credits towards their degree before a master's thesis may be submitted.
5. Guidance is mandatory for a master's thesis.

Section 2 Learning objectives

1. The objective of the independent work is to ensure the academic level of the higher education.
2. Work on a master's thesis should teach students to write an independent presentation of a legal or partially legal subject within a suitable time framework and scope.
3. For the LL.M. and M.Phil. degrees, the master's thesis shall be written for lawyers (or corresponding specialists for the interdisciplinary M.Phil. degree) without any special knowledge of the particular subject area, and it shall be well documented by the student having familiarized him/herself with and applied the general rules for references and the reference list. Emphasis will be placed on the ability to formulate clear problems, conduct a relevant discussion, and demonstrate reasoning. It is not necessary for the master's thesis to provide new academic knowledge in the subject area.
4. It is the students' own responsibility to seek and make use of guidance and to ensure progression in their work. The formalized guidance on the part of the Faculty is limited to a defined number of hours. Students may make use of other guidance, provided they remain within the scope of independent work. Supervisors will not be remunerated for guidance beyond the formalized scope on the part of the Faculty (See Section 5.4 for more details on the formalized scope of the guidance).

Section 3 Subject matter

¹ HUMR = M.Phil. in Theory and Practice of Human Rights

ICTL = LL.M. in Information and Communication Technology Law

MARL = LL.M. in Maritime Law

PIL = LL.M. in Public International Law



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The subject matter for the LL.M degrees may be legal or partially legal, and it may have a perspective-based approach (such as the philosophy of law, legal history, sociology of law, criminology or the economics of law, and be related to the main perspective of the LL.M. degree). The subject matter for the M.Phil. degree may be legal, interdisciplinary or belong to one of the other disciplines or combinations that qualify for admission to the programme.

The subject is chosen by the students and approved in consultation with a supervisor that has been approved by the programme.

Section 4 Scope

1. Individual thesis
 - a) An individual 30-credit master's thesis should contain approximately 15,000 words, but not exceed 18,000 words. Theses with an interdisciplinary subject written for the M.Phil. degree should contain approximately 17,000 words, but not exceed 20,000 words.
 - b) An individual 60-credit master's thesis may contain a maximum of 40,000 words (applies to the M.Phil. degree, cf. Section 1.3).
 - c) The preface, table of contents, indexes, summary, reference list and appendices are not included. The footnotes and endnotes shall be included.
 - d) Theses that exceed the maximum limit will not be evaluated.
2. Group thesis
 - a) For 30-credit theses, the master's thesis may be prepared jointly by a group of up to two persons. A group may consist of students across the international master's programmes when approved by the supervisor(s) and the programme directors.
 - b) Group theses are submitted as collective work in which the evaluation is made jointly for both members of the group (joint and several assessment of thesis). Each individual author must be able to account for their contribution to the thesis.
 - c) If the group cooperation does not work out, the students may choose to change to an individual thesis.
 - d) Students who write a group thesis must agree in advance on how they will proceed if the cooperation does not work out. They are obliged to draft an agreement on the distribution of materials used in the thesis. The agreement must be submitted when they are assigned a supervisor.
 - e) For group theses, the thesis must not exceed 27,000 words.
 - f) The preface, table of contents, indexes, summary, reference list and appendices are not included. The footnotes and endnotes shall be included.
 - g) Theses that exceed the maximum limit will not be evaluated.

Section 5 Guidance

1. In order to receive guidance, the students must be admitted to the programme of study and instruction and have a confirmed curriculum that includes a master's thesis for the semester in question.

2. The students themselves choose when they will receive guidance, but students should allow their supervisors an adequate amount of time to read the work. See nevertheless Section 1, Subsection 5.
3. The guidance quota may only be used once during the programme of study.
4. For 30-credit master's theses, up to 15 hours of guidance are offered. The framework for guidance includes the time used by the supervisor for preparation, reading, commenting and personal contact, which may be by e-mail, phone or a meeting between the supervisor and the student. Supervisors allocate and distribute these hours at their discretion. The student and supervisor shall meet for at least one guidance interview, unless this is not practically possible. For 60-credit master's theses, up to 30 hours of guidance are offered. For 30-credit group master's theses, up to 25 hours of guidance are offered. The limitation of the amount of guidance applies to the total amount of guidance provided by any prior and current supervisors appointed or approved by the programme, and it does not apply to guidance and help from others.
5. If a student has not found an approved supervisor him/herself, a supervisor will be assigned by the individual who is administratively responsible for master's theses in consultation with the programme director. The individual who is administratively responsible will appoint a supervisor according to the subject of the thesis. Permanent employment or qualifications for an associate professorship are not required for supervisors. External supervisors may be used, provided the requirements pursuant to Section 8 have been met.
6. The students themselves are responsible for contacting the supervisor to agree on a schedule for the guidance. See nevertheless Section 1, Subsection 5.
7. If desired, some of the guidance for individual theses may take place in groups. The time spent on such groups will be divided by the number of members in the group, so that the teacher's guidance hours do not become less overall.
8. If there are special reasons for doing so, students may be allowed to change their supervisors in the same semester that they are to submit their thesis, with the same submission deadline. The application shall be submitted to the administrative who is responsible for master's theses in the individual programme. The supervisor will not be informed that the student has applied for replacement until the student permits this him/herself.

Section 6 Registration and submission deadlines

1. Students register for a master's thesis through the StudentWeb in the same manner as ordinary examinations at the Faculty by the stated deadlines (1 February for the spring semester and 1 September for the autumn semester). The withdrawal deadline rules are the same as other examinations.
2. The deadlines for the submission of master's theses to be included in the ordinary conclusion of the semester are as follows:
 - a) Master's theses (both 30 and 60 credits) must be submitted by 1 December in the autumn semester for the ICTL, PIL, HUMR and MARL programmes.
 - b) In the spring semester the deadline for all the international programmes is 15 May.

Section 7 Submission

1. In order to submit a master's thesis, it is a condition that the student has confirmed a curriculum that includes a master's thesis for the semester in question.
2. Theses are to be submitted electronically according to the template defined by the Faculty. They are to be submitted in a PDF-format to DUO through StudentWeb and Inspira.
3. Theses are to be submitted with candidate numbers without the name of the candidate.
4. When a master's thesis has been submitted for evaluation elsewhere, it cannot be submitted for evaluation at the Faculty of Law in Oslo. Exceptions may be made to this rule in cases where there are formal agreements regarding so-called double degrees between the Faculty of Law and other educational institutions.

Section 8 Evaluation

1. A master's thesis that has been submitted for evaluation may not be withheld from evaluation.
2. The following requirements apply to external examiners:
 - a. An external examiner must have achieved a law degree or master's degree in jurisprudence at least two years prior to participation in the evaluation, with the following grades:
 - cand.jur. degree in accordance with the programme requirements of 1984 or earlier: 2.65 or better.
 - cand.jur. degree in accordance with the programme requirements after 1996: Grade of A for the common part.
 - master's degree: at least four A grades in the third, fourth or fifth programme year or a corresponding level, and a grade of at least B for any master's thesis.
 - b. An external examiner who has a relevant background and experience in the field of law that is the subject matter of the master's thesis and does not meet the requirements under letter a may be appointed upon evaluation by the programme director in consultation with the individual who is administratively responsible for the master's programmes.
3. Master's theses are to be evaluated by two examiners, who must be approved by the programme director.
 - a. The following applies for the MARL and PIL programmes: Master's theses must be evaluated by an internal and an external examiner, or two external examiners. The supervisor will be one of the examiners. A second examiner (examiner 1) will be appointed by nomination from the supervisor in consultation with the individual who is administratively responsible for the programmes.
 - b. The following applies for the HUMR and ICTL programmes: Master's theses must be evaluated by an internal and an external examiner, or two external examiners. Examiners will be appointed by nomination from the supervisor in consultation with the individual who is administratively responsible for the programmes. None of the examiners should have been a supervisor for the thesis, but if there are academic reasons for doing so, the supervisor may be appointed as the second examiner for the thesis by the programme director in consultation with the individual who is administratively responsible. The examiners may contact the supervisor for information on the thesis and the guidance provided. The supervisor, however, may not contact the examiners in order to provide information.

4. Master's theses are evaluated by an examination committee. Examiner 1 will submit his/her recommendation first. The supervisor must not disclose the students' identity to the examiners.
5. If there is disagreement between the examiners, the director supervisor will appoint two new examiners in consultation with the individual who is administratively responsible for a new evaluation.
6. Grades for master`s theses are awarded on a scale of A to E for passing grades and F for a failing grade.
7. Master's theses are graded on the basis of a complex evaluation of various qualities². What should be decisive for the grade awarded is the overall impression of the candidate's accomplishments, viewed in relation to the subject of the master's theses. Accordingly, no fixed rules are prescribed for what distinguishes the individual grades or what qualities count the most.

In assessing what grade is to be awarded, emphasis will be placed on the following skills in the overall evaluation of the master's thesis that is to be made:

1. Knowledge and overview of the subject matter of the thesis and relevant background material;
2. Ability to find and formulate legal problems, including making distinctions between various problems and questions of principal and secondary importance, as well as the ability to use the questions in the proper context;
3. Ability to discuss questions in an academically justifiable and perceptive manner, and make use of the legal materials and facts at hand in accordance with the methodical principles of the legal discipline. This also encompasses an eye for what is significant in relation to what is insignificant or irrelevant and distinguishing between what is certain or doubtful, as well as a sensible dimensioning of the choice of materials and proportions in the paper;
4. An eye for the legal policy dimensions within the subject matter of the thesis, without, however, losing track of the boundary between the importance of assessments with a view to the current law and the future law;
5. Autonomy in the ability to reason critically and independently in relation to the teaching materials and instruction that are available; and
6. Language skills, descriptive powers, level of accuracy and systematic organization, including well-organized references.

These skills will be part of the overall academic assessment to varying degrees, and they have not been exhaustively specified or prioritized.

8. The rules for the right of appeal are the same as for other examinations at the University of Oslo. In the event of an appeal, group theses will be subject to a joint and several reassessment of the grade.

Section 9 Oral examination for a 60-credit master's thesis

² Section 7 is based on the Instructions for Examiners: Detailed descriptions for legal subjects. Guidelines prescribed by the deans of the Faculty of Law by the authority of National Faculty Meeting for Legal Subjects on 24 April 2003.

1. An oral examination will be held prior to awarding the final grade for 60-credit master's theses.
2. Students will be given a preliminary grade prior to the oral examination.
3. The final grade will be awarded after the oral examination.
4. For oral examinations, candidates will be examined by both examiners in topics associated with the thesis or its subject matter.
5. Oral examinations should also verify that the stated author(s) have written the thesis.

Section 10 New evaluation

Master's theses that have been evaluated may not be submitted for a new evaluation in a revised form, unless a grade of F (fail) was awarded.

The submission of a new master's thesis in the same programme of study is not permitted.

Section 11 Amendment of the type of thesis or subject

1. In consultation with the supervisor for master's theses, students may change their goal from a 60-credit master's thesis to a 30-credit master's thesis.
2. The thesis writing will subsequently follow the rules for 30-credit master's theses.
3. Master's thesis supervisors may approve a transition from a 30-credit to 60-credit master's thesis within the rules that apply to 60-credit master's theses. This does not apply for the international LLM programs, they only have the option to write a 30 credit thesis.
4. Students may change their subjects in consultation with their supervisors. This does not give entitlement to expanded guidance.

Section 12 Language

Both 30-credit and 60-credit master's theses shall be written in English. Oral examinations for 60-credit master's theses are held in English.

Section 13 Authority to amend

The Programme Committee for Masters in Jurisprudence (PMR) or the Committee Chairperson may adopt amendments to the regulations.