HOW TO WRITE A MASTER THESIS?

PRACTICAL INFORMATION – THE WRITING OF A MASTER’S THESIS IN MARITIME LAW
TEACHING GOALS

The purpose of your thesis is to develop, exercise and demonstrate your expertise in the particular field of your thesis, as well as of your general scholarly competence.

Your thesis should be an independent contribution to scholarly knowledge and discourse.

Teaching goals II

The work with the thesis should teach the student to write:

An independent account of a legal subject within an appropriate frame of scope and time.
Teaching goals III

In other words you are supposed to:

• Engage in research work
• Learn how to find relevant material
• Learn how to analyse the material
• Learn how to make a systematic presentation of the material, your findings and analysis

Learning Goals

• You are going to learn how to be a project manager.
• You are going to steer the process!
DEADLINE

• Deadline for delivery of master’s thesis:
  1 November

THESIS SCOPE

• The thesis should contain approx. 15,000 words, but not exceed 18,000 words

• Note! Theses that exceed the maximum word content will not be graded! (or they will grade it, but you will receive a less good result…..)
Thesis scope II

Included in the word count:

• The main text of the thesis (the 'body'- all the chapters) and footnotes.

• Not included in the word count:
  Pre-face, acknowledgements, table of contents, abbreviations, registers, bibliography and annexes.

THESIS TEMPLATE

• You are required to use a set template!
• You will face problems if you don’t!
• Open the template and save it on your local disk (m: area)

template-thesis (.rtf)
SUPERVISION

Supervision is mandatory!

Responsibilities of the student:

• It is the student’s responsibility to seek and make the best of guidance as well as to assure the progress of the work.

• It is the student’s responsibility to contact the supervisor in order to coordinate a plan for the supervision.
Supervision III
Responsibilities of the supervisor:

The supervisor shall give you **15 hours** of guidance.

**NOTE!** In these 15 hours is included: Face to face contact, contact via e-mail and telephone, reading drafts and preparing comments.

Supervision IV
Responsibilities of the supervisor:

Your supervisor shall give you proper guidance.

You can expect that the supervisor can help you with:

• Formulating the title,
• Define the topic,
• Give you advice when your topic is too wide/too narrow,
• Inform you about relevant books and articles
Supervision V

The relation Student – Supervisor

The relation between your supervisor and yourself is to be like a work relation.
Supervision VI

The relation Student – Supervisor

When the relation Student – Supervisor don’t work out...

No matter the reason, if you experience that the relationship with your supervisor is not working, you should approach the study advisor immediately so that a new supervisor can be appointed.

If you experience serious problems, like religious, racial or sexual harassment, the first supervisor will not be informed about the change of supervisor until this is approved by the student.

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

The following rules apply when you deliver your thesis for grading and publishing at the UiO:

I. The thesis should not have been used for another exam at the University of Oslo, nor another higher institution abroad or in Norway

II. The thesis should not quote others work without giving the source

III. The thesis should not quote the students earlier work(s) without giving the source
SUBMISSION OF THESIS:

• Three hard copies (bound) is to be delivered to the Institute (Study advisor)

• One electronic copy is to be submitted into the DUO electronic database.

• You deliver in DUO through Studentweb. This was new autumn 2013!

• You'll have to tick off for non-cheating in DUO/Studentweb.

See more information on the MARLTHESIS web-page!

GRADING

• After you hand in your thesis, it takes approx. one month until you receive the result of the examining (that is if you deliver on the deadline 1 Nov. Please note; theses delivered earlier, will not be graded until after 1 Nov.)

• The thesis is graded by the supervisor and an external examiner

• The supervisor will not inform the external examiner about the student’s identity

• The grading of thesis uses the grading scale from A-E (pass) and F (fail).

• A thesis that has been subject to grading cannot be submitted for new grading in a changed form unless the thesis received a failing grade (F).
Examples of criteria used when assessing master theses

• A clear, well-defined problem

• That you give answers to the questions you ask in the introduction/beginning of the thesis – that you are following up what you say you are going to do! Coherence throughout the thesis.

• Originality in the treatment of the topic (not simply repetition of what others have said, but at least in part a genuine original contribution). This is difficult! Degree of difficulty in choice of topic.

• That you use appropriate methods for the topic you are treating. Are you using interviews, other types of field work? That you go “outside”, what you can easily find of written literature.

Examples of criteria used when assessing master theses

• Quality of the arguments presented - quality and clearness of the structure of the presentation - That it is easy to follow the reasoning behind the arguments – logic!

• Use of literature (familiarity with relevant literature, judicious choice of relevant literature and documentation) – you should show that you have a good overview over the literature situation regarding the topic you are writing about.

• Soundness of the conclusions in relation to the treatment. Again coherence! You don’t necessarily need to solve the problems you are writing about.
THESIS RESEARCH: WHERE DO I START?

FINDING RESEARCH RESOURCES
THE LIBRARY

Maritime Law

Kirsten Al-Araki
Email: k.h.al-araki@ub.uio.no
Phone: +47-22859742
Visiting address: St. Olavs gate 23

Oil, Gas & Energy Law
EU law

Inger M. Hamre
Email: i.m.hamre@jus.uio.no
Phone: +47-22859352
Visiting address: Domus Media

Finding Research Resources

- Lovdata (Norwegian Legislation, Decisions, Legal Literature)
- Translated Norwegian legislation
- Academic Databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibsys</th>
<th>HeinOnline</th>
<th>Westlaw International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DUO</td>
<td></td>
<td>I-Law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Other Information Resources
  - The Norwegian Parliament
  - The Government
  - Supervisor
  - Legal Events
  - Etc.
THESIS STRUCTURE
STRUCTURE

Cover sheet/Front page
Acknowledgment (voluntarily – but “normal” in Norwegian theses)
Table of Contents
Abbreviations
1. Introduction
2. Legal sources & Method
3. Text Material
4. Conclusion
References
Annexes

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Presentation of subject and issue/issues to be addressed
   What am I going to discuss? --> Subject, Context of the subject, issues
   Why am I going to discuss this? --> Reason for choosing the subject, intention

1.2. Demarcation of thesis
   What will I not include? Why?

1.3. Possible terminology clarification / definitions
   Are technical terms of central importance for the understanding of my thesis?
   Which particular meaning do they have?

1.4 Structure of thesis
   How will I proceed?
2. LEGAL SOURCES & METHOD

2.1 Legal sources

Prepare an account for all legal sources used

Legislation, Preparatory work, Court decisions, Legal literature etc.

→ Should not exceed one page!

2.2 Method

What methods am I using?

3. TEXT MATERIAL (MAIN PART)

Divide the text into headings and sub-headings:

3. Shipping and Climate Change Regulation
   3.1. Current Framework and Developments
      3.1.1 The Climate Change Regime
      3.1.2 Developments under IMO
   3.2 The Post-2012 Era
      (...
4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Summery of major findings
What did I find out with respect to the questions and issues presented in the introduction?

4.2 Outlook
What is the likely to happen in the future? --> Implications and scenarios

REFERENCES

List of Judgements / Decisions
[2002] 1 Lloyd’s Rep. 487 CA The Happy Day

Treaties/Statutes
Norwegian Maritime Code of 24 June 1994, no. 39

Secondary Literature
GOOD WRITING

POBLEM ORIENTED WRITING

1. Define the issue / issues
2. Discuss
3. Make conclusions
SOURCES

- Be accurate – the reader should with ease be able to find the source utilized
- When you use a source – always refer to it, and refer to where you found it. If you have found an article online, state this, in addition to where the article has been published.
- Tip: write down all your sources during the work with the thesis
- Information about the sources should be given and listed up in the reference list

FOOTNOTES

Mainly

- Give sources

Can also be used for:
- (Additional general information)
- (Raise additional issues)
- (Address objections to your discussion)
- (Elaborate argument)

- Use as few notes as possible!
- Lengthy notes should be avoided!
GOOD WRITING

• Clearity
• Use short and clear sentences, cut the redundant "word flow"
• Rational and neutral tone (you are not a journalist)
• Be concrete in expression
• Write your own arguments, do not cut and paste
• Conduct solid research
• Use examples

QUOTATIONS

• Keep them short
• "Place in quotation marks"
• The text is cited word for word
• Omissions in the quotation are indicated with three dots in brackets […]. "Contrary to many other fields within the area of maritime law […] there is no international convention concerning marine insurance in general or hull insurance in particular."
• Additions are placed in brackets
THE WRITING PROCESS

• If you have problems getting started: Approach your supervisor. Don’t wait too long

• Most need for supervision in the beginning and the (very hectic!) end

• The thesis writing takes always much more time than you think!

THE WRITING PROCESS

• Always use sufficient time at the end to revise properly and check details (spelling, grammar, footnotes, sources…)

• Try to have at least some days away from your thesis at the end – you can see things in a more objective way (distance)
THE ONLY WAY TO DO GREAT WORK IS TO LOVE WHAT YOU DO!

Good Luck!