

Master's thesis instructions for companies

MASTER'S THESES AND THEIR OBJECTIVES

The central goal of a master's thesis is to solve a relevant problem in the field by making use of current scientific knowledge and good research methods. The scientific nature of a master's thesis should not be emphasised too much, as the goal of generating new knowledge through research only comes in at the PhD stage. The solutions developed in master's theses should be beneficial for activities within the field being studied.

A master's thesis is a study module worth 30 credit points (approx. 800 hours) which includes the written work itself, a maturity test and either a seminar presentation or some other equivalent presentation of the work. A master's thesis can be done without any specific funding, but providing a reasonable compensation for the work often correlates with increased worker motivation and better final results. Sometimes, master's theses are funded through an employment relationship with the company or a grant. Master's thesis projects are suitable for companies or organisations that desire new expertise, extra resources for development, or an international perspective.

BENEFITS FOR THE COMPANY

In their master's thesis project, the student participates in carrying out a planning, development or research project for the company. It is an excellent way to verify the knowledge, skills and suitability of a recent graduate before recruiting them. While carrying out the commissioned project, the student gets to know the organisation and acquires expertise in the field, which can then be used later on in the same workplace. Commissioning a thesis offers excellent value for money for acquiring new knowledge which the organisation can utilise in the development of its operations, services or products. Through the cooperation, the organisation gains access to an extra resource – the thesis worker – who has access to the latest knowledge in the field. Through this worker, the company can also develop its relationship with the university and utilise their expertise in its operations. Through the master's thesis, the organisation and the final year student have the opportunity to get to know each other and both get to assess their compatibility for future work together. The project can also be thought of as providing a concrete example of the worker's capabilities and thus the

opportunity to set appropriate future work tasks for them.

The outcome of the thesis may be:

- a new or better working method
- a new or improved product, service or process
- a new or better procedure
- a development plan or development event
- an operational evaluation

THE PARTICIPANTS' ROLES

There are 3 official participants in the master's thesis process. These are the thesis worker, the thesis supervisor and the thesis adviser. Often it is highly preferable that the thesis worker, supervisor and adviser meet together so that all participants have a common overview and objective for the project.

The master's thesis supervisor should be a professor at the university, and the supervisor makes an evaluation proposal on the thesis to the university for approval. The thesis supervisor is an academic expert who both helps the worker to find appropriate theoretical material for the subject and provides support in both the writing of the thesis and the thesis process in general. The supervisor may also advise the thesis worker to seek guidance from experts in the thesis's subject area. The supervisor also makes sure that the thesis fulfils the objectives and requirements for master's theses set by the university. In problem situations, the supervisor's task is to act for the student's benefit.

Anyone designated as a thesis adviser must have a master's degree. A thesis adviser is often an expert within the partnering company or organisation who can help with carrying out the thesis's empirical component and with the writing process. The task of the adviser or advisory group is to supervise and advise continually and define the thesis objectives. The role also includes responsibility for any guidance relating to the project and the company. The thesis adviser may also be a university researcher, postgraduate student or university teacher whose research area relates to the thesis. The use of several advisers is preferable in situations where a single adviser will not be able to provide what is needed to fulfil the requirements of both the company and the university.

The thesis worker's role is to independently obtain scientific knowledge and to identify, define and solve professional problems in new situations by applying the scientific knowledge in practice. The goal for the worker is to deepen their knowledge of both the central theories within their field of study and also procedures for researching, problem-solving and planning. The purpose of a master's thesis is to provide thorough information about the problem selected. One particular goal of the thesis is that the thesis worker learns to independently, systematically and effectively carry out a research project. Although it involves work that is carried out independently, the interaction between the worker, supervisor and adviser is nevertheless an essential part of a successful learning process. Because the master's thesis is meant to be carried out independently, the supervisor's and adviser's part in it should not be directly visible. This should not, however, inhibit or reduce the provision of guidance. Guidance can help to set the direction, set the boundaries for the work, sharpen the focus, find one's way towards new perspectives and become aware of the latest research in the field.

Contact with the thesis supervisor is generally most intensive at the beginning and end of the research process. With the thesis adviser, on the other hand, it is good to maintain a close connection throughout the whole master's thesis process. The supervisor's most important task in the early stages is to ensure that the thesis subject is appropriate and that the research plan lays the foundation for successful research. The student can, however, always make contact with the supervisor if they have questions regarding the thesis's progress.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

One should discuss the thesis subject, content and timetable with the supervisor before making a subject application. Small elaborations can be made to the subject after it has been confirmed, but if fundamental changes are made, the subject must be submitted again. The deadline for completion of the master's thesis is agreed upon between the thesis supervisor and worker, with the maximum time permitted being one year from when the topic was approved. Both elaborations and changes must always be agreed on with the supervisor. The subject application must be submitted again also in situations where the supervisor, adviser or thesis language changes, or if the thesis is delayed for one reason or another. The university is not obliged to approve the subject again. If the subject is too demanding, the university may require that the thesis be redefined.

When both the supervisor and the adviser have approved the thesis research plan, the actual thesis work may begin and should be scheduled to last for around 6 months. The amount of time spent carrying out the thesis will depend on factors such as the scope of the research problem, the research methods involved, and the assessment and reporting of the results, as well as other possible thesis-specific factors.

PUBLICATION AND COPYRIGHT OF MASTER'S THESES

A thesis is a public document which is not normally affected by confidentiality regulations, and any approved thesis is to be available for viewing at the university. The meta data for all theses is saved and published. This includes the author, the thesis's name together with any translations, the author's major subject, and the names of the supervisor and adviser. Access in digital form to the entire text of the archived theses is available in the Learning Centre using the customer computers which have been reserved for this purpose. Using these computers, one can search for information from the theses, browse through them, read the entire text and print out sections from them. The thesis may contain information about company secrets and professional secrets, patentable inventions or other such matters. If it is desired that certain information remain unpublished, this information cannot be contained within the public master's thesis which will be assessed. In such situations, it

should be agreed between the thesis worker and adviser what information can be included in the thesis and what should be left out.

The theses produced by universities and universities of applied science are public, as they are part of the qualification attained and so should be openly available for evaluation. The thesis's abstract and/or entire text is published openly on the internet in the universities' publication archives, if the thesis author gives permission for this. By separate agreement, however, identifying information about the commissioning organisation or confidential information can be left out of theses. Where needed, the question of confidentiality is to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

In matters relating to the copyright of master's theses, questions are to be resolved in accordance with general copyright legislation. For innovations made as a part of master's thesis work, the regulations laid out in general patent law are to be applied in all patented-related matters.

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