

**GUIDELINES FOR GRADING:
GEOG3940 - MASTER'S THESIS IN MSc IN NATURAL RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT - GEOGRAPHY**

Department of Geography and Social Anthropology

(28.03.2025)

I. An interdisciplinary master's program

The Master in Natural Resources Management is an interdisciplinary cooperative programme involving two faculties at NTNU. The programme is administrated by the Faculty of Natural Sciences (NT). The program offers two specializations: Biology and Geography.

Admission to the MSc in Natural Resources Management specializing in geography requires a bachelor's degree which should include at least 80 credits within geography and/or natural resources management. The master's thesis work should be integrated with ongoing research projects and national/international issues suited for the individual student according to their specializations of study. The content of the thesis should attain an academic level appropriate to a master's level course and should relate to the interdisciplinary framework of the courses taught for the master's programme.

II. Formal requirements

The thesis must be written in English. The master's thesis is a 60-credit thesis and should be 35 000 – 44 000 words in length (approximately 100-125 pages), excluding the summary, preface, table of contents, figures, tables and lists, references/literature lists, and appendixes.

The title page should be followed by summaries in English and Norwegian, maximum of 1 page for each summary.

Content: The thesis must contain a scientific presentation on the chosen topic; precisely formulated research questions, reasoned method choices and systematic argumentation. Data or the empirical basis for the analysis may be based on observation, interviews, surveys and / or other types of field data. It is also possible to use existing research data, official statistics or

available texts, documents and more as a basis for the analysis. The thesis must follow scientific standards in accordance with reference and research ethics.

Style and references formatting: In the main text, it is recommended to use the font Times New Roman, 12 pt., and 1.5 line spacing. The style and reference technique the candidate uses depends on the academic field (i.e. human geography, ecology). This must be clarified with the supervisor. If the field does not follow a specific style, the candidate must choose one style and use it consistently. The following styles are recommended: American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago, and Harvard.

Assessment: *Master's thesis with an adjusting oral examination based on the thesis.* The oral examination will be conducted digitally and last up to one hour. At the beginning of the oral examination, the candidate must give a 10-minute oral presentation of the master's thesis where the choice of topic, research objectives, methodological choice and findings are explained. The use of PowerPoint or similar presentation tools is not allowed. The candidate should have the master's thesis available, and they can have additional notes during the oral exam.

An overall grade will be given based on the master's thesis and the oral examination immediately after the oral examination, including an explanation of the grading.

Examiners: The Department will appoint two examiners for the assessment of the thesis, one of whom will be an external examiner (Act Relating to Universities and University Colleges § 11-7). The external examiner cannot have been employed in a full-time position or an additional position (bistilling) at NTNU in the past year or had a part-time teaching engagement in the relevant course for the group taking the examination (Academic Regulations for the NTNU § 5-14 (4)). In cases of disagreement regarding grading, the external examiner will make the final decision on the grade to be awarded (Academic Regulations for the NTNU §5-14 (9)).

The Supervisor's Role in the Assessment Process: The student's supervisor(s) cannot serve as an examiner. Relevant knowledge the supervisor has about the student's work may be communicated to the examiners (Academic Regulations for the NTNU § 5-14 (7)). However, this is only applicable in cases where the commission has doubts about whether the work has been carried out by the student. Only the examination committee is permitted to contact the

supervisor for clarification. This is to ensure that the supervisor does not influence the grading process, in accordance with the Act Relating to Universities and University Colleges § 11-6.

Explanations of grades and appeals

Justification of grading: The candidate shall be given an oral explanation of the grade immediately following the completion of the oral examination and cannot request further justification for the grade.

Appeals: A candidate has the right to appeal against the grade they have been awarded. The deadline for an appeal is three weeks from the date when the grade is announced (i.e. the oral exam date). Appeal a grade through Studentweb.

In cases where the grade is based on both the written part and the oral exam, and the assessment of the written part (i.e. master's thesis) is subsequently changed, a new oral exam will be held to determine the grade (Act Relating to Universities and University Colleges § 11-11). If the appeals committee reaches the same conclusion as the original examiners regarding the master's thesis (based on evaluation of both the thesis and the original oral exam), the Department will not be under any obligation to arrange a new oral exam on the basis of the appeal. If the appeals committee decides on a grade on the master's thesis itself that deviates by two or more grades from the original grading, a further assessment must be made before the final grade is determined (Act relating to Universities and University Colleges Act § 11-11).

A candidate may also appeal against procedural errors. Such an appeal should be within three weeks of the candidate finding out about a matter that gives them reason to appeal.

Fail/F: If the master thesis is given a failing (F) grade, a new or reworked thesis can be submitted for examination one more time (Academic Regulations for the NTNU § 5-9 (1)).

Cheating or attempts at cheating are further described in § 6-6 of the Academic Regulations for the NTNU. In cases where there is suspicion of cheating, the grade will not be disclosed to the candidate, and the matter will be handled in accordance with the guidelines for handling cheating/attempts at cheating at NTNU.

III. Grading scale

The grading scale used in conjunction with the exam for evaluation of the thesis ranges from A (highest grade) to F (failed). Please note that a thesis in MSGLOPOL is a 30-credit thesis.

A: An exceptionally well-written thesis that is well organized, has well-defined research objectives, advanced theory and methodology, and especially well-performed analysis with very well formulated conclusions or recommendations. The candidate demonstrates exceptional reflective and analytical ability, and an outstanding degree of academic maturity and independence.

B: A very well written thesis that is well organized, has well-defined research objectives, adequate theory and methodology, and a good analysis with well-formulated conclusions or recommendations. The candidate demonstrates very good reflective and analytical ability, and a high degree of academic maturity and independence.

C: A well written thesis, which is good in most parts, is clear and concise, has adequate theory and methodology, a good analysis, and well-formulated conclusions or recommendations. The candidate demonstrates a certain reflective and/or analytical ability and a certain degree of academic maturity and independence. Minor deficiencies can be accepted.

Alternatively, a thesis with a more original research objective and/or higher theoretical and methodological aims, but where certain theoretical and/or methodological weaknesses are found.

D: The work indicates little independence and limited ability in formulating clear approaches to one or more of the following: Problem formulation, theory, methodology, analysis, presentation of findings and/or conclusion and recommendations. Treatment of research problems and presentation of results are characterised by serious theoretical and methodological errors. The candidate demonstrates a low degree of reflective and/or analytical ability and a low degree of academic maturity and independence.

E: The thesis is characterised by a lack of understanding of approaches to research, has weak scientific treatment of problems and is presented poorly. The candidate demonstrates a lack of reflective and/or analytical ability and a very low degree of academic maturity and independence.

F: The work is characterised by such serious errors and shortcomings in theory, methods, analysis, and presentation of findings that the thesis cannot be approved.

III. Checklist

Grading of master's theses should be based on the following guidelines (not in any order of priority).

- a) The candidate's ability to understand a problem area and develop precise, researchable questions.
- b) The candidate's ability to gain an overview of and engage with theoretical and empirical research within the problem area.
- c) The candidate's original contribution to new questions and findings.
- d) The candidate's use of methodology.
- e) The candidate's ability to communicate and present their work, including adherence to norms for the formatting of scientific publications, such as citation techniques.
- f) The candidate's ability to identify and reflect on potential ethical challenges related to the thesis.