

Guidelines for thesis advice

Masters Program: Culture, Environment and Sustainability
Centre for Development and the Environment

The following are general guidelines for the conduct of thesis advice, intended for both thesis advisors and students. Thesis advisors will also receive a separate contract that specifies obligations and conditions for financial compensation.

Selection of the Advisor

The Director of the Masters program will assign a Thesis Advisor to each student in the SUM Masters program near the end of their first academic year. Students are encouraged to identify, contact and eventually recommend a potential advisor for their topic from SUM's staff, another University Faculty or other academic institution in Norway.

Initiating the Advisor-student relationship

Once the Advisor is appointed, the Advisor and student should arrange an initial meeting to discuss the advisor role, mutual expectations and general thoughts on the student's project plan, frequency of meetings and so on.

Selection of Thesis Topic

Under new procedures to be initiated in Spring 2006, course 4011b will be oriented to work on the student's Project Description. Each student will complete a draft Project Description and then be assigned an advisor. The Advisor's first task will be to discuss and eventually revise the Project Description as necessary, then recommend its approval to the Director of the Masters Program. The deadline for approval of the project description is mid-June of the Spring Semester (at the end of the student's first year in the program).

Overall scope and time use

As a general rule, the scope of the advisory relationship should encompass from 10 – 15 meetings, beginning with the initial meeting in the student's second semester and ending with the thesis defence. Experience shows that meetings between Advisor and student are more effective when both agree beforehand on the subject of the meeting and the issues/questions to be discussed. In the final writing phase, the subject will usually be drafts of sections of the thesis, which should be submitted to the Advisor in advance of meetings.

The student's progress towards completion

Both thesis advisor and student should be cognizant of deadlines. For those students who wish to defend their thesis before the end of the Spring Semester, the deadline for submission is 1. May. For those who intend to defend after the summer vacation (from 1. September), the deadline for submission is 20. June.

Regular progress reports are not required; however, in cases where the Advisor sees that a student is falling significantly behind in progressing towards completion by the deadline, the Director should be informed.

Defence of the thesis

The Advisor is responsible for approving the final thesis before it is submitted for defence. An opponent will be selected to evaluate the thesis.

The student will defend her or his thesis in an oral examination. The opponent and advisor will be present at the oral examination. The student will be assigned a grade for the thesis in a consultation between the Director of the masters program and the opponent.