

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS REGARDING THE MASTER THESIS FOR MSc MARINE AND LACUSTRINE SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT 2021-2022

The thesis work investigates a research topic that is in the realm of marine and lacustrine science and management. It is written in English and is divided into 3 components that have a different weight for the final evaluation: (1) literature review, (2) thesis main text, (3) presentation with defence. The Master thesis has a total of 30 ECTS and the 3 scores are merged into **one final score**. Each component must however correspond to at least 8/20 in order to apply the respective weighting. If a component is marked less than 8/20, then this is proposed as the final mark. The final mark is given on the basis of these rules by the jury / deliberation commission.

At any stage of the work, each of the components must be free of any type of plagiarism. If after being informed about this, doubt remains, please contact lecturers or your promoter for further information. Plagiarism will be screened for and may have serious consequences if detected.

Every effort must be done for language and quality control, making use of spelling checking.

Part 1: A comprehensive literature review (5-10 pages, 15000-30000 characters without spaces excluding figures) about the chosen research project. (10% of the final mark)

This literature review is submitted separately: for students graduating in January the deadline is in December (last class day of 1st semester); for students graduating in June (or September) the deadline is the 7th of February (*). It should give the student the opportunity and incentive to familiarise themselves with the subject by a thorough consultation of the available literature in a thoughtful manner, before the actual research project is started. It also allows the student to think ahead about the wider context of his/her research and to identify the more specific questions that can be addressed by the proposed research activities. This work is not yet referring to any research results of the thesis itself. Since thesis research sometimes is initiated before the start of the 2nd year of the MSc programme (e.g. during the summer holiday), it is strongly advised in such cases to thoroughly discuss all aspects with the thesis promoter/supervisor before effectively starting. This is also in consideration of good academic practice and insurance.

A draft version of the literature review needs to be provided to the promoter/supervisor in time to allow him or her to give feedback and to improve the final document. We generally recommend the student to

1. inform themselves about the expected deadlines of draft submission with their promoter/supervisor
2. provide the promoter/supervisor with the detailed structure and topics that they plan to cover asap.
3. provide the promoter/supervisor with a draft text in time (as agreed in 1)
4. remind the promoter/supervisor to provide feedback before the winter break

Part 2: A manuscript according to a comprehensive scientific manuscript as found in scientific peer reviewed journals (about 20 to 30 pages, 60000-90000 characters without spaces, excluding figures, tables, maps). (70% of the final mark)

This manuscript is based on original analysis and interpretations made by the student. It will be the **main part of the thesis** and is submitted at the start of the examination session in June (*) in first session (depending on foreseen defence) and at the start of the examination session in August in second session.

It contains the appropriate **elements of a scientific paper**, such as an abstract, an introduction, materials and methods, results, a discussion, a conclusion, acknowledgements and references. Elements of the literature review can be used or adapted. Furthermore, the manuscript can also have one or more

appendices that contain aspects of the data collection or processing, which are generally not included in scientific papers (e.g. trials, failures, errors and corrections or proposing solutions). When the topic requires ethical advice, research permits or entails Nagoya protocol-related procedures or abiding with any other general or local regulation, these must be explicit in the thesis (permit number, ethical agreement or other legally necessary documents). It is the responsibility of the student to discuss and check this and take all necessary steps in agreement with the supervisor or mentor. Omitting this step if required may lead to non-acceptance of the thesis.

Part 3: A PowerPoint presentation (as ppt or pdf) of 15 minutes. (20% of the final mark: 10% for the presentation, 10% for the defence)

This will be presented for examiners (jury) with readers / jurors, an audience of scientists (peers) and a general public, followed by a discussion with the members of the examination commission and the audience. Anyone present may ask questions.

General timing issues

Notwithstanding the thesis being programmed for the second year, we suggest that students confirm their thesis topic (in general terms) by end of March of their first year of the MSc programme. If fieldwork is part of the research, the location (country and place) and kind of activities (e.g. cruise on a research vessel, snorkelling, diving) have to be provided. This allows students to prepare for fieldwork that might be carried out during the summer months (July/August) and to start timely with the literature review (see earlier).

Timing schedule (*)

Call for subjects among students and research groups	15 October (1 st year MSc programme)
Compilation of subjects	15 November (1 st year MSc programme)
Announcement of subjects to the students	15 November
Selection of subjects by students, contact potential promoters/supervisors	15 November until end of class free week
Promoters/supervisors confirm students their topics	1 March
Submission of confirmed topic via Matix	31 March
Initial discussion of work plan with promoter/supervisor	April-July
Start of fieldwork (facultative)	July
Start of laboratory work (or equivalent)	September-October (2 nd year MSc programme)
Contact promoter/supervisor to discuss literature review timeline and draft content	Before 1 st of November
Submit draft review for feedback	In agreement with promoter/supervisor, preferably 1 st week of December
Submission of final literature review	7 th of February (1 st class day 2 nd semester)
Submission of manuscript	06 June or 22 August (1 st day of exams)
Defence	29/06, 30/06, 01/07 or 7, 8 or 9 Sept.

(*) timing here is typically for a first session defence in June, or second session September. Other schedules possible: January. Please be aware of regulations regarding defence sessions, unless requested otherwise, students are scheduled for June or September (if not graduated in July) automatically. First or second session have equal academic value. Students graduating in January must register for this (via the faculty's website – VUB)