

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS REGARDING THE MASTER THESIS FOR MSc MARINE AND LACUSTRINE SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT 2024-2025

The thesis work investigates a research topic that is in the realm of marine and lacustrine science and management. It is written in English. It is preceded by a **literature study** of 3 ECTS. The master thesis itself consists of a **scientific manuscript** (80% of final score), and a **presentation with defence** (20% of final score). The Master thesis has a total of 27 ECTS. The scores for the two parts are merged (80% manuscript score, 20% presentation score) 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, the literature review as well as the scientific manuscript 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 (more info can be obtained via the head of the thesis commission).

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

A comprehensive literature review about the chosen research project (5 – 10 pages, i.e. 15000 – 30000 characters without spaces, excluding figures, tables, maps, and references)

This literature review is submitted separately, prior to the start of the thesis work. It is a second semester course in the first master year. The literature review is submitted at the start of the June exams (or September exams) of the first master year. 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 is sometimes 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 in line with 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 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 [the latest](#) after the Easter holidays

Scientific Manuscript

Part 1: 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). (80% 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 evaluation session (depending on foreseen defence) or at the start of the examination session in August in second evaluation session.

It contains the appropriate **elements of a scientific paper (similar as papers published in peer reviewed journals)**, 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 2: 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. All students should attend the thesis defence event, at least in first evaluation session (June).

General timing issues

Notwithstanding the thesis being programmed for the second year, the students must already confirm their chosen topic by the end of the first semester of their first year of the MSc programme. Additionally, they must already complete the literature review in the second semester of the first year. 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).

Timing schedule (*)

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| Call for subjects among lecturers and research groups | mid September (of 1 st year) |
| Deadline for submitting subjects + info-moments | 15 October (of 1 st year) |
| Announcement of subjects to the students | 20-Oct |
| Students sign in for info-moments | 01-Nov |
| Students send top 3 of topics (+motivation) | 30-Nov |
| Topic confirmed to students (Matix) | Start of Christmas break |
| Student and supervisor sign thesis charter | 1 st day of second semester (of 1 st year) |
| Contact promoter/supervisor to discuss literature review timeline and draft content | 1st week of 2 nd semester (of 1 st year) |
| Initial discussion of work plan for master thesis with promoter/supervisor | Before June exams (of 1 st year) |
| Submit draft literature review for feedback | After Easter holidays (of 1 st year) |
| Submission of final literature review | Start of June exams - 3 June (of 1 st year) (for January graduation: 22 December) |
| Start of fieldwork of master thesis (facultative) | July or later depending on topic (of 2 nd year) |
| Start of laboratory work (or equivalent) | September-October (of 2 nd year) |
| Submission detailed work plan (template) | 2 nd week of academic year (of 2 nd year) |
| Submission of thesis update | Start of 2nd semester of 2 nd year |
| Submission of manuscript | 03 June or 19 August (1 st day of exams) (for January graduation: 8 January) |
| Defence | 27 and 28 June or 4, 5, 6 Sept. |

(*) timing here is typically for a first evaluation session defence in June, or second evaluation session in September. Exceptionally, the defense can be scheduled in 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)