

**GUIDE FOR THE**

# **MASTER'S THESIS**

**Master of Science**



**NORD**  
University

Updated January 2020

## Preface

This guide has been created for the Master of Science students at Bodø Graduate School of Business. The purpose is to convey crucial information to help students with choosing a topic for their master thesis (MOPP), the writing process, and smooth and efficient completion of the final reporting.

### **The master thesis (MOPP) – an exciting challenge!**

The MOPP is a compulsory part of the programme and constitutes 30 out of a total 60 ECTS credits in the programme's final year.

The MOPP is a continuation of the chosen major course offered in each programme.

In this booklet we have compiled the formal rules and deadlines pertaining to the investigation (*investigation* is the term we use to denote the completed written work in which the programme culminates), in addition to some good pieces of advice for the entire investigative process. This guide is intended to help you make a quick start and enjoy a vivid, educational experience during this period of study. Planning is an essential element and we hope this guide will help you. If you have queries about your subject or other academic questions at any stage in the process, seek the advice of your supervisor or the head course coordinator. Administrative staff are available at the business school to assist you with practical issues.

**Note that the programme includes two compulsory assignments, often in the form of presentations; one in January and one in March (see details in chapter 8.1).** These presentations will give you first hand knowledge about other students' ongoing projects, as well as an opportunity to receive valuable feedback from both fellow students and faculty. **You are required to make a contract regarding the supervision of the master thesis. You will find more information about this in chapter 6.1.**

Good luck with your work!

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## 1. THE PURPOSE OF THE MASTER THESIS

As part of the final year of graduate business programmes each student must complete an individual project – a master thesis – in the form of a written report. This written work is denoted MOPP (Masteroppgave in Norwegian). The purpose of this work is to provide the student with an opportunity to practice the theoretical knowledge acquired during the course of study, and provide him/her with the opportunity to conduct an in-depth study within a particular field.

Through the work on the thesis, you should acquire knowledge and skills about scientific method and investigative method – to state a problem, search for and examine literature related to the problem, to plan and conduct possible empirical studies and choose a method/methods of analysis, in addition to presenting, concluding and suggesting solutions to the problem. Furthermore, this work is to take place within limitations concerning time and resources. This is a type of job situation and task that business graduate students are likely to face in most positions. It is wise to consider how relevant your thesis will be, both to the area of study as well as in future employment situations.

### 1.1 Various types of tasks and their scope



Theses with a *theoretical and empirical* orientation and a report containing typically large amounts of text (***normally 80 pages for one student, line space 1.5, about 50% longer for two students***).



Theses with a *theoretical and empirical* orientation as a scientific article (***normally 40-50 pages for one student, in addition to an article summary, line space 1.5***). If more than one student, the number of words in the article summary is increased.

*f(x)* Theses oriented towards *mathematical models* (normally 40-50 pages).

## **2. WHAT SHOULD I WRITE ABOUT?**

If you are about to begin your second term of study, you may be asking yourself this question. If you have not yet decided on a topic, there are many ways for finding an interesting, relevant topic of investigation. Before making use of them, you should have some idea about which professional areas you are interested in and what type of investigation you are aiming for. The final selection of a topic will take place during the major course in the third semester of the programme. The theoretical basis for the master thesis may be comprised of written works completed during the major course.

The following sources could facilitate inspiration for your topic:

- ✓ Various research foundations can also provide assignments and may even support theses related to ongoing research projects. Nordland Research Institute, for example, has established close relations with Innovation Norway, a cooperation that can provide projects for students. The Nordland Research Institute is located in the University building (entrance A, 3rd floor). It is the student's responsibility to contact any relevant research institutes.
- ✓ Summer internships or appointments may provide the stimulus for an interesting master thesis. If the student has not undertaken to obtain such an appointment earlier, they may wish to do so during the third semester. Some companies also offer summer jobs aimed at initiating or carrying out investigative work.
- ✓ Personal contact by means of email or letters, telephone, or visits to companies, organizations, public offices, counties, departments, etc., is of crucial importance and will often provide good opportunities.
- ✓ Last, but not least, the professors, the supervisor for the master thesis, or other staff members currently active within the field of interest will provide valuable advice and hints for the choice of topic.

### 3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

In order to make a good start and satisfactory progress in your work on the master thesis, careful planning is required. Students should be in close touch with professors, supervisors and other interested parties. You also need to decide on whether to write alone or with another student. ***It is a requirement that you have completed your major prior to being appointed a supervisor and writing the MOPP.***

Planning is, as mentioned, of utmost importance, and it is often a time consuming part of the work on the investigation. It is therefore important to start this process as early as possible. All experience indicates that students embark on their research much too late. The search for a suitable topic should preferably start as early as during the second semester.

Each master thesis has its own unique code depending on the major:

*Master of Science in Energy Management:*

- Master's Thesis, EN310E

*Master of Science in Business, major in:*

- Entrepreneurship and innovation management, BE307E
- Management control, BE304E
- Finance and Investments, BE305E
- International business and marketing, BE309E

For these codes, the following deadlines apply:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Requirement 1</b> | <b>deadline in January – check studweb for correct date</b> |
| <b>Requirement 2</b> | <b>deadline in March – check studweb for correct date</b>   |
| <b>Thesis</b>        | <b>deadline 19 May 2020 by 14.00 (in Inspira)</b>           |

A great deal of preparatory work is necessary. The search for, and study of literature will usually require a lot of time, especially if the literature has to be ordered from external sources. If you plan to conduct an empirical investigation, a timetable must be worked out. Sufficient time should be allocated for the development and testing of questionnaires or interview guides, putting down deadlines and time for interviews, reminders, the interpretation of data, editing, etc. Bear in mind that most students experience a time shortage towards the deadline. Time management is part of the learning experience.

#### 3.1 Should I write alone or with another student?

The research work must be an independent piece of work. However, this does not prevent two students working together. In fact, many students have experienced the added reward and learning effect of collaborative writing. In this setting, it is possible to give positive and negative feedback during the process – “two heads think better than one”. Also, both share the responsibility of moving the process forward. Last, but not least, this way of working will teach the participants how to cooperate with others, a very likely job situation for most master graduates.

## 4. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

After choosing a topic, and deciding whether to write the thesis alone or in collaboration with others, it is time to formulate the theme and research problem more accurately. For students writing on behalf of an external employer, it is important to remember that the expectations and demands set by the employer may not be the same as the formal and academic requirements set for the MOPP, including a problem topic, theory discussion, method, empirical data. Generally speaking, a clearly formulated topic should first and foremost answer the following questions (Extracted from Troye/Grønhaug: "Utredningsmetodikk" (Research Methodology)):

- ❖ **What does the exposition focus on?**  
Here, a number of specific problem areas are conceivable: the information system in organisation Y, the export market, e.g., for salmon, budget routines for product X and buying routines of company A.
- ❖ **What is the purpose of the investigation?**  
You always have limited time and resources at your disposal in this work. This means you cannot encompass all problem topics inherent in a theme – in other words you must decide on the purpose of the exposition. The purpose could e.g. be descriptive, recommending, predicating, explanatory or theoretical.
- ❖ **What type of problem formulation is it?**  
Here, it will be a matter of whether to formulate the problem as a theme, question, or as a hypothesis. The decision will depend on how much literature already exists on the theme. If the literature is extensive, the student may focus on testing hypotheses on the bases of survey data. If the field is new and unexplored, new research questions might be formulated.
- ❖ **What is the professional perspective of the exposition?**  
Here, once again, the limitations regarding time and resources might indicate an economical approach. Despite the fact that some exposition topics do require interdisciplinary approaches, it is often useful to approach the topic matter vertically, focusing on one or very few perspectives, rather than spreading the focus.
- ❖ **Is the exposition useful?**  
Somehow, the work should contribute to something new in terms of information value. Examples of this could be a new understanding, a new basis for making decisions, that it gives a new description or applies old theories in a new field.
- ❖ **Is the exposition assignment feasible?**  
There could be several reasons for a project's lack of feasibility. The main rule is that students, in conjunction with their supervisor, make a critical evaluation of how suitable the research problem as early as possible. Based on the assumption that things can go wrong, it is important during this introductory investigation phase to have other investigation themes in mind. This is particularly important when contemplating an empirical study. Resources, such as time and money, will normally be a critical factor. Costs incurred by the dispatch of questionnaires, telephone calls, envelopes, and personal interviews could amount to considerable sums of money to be covered by the students themselves. If the task is too big, you may not have time for sufficient analysis of the data. In order to boost the return percentage of postal interviews, the form itself should not be too complex or extensive.

## 5. THE PRELIMINARY OUTLINE

At this point of the investigation process, it is time to make an outline, or to complete a so-called preliminary outline plan (see the form enclosed in this guide, appendix 1). The outline must be submitted and approved by the professor of your major course before the actual work on the MOPP can start.

**The outline plan (appendix 1) must be handed in to the course coordinator of the chosen major within the deadline given in your studweb (see also chapter 3).**

The form is evaluated by the coordinator of your major, who subsequently recommends a supervisor. The main purpose of the form is to ensure that everyone gets off to a quick start with their investigative process as well as providing the basis for the formal appointment of the supervisor.

The investigative process and its continuation:

1. Choosing a topic
2. Preparation, organization
3. Choosing research problem
4. Outline plan (NB! Mandatory presentation)
5. Carrying out the various phases (NB! Mandatory presentation)
6. Submission
7. Evaluation

### 5.1 Completing the outline plan

Example of the outline plan:

-  The point of departure for the outline plan is the formulated problem.
-  Literature search and literature examination
-  Forming and organising possible empirical studies
-  Choosing a possible method of analysis
-  Collecting possible data
-  Interpreting possible data
-  Writing up the thesis

Both literature, the supervisor, and the use of the University infrastructure will aid you when going through the various steps of the outline plan.

## **6. USEFUL TOOLS**

In addition to the professional staff and your assigned supervisor, the library and computer network at the University constitute the main tools offered to you in your work with the investigation. In our experience, students do not always avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the library and the computer facilities in this type of investigative process. We strongly urge you to do so. We hope that the following suggestions can contribute to more effective use of these resources.

### **6.1 The supervisor**

In most cases, the supervisor will be one of the staff members at the business school.

You are required to sign a contract with regard to supervision of the master thesis. You will find the contract on Canvas. This must be filled out after you have submitted requirement 1 (see chapter 8.1). The contract is signed by student and supervisor, and returned to the administration.

A successful guidance process presupposes you being a responsible and active student. The supervisor should not have to chase up late work. As a master student you are responsible for getting in touch with the supervisor early and also for sending him/her material (papers etc.), which can function as a basis for further supervision. Remember that the supervisor has other obligations, which means you cannot expect instant feedback. This means that you must allow time for some delay in your planning – this is of particular importance as the deadline approaches.

### **6.2 Services provided by the University Library**

The University Library (UBiN) is an academic library. They cover the latest in research and curriculum for all of the university courses and have a comprehensive collection of relevant literature available in the form of books, e-books, magazines, electronic periodicals and a broad selection of databases.

Interlibrary loans and orders can be arranged for items not held by the library. In periods of high demand there may be a waiting list for some titles. It is advisable therefore that you start to research and plan what literature you need as early as possible.

The goal is that you as a student should be able to locate information and new research in your field through the library. The library provides courses in database searches, academic reading and writing and EndNote referencing software to aid you. If you have not received such offers in your schedule please contact the library. You may register at [nord.no/english/library/workshopsandtraining](http://nord.no/english/library/workshopsandtraining). The library can also arrange a tutoring hour for you or search and Endnote courses for you and your fellow students upon request.

#### **Database Access**

Through the University's network, students have access to a vast array of electronic resources. If you want access to the databases outside campus just follow the instructions below:

1. Click on the "Remote access" links via [nord.no/library](http://nord.no/library) or from the [databases](#) list.
2. Sign in with your 6 –digit student number and password.

**Advantages:**

- You can now search ORIA and most other databases as if you are on the IP network for Nord University.
- **ORIA** now provides search results from Nord University.
- You can get most of the articles in the databases in text-PDFs.
- Atekst / Retriver provides access to almost all Norwegian newspapers in .PDF. Both new and old.
- Factiva provides access to international newspapers, including some Russian.

**Databases**

Use [nord.no/library](http://nord.no/library) as the starting point for searches.

The [list of databases](#) gives you a complete overview of collected electronic databases and other resources. Here you will find a brief description of the resources in addition to the "Remote Access" link.

On the course page of [Bodø Graduate School of Business](#), the library has gathered the resources likely to be most appropriate for you. Here is a brief overview:

**ORIA & Bibsys:**

Search in ORIA & Bibsys gives results in:

- The library collections.
- Student assignments.
- BLIX and NORA.
- E-books from ebrary.
- Periodicals.
- electronic periodicals.

**BLIX:**

...is Nord University's own institutional archive. Here you will find Masters theses and Ph.D. dissertations completed at University of Nordland. We encourage you to consent to electronic publishing in BLIX when submitting your master's thesis. This will make it searchable in BLIX, Oria and Google Scholar as well as other academic databases. Confidential theses can not be published in BLIX.

**NORA:**

Here you can search in all Norwegian universities and university archives. Here you will find Master theses, Ph.D. dissertations and research reports.

Blix and Nora are open to all Norwegian IP addresses.

**DART-Europe**

Search for European theses and dissertations available through Open Access

**Ravn foretaksinformasjon:**

Here you will find key information on more than 850,000 Norwegian enterprises in Brønnøysundregistrene. Complete financial statements can be ordered free of charge by contacting the library.

**Factiva:**

... is an international news database where you can extract both company information and area information and also read fresh news from various international newspapers such as the Wall Street Journal and New York Times. Highly recommended! Click on Factiva Pages >

**Ebrary:**

More than 80,000 e-books in all subjects with an emphasis on social sciences, economics, language and literature. Searchable via Bibsys.

Ebrary also works well on tablets. Click [here](#) for instructions.

**ProQuest**

.. is a complete text and reference base containing approx. 6000 journals in finance / administration.

**ABI/Inform og ProQuest Business**

..is the part of ProQuest databases package that is most relevant to the financial and administrative fields.

**Taylor & Francis**

Over 1.000 electronic journals in full text, many of them within economic subject areas.

**Other databases:**

If you do not get a hit on the topic you are searching in Proquest, try the other bases such as: [Science Direct](#), [Springer Link](#), [Wiley and Emerald](#) (especially good within economy subjects). Please note that there are often differences in subject headings between bases originating in the United States and Europe (due to different professional terminology).

**ISI-bases and Scopus.**

This is a reference database. Here, you will not get the full text, but there are abstracts (summaries) of many articles and a link server that brings you to the full text in the other databases.

**Search Tips:**

1. Search and research work often takes more time than you think, but is well worth it. A good thesis often illuminates the problem on the basis of a wide range of sources. Be curious!
2. Start by searching for prior relevant theses in Blix and Nora.
  - a. Search using keywords.
  - b. Read the summaries.
  - c. Look at the task structure, definition of the problem and the use of sources and references.

- d. Use bibliographies actively. Make a note of names, titles, tags and keywords you want to investigate. Remember: Recent assignments have usually quite up to date bibliographies and can provide a great starting point.
  - e. Be critical! Master theses are rarely innovative, but often highlight issues well. Seek therefore sources rather than referring to the actual thesis.
3. Search Oria for book titles, author's surname and keywords.
- Example of keywords:
- a. Search on the keyword "[assignment writing](#)".
  - b. Most matches lead to the literature on shelf No. 808.066.
  - c. Click on the map to get guidance.
  - d. Find 808.066. There you will find almost all the literature on how to write assignments.
  - e. Look for the most relevant book for you.
4. Search in databases for scientific articles:
- a. "Advanced searches" always gives more refinement options. Few hits = good.
  - b. Use refinement opportunities actively. All databases provide different opportunities.
  - c. Use "quotation marks" around the exact phrase you want to search, if there is more than one word.
  - d. Combine keywords with AND, OR, NOT. Example: economy AND business.
  - e. Full text = access to .PDF or the web version of the article.
  - f. [Peer reviewed](#) = a scientific mark of quality. If an article is not peer reviewed it does not mean it is necessarily bad. .
  - g. Found a good article? Follow the sources, the author or the [journal](#).
  - h. A refereed scientific journal often contains topics. Do a search on keywords in the specific journal.
  - i. If an author posted something exciting, chances are that he / she has published more. [Google](#) the person! Find out who he / she is and seek his or hers university page. Norwegian researchers' publications are available on [Cristin](#).
5. Use news articles from [Atekst/Retriver](#) to shed light on the information for the choice of topic, or refer to a case.

Know the terms and conditions of loan at the [library](#).

All links here require that you are connected to Nords IP network. They are also found on [www.nord.no/library](http://www.nord.no/library).

Need some help? Ask a librarian.

[www.nord.no/library](http://www.nord.no/library), library desk, [bibliotek@nord.no](mailto:bibliotek@nord.no), 7551 7370, [Facebook](#)

## **7. SUPPORT FOR THE MASTER THESIS**

There are numerous ways of financing the master thesis. You can pay for everything yourself, or you can look for a partner, such as a company, organization, foundation - on or off campus.

### **7.1 The Master fund**

For students who do not have other sources of financing their thesis, it is possible to apply for support from the business school's Master Fund. You may apply for funding for the following activities:

- Access to databases and reports
- Travel expenses for data collection and other visits related to the thesis
- Other expenses related to data collection

The board of the Master Fund consists of two business school staff members in addition to two students. The board grants support to applicants who fulfil the criteria for applying. The application deadline in 2020 is March 20th. For more information, see Appendix 5.

If your topic is related to tourism in the High North, see <http://www.opplevelserinord.no/index.php/en/funding>

### **7.2 The MOPP Award**

Bodø Graduate School of Business does not have a system of scholarships covering costs during the actual work with the master thesis. However, an agreement with the local business community and the public sector has led to an award ceremony. The most outstanding master theses related to particular topics are rewarded by means of a monetary prize. Prizes are awarded in different fields:

For the past years the total prize money per category has been from 10.000-15 000,- NOK. In order to receive a prize, the students **must** be present at the graduation ceremony to receive the award.

The course coordinator of every major course is responsible for the nomination. A confidential master thesis is not eligible for nomination. Even if the thesis is based on confidential data, there are ways of circumventing the thesis' confidentiality. In cooperation with the supervisor, it is possible to develop techniques for making data anonymous to preclude any identification of persons, activities, and organizations, while preserving the empirical and analytical part. But please remember that this must be done in cooperation with the supervisor, who should get access to the original empirical data.

## 8. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER THESIS.

### 8.1 Information regarding the compulsory presentations and submission

The thesis must be submitted by the announced deadline, see studweb. You submit the thesis in Expera in a specific exam room by the given date, by 14:00. The document must be submitted as a single PDF file.

You must use a standard front page for the thesis. The front page is available in Canvas. The front page text is your responsibility and the following text must be included: Title of the thesis (limited to a maximum of 90 letters), name of the author(s), course code.

When submitting the thesis you need to indicate in Inspira whether the thesis must be kept confidential. After submission, the completed investigation remains the property of the student, but may also be used in research and teaching later on (also see chapter 11). Be aware that a confidential thesis is not eligible for a MOPP award.

**Note that two oral presentations must be given; one in January and one in March. The forms enclosed in appendix 1 and 2 must be filled out in order to document the completion of the presentations. The deadline for these presentations (requirement 1 and 2) can be found in StudWeb. The course coordinator of the major will provide more information regarding the completion of the presentations.** As previously stated, these presentations will give you first hand knowledge about other students' ongoing projects, as well as an opportunity to receive valuable feedback from both fellow students and faculty.

### 8.2 Format and layout

The master thesis is to be designed according to standardized templates for scientific work. These vary depending on the chosen format. Standard front page (HHN) must be used and the thesis will be delivered electronically. The student(s) can choose between two layouts on the master's thesis: The master thesis may be written as a

- Monograph
- Scientific article with a summary article.

Each layout is described in the sections below.

#### 8.2.1 Master's thesis as monograph

The scope of the Master's thesis can not be determined accurately. This is usually a matter between the student(s) and their supervisor. Scope can be defined by the number of words, attributes of the data, and / or the complexity of the analysis. The standard for a master's thesis written by one person is 20000 words excluded summary and literature list. If the monograph is a result of a group work, the scope of the thesis should be increased

accordingly. When two students collaborate, an amount of 30000 words is expected. Deviations from the norm depend on traditions in the professional disciplines. The thesis's layout and structure are described in detail in Section 8.3.

## **8.2.2 Master's thesis as a scientific article with summary article**

An article-based master's thesis is comprised of two parts: an introductory chapter and a scientific article. Upon submission, the introductory chapter and article are bound as one volume with a common cover page. The introductory chapter forms the first part of the volume. It should be possible to submit the article to an international or national peer-reviewed journal for evaluation after grading. If the candidate plans to submit the article to a peer-reviewed journal they must adhere to the relevant guidelines (see below).

### **8.2.2.1 Introductory chapter**

The introductory chapter explains the theoretical and methodological aspects of the research. This includes discussion and explanation of theoretical aspects as well as critical analysis of methods used and reflection on the limitations of the study. The introductory chapter has a scope of between 5,000 and 10,000 words, excluding the summary and bibliography. If two candidates cooperate on the thesis, the introductory chapter's word count increases by 2-3,000 words. The candidate must present a separate bibliography for the introductory chapter. The bibliography is presented at the end of the introductory chapter. In cases where a candidate has written their article with the goal of publication in an English-language international journal, he/she may still write the introductory chapter in Norwegian.

### **8.2.2.2 Scientific article**

The thesis comprises at least one article, which meets the requirements for publication in a recognized and relevant peer-reviewed journal. The candidate may choose a relevant scientific journal from the overview of authorized channels ([authorized channels](#)). The article must be written in a format that adheres to the author guide for the chosen journal. The author guide should be attached to the master's thesis.

The scope of the article will vary depending on the chosen journal, however most journal articles have a scope of 4,000 – 12,000 words. The article must not exceed the maximum word count of the chosen journal. In general, the article should be neither fewer than 4,000 words nor exceed 20,000 words. Upon submission, the article should be ready for submission to the given journal. The article must not be submitted to the journal prior to completion of grading. Grades A or B are preferable for articles submitted to peer-reviewed journals for assessment. Once a candidate has chosen a journal, it is important that he/she follows the author guidelines closely. The author guidelines provide information about article structure, word count, referencing style and how the article should be submitted. The article must adhere to these formal requirements.

Usually, a scientific article has the following structure:<sup>1</sup>

- Front page with
  - Title
  - List of authors and institutional association (in most cases Nord University)
  - Summary/abstract
  - Keywords
  - Introduction
  - Theoretical framework/methods/data
  - Results
  - Discussion
  - Conclusion
  - References
  - Acknowledgements
  - Figures/tables

All points should be in accordance with the guidelines of the relevant journal.

### **8.2.2.3 Weighting of assessment**

When assessing the assignment, the summary article is weighted 30% and the article 70% when the total grade is set. However, both parts must have a minimum E in order for the student to get a passing grade overall.

### **8.2.2.4 Publishing**

The student(s) and supervisor can, after censorship, together assess whether the article part of the master's thesis may be further processed for submission to the chosen journal. The co-author of the supervisor(s) should then be discussed, but the supervisor(s) will not automatically become co-author(s) (cf. the Vancouver Guidelines <http://www.icmje.org/icmjerecommendations.pdf>).

If the student, in whole or in part, builds the article on data made available by the supervisor / supervisor's project, the student(s) may not usually be the sole author if the article is published.

If the supervisor and the student(s) agree that the article will be submitted for assessment, any expenses for publication will be covered by Nord University Business School. If the master's thesis (article / articles) is not sent to scientific journal within six months after the assessment, the supervisor may publish as the first author with the master's degree student(s) as a second

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<sup>1</sup> These may vary. In many journals, the introduction may start on the front page, while graphs and tables appear in the text itself. It is paramount that candidates write their text in accordance with the relevant author guidelines.

author. When submitting an article to a journal, it is required for further co-authorship that all co-authors agree on any changes to the original manuscript.

### **8.3 The organization of the report as a monograph**

- |   |  |   |                                 |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------|
| ✓ | Front page   | ✓ | List of tables                  |
| ✓ | Sammendrag<br>(A summary in Norwegian,<br>ab. 200 words) | ✓ | List of figures                 |
| ✓ | Preface  | ✓ | List of appendixes              |
| ✓ | Abstract   | ✓ | Glossary of concepts            |
| ✓ | Table of contents  | ✓ | The chapters of the main report |
|   |  | ✓ | Literature list                 |
|   |  | ✓ | Appendices                      |

### **8.4 The abstract**

The abstract (and the Norwegian “sammendrag”) contains a description of the thesis. Here, the problem topic is presented in a brief manner and the main conclusions given. A reader should be able to understand the abstract and obtain an overview over the contents of the thesis without having to read further into the thesis. The abstract should not make up more than 2 – 4% of the total report.

### **8.5 Introduction, theory, context**

The thesis’ main report should contain an introductory chapter, which touches on the following main themes:

- ✓ **Background:** the motives and intentions of the work. Why is the theme interesting, e.g. for a business community and for a particular research field?
- ✓ **Problem topic:** clarification and limitation of the problem dealt with; definitions and important concepts; possibly a presentation and argumentation for crucial theories and perspectives.
- ✓ **The material forming the basis,** i.e. arguments for and a display of the most important theories and main sources on which the investigation is based.
- ✓ **A presentation of the report’s structure,** as well as a brief introduction to the reasoning behind the structure.

- ✓ A theoretical discussion, either as a basis for later empirical investigations, or as an objective in itself. One may also want to present the thesis' context(s) (e.g. a particular company), before or after the theoretical discussions.

## **8.6 Method**

If the report is based on some type of collection of empirical data, one of the main chapters should explain this explicitly. The following themes are essential:

- ✓ The definition of the observation unit. When using quantitative methods, the population must be defined.
- ✓ Selection/sampling parameters and the procedure for selection of observation units, possibly a discussion of who/what is representative, etc. How and why is the sampling conducted?
- ✓ Methods of data collection, interpretation and processing.
- ✓ The discussion of sources of error and validity.

The contents of the method chapter will be important when the formal quality of the report is evaluated. The discussions in this chapter must be explicitly related to the research problem chosen and the investigation work you are to start on.

## **8.7 The introduction and summary of each chapter**

All chapters, except the introduction and the method chapter, **may**, as a conclusion, contain a small summary of half a page length at the most. The summary should describe the main results and the main conclusions. Also, the main chapters may have a short introduction presenting the purpose of the chapter, central arguments and a reader's guide.

## **8.8 The literature list and literature references**

*Appendix 3 provides an example literature list or bibliography.* In any scientific work there must be references to the sources used. If direct quotations are made, both the year of publishing and the page number must be referenced. An example: "Pettersen says "..., and to say a thing like that, would be to lie" (1980: 23)." If a direct quote is not made, but a reference is being made to the author, the year reference in parenthesis is sufficient: Pettersen (1980) thinks that such a contention is incorrect. If the name of the source is omitted, it must be included in the parenthesis: Such a contention will in some people's opinion be incorrect (Pettersen, 1980; Janson, 1983). Consult your supervisor for advice.

Correct literature references will be emphasized when the formal evaluation is made. The candidate is advised to implement a system that can be easily surveyed to see how s/he uses his/her references. The main purpose is to maintain order and control over the references used and for the research to be verifiable. Disorganized and missing references create confusion in the latter stages of the process.

More importantly, omission of references (leaving out information about where theories, quotes etc. were found) may be regarded as plagiarism and cheating and can be punished by exclusion from the university for up to 12 months. Therefore, be extremely accurate regarding the list of references. All sources used in the MOPP must be mentioned! **The University utilizes Ephorus in order to detect possible plagiarism on all master theses.**

## **8.9 Tables and figures**

Examples of tables and figures are shown in appendix 3. Creation of tables and figures must also be done in an appropriate manner. It is particularly important to be meticulous about finding a title for figures or tables and a title reflecting the topic matter to be illustrated.

## **8.10 Appendixes**

Detailed background material of significance or interest, but not inherent to any part of the discussion in the report itself, may be provided in an appendix. If you are unsure whether to assign material to the main report or the appendix, consult your supervisor.

## 9. EXAMINATION-RESULT / GRADE

The evaluation of the master thesis is carried out by 2 persons, one internal examiner (usually the supervisor) and one external. Letter grades are given (A-F).

### 9.1 Criteria and grading ladder for the evaluation of the MOPP thesis.

#### 1: Professional/substantial criteria

- Emphasizing and explaining the research problem
- Arguments for and discussions of the theoretical basis
- Stating reasons for and discussing method
- Theoretical and empirical use of the problem topic
- The ability to abstract

#### 2: Formal criteria

- Structured exposition
- Coherent and well written presentation
- Systematic references and literature list

#### 3: Independence criteria and originality

- The ability to work independently with a problem, theory and method
- Originality displayed in the choice of problem, theory, and method.

### 9.2 Grading scale

#### **A Generally: An excellent performance that clearly stands out at a national level**

- Displays excellent insight into the academic theories and methods in the field and knowledge at an exceptionally high level. The goals of the thesis are clearly defined and easy to understand
- can choose between and use relevant methods of research and academic development, and masters the methods used in a convincing manner
- The work is innovative and has required very extensive work
- has an excellent ability to analyse and critically relate to different sources of information and to use these to structure and articulate academic arguments
- has in an outstanding manner conducted an independent, delimited research or development project under supervision and in line with applicable norms of research ethics
- displays excellent capacity for critical reflection, and can clearly distinguish between own contribution and the contributions made by others
- Shows that they have undertaken extensive independent work and has excellent mastery of the expressive forms of the field.  
The thesis has an advanced form, structure and language.

#### **B Generally: A very good performance that clearly stands out**

- Displays very good insights into the academic theories and methods of the field and knowledge at a very high level. The goals of the thesis are clearly defined and easy to understand
- can chose between and use relevant methods of research and academic development, and masters the methods used in a very good manner
- The work is innovative and has required extensive work
- has a very good ability to analyse and critically relate to different sources of information and to use these to structure and articulate academic arguments
- has in a very good manner conducted an independent, delimited research or development project under supervision and in line with applicable norms of research ethics
- displays very good capacity for critical reflection, and can clearly distinguish between their own contribution and the contributions made by others
- Shows that they have undertaken extensive independent work and has very good mastery of the expressive forms of the field. The thesis has an advanced form, structure and language.

**C Generally: A generally good performance**

- Displays good insight into the academic theories and methods of the field and knowledge at a high level. The goals of the thesis are generally defined well
- has chosen relevant and correct methods for research and academic development and masters the methods used well
- The work is good and the thesis represents a normal scope of work
- has a good ability to analyse different sources of information and can use these in an independent and competent manner to structure and articulate academic arguments
- has conducted an independent, delimited research or development project under supervision and in line with applicable norms of research ethics
- displays capacity for critical reflection, and can distinguish well between their own contribution and the contributions made by others
- Masters the forms of expression in the field well. The thesis has good form, structure and language

**D Generally: A clearly satisfactory performance**

- Displays satisfactory insight into the academic theories and methods of the field, and shows that they have a satisfactory level of knowledge. The goals of the thesis are not defined clearly
- has chosen relevant and correct methods for research and academic development and masters the methods used to a satisfactory degree.
- The work appears to have required a modest amount of work
- has some ability to analyse different sources of information independently but depends on relatively close supervision in order to structure and articulate academic arguments  has conducted an independent, delimited research or development project under supervision, but the thesis has clear potential for improvement. The work is in line with applicable norms of research ethics
- displays capacity for critical reflection, but has difficulty in distinguishing well between their own contribution and the contributions made by others
- Masters the forms of expression in the field to a satisfactory degree. The thesis has a satisfactory form, structure and language.

**E Generally: A performance that is sufficient in that it satisfies the minimum requirements**

- has sufficient insight into the academic theories and methods of the field. The goals of the thesis are described but appear unclear
- has chosen relevant and correct methods for research and academic development, and masters the methods used in a manner that satisfies the minimum requirements
- The work appears to have required a very modest amount of work and seems fragmented shows some independent ability to analyse different sources of information, but depends on relatively close supervision in order to formulate academic arguments
- is clearly dependent on supervision in order to complete a delimited research or development project. The work is in line with applicable norms of research ethics
- shows sufficient capacity for critical reflection, but has not utilised the competency of the research community in a good way
- can generally use the expressive forms of the field, but the form, structure and language of the thesis have notable deficiencies

**F Generally: A performance that does not satisfy minimum requirements**

- has insufficient insight into the academic theories and methods of the field. The goals of the thesis are not clearly described, or are not described at all
- lacks competency in the methods of the field, and lacks technical skills in the methods that were utilised
- The work required modest work and is fragmented
- does not use existing sources of information, and has not understood or wanted to use advice and guidance
- does not show sufficient capacity for critical reflection, and has not utilised the competency of the research community in a good way
- The presentation shows significant deficiencies in its form, structure and language

The title and the grade of the written investigation are stated on the diploma.

Theses which upon initial review do not qualify for a passing grade can, if rewritten, be handed in one more time – and then by the next deadline (November). See studweb for information on the deadlines or contact the administration at HHN.

## **10. CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATIONS**

In isolated cases where the student is not able to omit information, or where a sufficiently anonymous rendition is not possible, the “employer”/source of confidential data may decide that the Master thesis should be treated as a confidential investigation, and thus be shielded from public access. You need to indicate whether this is the case when submitting in Canvas.

A confidential Master thesis may only be borrowed from the library if a written permission is issued by the employer/source of data and the author(s).

After 4 years, the Master thesis should normally be accessible for borrowing similar to other investigations.

In general, we recommend students to avoid writing confidential investigations. A confidential thesis may NOT be nominated to a MOPP prize, ref. Chapter 7.2. The Board of Bodø Graduate School of Business agreed, ref. decision no 42 in 1996, that all theses that are not confidential may be used for educational/counselling purposes at Bodø Graduate School of Business.

## 11. OBLIGATION TO NOTIFY

Your project is subject to notification if you will be processing **personal data** in any of the following ways:

- using computer-based equipment (e.g. by processing text, audio or video files on a computer, USB or smartphone), and/or
- manual storing of [sensitive data](#) sorted by name or personal identification number.

Please note that you have an obligation to notify even if an individual remains anonymous in publications from the project. The main issue is how personal data is processed during the whole project; from collecting data until results are published.

You will find the notification form here:

<http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/meldeskjema>

NSD is the Data Protection Official for approximately 150 research and educational institutions, including all the Norwegian universities, university colleges, several hospitals, and a number of independent research institutions. You can read more about NSD on their website.

Learn more about Nord University research ethics policy here:

<http://www.nord.no/no/forskning/forskningsetikk#!&acd=f7a4e95f-2c31-612e-b93ade411c4cc017>

Under paragraph 4 - you write Elena Dybtsyna (Master of Science in Energy Management) or June Borge Doornich (Master of Science in Business) as responsible.

## **12. RULES ON PROPERTY RIGHTS AND USER RIGHTS**

1. The master thesis is the property of the student. The thesis can be used for research and educational purposes at the University. In this context, the thesis can be copied and distributed internally to students and employees at the University without special permission from the rights owner, and without any obligation to compensate the rights owner.

The staff at Bodø Graduate School of Business agreed, according to case 42/96, that all theses that are not confidential can be used for educational/counselling purposes at Bodø Graduate School of Business. Furthermore Bodø Graduate School of Business can, without the author's approval, make theses nominated for awards available to any interested party.

2. The thesis, or part of the thesis, can not be copied or distributed externally without special approval by the rights owner. In the event of an agreement, the price and distribution of the income is stipulated in concordance with the rights owner.
3. The thesis can be made exempt from the public (confidential) if it is written on the request of a company or organisation (employer) who has requested this specifically, ref chapter 10. This is also the case if data sources have been promised complete confidentiality. In these cases the thesis is kept confidential for a period of time stipulated by the employer/ source of data, the student and his/her supervisor in unison, with an upward limit of 4 years. Confidentiality must be agreed to in writing by the supervisor. Students should take steps to make their theses publicly available.
4. Two examples of the master thesis must, with the exception of the directives of point 3, be publicly available at the University library.
- 5 The originator of the work is entitled to have his/her name mentioned, as is the custom, in the event of external use of the work.

**APPENDIX 1: Documentation that presentation number 1 is completed:**

*(The form is available in Word-format in Canvas)*

**THE SIGNED FORM MUST BE HANDED IN TO THE COURSE COORDINATOR FOR THE MAJOR**

Deadline for handing in the form (January 2020) appears on StudentWeb (see your exam registration).

|        |              |
|--------|--------------|
| Name:  | Student no.: |
| Name:  | Student no.: |
| Major: | Course code: |

**PROPOSAL FOR MASTER THESIS**

**Assigned supervisor:**

**Theme /research problem:**

**Preliminary plan:**

For the master's thesis, this is registered as *required work 1*.

**Approved.** \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sign. course coordinator for the major

**APPENDIX 2: Documentation that presentation number 2 is completed**

*(This form is available as a Word-document in Canvas)*

**THE SIGNED FORM MUST BE HANDED IN TO THE COURSE COORDINATOR FOR THE MAJOR**

Deadline for handing in the form (March 2017) appears on StudentWeb (see your exam registration).

|        |              |
|--------|--------------|
| Name:  | Student no.: |
| Name:  | Student no.: |
| Major: | Course code: |

**PROPOSAL FOR MASTER THESIS**

|  |
|--|
| <b>Title (Limited to 90 characters!) :</b> |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>   |

**Review of progression / presentation 2.**

For the master's this is registered as Required presentation 2

Approved. \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sign. course coordinator for the major

### APPENDIX 3: References

#### **The use of reference in the text not functioning as direct quotations – 1 author:**

- a) Westhead (1994) argues that the population density in a region influences the entrepreneurial climate of the region.
- b) The population density in a region has an impact on the entrepreneurial climate of the region (Westhead, 1994)

#### **The use of references in the text that are not treated as direct quotations – two authors :**

The same as above, but

- a) Westhead og Wright (2000) argue ....
- b) .... (Westhead og Wright, 2000).

#### **that are not treated as direct quotations – 3 authors or more:**

The same as above, but

- a) Westhead et al. (2001) argue ...
- b) ... (Westhead et al., 2001).

#### **The use of references in the text that are direct quotations:**

- a) Westhead (1994:page reference) argues that "the population density in a region has some bearing on the entrepreneurial climate of the region"
- b) "The population density in a region has some bearing on the entrepreneurial climate of the region " (Westhead, 1994:page).

#### **The list of references**

(All authors must be enlisted)

##### *Scientific article:*

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179-211.

##### *Conference paper:*

Alsos, G.A., Ljunggren, E. og Rotefoss, B. (2000). Who makes it through the business formation process? A longitudinal study of entrepreneurs. Paper presented at the 2000 Babson College-Kauffman Foundation Entrepreneurship Research Conference, Babson College, 8-10 June.

##### *Book:*

Dollinger, M.J. (1995). *Entrepreneurship: Strategies and resources*. Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin.

*Book chapter:*

Batstone, S. og Mansfield. E. (1992). Births, deaths and turbulence in England and Wales. In Robertsen, M., Chell, E. og Mason, C., red., *Towards the twenty-first century: The challenge for small business*. Macclesfield: Nadamal Books, 179-208.

**References to Internet documents**

Use the exact date that appears on the article.

Note that page references should not be made

When referring to an Internet document the volume and issue number is usually irrelevant. If possible, the URL, which refers directly to the source, should be submitted. If the URL is too long for a line, use line shift after one/or before a full stop.

Examples:

Fredrickson, B. L. 7. March 2000. Cultivating positive emotions to optimize health and well-being. *Prevention & Treatment*, 3, Article 0001a. Downloaded 20 November 2000 from <http://journals.apa.org/prevention/volume3/pre0030001a.html>

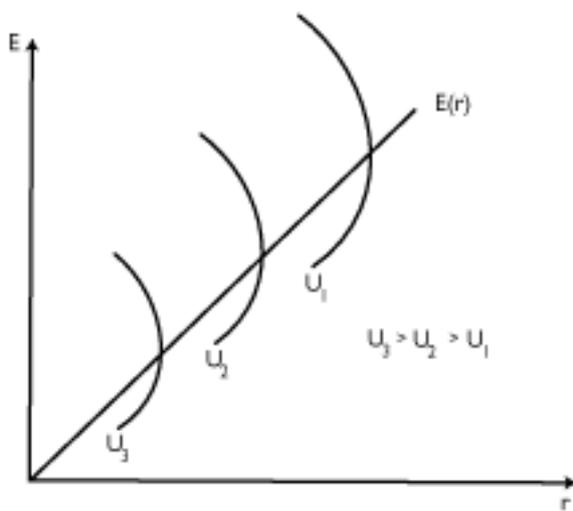
*GVU's 8th WWW user survey*. (without date). Downloaded 8 August 2000 from <http://www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/usersurveys/survey1997-10/>

APPENDIX 4: Tables and figures

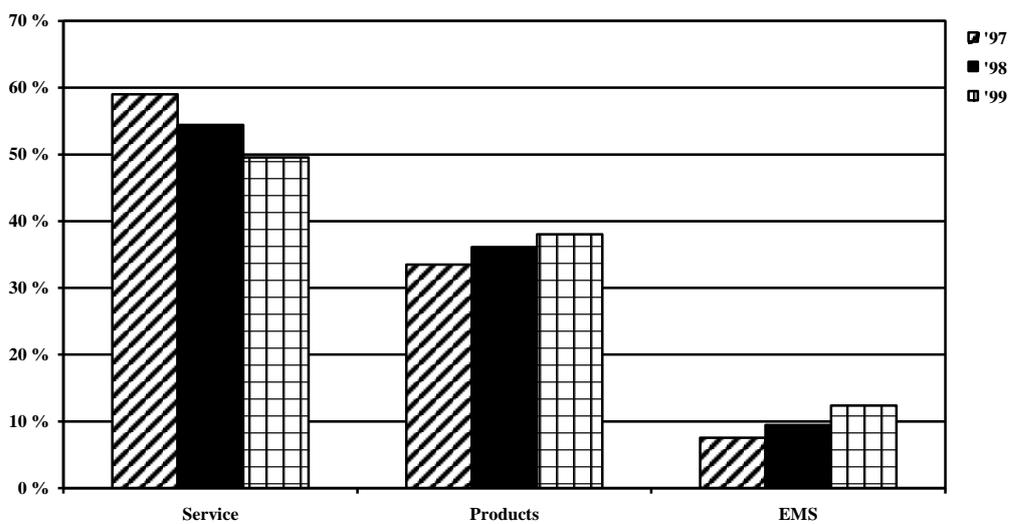
Note! Figures and tables only serve as examples of contents and layout.

**Table 3.1 Additional information from the annual reports of 17 shipping companies**

|                                      | 1990 | 1991 |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|
| Other accounts standards             | 2    | 3    |
| Segment reporting                    | 6    | 12   |
| Substance value estimation           | 10   | 13   |
| Budget and other future info         | 0    | 0    |
| Price-adjusted accounts              | 0    | 0    |
| Value-added accounts                 | 0    | 0    |
| Information on employees             | 11   | 13   |
| Information on shareholder relations | 17   | 17   |



**Figure 1: The reaction curve and preference structure of the authorities**



**Figure 2. Sales by year**

## APPENDIX 5: Application guide for the Master Fund

### **The Master Fund – Guidelines for application**

#### **Who can apply and for what?**

Master degree students at Bodø Graduate School of Business can apply for financial support related to the master thesis. Financial support is given only to activities for which no alternative sources of finance exist. As an example; if you write your thesis for a company they will normally cover most of your expenses.

#### **Examples for types of activities that may be supported:**

- Getting access to databases and reports
- Travel expenses related to collection of data and visits to resource persons
- Other expenses in connection to collection of data

#### **The application must contain the following:**

- Project description
- Budget, including the amount applied for (and other sources\*)
- Supervisor's signature
- The applicant's contact information (including e-mail and phone number)

Support is not given to: study trips, allowance for board, payment/salary, technical equipment, printing/copying expenditures.

The applicants are expected primarily to seek financial support from their employer/collaborator. The application must contain information about this. If support has been or may be provided from another source of financing, this must be specified in the application.

#### **Asset distribution**

The board of the Master fund grants assets to applications which meet the demands of these guidelines. The board does not consider the academic quality of the project.

Students can only apply for support once.

The board has set a maximum limit for costs associated with travel, approximately NOK 4,000. Normally only one trip per person is financed (the main trip).

The bill, including receipt(s), must be submitted before or at the same time as submission of the Master thesis. Receipts are necessary for reimbursement. Reimbursement is given in concordance with the actual costs, as they were specified in the application.

Send your application to Kathrine Mathisen, Kathrine.mathisen @nord.no, in the HHN administration. **Deadline: 20 March, 2020.** Responses will be given within three weeks of the deadline.