



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

# PROCEDURES FOR DEGREE PROJECTS

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<sup>1</sup> This document has been translated from Swedish into English. If the English version differs from the original, the Swedish version takes precedence.



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## 1. Description

This document clarifies the procedures concerning the roles and division of responsibility for degree project courses. These procedures apply throughout Umeå University. Both faculties and departments should use these procedures as a basis for more precise course-specific instructions.

## 2. Background

These procedures are based on rules approved by the Vice-Chancellor. See also, *Rules for course syllabi and literature lists* and *Rules for grades and examination*.

## 3. Definitions

In this document, degree projects refer to an independent project worth at least 15 credits as regulated in the Higher Education Ordinance, *Annex 2 – System of Qualifications (1993:100)*.

### 3.1 Division of roles and responsibility

Several individuals or operators can be involved in a degree project; hence it is important to be aware of the various roles and responsibilities of all those involved. This document clarifies the roles and the responsibility of the department holding the course, student, supervisor, and examiner.

#### 3.1.1 The department holding the course

It is essential that students, supervisors, and examiners involved in degree project courses all receive clear information about the applicable regulations and types of degree project at the department. To avoid misunderstandings and problems, the department holding the course must provide information and create the conditions necessary for effective communication between student and supervisor, and supervisor and examiner.

- The department determines the supervision hours for degree project courses. The department must provide clear information based on the course syllabus about the number of supervision hours offered and when they are offered. It is of particular importance that students are given information about when the supervision period takes place. The Swedish Higher Education Authority recommends providing additional supervision – within reason – to students who do not complete their work within the course period, until the students complete their degree



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project. If the department wishes to apply other procedures, these must be specified in the course syllabus.

See *Rules for course syllabi and literature lists*, and a report from the National Agency for Higher Education on legally certain examinations (Sw. *Rättssäker examination*)<sup>2</sup>.

- The department must ensure that students, supervisors, and examiners understand the course objectives (intended learning outcomes) and assessment criteria for degree project courses, and that the intended course learning outcomes are applied appropriately. To encourage cohesive interpretation of the course objectives (intended learning outcomes) and ensure that the assessment conducted by supervisors and examiners is legally certain, the department must aim to create forums where validation of degree project courses can be discussed regularly.
- The Swedish Higher Education Authority states that situations should not arise where supervisors recommend that the student submits their degree project for public examination or final seminar and then the examiner requires comprehensive changes in order for the degree project to pass the examination. However, it is important that only examiners determine grades.

See the 2008 report on legally certain examinations from the National Agency for Higher Education, and the decision from the Swedish Higher Education Authority (31-458-13, 2013) on lack of consensus between supervisor and examiner regarding a medical degree project (Sw. *Bristande samsyn mellan handledare och examinator vid examensarbete inom läkarprogrammet*).

- In order to improve the quality of supervision, the department must ensure that the supervisor has completed a course on higher education supervision in practice. See the courses offered by the Centre for Educational Development.
  - The department will decide whether students will work independently or in pairs. It is important that students working in pairs can be assessed individually. See *Rules for course syllabi and literature lists*, and *Rules for grades and examination*.
  - Consult the *Rules for grades and examination* if a student and supervisor are unable to cooperate.
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- The department will decide whether supervision will be given independently or in groups. See *Rules for course syllabi and literature lists*.
- The department holding the course should inform students of the possibility of conducting their degree project in collaboration with an external party, if appropriate.
- The department must inform students that their Umeå University degree projects must be registered and uploaded to DiVA. The information registered (author, title, abstract, department, etc.) is openly available. Each faculty or department decides whether the degree project will be published in full, see Open access policy for scientific publishing at Umeå University (FS 1.1-911-17).

### 3.1.2 Student

- The student is expected to create a project and schedule (or similar) based on the course syllabus, which must then be approved by the supervisor or examiner. The student has the sole responsibility for realising the approved plan and achieving the course objectives (intended learning outcomes).
- Students must take the initiative to arrange sessions with their supervisor. Together, student and supervisor will use the established schedule or other agreement to determine the number of supervision hours needed from those allocated.
- Students who are collaborating on a degree project must ensure that work is divided as equally as possible. They must also attempt to resolve any collaboration problems between themselves. If this is not possible, the students are to consult with the supervisor.
- If any collaboration problems arise between the student and their supervisor, they must first contact the course coordinator to find a solution. See also, *Rules for grades and examination*.
- If a student does not intend to complete the course, they must notify their supervisor and the course coordinator. This ensures that the department is aware of which students will be using the supervision resources.

### 3.1.3 Supervisor

- The supervisor is to guide the student towards attaining the course objectives (intended learning outcomes). The supervisor is to establish a plan together with the student and make their role during the course clear to the student.



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- The supervisor must provide the student with supervision within the time allocated. The supervisor must notify the student of the amount of supervision allocated and when the supervisor will be available to provide supervision during this period.
- The supervisor and student will plan how supervision hours will be used and review and agree on the student's plan for their degree project.
- The supervisor can recommend that the student does not submit their degree project for public discussion and examination or final seminar, however the final decision to submit is that of the student. See *Rules for grades and examination*.

### 3.1.4 Examiner

- The examiner assesses and grades the student's degree project following the relevant course objectives (intended learning outcomes) and assessment criteria.
- The examiner must give the reasons for their assessment. The examiner must conduct individual performance assessments of students who have collaborated on their degree project. However, the examiner is not expected to provide suggestions about the corrections a student can make to attain a passing grade. See *Rules for grades and examination*.

## 4. External partners

Even if a student conducts their degree project in collaboration with an external partner, there are no differences regarding the division of responsibility between student, supervisor, examiner, and the department holding the course (see above). External collaborations can be based on an assignment; however, students can also initiate contact and be given approval to study an organisation. Regardless of the nature and shape of the collaborations, the student and the external contact person or external supervisor must agree on how the work will be carried out. The following applies to external collaborations.

- It is the task of the supervisor, examiner or equivalent (at the University) to determine whether degree projects being based on an external assignment meet with the course objectives (intended learning outcomes). The University is always the one to decide whether the assignment is in line with the course objectives.
- Before the work begins, it may be necessary to draw up an agreement between the student and external partner that regulates publication, ownership, and secrecy of results. The University cannot be a party in these agreements. The University, primarily the department, should



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provide the student with certain advice and determine whether the conditions in the agreement are in line with the course objectives.

- Students working with external degree projects may sometimes need to write another version in addition to the one meeting the course objectives if required to do so by the organisation or company (and the student is prepared to meet such a requirement).
- It is the student's responsibility to maintain contact with the external partner and provide them with information about the University's expectations for external degree projects.