STUDY GUIDE
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
Design—oriented MASTER THESIS
2016 - 2017
LAR-80436/39
INTRODUCTION

A thesis landscape architecture of 36 ECTS (LAR 80436 in the University’s Study Handbook) is compulsory for master students who follow the master programme Landscape Architecture and Planning (MLP), specialization landscape architecture. Students have a choice between a design-oriented or a research-oriented thesis and a choice regarding the size of the thesis. This document deals with the large design-oriented thesis as this is the most common type that students of MLP will do. The typical characteristic of this thesis is that it entails, in addition to research, a substantial design component. At the end of this document some remarks are made on other types and lengths of theses.

This study guide is, in principle, written to guide landscape architecture students through the logistics of the compulsory master thesis, but it also contains useful information for those who include a second thesis in their master programme. A master thesis project can be undertaken individually though co-operation with another student is possible. In the foreword of your thesis (and before that in your thesis proposal and contract), you need to motivate why you undertake your master thesis in cooperation with another student. However, every student needs to hand in an individual thesis with a specific part of research and design in which the cooperative part has to be documented in a clearly identified section of the report, so that the individual capacity of each student can be assessed. The MSc thesis landscape architecture is carried out in the English language including your thesis report and the various required presentations.

In order to streamline the thesis process as much as possible, there is a specific routing that you should follow. This routing runs from preparing a first initial proposal during the course research methodology for planning and design up to your final thesis examination. It is in the benefit of the student that you adhere as much as possible to this routing. The study guide at hand will take you through the routing protocol.

PREQUALIFICATION

The WUR Study Handbook does not give specific prerequisites for a master thesis. It is, however, expected that a student has passed the following master landscape-architecture courses:
LAR-37306 Reflections on planning and design practices
LUP-36806 Landscape theory and Analysis
GEO-37806 Research methodology for planning and design

Furthermore, the full completion of the design masters studios LAR-38806 Master Studio Regional Landscape Architecture: a Systems Approach and LAR-39306 Master
Studio Park Design: a Narrative Approach is a prerequisite for a successful thesis process. The completion of the ‘Internship Landscape Architecture’ (LAR-70421 up to LAR-70439) is advisable.

In the course ‘GEO-37806 Research Methodology for Planning and Design, you practice with the development of a design-thesis proposal. The examination of this course is in the form of a written preliminary thesis proposal and includes a fact sheet summarising your topic, concepts and methods. It is, thus, in your advantage to know your thesis subject at the start of that course. We also highly recommend that you match your choice of topic with the track you have chosen.

ROUTING

The routing is as follows:

1. Contact one of the MSc thesis coordinators for an intake (Ingrid Duchhart or Rudi van Etteger)
During the course GEO-37806 Research methodology for planning and design you will already start working on an initial thesis proposal. Based on running research programme of the chair group Landscape Architecture and the related PhD research projects, you choose a topic that matches best with your learning objectives and your design and research interest. You will maybe also be attracted by the landscape architectonic approach of a certain staff member. It is, thus, in your advantage to know your thesis subject at the start of the course. At the end of the course, the thesis coordinator will in consultation with the chair-group staff, determine the most suitable supervisor. Hereby, we will take into account as much as possible your wishes, but we also have to look at the availability of the staff members. The full and final proposal will be prepared under the supervision of the assigned supervisor(s).

It is possible to include a second or external supervisor. This second supervisor is usually drawn from another Wageningen University chair group. External supervisors can be invited from another university, or research institutes, such as Alterra or Deltares, or from a professional (landscape architecture) office or company. However, the first supervisor is a staff member of the chair group Landscape Architecture. He or she is the first responsible person (this is also expressed in the maximum amount of time the 2nd or external supervisor can spend on your supervision). Keep in mind that you contact the thesis coordinator at least two months before the start of your thesis work trajectory.
2. Contact supervisor(s)
Once the chair group supervisor agreed to your supervision, the thesis coordinator will inform you. It is wise to agree also upon a Green Light and 2nd examiner on forehand.

3. Study space and computer requirements
The ESG (Environmental Science Group) has allocated ‘flexiworking’ space with appropriate computer software in rooms A204, A205 and A314 in the Gaia building. Any questions about the software, you need to contact Monique Janssen (Gaia B.205). For other questions contact Audrey Raijmann-Schut (Gaia B.114).

4. Proposal and Thesis contract
As mentioned earlier, in collaboration with your supervisor, you prepare a final thesis proposal of a maximum 5000 words. The thesis proposal contains the following parts:
- Introduction of the issue in general terms
- Specific topic, knowledge gap and design issue
- Theoretical framework
- Research questions and design question (plus helping questions)
- Research and Design Methodss with specific attention to the link between the two
- Time planning
- Expected results and academic and societal relevance
- References

Nb Pay.

The proposal is added to the thesis contract. ([http://www.wageningenur.nl/web/file?uuid=525dbd2a-0b73-4dd9-bbb7-e510bd8ce6b2&owner=695d9494-935d-4a6e-9511-a774a34306ae](http://www.wageningenur.nl/web/file?uuid=525dbd2a-0b73-4dd9-bbb7-e510bd8ce6b2&owner=695d9494-935d-4a6e-9511-a774a34306ae)).

Usually, the percentages for contribution to the final grade for the thesis that you fill in are: 30% design; 30% thesis; 30% research and 5% examination and 5% colloquium. Different percentages (within margins) must be discussed with your supervisors. This is also where the design-oriented thesis differs from a research-oriented thesis.

This contract needs to be signed by the supervisors and requires a confirmation of the study advisor in relation to the pre-requirements. Take the signed original of the thesis contract to Audrey Raijmann-Schut. She will take care that the examiner (Adri van den Brink) will sign the contract. She will send a digital copy of the signed contract to you, the supervisors and to the MSc thesis coordinator (Ingrid Duchhart).

The contract will establish the weight of your thesis (in ECTS) and the contact hours between the student and supervisors (usually 1 to 1.5 hours in two weeks). For a
If you start a research thesis without a design objective, you use the general WUR contract (WUR/Forms).
The contract also includes a time schedule - it is important to mention how much time per week you can spend on the thesis. Valid reasons to spend less than 40 hours per week might relate to part-time work or invalidating circumstances.

5. ‘Proposal’ Presentation and Approval
From 2014-2015 onwards, a presentation of your proposal is a requirement. See Appendix 3 for a typical time line of a major thesis. On every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month, you can present your proposal to your supervisor, other LAR staff members, external supervisors, examiner and your peer students. Audrey Rajmann-Schut coordinates these presentations. The presentation of maximum 10 minutes and discussion takes half an hour. After the presentation you prepare 1 A4 with the most important comments and an indication of how you will address these points in your proposal. The improved proposal becomes formal after you have received the approval from the examiner (typically the chair) and your supervisors. The examiner, supervisor, and yourself sign the contract (see point 4). The proposal meeting has a go/no go character.

6. Research starts according to contract
Once the thesis contract is finalised and signed, you start with your actual research and design activities. You do your research and design work under the guidance of your supervisor(s) and according to your planning as agreed upon in your research proposal which is summarized in your contract. Any deviations from the planning must be communicated and discussed with your supervisor(s). During the period you work on your thesis, it is strongly advised to attend proposal presentations of other students and at least five colloquia of fellow students to get insight of the level of a MSc landscape architecture thesis and standards for colloquium presentations.

Typically the research part(s) of your thesis will contain landscape analysis, reference studies, the development of a theoretical framework, and supportive research related to your research topic resulting in the development of design guidelines. The latter form the foundation and legitimation of your designs on a real site. Further search activities give shape to the design activities. The design part(s) be it ‘design experiments’, ‘strategic design’ or ‘practical nearly implementable design’ are clearly connected to the research part(s). Appendix 1 gives a literature overview of landscape architecture classics for you to explore.

7. ‘Green Light’ Presentation
A ‘green light’ presentation is a presentation to benchmark your progress and to assess the accomplished research and design work. A ‘green light’ presentation is typically scheduled 16 weeks after your proposal presentation and 6 weeks before the
date of your thesis examination. Your work is usually presented as a beamer presentation. Content wise, you need your designs and the supportive theory and legitimation (analysis, research and research methods) accomplished. Make clear how designs and supportive research are connected. A thesis outline is in order – but you do not need a full draft as yet. Keep in mind that you are not ‘selling’ your design but defending the credibility and authenticity of your thesis (design and research included).

In principle, you present for your supervisor(s) and one member of the landscape architecture staff who was not involved in your tutoring (‘green light’ reviewer). In agreement with your main supervisor, you could include your peer students as well. The ‘green light’ procedure starts at a point in time when your supervisor believes you are ready for a successful rounding up of your thesis. The student is responsible for the invitations and for making room reservations. Consult with the supervisor(s) about the invitation of the ‘green light’ reviewer/examiner.

After your presentation of at the most 20 minutes, the supervisor (s) and the invited ‘green light’ reviewer will consult on the quality of your work. The qualification will be expressed as follows:

- **Green light**, the staff is satisfied with your progress and expects you to finalise your work in a satisfactory way within a time period of about 6 weeks. Green Light is not a guarantee for a pass of the final thesis.
- **Orange light**, the staff is positive about your progress, but also sees serious shortcomings. You will be asked to prepare a new presentation, scheduled 4 weeks away from the green light date, that addresses the shortcomings. You have to adapt your contract.
- **Red light**, the staff is not satisfied with your work. There are major flaws and a substantial revision is required. Only after these revisions have been addressed you can request your supervisor permission to organize for a new green light session. A new green light date is 8 weeks away from the previous date. If you fail twice the next step is that you will have to apply for an exam 8 weeks later. If you fail that exam you need to discuss with the examiner a follow-up procedure; possible solutions are – you are paired with a new supervisor; or you start afresh with a new thesis topic.

Just before the green light you are also asked to deliver electronically a draft version of your report. The status of the report can then also weigh in on the evaluation.

### 8 Colloquium and Examination

After your work is assessed with a ‘green light’ you prepare your final work. This includes writing the thesis report, refining and completing designs, a beamer presentation (Powerpoint or PDF) and three posters (A0, A1 or a size required for a competition entry). Keep in mind that you have different objectives (maybe even target groups) with each medium.
The design thesis will not exceed 125 pages A4 or 60 pages A3, including reference list and appendices, and typically covers the sections mentioned earlier. Text is single spacing Times New Roman 12-point or comparable format.

To help you to prepare concise and challenging posters, you are advised not to represent the full thesis, but to focus on the design and provide the findings of the research in so far as they support the design. The poster needs to be readable from 1 to 1.5 meters, it needs to be clearly structured and inviting.

A final presentation of your thesis results, i.e. your colloquium, your thesis report (see also point 8), posters, and a final examination by your supervisor(s) examiner and supervisors forms the basis for your assessment. In case you have only one supervisor or the second supervisor is from outside the WUR, the presence of a second landscape-architecture staff member as a reviewer is compulsory. He/she is typically the same staff member as the one present at your ‘green light’ presentation. The chair holder, who is the formal examiner of all LAR MSc theses, Prof. Adri van den Brink, will in principle preside over the exam or he may delegate this position to a chair group member.

You first present in English your thesis in maximum 20 minutes in a public colloquium. After that there is room for informative questions and some discussion with the audience. After that a closed oral examination takes place. After this the supervisor(s), reviewer(s), and examiner determine your mark. The students receives immediate feedback on the level of pass and fail. The precise grades takes into account your performance at the exam and will be passed on at a later moment. The marking follows a standard Excel sheet (Appendix 3) and the underlying rubric which are available. Your mark is forwarded by the first supervisor to Audrey Raijmann-Schut, who enters it into the central student administration (CSA). After the examination the examiner arranges for the signatures of your examination committee (see Appendix 2).

9. Hard and soft copies
You have to provide (at least) three hard copies of the thesis report. Two or more copies are for your supervisor(s) and reviewers and examiner, one copy is for the library. Take care to include a signature page and ask for the signatures of supervisors, reviewers, and examiner (see Appendix 4). One set of the hard copy posters need to be handed in to your supervisor.

You also have to provide your thesis document in pdf format (print quality 300 dpi and screen quality 72 dpi), as well as separate folders with 5 crucial illustrations (300 dpi), the colloquium ‘beamer’ presentation, posters (print quality of 300 dpi and screen quality 72 dpi), and an abstract in the English and Dutch language, maximum of 300 words. Also add your contact (address, email and 06-phone number). All materials
need to be handed on your examination day. Failing to do so may delay the processing of your examination results.

You hand the hard copy thesis report for the library in to Audrey Rajjmann-Schut and the digital materials to Monique Jansen (Gaia B.205). Audrey Rajjmann-Schut needs to upload your thesis, so provide her too with a PDF version of your thesis.

To allow sufficient preparation time for your supervisor(s) and examiners, the final thesis report needs to be handed in in printed form 2 weeks before your examination date.

10. Financial compensation
You can request Audrey Rajjmann (secretary for the Chair Group Landscape Architecture) for a compensation of (a part of) your thesis costs. This is a fixed amount of money (currently Euro's 150,00). You have to provide the receipts of printing costs that are confirmed with a signature of the thesis supervisor.

11. What if there are problems?
What if you experience problems during your final thesis studies process? You might have difficulties with your health, guidance, or finances. Wageningen University has a professional Student Counselling Service (DSB) comprised of student deans, psychologists, and student physician. In the case of problems, do not wait too long to contact your study advisers (Hanneke Schavemaker, Hetty van der Stoep) as soon as possible. Issues related to supervision and the like, can be in first instance be discussed with your supervisor(s), then with the thesis coordinator or the chair Landscape Architecture.

Theses of other formats:

In general a smaller (24 ECT) design oriented thesis could be based on research performed by others. In practice however it is extremely rare to find research tailored for this purpose. For this reason the production of small design theses is not recommended.

Usually a 24 or 27 ECT research theses covers researching a landscape related topics without the need for a design. In that case the general rules for theses at WUR apply. Students are reminded that the capacity for tutoring smaller theses beyond the research interests of the chair-group landscape architecture is very limited. A small and large thesis cannot be supervised by one supervisor. Neither can the small thesis be constituted of a substantial part of the large thesis (for example, case analysis). The central theme for the small and large thesis can be the same, e.g. micro-climate, but then the small thesis is undertaken at a different Chair Group than LAR chair
group. In principle the green light step of the procedure is not required for a small thesis.
Appendix 1: Classic books
(NB Other books by any of these authors might also be interesting)

Appleton, Jay. 1996. The Experience of Landscape, New York, Wiley


Dee C., 2001 Form and Fabric in Landscape Architecture: A Visual Introduction: An Introduction Paperback


Ingold, T., 2000. The perception of the environment, essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill.

Jackson, J.B. 1986. Discovering the Vernacular landscape, Yale University Press

Jacobs, J., The Death and Life of Great American Cities


Lyle, John T. 1999, Design for Human Ecosystems, Washington DC, Island Press,


Olin, Laurie. 1996. Transforming the Common Place: Selections from Laurie Olin’s sketchbooks, Harvard


Relph, Edward. 1976. Place and Placelessness, Research in Planning and Design, Pion London

Simonds, J.O. 2006. Landscape Architecture: A Manual if Site Planning and Design


Spirn, A.W., 2000. The language of landscape


Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1990. Topophilia, Columbia University Press

Important articles:


Lenzholzer S., Duchhart I., Koh, J., 'Research through designing’ in landscape architecture Landscape and Urban Planning Volume 113, May 2013, Pages 120–127


Thompson, I.H, Ten Tenets and Six Questions for Landscape Urbanism Landscape Research Volume 37, Issue 1, 2012 pages 7-26

Appendix 2 (36 ects – major thesis)

**Thesis evaluation Wageningen University LAR Design Thesis**

Fill out the single lined fields. Use a comma or a point as decimal sign, depending on the language chosen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Grading mark 1-10</th>
<th>Relative weight *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research competence (20-50%) *</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Commitment and perseverance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Initiative and creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Independence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Efficiency in working with data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Handling supervisor's comments and development of research skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Keeping to the time schedule</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis report (20-50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Relevance research, clearness goals, delineation research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Theoretical underpinning, use of literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Use of methods and data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Critical reflection on the research performed (discussion)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Clarity of conclusions and recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Writing skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Graphical Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design competences (20-60%) *</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Architectural Composition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Creative thinking landscape architectural design and aesthetical enhancement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Conceptual strength that expresses, leads, or predicates the design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colloquium (5-10%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Graphical presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Verbal presentation and defence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination (5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Defence of the thesis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Knowledge of study domain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *please choose weights such that they sum is 100.

**TOTAL**

| 0.00 |

**FINAL GRADE**

**Comment by supervisor:**

**Comment by 2nd reviewer/examiner:**
# Thesis evaluation Wageningen University

Fill out the single lined fields. Use a comma or a point as decimal sign, depending on the language chosen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name chair group</th>
<th>Name student</th>
<th>Registration number</th>
<th>Study programme</th>
<th>Specialisation</th>
<th>Code thesis</th>
<th>Short title thesis</th>
<th>Date examination</th>
<th>Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor chair group</th>
<th>Supervisor outside chair group (if so)</th>
<th>Second reviewer/examiner</th>
<th>grading mark 1-10</th>
<th>relative weight *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Research competence (30-60%) *

1. Commitment and perseverance
2. Initiative and creativity
3. Independence
4. Efficiency in working with data
5. Handling supervisor's comments and development of research skills
6. Keeping to the time schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research competence (30-60%) *</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Thesis report (30-60%) *

1. Relevance research, clearness goals, delineation research
2. Theoretical underpinning, use of literature
3. Use of methods and data
4. Critical reflection on the research performed (discussion)
5. Clarity of conclusions and recommendations
6. Writing skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis report (30-60%) *</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Colloquium (8%) *

1. Graphical presentation
2. Verbal presentation and defence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colloquium (8%) *</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Examination (5%) *

1. Defence of the thesis
2. Knowledge of study domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examination (5%)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* please choose weights such that there sum is 100.

** TOTAL **

** FINAL GRADE **

### Comment by supervisor


### Comment by 2nd reviewer/examiner


### Appendix 3 – Time line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8 weeks</th>
<th>2 weeks</th>
<th>2 weeks</th>
<th>16 weeks</th>
<th>4 weeks</th>
<th>2 weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact thesis coordinators</td>
<td>Start thesis</td>
<td>Deliver final proposal</td>
<td>Present proposal</td>
<td>Green light presentation</td>
<td>Deliver printed thesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Appendix 4 Example of a Signature Page in the Thesis

Solicit for the signatures of the examiner, supervisor, and reviewer at the end of your examination. Scan the signed page and add it to the digital version of your thesis! This copy will be uploaded to the library. Hand the signed hard copy of your thesis to Audrey Raijmann-Schut.