



# Guidelines for preparing and carrying out an MSc thesis

at the

**Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group  
Wageningen University**

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# 1 Preface

These guidelines have been written for students who plan to carry out MSc thesis research at the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group. These guidelines do not replace the many excellent textbooks providing an introduction into science or the writing of research proposals. Rather they should serve the student as an orientation during her or his scientific training period with the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy (FNP) Group at Wageningen University to take the best out of this period for her or his further career.

The guidelines provide information on the goal of the thesis, the function of the thesis contract, admission requirements, responsibilities, the assessment procedure, plagiarism and the submission procedure of the final thesis. The appendices show several forms related to the different aspects of preparing, carrying out and finalizing a master thesis with FNP.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 MSc thesis: the crown of higher academic education

The writing of an MSc thesis is the biggest achievement of students in their higher academic education and it takes a prominent position within the whole MSc program. After completing introductory and specific courses in the educational program the MSc thesis offers the challenge to set up and carry out a scientific research project in an almost fully, self-responsible manner. This challenge includes:

- assuring the adequate delineation and definition of the research topic,
- building a sound theoretical framework for orientation of the research,
- collecting data in a systematic and verifiable manner,
- analyzing the data critically,
- presenting the results comprehensibly,
- drawing sound conclusions based on a comprehensive discussion of the results,
- showing the possible contribution of the research to the process of theory building as well as policy advice.

#### *A soccer player and his/her coach*

A great deal of independence is expected from the student in preparing the MSc-thesis. The role of the supervisor is to guide the students' learning process rather than offering specific knowledge. In this respect the relation between the student and the supervisor can be compared to the relation between a soccer player and his/her coach: it is the player who scores, but it is the coach who regularly provides the player with hints and tactics. In contrast to soccer, not only the goals count, but also the training process itself. Thus, the grading of the MSc thesis is not only based on the quality of the report but also on the qualities of the student as a scientist and the learning process.

Given the intensive training process, it is important that the expectations of both parties involved, the student as well as the supervisor, are made clear from the beginning. In order to avoid disappointments on both sides these agreements are laid down in written form in the 'thesis contract' at the very beginning of the training process (see appendix; copies of the thesis contract can be downloaded at [http://www.fnp.wur.nl/UK/Education/Education\\_Master+thesis](http://www.fnp.wur.nl/UK/Education/Education_Master+thesis)). Copies of the thesis contract go to the student and the responsible study adviser, the original remains with the administration of the responsible chair group (see chapter "administrative issues").

This guideline informs about the regular steps and procedures for preparing an MSc thesis with the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy group (FNP). It takes its point of departure from the general information and terms of references for preparing an MSc thesis at Wageningen University (see online study handbook).

The rest of this chapter deals with the basic scientific and administrative pre-conditions to start with the preparation of the MSc thesis. In chapter 2 the different phases in preparation of an MSc thesis are described. Chapter 3 touches on the necessary content, organizational, as well as administrative procedures for the successful completion of the MSc thesis. Finally, chapter 4 explains the rules and regulations connected to the thesis process.

In Annex B the student can find all steps and actions to be taken and by whom during the preparation and the execution of his/her thesis project in a

chronological order. This Annex is an easy tool to direct the student's necessary activities with respect to the thesis work.

## 2.2 The MSc thesis as a scientific product

Most MSc candidates already have some experience in carrying out research, e.g., in doing experiments during their practical periods. But, in working on their MSc-thesis they are faced, usually for the first time, with the requirement that the thesis has to be scientific. What this means exactly is often not immediately clear.

Research often starts with an interest in a certain empirical phenomenon. The questions asked are often of an empirical or descriptive nature: "what conflict resolution mechanisms do forest owners prefer?", "who is participating in collaborative management approaches?", "how many farmers depend with their income on forest use?". For this empirical or descriptive research to become scientific, something extra is required. There has to be a scientific contribution that highlights what the significance of the findings is beyond knowing the answer to these questions. This is done through the use of theory.

The first way in which theory is important is by offering a general epistemological outlook on the world. Different research approaches and methods start from different epistemological positions and it is important that a master thesis clearly articulates and argues its position.

The second way in which theory is important is by offering taxonomies that will guide you in structuring the findings and will structure the shape of your answer to the questions you ask. Take for example the question about the conflict mechanisms. In order to start your research and in order to make sense of your result, you will need some idea about what kinds of conflict mechanisms you may encounter. A search of relevant literature will help you to design an appropriate conceptual framework to serve exactly this purpose. However, while this is important, it is in most cases not sufficient for a scientific contribution.

The third way in which theory is important is that it helps you to take the findings a step further by confronting them with current scientific debates. This is only possible if the research questions go beyond the level of empirical description. This, in turn is only possible if the objective and problem statement are of sufficient quality (which often means that they have to do more in terms of problem formulation than only identifying a gap in the literature). For example, in case you are interested in conflict mechanisms and you have found a suitable framework to categorize and make sense of these mechanisms, what can you now say about these? How do they connect with other studies? What does this mean for conflict studies? What does this mean for the management of conflicts? You see, now we start to get somewhere in terms of articulating a scientific contribution. This also shows that the final quality of the thesis is to a large extent already determined in the very early stages of the MSc thesis process.

We maintain the following standards for an MSc thesis:

- The thesis must be **theory-based**. Theories in this respect can be understood as sets of explanation systems for observable phenomena in the real world. The student's departure in enlightening real world phenomena has to be taken from existing theoretical literature. The student is furthermore expected to discuss and to reflect on his or her findings against the existing theoretical literature as well as empirical literature.

- The thesis must **meet standards of validity**. This is only possible if a clear line of argumentation through the existing theoretical and empirical literature is given, and the underlying assumptions are made explicit. Ideally, the original data should be added to the work (usually as a separate document, sometimes as an appendix) to allow the reader to verify the drawn conclusions. An important part of this is to be as detailed and transparent as possible about the methods for data collection that were used and the different steps in the analysis of the data.

## 2.3 Basic requirements and necessary skills

For the successful completion of an MSc thesis certain knowledge levels as well as mastering certain skills are basic requirements. This means that students normally should start to work on their MSc thesis only after they have obtained at least 20 study points (ECTS) within the MSc program, with an adequate coverage of relevant courses in Forest and Nature Conservation Policy.

It is highly recommended to follow courses in social science theory and social science research methodology before starting of the MSc thesis work. Sound knowledge of methods and tools for data collection as well as data analysis will be assumed as basis at the beginning of the thesis work and will not be touched upon during the supervision.

## 2.4 Supervision and feedback

As has been mentioned already, the role of the supervisor is focused on guiding the learning process and not on providing specific knowledge on the thesis topic. Students can therefore not expect the supervisor to provide them with more than background information on the topic and some start literature. Finding relevant literature, working out a good problem statement, defining objectives and research questions, and elaborating a sound conceptual as well as methodological framework has to be carried out by the student independently.

The supervisor is the person that provides feedback at the different stages throughout the process of preparing the MSc thesis as well as controlling the process itself, including the contractual agreements.

No general rules on the frequency of supervision meetings exist – instead the frequency depends on the individual agreements between the student and the supervisor. It is the student's responsibility to signal the need for meetings with the supervisor in a timely fashion.

The supervision process can take a maximum of 50 hours in case of a thesis of 36 ECTS. Taking into account time spent on administrative issues, time spent by the examiner who acts as a second reader, and the time spent during attending colloquia, the thesis rings and the examination meeting, this leaves **a total of around 35 hours spent by the supervisor on the individual supervision of the MSc thesis**. This is not a lot of time and it is the responsibility of the student to make the best use possible of that time. The average process involves 6 or 7 individual meetings of 1 to 1.5 hours and supervisors may spend a total time on reading or commenting on drafts of a maximum 25 hours. If organized well by the student, this should mean that in principle the supervisor is able to read two drafts of the proposal and two drafts of every chapter of the thesis before the final versions of the proposal and thesis are submitted for grading. It needs to be clear that although stu-

dents may demand more supervision, this will either be impossible, or it will be taken into account in the final grade.

The primary job of the supervisor is to give feedback. The essence of giving feedback is that the supervisor does not propose solutions but identifies problems. Students are expected to take the initiative to make sense of the feedback and propose their own solutions to the problems.

If for any reason the student is not satisfied with his or her supervision, the thesis coordinator and the examiner should be contacted by the student directly.

## 2.5 Facilities and special arrangements

It is recommended to the students to use work places that are provided by FNP. These work places are located at the A-wing of Gaia. A desk with computer can be requested to Mieke Hannink for the duration of the thesis research. Working in Gaia might be more inspiring than working alone and encourage interaction with FNP staff.

Other facilities that FNP offers are a small library of methodological handbooks and specific literature, software and recording devices. Students can request their supervisor to get access to these facilities.

Under certain conditions (e.g., carrying out research in the tropics, participating in larger projects) it might be necessary to come to specific arrangements departing from the regular procedures. In these cases please contact your supervisor and your study coordinator early enough for the necessary arrangements.

## 3 Steps in the MSc thesis preparation

### 3.1 Selection of topic and supervisor

The first step in working on MSc thesis is the selection of a topic and a supervisor. There are in principle three different ways to find a topic:

- Topics offered by the FNP group. The FNP group organizes each study year an information meeting for students interested in carrying out their thesis work within the broad field of forest and nature conservation policy. During this information meeting student can select a topic from the updated list of thesis-topics on a first come, first serve basis or discuss their own suggestions. The information meeting is usually held around mid-January. The exact dates for the information meetings will be announced on the FNP website and through e-mail. The topics offered originate from within the FNP group, mainly related to ongoing or planned larger research projects of the chair group that are carried out by staff, post-doc researchers and PhD students. Furthermore, topics are offered in cooperation with organizations in the field of forests and nature conservation policy, such as Staatsbosbeheer, Vereniging Natuurmonumenten, and Tropenbos.
- Topics brought up by the student himself/herself: It is possible that a student suggests a topic for thesis research him/herself.
- Topics organized by other chair groups or research organizations such as Alterra. FNP welcomes cooperation. However, even though supervision may be shared, FNP has the final responsibility for ensuring that the thesis meets the quality standards set by FNP.

**Students are not allowed to start an MSc thesis without prior approval by FNP and *must in all cases contact the FNP MSc thesis coordinator before starting their MSc thesis.*** In addition, students can contact their preferred supervisor directly.

In some cases it might be helpful to combine the MSc thesis work with a practical period. This holds particularly true for MSc research that is done outside the Netherlands. In case the MSc research is carried out abroad, adequate scientific supervision must be guaranteed in the respective country (in most cases by selecting a second supervisor from a local university) or within the respective organization. Possibilities to carry out an MSc thesis abroad in different European countries do also exist within the Erasmus+ program (see: <http://www.wageningenuniversity.nl/UK/informationfor/Current+students/Study+Abroad+for+WU+students/>).

All arrangements must be settled by the student in time before the start of the thesis work, and must be agreed upon by the supervisor at the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy group.

**NOTE: It is in principle possible to start an MSc thesis any time of the year. However it is recommended to start a thesis after completion of the MSc courses at the end of the first year of MSc study (around June) or the beginning of the second year of MSc study (September). It is strongly recommended that before starting the thesis work, a student has followed the research methodology course and an MSc course dealing with the topic of research.**

## 3.2 Preparation of a research proposal

After the selection of a topic the next step is to sign the Wageningen University Master Thesis Agreement that is an official agreement between the student, the supervisor and the examiner. No MSc-thesis work can be started without a contract: the MSc thesis officially starts only after the student, and supervisor have filled in an MSc thesis contract (see Annex C). The idea of the contract is to provide clarity in advance of the training process, in order to make clear what the expectations and requirements are. At all times during the thesis process, the thesis process can be terminated (by means denoting an insufficient grade) if the student does not meet the agreements made in the contract.

The following step in the thesis work is the preparation of a consistent and comprehensive research proposal. The thesis proposal is a product of the process of preparatory research around the main research theme. Students must become familiar with the theoretical problems, the historical context and the empirical specificities of the theme to be able to define, in precise terms, what it is that will be studied, how it will be studied and what the expected scientific and societal contribution of the study will be. The research proposal has to be presented to a wider audience of students and staff after a go-decision given by the supervisor.

The research proposal consists out of the following parts:

- **Problem statement:** giving the motivation for the selection of the topic and a clear delineation of the problem field, finally resulting in a concise problem statement. If done in a sound way, this implicitly and explicitly reflects the social and scientific relevance and contribution of the selected research topic. To be able to develop a clear problem statement, a preliminary investigation must be carried out to establish a sufficiently profound knowledge base to pose the concrete problems that will be researched. This includes a review of the most relevant theoretical and empirical literature, which ensures that the topic has not already been exhausted by other researchers.
- **Research objective(s) and research questions:** stating clearly the scientific objectives of the research. Scientific objectives are very often expressed with terms like 'to enlighten', 'to understand', 'to explore', 'to determine', 'to highlight', 'to verify' etc. However, this is also complemented with the wider relevance of this understanding, exploration etc. This is often dubbed to the 'so what problem'. Thus, a typical objective often starts with the phrase "in order to" followed by "this research examines....." It is important that the objectives of the research (1) are strictly related to the research topic and the problem statement, that is, that they do not change the focus by introducing elements not already implicit in the topic, and (2) that they exhaust the topic completely, that is, they do not leave out any object or relation already posited.
- The research objectives are on the one hand determined by the challenge to deepen theoretical knowledge, analytical capacities and techniques and methods of social research, and, on the other hand, by pragmatic reasons, such as available time, actual research conditions (e.g., availability of resource persons, harvest seasons, hazards, political events), and the capacity of the student. The objective should preferably be articulated in the first chapter or paragraph of the thesis or the proposal, however in some cases this is not feasible.

Subsequently, the research objective(s) should be translated into research questions, that is, stating the questions, which need to be an-

swered in order to fulfill the research objective(s). In this respect, the research questions are an operationalization of the research topic. However, the research questions should not be mixed up with the operationalization of the research topic in a methodologically coherent manner for data collection (e.g., the questions in a questionnaire or in a structured interview) in the later stage of the research process (see step “carrying out the research”). Instead, the research questions have to be analytically relevant. Often this is done by using the central concepts in the research questions. If those concepts are not mentioned in the first chapter or paragraph of the thesis or the proposal, it can make sense to put the research questions after the conceptual framework. Finally, research questions have to be knowledge questions. Common mistakes are to pose interventionist questions as research questions, for example “how can biodiversity conservation be improved” or normative questions like “how should we treat wild boar in the Veluwe”.

- **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical framework acts as a partial guide for the selection of the phenomena, which will come under study. Different theoretical frameworks emphasize different phenomena as important, thereby giving direction to the overall thesis work. In other words, the theoretical framework guides the student in his or her approach to the theoretical reconstruction of the topic. (see paragraph 2.2 for more on the role of theory in social science research). It is important to keep in mind that the theoretical framework should be an argumentation of the student through existing theories and concepts, finally resulting in the student’s own conceptual framework. Working out the theoretical framework is therefore a creative act, rather than a descriptive exercise through existing literature.

The arguing against and with existing theories and theoretical concepts in developing the theoretical framework should always be done against the background of the research objective(s) and research questions. Even though almost everything seems to be connected with each other, the research objective(s) and research questions help in determining which theories and concepts are relevant for the student’s thesis research and which not.

It follows that the research proposal is not a linear process. Instead, the problem statement, the objective and research questions and the theoretical and conceptual framework are always in conversation with each other and as the proposal develops, each of these will change multiple times.

- **Methodology:** With the theoretical framework the student indicates *which* concepts are important to be looked at in answering the research questions. In this part of the proposal it should be explained *how* these concepts will be identified and assessed empirically. Methodology refers to the methods used to collect and analyze the data. The chosen approaches and methods have to be consistent with the theoretical framework, and specifically the epistemological position that the research takes. Appendix A provides the student with the titles of some methodological books.

Setting up a sound methodological framework requires arguing about the following points:

- Identify the **character of the thesis work:** is it an explorative, or comparative, or interpretative, or analytical, or historical study? Is a case study approach chosen to exemplify a certain real world phenomena or does the thesis work aim at being representative for

them? It is obvious that with the selection of the topic and the formulation of the problem statement the student already implicitly provided answers to many of these questions. However, only in making them explicit does the student allow for the discussion of his work, as the student's assumptions and logical framework can be examined.

- Design the **data collection**: this step requires arguing about, and providing an answer to, the following questions:

(1) What is seen as *data* and from which sources of information (e.g., pictures, texts, individuals, groups) will they be derived? Data can take on the quality of primary data (that is, generated by the researcher) as well as that of secondary data (new analysis of data generated by earlier research).

(2) What are the criteria for determining and delineating the sources of information (e.g. who will be interviewed? Why those policy documents and not the others? How many people will receive a questionnaire? Why selecting this case study and not another?) The answers to these questions are partially dependent on whether qualitative or quantitative research methods are chosen (see next question). Usually, research relies on multiple sources of data (interviews, documents, etc) to allow for triangulation as a way to check the validity of the analysis.

(3) What methods are employed to derive the data from the sources of information? The selection of adequate methods is dependent from on the sources of information, which are seen as relevant to find answers to the posed research questions. Here the student has to argue why a certain method (e.g., observations, interviews, content analysis) is most appropriate for the research topic at stake. In general, textbooks distinguish between quantitative and qualitative socio-empirical research methods. These refer to different assumptions about data and to different epistemological positions in social science research. E.g. you will need to argue whether you consider the data to be accessible in direct quantifiable (or measurable) qualities (e.g., the amount of cut timber) or whether the data can only be derived in an interpretative, qualifying way (e.g., the underlying motives of illegal logging). Often research will employ different methods. In those cases, theoretical consistency must be ensured because data obtained through different methods are not always commensurable.

(4) Which instruments within the method family will be used (e.g. questionnaires, semi-structured interview guideline, observation manual).

- Design the **data analysis**: It should be pointed out that methods and instruments are necessary for the *data collection* (that is, to come from theory to data) as well as for *data analysis* (that is, to come from data to theory). Whereas students are most often familiar with basic methods of data collection, either quantitative or qualitative in nature, data analysis is often much more implicit and not codified in tools or instruments. But how do you cope with hundred of pages of transcribed interviews? What are now the results of the interviews? Which statistical tests can be applied given the employed data collection methods? Students should therefore in advance inform themselves about the wide range of methods and the availability of respective instruments (e.g., statistical software packages such as SPSS, content analysis software such as NUDIST) for data analysis.

- **Working plan and time scheme:** The research proposal should be completed by a comprehensive working plan, indicating the necessary steps in carrying out the research, as well as their logical order. The different steps in writing the MSc thesis should be distributed in a feasible manner over the available time period (in most cases 26 weeks equaling 36 credit points). The student should also agree with the supervisor about the frequency of contacts as well as milestones for delivering certain parts of the thesis proposal or report.

Preparing the working plan implies additionally to elaborate a financial plan, such as for example costs for travel, mailing costs, field assistance (e.g. for translation) etc. The general necessity of financial means to carry out the thesis work needs to be discussed and agreed upon between student, supervisor, and examiner before the actual thesis work.

### 3.3 Thesis proposal assessment and go/no-go-decision

The final research proposal is graded and forms the basis for a go- or no-go-decision by the supervisor for the further continuation of the thesis research. If the thesis is graded with a 5,5 or higher, this automatically implies a go decision and the student is allowed to continue the thesis research. In case a grade of a 5 or lower is given, the thesis process is ended and the student must start a new thesis to obtain his or her MSc degree.

The research proposal is graded according to the four criteria used for the evaluation mentioned below. They evaluate to what extent the student is able:

- to articulate a theoretically and empirically well-grounded and convincing problem statement.
- to formulate a clear question and a focused objective and/or testable hypothesis.
- To develop an appropriate methodological design, including a conceptual framework and appropriate methods for data collection and analysis.
- And to present the proposal in a clear and well-structured start colloquium during a WSCG-thesis ring activity (see 3.4).

The grade for the proposal is the first partial grade of the thesis grade (see Annexes I and J for the Thesis Assessment Form and the Thesis Assessment rubric).

The following procedure for completing and grading the thesis proposal applies:

1. In the contract, a specific date is agreed for the completion of the proposal (usually four to six weeks after the start of the contract, but this can differ when students are not available to work on the thesis for the expected 42 hours a week).
2. On that date, the quality of the proposal is discussed during a meeting (usually, this is the second or in some cases the third supervision meeting) by the supervisor and the student. In case of sufficient quality, the decision for a go is made during that meeting.
3. If on that date the proposal cannot be approved, the student gets one opportunity to repair the proposal. A deadline is set within two weeks and the revised proposal will be assessed by the supervisor and a second reader (examiner) and if this is deemed to be of sufficient quality a maximum grade of a 6 may be noted for the first three assessment criteria. If this is not of sufficient quality, a no-go decision is made.

The final proposal will be digitally stored by the supervisor on the common FNP drive in the folder FNP MSc thesis proposals. After the successful completion of the proposal, students can hold their start colloquium and receive the final grade of the proposal. All four assessment elements have to be sufficient in order to proceed.

### 3.4 FNP colloquium sessions

To allow exchange between our MSc students on their efforts in carrying out their thesis research, students are required to attend the FNP colloquium sessions, which are organized every first Thursday afternoon of each month. Each thesis student is required to:

1. Give a start colloquium or proposal presentation
2. Give a final colloquium
3. Act once as a co-referent for a student giving an end colloquium
4. Attend a minimum of three full colloquia sessions or a minimum of 6 presentations of fellow students (in case three full colloquia sessions amount to less than 6 presentations)

Attendance of colloquia as well as other obligatory parts of the thesis trajectory can be registered on the form in Annex G.

#### Start colloquium

As of the beginning of the academic year 2017/18, FNP start colloquia or proposal presentation will be part of the activities taking place in so-called WCSG Thesis Rings. These thesis rings consist of biweekly meetings of students from ENP, FNP, LAW and PAP and aim at commonly developing skills in writing a thesis by giving constructive feedback by fellow students. How these meetings are organized can be found on the WSCG Thesis Rings Blackboard, once the student has enrolled in one of them. Thesis Ring activities take place at the Leeuwenborch.

The purpose of the proposal presentation as well as how it is organized can be found in Annex D.

#### Final colloquium

In order to present the major findings of the thesis research a so-called final colloquium will be given by the student. The purpose of this final presentation is to present the main research results to a wider audience of interested students and staff. See Annex E for additional information on the final colloquium including guidelines on how to act as a co-referent to ensure the quality of the discussion and the length of the presentation.

### 3.5 Carrying out the research

When carrying out the research, special attention should be given to organizational, ethical and safety aspects. Possible economical, social and technical constraints (e.g. rain seasons, harvesting time, holidays of respondents/interviewees) should be taken into account as much as possible in advance of the research work. If unforeseeable circumstances do occur, the research plan should be adapted after consultation with the supervisor.

The student has to respect social, cultural and interpersonal norms and standards. This holds particularly true for privacy aspects of organizations and persons. Before data collection, the student has to make agreements on how to deal with the identity of respondents in the thesis and how to organize feedback about the results of the research.

It is recommended to clearly document all research activities, findings and sources, including also seemingly small details. Analytical skills should be accompanied by organizational accuracy. Experience shows that this can save a lot of time when finally preparing the thesis report.

Also in the phase of carrying out the research it is recommended to keep close contact with the supervisor.

### 3.6 Writing the thesis report

The research activities should finally result in a comprehensive, consistent and concise thesis report. The thesis report in average has a size around 60 to 80 pages. It should be written according to scientific standards and using the possibilities of modern text software in the layout. In general the following parts structure the thesis report:

#### ▪ **Title page**

The title page should include the following information:

- Name of the student and registration number;
- Title of the thesis research;
- Name of the supervisor(s);
- Name of the chair group and university;
- Month and year of publication.

A series number on the report is not required any more.

- **Outline / Table of content:** Providing the overview on the chapter structure with the respective page numbers. The outline should also include the summary or abstract as well as the possible list of annexes.
- **Overview of tables and figures:** The outline is followed by an overview of the tables and figures in the text, including the respective page numbers.
- **Summary or abstract:** Providing a short, but comprehensive summary or abstract of the thesis. The length should not exceed one A4 page.
- **Introduction:** This part includes the problem statement (see also chapter “Research proposal”), the scientific objectives and in some cases also the research questions (see also chapter “Research proposal”). It can be completed by a characterization of the type of work (referring to the first question in the methodology part of the research proposal), a short outline and the structure of the subsequent chapters.
- **Theoretical Framework:** In this section the review of the theoretical and empirical literature and the reconstruction of the used theoretical concepts will be provided (see also section “research proposal”). The theoretical framework is very often completed by a conceptual model, in which the relations of the relevant concepts (e.g., behavior, action, values, community) of the applied theories are presented (see also chapter “preparation of a research proposal”). This chapter can also contain the research questions.
- **Research methodologies:** This part first reports the overall research design, i.e., the general approach of the study. Next, information is given on the used information sources, as well as the applied methods and instruments for selection of research locations and respondents, and methods for data collection and data analysis (see also section “research pro-

posal”). In addition, the chapter should report the actual research process (e.g., also problems which occurred). If the research has been a case study, circumstances as well as the case should be described here. Finally this part includes information on relevant ethical considerations and how they were addressed in the research (guidance on ethical issues can be found in most methodology handbooks) as well as data management issues (see p. 19).

The first three parts of the thesis will be based on the proposal but in many cases they will need updating and rewriting.

- **Results:** In this section the results should be presented. The challenge is to structure the results chapter in such a way that it facilitates the analysis, the answering of the research questions and the discussion of the objective. The results are often presented in more than one chapter, for example when part of the analysis involves a comparison.
  
- **Conclusion and discussion**  
This can be one or two chapters depending on the thesis in question. This chapter should not contain new data and all the ingredients necessary to answer the research questions should have already been presented. A useful structure is as follows:
  1. A succinct wrapping up of the findings in conceptual terms.
  2. Systematic answers to the research questions. This can be combined with nr 1 in case the answers are in fact the succinct wrapping up.
  3. A discussion in which the findings are discussed in connection with wider relevant scientific debates. This is the literature used in the problem statement and the theoretical framework. In addition, new sources can be used here as well. In this part of the thesis, the contribution of the thesis should be clearly articulated and the objective should be addressed.
  4. A reflection on the theoretical framework and the methods used (as well as the limitations of the study). This can be combined with nr 3.
  5. Recommendations for practice or for further research (not required).
  
- **Bibliography:** In this section a list of all referred literature should be given, as sorted in alphabetical order with the last name of the author. The bibliography section (like the theoretical framework) again can be seen as a sort of “business card” of the researcher. Information given in the bibliography should be complete and accurate. The style for the different types of publications (articles in journals, books, chapters in books etc.) should be consistent. Some researchers prefer to mention information sources, such as policy documents and internet sources separately. If reference is made to information on the internet, the complete web-address should be given, as well as the date on which the information has been accessed the latest (e.g., *Ministry of LNV (2002): Dutch Forest Policy. Public brochure downloadable at <http://www.lnv.nl/brochure.pdf>. Information derived on June, 15<sup>th</sup> 2002*).
  
- **Annex/Appendix:** The annex should include information, which can be missed in the direct text body, which, however, is relevant for the understanding of the research or of important steps of it. This could mean for example the inclusion of the original data, the list of interviewed persons, background information on the study area, the questionnaire, further de-

tailed statistical analysis, etc. Note that also the annex pages should be numbered consistently with the general text.

The presented structure of the different parts at the same time also reflects the standard chapter structure of a scientific report, with the 'Introduction'-section forming chapter 1, the 'Theoretical framework' forming chapter 2, and so on. However, different types of research (e.g., historical research, developing methods) might require a slightly different chapter structure.

### 3.7 Final examination talk

The aim of the final examination talk is to reflect on the whole 'scientific training' process, which the student has undergone in preparing the MSc thesis as well as place the MSc thesis in the ongoing debates and the larger context within forest and nature conservation policy. Beside the student and the supervisor, the examiner will participate in the final examination talk. The date for the final examination should be arranged at least three weeks in advance.

Overall length of the examination talk is about 45 minutes, with about a half an hour of questions and discussions, followed by a feedback and the announcement of the final grade. In preparation of the final examination talk the student receives a thesis evaluation form (see 4.4 and Annex H), which has been completed by his or her supervisor(s). It is the student's responsibility to provide the supervisor(s) and the examiner with a hard copy and a digital copy of the final MSc thesis no later than two weeks in advance of the talk. The student should not neglect this rule, because it might delay the examination.

The thesis evaluation form does not yet contain a grade and can be modified on the basis of the examination talk. In the beginning of the final examination talk the student will be provided with the opportunity to react on the supervisor's evaluation. Afterwards the examiner or the second supervisor will pose questions about the wider context of the thesis topic, possibly including issues from earlier course work.

After short consultation between supervisor and examiner the final grade will be announced to the student. The MSc thesis work has successfully passed only after all administrative issues (see following section) have been completed.

### 3.8 Grading

The grading will be done in two steps. The first grade that will be obtained is based on the proposal and start colloquium and is the basis for the go- / no-go decision. In order to make the grading transparent a Thesis Evaluation Sheet, a Thesis Assessment Form and a set of rubrics for the assessments of the proposal at one hand and the complete thesis on the other hand are available in the Annexes H, I and J.

The grading will be based on the standard grading scale at Wageningen University ranging from 0 to 10 (extraordinary), with a grade lower than 5.5 meaning "failed". None of the main categories mentioned in the Thesis Assessment Form should be evaluated below 5.5. The final grade will be announced immediately after the final examination talk.

Conforming the standard of Wageningen University, the grading will be based on the research proposal (including the start colloquium), the research competence, the quality of the thesis report and the final colloquium as well as the results of the discussion on the thesis during the examination. After the exam-



ination talk, the supervisors and the examiner together decide on the final grade and subsequently, the student receives an explanation of the grade.

If students have an insufficient grade, they may be given one opportunity to repair their products. After successful reparation, these students may obtain the maximum grade of a 6. If the grade is still insufficient the student should look for another thesis topic. In some cases, for example when repairing the report will not be sufficient to get all main categories in the evaluation sheet to a minimum of a 5,5, no opportunity for repair will be given and the thesis is completed with an insufficient grade.

Repeated instances of missed deadlines or meetings may be reason to terminate the thesis process (see section about the thesis contract). If students are unable to make deadlines, meetings or other agreements, timely notification of the supervisors is crucial. Depending on the reasons for delay, teachers may grant an extension. If considered appropriate, teachers can ask for proof (e.g. a doctor's notice).

## 4 Rules and regulations

### 4.1 MSc thesis contract

The contract is signed by the student, the supervisor and the examiner. The supervisor gives the original of the signed contract to the secretariat and sends scanned copies to the student, the supervisor(s) and the FNP MSc thesis coordinator. The thesis coordinator sends a copy to the study advisor. The secretariat is at the same time responsible for including the student's name in the mailing list of all MSc-students at the FNP group, through which the MSc colloquia will be announced as well as other information will be distributed.

### 4.2 Costs associated with carrying out the MSc research

All MSc research should be planned in such a manner that no project finances or external funding must be acquired. It should be tried to rely on existing administrative and logistic support from ongoing research projects or guest organizations as much as possible. If additional finance is not found, all costs must be carried by the student her- or himself.

### 4.3 Printing costs of thesis

A student must provide his/her supervisor(s) and the examiner each with one printed copy of the thesis. The reasonable costs for two copies) are reimbursed by the chair group by means of a standard amount. Students should contact the chair group secretary (Mieke Hannink) for the reimbursement form. Any additional copies must be funded by other means. In addition to the printed copies, the student must also submit an electronic copy (in pdf format) that will be forwarded to the library and stored in FNP thesis archive.

### 4.4 Thesis Evaluation Sheet

Written feedback on the student's performance during the 'training' process of preparing the MSc thesis will be provided through the FNP Thesis Evaluation Sheet. This sheet has been exclusively designed for FNP as a basis for the examination talk (see Annex H). The thesis evaluation consists of six groups of criteria for describing the quality of the scientific work namely:

- **Proposal:** focus will be on a) problem statement; b) objectives/research questions; c) theoretical/analytical framework; d) methodology and e) the start colloquium.
- **Research Competences and Working process:** focus will be on a) commitment and perseverance; b) initiative and creativity; c) independence; d); efficiency in working with data; e) keeping the time schedule; f) handling comments and development of research skills and g) specific difficulties (e.g., thesis report in an other than the mother language) and unforeseeable problems (e.g., illness of interview partners).
- The remaining part and formal aspects of the **Thesis Report:** focus will be on f) results; g) critical reflection and discussion; h) conclusions, rec-

ommendations and/or synthesis; i) logic of chapter structure; j) comprehensiveness of literature review and accurateness of citations; k) writing skills and scientific text style; l) quality and appropriateness of tables and figures; m) quality of layout according to modern text processing standards; n) completeness and consistency of the bibliography.

- **Final Colloquium:** focus will be on a) the graphical presentation; b) the verbal presentation with respect to structure, functional lay-out and clearly speaking.
- **Examination:** focus will be on a) the defense of the thesis; b) knowledge of the study domain by interacting lively in the discussion.
- **Remarks** allowing for additional comments of the supervisor about the training process of the student.

The supervisor will fill in the thesis evaluation sheet after receiving the final version of the MSc thesis (at least two weeks in advance of the date for the final talk). The supervisor will provide the completed evaluation sheet to the student and examiner no later than three working days in advance of the final examination talk, in order to allow for the student's preparation of the talk.

## 4.5 Plagiarism

The fact that all research directly or indirectly based on the intellectual work of others, on theories, their models or research findings, makes scientific writing a risky process, especially in an era in which 'cut and paste' possibilities are overwhelming. Plagiarism, or using the work of someone else without acknowledging it, is considered theft of intellectual property. When quoting, paraphrasing and summarizing the intellectual work of others, it is necessary to cite the source of that work – without exception!

A charge of plagiarism can have severe consequences. Wageningen University heavily insists on documenting sources. In order to avoid plagiarism, staff is expected to screen all writings carefully and the University has made software available (e.g., TurnItIn) for this purpose. Supervisors are obliged to report all suspicions of plagiarism to the Examining Board as well as to the student(s). After providing a hearing to the student(s) involved, the Examining Board decides if fraud has actually occurred and can punish the relevant student or students by preventing them from completing the subject (in his case from submitting the thesis) for up to one year. For further information see Student Charter 2010/2011.

Students are expected to be familiar with proper referencing techniques and to have consulted at least one of these sites before they start writing the thesis:

- <http://www.lib.moash.edu.au/vl/citecon.htm>
- <http://www.amc.nl/index.cfm?pid=319>
- <http://www.sls.wau.nl/enp/education/plagiarism.html>
- <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html>

The MSc guide for Students contains more extensive information on plagiarism. There is a course on Information Literacy (EDU-52901) offered by the University and numerous other websites that can help students ensure that they are not committing plagiarism (copied from GEO, 2012).

## 4.6 Copyrights of thesis and data management

MSc theses are normally entered in the E-articles depot of Wageningen University and are available as open access publication. The author(s) remain(s) the copyright owners of the MSc thesis. However, FNP holds the copyrights of the data gathered and used. This means that the FNP group can use these data for further research and publications. FNP may seek the collaboration of students, but are not required to do so. In order to keep transparency or confidentiality primary data like collected figures, numbers and transcribed interviews have to be stored in digital form at the FNP secretariat. Confidentiality of data and other information should always be checked on beforehand.

In case a publication (article, book chapter) based on the outcomes of the thesis project might be considered by the student, the supervisor has to give permission for this publication. As a matter of principle, the supervisor acts as an author (often first author or second author) of any publication resulting from MSc thesis work. Except when supervisors explicitly give permission to the students to publish without their involvement. Sometimes students are contacted by commercial book publishers on publishing (parts of) the thesis. Students are advised to check thoroughly whether this concerns reputable publisher firms.

Data Management is a term that describes the "*organization, structure, storage, and legal care for data used or generated during a research project*" (WUR, 2015). The ultimate goal of data management is to trace back the data from raw data to the published forms. That means that each step of the research process, from data collection, to data transformations, the final analyses, and the reporting needs to be documented and stored in a secure centralized location.

MSc thesis projects at the FNP-group (i.e. with a FNP-804xx code) are required to follow the guidelines of the Data Management Plan of the FNP group. In these FNP-data-guidelines the storage and traceability of data of FNP-research projects are explained. To support students who carry out an MSc thesis at the FNP group, separate instructions have been developed to guide the student through the data management process. These instructions can be found in Appendix F. MSc students at the FNP group are obliged to follow the instructions; the MSc thesis will not be graded unless the MSc student satisfies the demands set.

## 4.7 Unforeseen problems

If the student is facing some problems regarding e.g. delays, or even psychological or physical problems, both supervisor and study adviser should be informed as soon as possible in order to make new arrangements.

## Annex A: Recommended literature

### Literature at FNP group

FNP has a small collection of text books on methodological issues in social science available, that, on request, can be consulted by students. These books can be borrowed at the secretariat. It includes the following books:

- Field, A. 2004: *Discovering Statistics using SPSS for Windows*.
- Jennings, G. 2001: *Tourism research*. Central Queensland University. John Wiley & Sons Australia – Milton: 452 p.
- Neuman, W.L. 2003: *Social Research Methods. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*.

### Introduction into social science

- Chambers, A., 1987. *Wat heet wetenschap? Over aard en status van de wetenschap en haar methoden*. Vierde druk. Boom, Meppel/Amsterdam.
- Cornelisse, F.H., 1985. *Inleiding tot de wetenschapsfilosofie*. Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum, Houten/Zaventem.
- Crotty, M. 1998: *the Foundations of Social Research: meaning and perspective in the Research Process*, Sage, London.
- Fuller, S. 1997: *Science*. Open University Press, Buckingham: 159 p.
- Hollis, M. 1994: *The philosophy of social science : an introduction*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 268 p.
- Koningsveld, H., 1987. *Het verschijnsel wetenschap; een inleiding tot de wetenschapsfilosofie*. Achtste druk. Boom, Meppel/Amsterdam.
- Smith, M.J. 1998: *social Science in Question; towards a Postdisciplinary Approach*. Sage Publications/Open University Press, London.
- Stevenson, L. and Byerly, H. 1995: *The many faces of science : an introduction to scientists, values, and society*. Westview Press, Boulder: 257 p.
- Trigg, R. 1985: *Understanding social science : a philosophical introduction to the social sciences*. Blackwell, Oxford: 224 p.

### Methodology in social sciences

- Berg, B.L. 2001: *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. - 4th ed. Allyn and Bacon, Boston: XV, 304 p.
- Bohrnstedt, G.W. and Knoke, D. 1994: *Statistics for social data analysis*. – 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Peacock, Itasca: 574 p.
- Bryman, A. and Cramer, D. 2001: *Quantitative data analysis with SPSS Release 10 for Windows – a guide for social scientists*. Routledge, Hove.
- Dale, A. and Davies, R.B. 1994: *Analyzing social and political change – a casebook of methods*. Sage, London: 229 p.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. 2000: *Handbook of qualitative research*. - 2nd ed. Sage, Thousand Oaks: XX, 1065, 46, 11 p.

- Hair, J.F., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L. and Black, W.C. 1995: Multivariate data analysis – 5th ed. Prentice Hall, Englewood cliffs, New Jersey: XX, 730 p.
- Nooij, A.T.J. 1995: Sociale methodiek – Normatieve en beschrijvende methodiek in grondvormen. Stenfert Kroese, Leiden: 256 p
- Nooij, A.T.J. 1995: Variabelen en modellen – Multivariate analyse in het sociaal-wetenschappelijk onderzoek. Boom, Amsterdam: 301 p.
- Punch, K.F. 2000: Developing effective research proposals. Sage, London: VII, 125 p.
- Schwartz-Shea, P. and Yanow, D. 2012: Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes. Routledge, New York and London: 184 p.
- Segers, J. 1999: Methoden voor de maatschappijwetenschappen. Van Gorcum, Assen: 470 p.
- SPSS Inc. (Chicago) 1997: SPSS 7.5 statistical algorithms. SPSS, Chicago: 641 p.
- Yanow, D. and Schwartz-Shea, P. (eds) 2006: Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn: 440 p.

## Annex B: Checklist of actions and responsibilities

<u>Action</u>	<u>Who</u>
1. Fixing thesis topic	<i>Student, supervisor</i>
2. Filling in MSc-thesis contract, signing by student and supervisor	<i>Student, <u>supervisor</u></i>
3. Signing of MSc-thesis contract for approval by examiner, possibly adoption of contract	<i>Supervisor, <u>examiner</u> (possible adoption: supervisor and student)</i>
4. Delivering completed contract to the FNP secretariat	<i>Supervisor</i>
5. Providing provisional title of MSc-project and name of student to editor of info-bulletin	<i>Supervisor</i>
6. Registration of MSc-project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ providing copies of contract to a.) student, b.) supervisor, c.) FNP archive, d.) study advisor</li><li>▪ registering student in administrative system</li><li>▪ including student into FNP-students mailing list</li></ul>	<i>Student administration</i>
7. Enrollment in one of the WCSG Thesis Rings	<i>Student administration</i>
8. Preparation of research proposal	<i>Student (supervisor)</i>
9. Grading of research proposal – Go-/No-go decision and submission of the proposal to the FNP supervisor for storage	<i>Supervisor</i>
10. Thesis work	<i>Student</i>
11. Approval of draft thesis	<i>Supervisor</i>
12. Arranging date for final colloquium presentation	<i><u>Student</u>, colloquium coordinator/secretariat</i>
13. Providing copies of final thesis to supervisor and examiner two weeks in advance	<i><u>Student</u></i>
14. Arranging date for final talk with examiner	<i><u>Supervisor</u>, secretariat (examiner)</i>
15. Checking partial fulfillment of requirements: participation at 3 colloquia meetings	<i>Supervisor</i>
16. Filling in thesis evaluation form, sending copies to student and supervision <u>a week in advance</u> of final talk	<i>Supervisor</i>
17. Final examination talk	<i>Student, supervisor, examiner</i>
18. Grading of thesis	<i>Examiner, <u>supervisor</u></i>
19. Delivering grades to secretariat	<i>Supervisor</i>
20. Delivering in minimum of two final copies and pdf-file of MSc thesis to secretariat (more copies dependent on arrangements)	<i><u>Student</u>, (supervisor, secretariat)</i>
21. Delivering data in meta data files to the supervisor	<i><u>Student</u></i>
22. Administrative finalization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ grades to central administration,</li><li>▪ delivering digital copy to library</li><li>▪ deleting student from FNP_students mailing list after graduation</li></ul>	<i>Student administration</i>

## Annex C: Thesis Contract Form

### Wageningen University Master Thesis Agreement

This Wageningen University (WU) master thesis agreement serves to lay down agreements between a master student and a chair group. The agreement registers rights and duties of both parties and is a further supplementation and elaboration of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Education and Examining Regulations and the Student Charter.

The form has to be completed for each master thesis by the student and a representative of the chair group before the start of the study activities.

Student and representative sign three copies of the form. Both receive a copy. A third one is sent to a representative of the programme: the study advisor mentioned below.

When the agreement is modified the student will receive a copy of the adjusted form.

For complaints on the supervision or assessment the student can appeal to:

- The study advisor for advice and support
- The Examining Board for advice on procedures or an official complaint.
- The Examination Appeals Board.
- A dean or a Confidential advisor for students

For additional information see the explanation on page 4.

#### 1. Information on student and chair group

Student: \_\_\_\_\_  
Study programme: \_\_\_\_\_  
Registration number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Study advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair group: \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Examiner b<sup>1</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_  
Course code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Examiner a<sup>2</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

The student is informed upon the (written) guidelines and rules of the chair group for thesis students: yes/no

#### 2. Prerequisite course(s)

Course code: \_\_\_\_\_ Passed: 

yes/no
--------

  
Course code: \_\_\_\_\_ Passed: 

yes/no
--------

#### 3. Admission to the thesis

Study advisor \_\_\_\_\_ has stated that the student is  
qualified<sup>3</sup> for a master thesis and that the thesis is compulsory for the programme of the student.

<sup>1</sup> This name can be entered later.

<sup>2</sup> This can be the supervisor.



#### 4. Title and planning

Title of the thesis project: .....

Date of start: .....

Date of completion thesis  
proposal: .....

Date of finish: .....

Special arrangements for  
planning: .....

#### 5. Arrangements on supervision

(Arrangements on the type and intensity of meetings of student and supervisor on role and responsibilities when more supervisors or more chair groups are involved)

#### 6. Arrangements on facilities

(Work place (office/lab), access to buildings and locations. Availability and use of equipment, materials and facilities)

#### 7. Arrangements on report

(Language and lay out, time and format of transfer of results and data, agreements on secrecy of results and publicity of the thesis report)

#### 8. Arrangements for individual situations.

(Circumstances beyond one's control, disability, absence for special reasons)

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<sup>3</sup> This means that the student has completed all requirements for starting with this master thesis.



## 9. Assessment

The [assessment form](#)<sup>4</sup> for theses of WU has to be used.

The percentages in the assessment form that will be used are:

Learning outcomes (assessment criteria)	Percentage
A. Research proposal	10
B. Research competence	30
C. Thesis report	50
D. Colloquium	5
E. Examination	5

None of these five categories can be lower than 5.5.

The assessment will be done in week  
(on) .....

## 10. Signature

The student agrees to report any relevant change in circumstances which may affect the results of the project to the supervisor.

The student declares to be acquainted with rules and procedures of the chair group and with the assessment form. The chair group declares to have provided the student with all relevant information (including rules, regulations, safety issues).

Wageningen,

	Name	Date	Signature
Student:	.....	.....	.....

Supervisor(s):	.....	.....	.....
----------------	-------	-------	-------

Examiner a:	.....	.....	.....
-------------	-------	-------	-------

Examiner b:	.....	.....	.....
-------------	-------	-------	-------

<sup>4</sup> <https://portal.wur.nl/sites/owi/kwaliteitszorg/Policy Documents and Forms/Thesis assessment form WU UK v9.xls>

## Explanation<sup>5</sup>

### 1. Information student and chair group

The study advisor has to be asked for advice on the progress of the student and qualification for a master thesis. The study programme (study advisor) has to be informed about the arrangements students want to make for thesis projects in order to establish whether the programme allows the student to take this thesis and to keep record of the student's progress.

The examiner will be the chair holder being responsible for the thesis. The supervisor takes care of daily supervision. A supervisor from an external organization can not have a formal role, and can not be involved in the marking because he is not a qualified lecturer. If more supervisors and chair groups are involved each role should be explained under item 5. WUR employees outside the university section (e.g. researchers) can be regarded as supervisor like a WU lecturer.

### 2. Prerequisites

Chairs can require a maximum of two prerequisite courses (in total 12 credits) for starting a thesis. These prerequisites have to be published in the study handbook. The student has to pass the exam(s) to gain access to the thesis.

### 3. Admission to the thesis

The chair group (supervisor, coordinator education) should contact the study advisor personally to be informed about the student being qualified for starting with the master thesis.

### 4. Description and planning

In general reference can be made to a previously described project proposal of the chair group with subject and type of activities. It is considered very important that the student writes a detailed project description and is aware of all consequences with respect to type of activities, intensity and planning of work. If the student intends to interrupt the project for exams or leave the supervisor should agree in advance.

### 5. Arrangements on supervision

A supervisor will have his own rules for planning meetings with students, for involvement of co-workers. Especially when more supervisors and chair groups are involved it should be avoided that the student is confronted with conflicting rules and opinions. Only one supervisor should be the focal point for the student.

### 6. Arrangements on facilities

The chair group takes care of the facilities the student needs. In general it should be assumed that the student is not familiar with the policy concerning priorities for use of equipment and facilities, and is not aware who is in charge of them. It should be explained to the student that arrangements can never be a guarantee for availability and that because of unpredictable circumstances

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<sup>5</sup> This Master Thesis Agreement form is established by the Board of the Education Institute in September 2009: it is a revision of the Thesis Contract used at WU since January 1996.

the thesis project may have to be adapted with respect to time planning and/or content. Chair group and student have to find solutions together.

### **7. Arrangements on report**

Specific rules on the lay-out of a report, the transfer of data sets and processed results have to be agreed.

The thesis project can be part of a larger project in which external partners are involved, or in which results may be generated that require confidentiality. The university has rules on protection and embargo of scientific results. Thesis reports can be registered with a restriction on disclosure of contents. The examiners and supervisor(s), however, always need a full copy to assess the student.

From October 2009 all master theses have to be uploaded to the Wageningen UR Digital Library through the AIR (Administration Enrolment data and Results). It is up to the involved chair group and student to decide whether the thesis will be made public or not in the Digital Library.

### **8. Arrangement for individual situations**

Students can ask for specific facilities e.g. to work with a disability. Student and chair group can ask study advisor or dean for students for advice.

### **9. Assessment procedure**

Examining Boards and Board of the Education Institute have [decided](#)<sup>6</sup> in 2006 that all chair groups of WU have to use the standard assessment form for theses and two examiners. The chair group can adjust the weight (percentages) of the assessment criteria on the excel-form. The student should be informed on this (item 9 of this agreement).

The completed assessment form for the thesis has to be uploaded to the AIR.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://portal.wur.nl/sites/owi/kwaliteitszorg/Policy%20Documents%20and%20Forms/thesis-letter-061102.pdf>

## Annex D: Information on WCSG Thesis Rings

(provided by Mattijs Smits from ENP and the current thesis ring coordinator)

This annex introduces you to the thesis rings for MSc students, coordinated by the cluster of the Wageningen Centre for Sustainability Governance (which includes the ENP, FNP, LAW and PAP groups). It contains basic information to get you started, in case you have not heard about this before. If you receive an email with the information below, we expect you to participate.

### General

The 'thesis rings' are facilitated groups of MSc students writing their thesis who meet on a two-weekly basis to discuss each other's writing. The idea is that this will improve your writing, increase your experience in giving feedback, and help each other out with common problems. We expect all MSc students to be an active member of their thesis ring and attend the meetings (unless you are on fieldwork, for example).

The thesis ring meets for about 1.5 hour every two weeks on Wednesday. You have been assigned to Ring A, Ring B, or Ring C, which are meeting at different times. Always check Blackboard for the date and location (more below). Each time you would read up to two pieces (e.g. chapters, proposals), which will take you 2-3 hours to prepare in total. Of course, you will also submit your own writing when you have finished something (your proposal or one or more chapters at a time). In that case, we ask you to 'sign in' and upload your documents at least a few days in advance.

Note that the thesis rings are mainly focusing on how to write a good thesis (structure, argumentation, writing process, use of figures, etc.) and less on content. Your supervisor always keeps the final responsibility.

### Proposal presentations

The thesis rings will also be the place to present your thesis proposal. Strat colloquia sessions were formerly organized by each of the chair groups, but each student is now required to present his or her proposal as a thesis ring activity. You will receive better feedback, as everyone will have read your (draft) proposal in advance (provided you submitted it on time). Only FNP students also get a mark for this presentation, focused on graphical and verbal presentation skills but not on content.

FNP students have 10 minutes time to present their proposal. Then 20 minutes are left for receiving feedback on the presentation and the proposal itself. Therefore it is important to have the proposal uploaded to Blackboard in time.

### Blackboard

As soon as you have been registered for a thesis you will be added to the thesis rings' Blackboard (ENP80100\_2014\_0: WCSG Thesis Rings) where you can find more information, dates and 'sign up' (if you have a document you want to be discussed). Log in via: <https://blackboard.wur.nl/> (NB: the Blackboard cannot be accessed through MyPortal at the moment).

We urge you to read all the information on Blackboard carefully and try to find answers to your questions there. In general, most (if not, all) communication goes through Blackboard and it's your responsibility to keep track of meetings and upload/download documents on time.

### Next meeting

When you receive an email about your registration, first thing to check is when the next meeting is for 'your' ring. You can check this by going to the Blackboard site (see above) --> 'Dates, sign-up and documents' --> 'Dates and sign-up ring A/B/C'

You can also find the full schedule there for the next few months (note that the location changes), so you can plan ahead. We strongly urge you to be present at all meetings (and the next ones as well of course).

## Annex E: Final Colloquium

Students working on their FNP Master Thesis have to give two presentations: one at the start of the thesis process and one at the end. The proposal presentation takes place in one of the thesis rings (see annex D).

The final colloquium is meant to share the results and new (scientific) insights with a broader audience of students and staff. The presentation will be co-referenced by a student and discussion and reflection will take place. The final colloquium takes place after the report has been completed and before the examination talk, since it is part of the grading.

FNP final colloquia sessions will usually take place on the first Thursday afternoon of each month in Gaia or Lumen.

To schedule the colloquium the supervisor must give permission (meaning that the thesis report is sufficiently advanced and near to completion) and the student must contact the FNP secretariat or thesis coordinator to set a date.

The meetings are organized in the following way:

- Presentation of 10-15 minutes for the presentation of the research.
- Reaction by a fellow student acting as co-referent. This reaction is meant as an introduction to the discussion and serves to stimulate student (rather than only staff) contribution to the discussion. In addition, the co-referent will give feed-back on the presentation skills with respect to performance and use of powerpoint slides. (2-5 minutes).
- General discussion and defence of parts or entire research approach chosen by the student presenting (10-15 minutes)

## Annex F: Guidelines for Data Management

The aim of this DMP is to explain the guidelines on the storage and traceability of data in MSc theses carried out at the FNP group with the ultimate goal to trace back the data from raw data to the published forms. That means that each step of the research process, from data collection, to data transformations, the final analyses, and the reporting needs to be documented and stored in a secure centralized location.

The following documents and files need to be stored for every MSc research project carried out at the FNP group (i.e. with an FNP-804xx code):

1. The project proposal and the evaluation form of the project proposal, in a folder "Project proposal".

Storage name project proposal: UNA<sup>7</sup>\_MSc\_PP\_YYYY.pdf

Storage name project proposal evaluation: UNA\_MSc\_PE\_YYYY.pdf

*Example:*

*S. Cooper, MFN student, starts in 2015 a thesis on Dutch climate change policy and forest management at the FNP group, supervised by prof. Arts. S. Cooper's UNA (unique wur-name) is coope001, he finishes his project proposal in 2015.*

*Storage name project proposal: Coope001\_Msc\_PP\_2015.pdf*

*Storage name project proposal evaluation: Coope001\_MSc\_PE\_2015.pdf*

2. Raw data files (such as transcripts of interviews, excel/SPSS raw data from web-surveys, etc.), in a folder "Raw data".

Storage name raw data files: UNA\_MSc\_RD\_YYYY\_#<sup>8</sup>.ext<sup>9</sup>

*Example:*

*S. Cooper has carried out several interviews in 2015. Part of the interviews are with experts and part with forest managers. All interviews were transcribed. The transcribed expert interviews are stored in one pdf-file, and the transcribed interviews with the managers are stored in one pdf-file:*

*Storage name expert interviews: Coope001\_MSc\_RD\_2015\_1.pdf*

*Storage name managers interviews: Coope001\_MSc\_RD\_2015\_2.pdf*

*Next to the interviews, S. Cooper has also carried out a web-survey. All data from the survey was transported to SPSS. This SPSS file (with a complete description of all variables, the labels, and the values) is also stored.*

*Storage name SPSS file: Coope001\_MSc\_RD\_2015\_3.sav*

3. Data files after analyses (such as SPSS data after variable transformations, removal of outliers, etc.) and a description or computer code (e.g., SPSS syntax file) containing the steps to go from raw data file to the analyzed data file, including a short clarification of the steps of the analyses in English, in a folder "Processed data".

---

<sup>7</sup> unique wur-name

<sup>8</sup> # = number

<sup>9</sup> ext = relevant extension (depending on type of file)

Storage name processed data files: UNA\_MSc\_PD\_ YYYY\_#.ext

*Example:*

*S. Cooper analysed and coded the interviews (both those of the experts and the managers) using Atlas.ti 7.*

*Storage name expert interviews: Coope001\_MSc\_PD\_2015\_1.hpr7*

*Storage name managers interviews: Coope001\_MSc\_PD\_2015\_2.hpr7*

*All data from the survey was analysed in SPSS. This SPSS file (including all steps of the analysis) is stored.*

*Storage name SPSS file: Coope001\_MSc\_PD\_2015\_3.spv*

4. The final product(s) (pdf-version of the thesis report) and the evaluation forms of the thesis, in a folder "Thesis report".

*Storage name thesis report: UNA\_MSc\_FP\_YYYY.pdf*

*Storage name OWI evaluation sheet: UNA\_MSc\_FOWI\_YYYY.pdf*

*Storage name FNP evaluation sheet: UNA\_MSc\_FFNP\_YYYY.pdf*

*Example:*

*S. Cooper finishes his report at the beginning of 2016, his final evaluation takes also place in 2016*

*Storage name thesis report: Coope001\_MSc\_FP\_2016.pdf*

*Storage name OWI evaluation sheet: Coope001\_MSc\_FOWI\_2016.pdf*

*Storage name FNP evaluation sheet: Coope001\_MSc\_FFNP\_2016.pdf*

5. Manuscript History if applicable (e.g. if a proposal or thesis report has been rejected in one of the phases of the thesis), in a folder "History".

Storage name History: UNA\_MSc\_HIS\_YYYY\_#.pdf

*Example:*

*Unfortunately S. Cooper's first thesis report that he finishes in 2015, has been graded as insufficient. Both the final report as the evaluation sheets are stored.*

*Storage name thesis report: Coope001\_MSc\_HIS\_2015\_1.pdf*

*Storage name OWI sheet: Coope001\_MSc\_HIS\_2015\_2.pdf*

*Storage name FNP sheet: Coope001\_MSc\_HIS\_2015\_3.pdf*

6. A "Metafile" explaining the different files and how to interpret the uploaded files. This file is found in appendix 1.

Storage name Metafile: UNA\_MSc\_MF\_YYYY.pdf

*Example:*

*S. Cooper finishes the metafile with the final report and stores this.*

*Storage name metafile: Coope001\_MSc\_MF\_2016.pdf*

The folder structure of the overall data management is as follows:



UNA		
		UNA_MSc_MF_YYYY.pdf
	Project proposal	UNA_MSc_PP_YYYY.pdf UNA_MSc_PE_YYYY.pdf
	Raw data	UNA_MSc_RD_YYYY_#.ext .....
	Processed data	UNA_MSc_PD_YYYY_#.ext .....
	Thesis report	UNA_MSc_FP_YYYY.pdf UNA_MSc_FOWI_YYYY.pdf UNA_MSc_FFNP_YYYY.pdf
	History	UNA_MSc_HIS_YYYY_#.pdf

*Example:*  
S. Cooper's folder structure is as follows:

Coope001		
		Coope001_MSc_MF_2016.pdf
	Project proposal	Coope001_MSc_PP_2015.pdf Coope001_MSc_PE_2015.pdf
	Raw data	Coope001_MSc_RD_2015_1.pdf Coope001_MSc_RD_2015_2.pdf Coope001_MSc_RD_2015_3.sav
	Processed data	Coope001_MSc_PD_2015_1.hpr7 Coope001_MSc_PD_2015_2.hpr7 Coope001_MSc_PD_2015_3.spv
	Thesis report	Coope001_MSc_FP_2016.pdf Coope001_MSc_FOWI_2016.pdf Coope001_MSc_FFNP_2016.pdf
	History	Coope001_MSc_HIS_2015_1.pdf Coope001_MSc_HIS_2015_2.pdf Coope001_MSc_HIS_2015_3.pdf

The student is responsible for maintaining its own data management, with a final responsibility of the FNP supervisor. We strongly advise the student to keep reliable backups during the whole thesis process and/or store all data on a network with central backup services.

The student is responsible for delivering all files to the supervisor; the way file transfer takes place (such as zip-file, usb stick) should be done in consultation with the supervisor. Make sure to use the above structure. Thus everything is included in one root-folder, named after your unique WUR name The data management files should be delivered together with the final thesis. The FNP supervisor checks the files and is responsible for permanent storage. The grade of the thesis can only be registered after the supervisor approves the files handed in by the student.



## APPENDIX 1

## METAFILE

Name of student:

Reg. no of student:

Educational programme:

FNP supervisor(s):

Other supervisor(s), including affiliation:

Title of thesis:

Short description (2-3 sentences) of the thesis:

Country of research:

Region/location of research:

Dates/period of MSc research:

Dates/period of data collection:

Files:

<b>Metafile</b>	
<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>
<b>Project proposal and evaluation</b>	
<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>
<b>Raw data files</b>	
<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>
<b>Processed data files</b>	
<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>
<b>Thesis report</b>	
<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>
<b>History</b>	
<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>

**Example:**

Based on the data collected by S. Cooper, he should set up the following metafile:

Name of student: S.L. Cooper  
 Reg. no of student: 800226-999-999  
 Educational programme: MFN  
 FNP supervisor(s): Prof. dr. B.J.M. Arts  
 Other supervisor(s), incl. affiliation: -

Title of thesis: Climate change policy and forest management: current state-of-art

Short description (2-3 sentences) of the thesis:

Today, our climate is changing at an unprecedented rate, and this changing climate might dramatically influence our forests. This thesis investigated the effect of the Dutch climate change policy on forest management in the Netherlands, using interviews and a web-survey. Results show that forest managers have limited knowledge on climate change policy.

Country of research: Netherlands  
 Region/location of research: Netherlands  
 Dates/period of MSc research: September 2015 – March 2016  
 Dates/period of data collection: November 2015 – January 2016

Files:

**Metafile**

<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>
Coope001_MSc_MF_2016.pdf	Metafile FNP thesis

**Project proposal and evaluation**

<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>
Coope001_MSc_PP_2015.pdf	Project proposal FNP thesis
Coope001_MSc_PE_2015.pdf	Evaluation project proposal FNP thesis

**Raw data files**

<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>
Coope001_MSc_RD_2015_1.pdf	Data file transcribed interviews experts
Coope001_MSc_RD_2015_2.pdf	Data file transcribed interviews managers
Coope001_MSc_RD_2015_3.sav	SPSS data file containing data web-survey

**Processed data files**

<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>
Coope001_MSc_PD_2015_1.hpr7	Atlas.ti 7 file with coded interviews experts
Coope001_MSc_PD_2015-2.hpr7	Atlas.ti 7 file with coded interviews managers
Coope001_MSc_PD_2015_3.spv	SPSS output file with statistical analysis

**Thesis report**

<i>Name of file:</i>	<i>Short description:</i>
Coope001_MSc_MF_2016.pdf	Final thesis report
Coope001_MSc_FOWI_2016.pdf	Final OWI evaluation form thesis
Coope001_MSc_FFNP_2016.pdf	Final FNP evaluation form thesis

**Annex G:****FNP thesis path schedule  
Overview of main activities****Thesis topic:****Supervisor(s):**

1. Progress of planning and implementation of thesis research

Activity	Date approved / presented / completed	Signature supervisor
Thesis contract		
Research proposal (+ Go/No Go decision)		
Start colloquium within the WCSG Thesis Rings		
Final colloquium at FNP		
Final discussion with examiner		

2. Participation in FNP final colloquia meetings

a) Acting as co-referent of a final colloquium

Date	Name of presenter	Title of presentation	Staff signature

b) Attendance of minimal three final colloquium sessions

Date	Titles of presentations	Staff signature



## Annex H: Thesis Evaluation Sheet

<b>Student</b>	<input type="text"/>
Thesis Title	<input type="text"/>
Credits	<input type="text"/>
Supervisor	<input type="text"/>

---

### Proposal (study design)

<i>Problem statement</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Research question, objective or hypothesis formulation</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Methodological design</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Proposal presentation</i>	<input type="text"/>

---

### Research Competence

<i>Commitment and perseverance</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Initiative and creativity</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Independence</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Efficiency in working with data</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Handling comments and development of research skills</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Keeping to the time schedule</i>	<input type="text"/>

---

### Thesis report

<i>Relevance research, clearness goals, delineation research</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Theoretical underpinning, use of literature</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Use of methods and data</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Critical reflection on the research performed (discussion)</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Clarity of conclusions and recommendations</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Writing skills</i>	<input type="text"/>



---

**Final Colloquium**

*Graphical presentation*

*Verbal presentation and defence*

---

**Examination**

*Defence of the thesis*

*Knowledge of the study domain*

---

**Remarks**

---

**Overall Grade**

Summarizing the given arguments  
the work is graded with

Wageningen,  
\_\_\_ day of 20\_\_\_

.....  
(Signature Supervisor)

## Annex I: FNP Thesis Assessment Form

### Assessment thesis Wageningen University

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

Name chair group		<b>Fee Percentage per Chairgroup</b>	
Name student		FNP	100%
Registration number		LGG2	0%
Study programme		LGG3	0%
Specialisation			
Code thesis			
Short title thesis			
Date examination			
Country (of fieldwork)	1		
	2	<b>Signature</b>	
Supervisor chair group			
Supervisor outside chair group (if so)			
Second reviewer/examiner			

	grading mark 1-10	relative weight *
<b>Proposal (study design)</b>		10%
1 Problem statement		0.00
2 Research question, objective or hypothesis formulation		
3 Methodological design		
4 Proposal presentation		
<b>Research competence</b>		30%
1 Commitment and perseverance		0.00
2 Initiative and creativity		
3 Independence		
4 Efficiency in working with data		
5 Handling comments and development of research skills		
6 Keeping to the time schedule		
<b>Thesis report</b>		50%
1 Relevance research, clearness goals, delineation research		0.00
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		
<b>Colloquium</b>		5%
1 Graphical presentation		0.00
2 Verbal presentation and defence		
<b>Examination</b>		5%
1 Defence of the thesis		0.00
2 Knowledge of study domain		

\* Relative weights may be adjusted, provided this is agreed upon and recorded in the thesis contract.

<b>TOTAL</b>	0.00
<b>FINAL GRADE</b>	0.0

**Comment by supervisor**

**Comment by 2nd reviewer/examiner**

## Annex J: Rubrics for Assessment of the Proposal and Thesis

# Rubric for assessing FNP MSc theses

This rubric serves as guidance for supervision and grading, no rights can be derived from this document

Item	Grade					
	1-3	4-5	6	7	8	9-10
<b>0 PROPOSAL</b>						
<b>0.1 Problem statement</b> <i>Knowledge of research context/problem domain</i>	Absent, not or only limitedly described	Fails to cite relevant knowledge or misinterprets knowledge	Cites some of the context/problems, but more sources are available	Makes a link to most relevant knowledge sources	Provides a good overview of relevant knowledge sources	Provides a thorough and nuanced overview, including sources from different domains
<i>Significance/legitimacy of the problem statement</i>	Absent	Incomplete and/or unclear	Very basic and/or limited to a basic identification of a gap in knowledge	Identification of gaps in knowledge, some arguments for the significance of the work	Good description, showing the significance of the work	Extensive and clear, shows potential for a significant scientific contribution
<b>0.2 Research question &amp; objective or hypothesis formulation</b>	Absent or very unclear, unrelated to problem statement	Poorly phrased, not researchable. Relation to the problem statement illogical and poorly described.	In principal researchable, but unclear phrasing/ wording. Link to problem statement logical but poorly articulated	Mostly clear and researchable. Relation to problem statement logical, but not well defined	Well-defined, researchable. Relation with problem statement logical and well defined	Well-defined, researchable. Relation with problem statement defined in an excellent way
<b>0.3 Methodological design, data analysis/collection</b> <i>Theory</i>	Absent, no discussion of underlying theory	Some discussion of underlying theory, but the description shows serious errors or uses inappropriate theory.	Basic, reviews of theory but no evaluation.	Overview of relevant theory, mostly reviewing, some evaluation. Positioning of the research is rudimentary.	Good and critical review and evaluation of most relevant theory. Positioning of research and choices made well justified.	Sophisticated review and evaluation, clear positioning of research in larger theoretical context. Identifies a convincing scientific niche
<i>Operationalisation and conceptual framework, strategy for data analysis</i>	Absent	Incomplete and unclear.	Basic understanding of concepts. No clear application to topic. Unclear link with research questions and methodology.	Basic understanding of concepts. Some problems in the application to the topic or in the relation with research questions and methodology.	Good understanding and application. Some aspects show originality. Clear links to theory and methodology.	Excellent understanding of concepts, original theoretical contribution, excellent application to topic and well defined links to methodology
<i>Methodology</i>	Research method is missing	Research method is incomplete	Research method is described	Research method is described	Good description of research method	Original/innovative and well justified



Item	Grade					
	1-3	4-5	6	7	8	9-10
	ing, or is poorly described poorly justified (e.g. does not match with the research questions).	complete, with problems in justification (e.g. relation with the research questions is not clear.)	scribed, but is incomplete and/or not well justified.	scribed accurately with sufficient justification	search methods, embedded and well justified	methodological approach fully substantiated and described transparently.
<b>0.4 Proposal presentation</b>  <i>Graphical presentation</i>	Presentation has no structure. Slides poorly prepared	Presentation has unclear structure. Most slides poorly prepared.	Presentation has structure but quality of slides is mixed. Use of text, tables, graphs and graphics often not appropriate	Presentation has a clear structure with only few exceptions. Slides are mostly of sufficient quality with appropriate use of text, tables, graphs and graphics	Presentation has a clear structure. Slides have a good lay-out with appropriate use of text, tables, graphs and graphics.	Presentation has a clear structure. Slides have a good layout with appropriate use of text, tables, graphs and graphics.
<i>Verbal presentation and defence</i>	Insufficient delivery and defence	Unclear and insufficient delivery. Response to questions often insufficient	Delivery is mixed: Often hard to follow. Response to questions not always sufficient	Delivery mostly of sufficient quality, but with some exceptions. Response to questions mostly sufficient	Clear and engaging delivery. Response to questions shows good understanding.	Clear and engaging delivery. Delivery and response show full mastery of the subjects.
<b>1. RESEARCH COMPETENCE</b>						
<b>1.1. Commitment and perseverance</b>	Student is not motivated, escapes work and gives up regularly.	Student has little motivation. Tends to be distracted easily. Has given up once or twice, was unable to meet challenges	Student is motivated at times, but often sees the work as a compulsory task. Is distracted from thesis work now and then.	The student is motivated. Overcomes an occasional setback with help of the supervisor	The student is motivated and/or overcomes an occasional setback on her own and considers the work as her own project.	The student is very motivated, goes at length to get the most out of the project. Takes complete control of her own project.
<b>1.2. Initiative and creativity</b>	Student shows no initiative or new ideas at all.	Student picks up some initiatives and/or new ideas suggested by others but the selection is not self-motivated..	Student shows some initiative and/or together with the supervisor develops one or two new ideas on minor parts of the research..	Student initiates discussions on new ideas with supervisor and develops one or two own ideas on minor parts of the research.	Student has creative ideas in major parts of the research process (problematization, research design and approach, or discussion)	Creative and innovative ideas is most parts of the research process..
<b>1.3. Independence</b>	The student only conducts the thesis properly after repeated detailed instructions. No critical self-reflection at all.	The student needs frequent instructions and well-defined tasks from the supervisor and the supervisor needs careful checks to see if all tasks have been performed.	The supervisor is the main responsible for setting out the tasks, but the student is able to perform them, but not always in an independent way. Student is able to reflect on functioning with	Student selects and plans the tasks and steps together with the supervisor and performs these tasks mostly independently The student occasionally shows independence in critical self-	Student plans and performs tasks mostly independently, asks for help from the supervisor when needed. Student actively performs critical self-reflection on some aspects of their func-	Student plans and performs tasks independently and organizes sources of help independently. Asks for help from the supervisor when needed. Student actively performs critical self-reflection on vari-



Item	Grade					
	1-3	4-5	6	7	8	9-10
		No critical self-reflection at all.	the help of the supervisor	reflection	tioning	ous aspects of their own functioning and performance.
<b>1.4. Efficiency in working with data</b> <i>Data analysis</i>	Student is lost when using data. Is not able to execute a systematic approach to data collection.	Able to organize the data, but is not able to perform checks and/or simple analyses.	Able to organize data on a basic level and perform some simple checks or unable to analyse the data independently. The way the data are used does not clearly contribute to objective and research questions	Able to organize the data, perform some basic checks and perform basic analyses that contribute to the objective and research questions.	Able to organize the data, perform commonly used checks and perform some advanced analyses of the data that contribute to the objective and research questions.	Able to organize the data, perform thorough checks and perform advanced and original analyses of the data that contribute to the objective and research questions
<i>Data collection</i>	No strategy or planning for data collection. No skills in execution of methods.	Insufficient strategy, planning and execution	Rudimentary strategy for data collection. Poor execution resulting in poor quality data	Sufficient strategy and execution. Sufficient quality of data but more could have been done	Good and systematic strategy for data collection. Good execution of methods resulting in good quality data	Good and systematic strategy for data collection. Excellent execution of methods.
<b>1.5. Handling supervisor's comments and development of research skills</b>	Student does not pick up suggestions and ideas of the supervisor. Knowledge and insight of the student is insufficient and the student is not able to take action to remedy them.	Student needs detailed instructions, implementation is insufficient. There is some progress in the research skills of the student, but suggestions of the supervisor are frequently ignored.	Student needs detailed instruction and incorporates some of the comments of the supervisor, but ignores others without arguments. The student is able to adopt some skills as they are presented during supervision.	Student needs instruction but student incorporates most or all of the supervisor's comments. The student is able to adopt skills as they are presented during supervision and develops some skills independently as well.	Student does not need instruction. Supervisor comments are weighed by the student, asked for when needed and incorporated appropriately. The student is able to adopt new skills mostly independently, and asks for assistance from the supervisor if needed	Student does not need instruction. Supervisor's comments are critically weighed by the student and asked for when needed. The incorporation of comments is appropriate and systematic throughout the thesis. The student has knowledge and insight on a scientific level.
<b>1.6. Keeping to the time schedule</b>	No time schedule made or kept	No realistic time schedule, deadlines agreements are not met. No appropriate justification and communication	Mostly realistic time schedule, but no timely adjustment of time schedule. Problems with meeting agreements and deadlines and with appropriate justification and communication	Realistic time schedule, with some adjustments, Agreements and deadlines are mostly met. Sometimes appropriate justification and communication is lacking.	Realistic time schedule, with timely adjustments. Student organizes the process and communicates timely and appropriately.	Realistic time schedule, with timely adjustments. Student organizes the process and communicates timely and appropriately.



Item	Grade					
	1-3	4-5	6	7	8	9-10
<b>2. THESIS REPORT</b>						
<b>2.1. Relevance research, clearness goals, delineation research</b>  <i>Knowledge of research context/problem domain</i>	Absent, not or only limit- edly described	Fails to cite relevant knowledge or misinter- prets knowledge	Cites some of the con- text/problems, but more sources are available	Makes a link to most rele- vant knowledge sources	Provides a good overview of relevant knowledge sources	Provides a thorough and nu- anced overview, including sources from different do- mains
<i>Significance/legitimacy of the problem state- ment</i>	Absent	Incomplete and/or un- clear	Very basic and/or limited to a basic identification of a gap in knowledge	Identification of gaps in knowledge, some argu- ments for the significance of the work	Good description, showing the significance of the work	Extensive and clear, shows potential for a significant scientific contribution
<i>Research question &amp; objective or hypothesis formulation</i>	Absent or very unclear, unrelated to problem statement	Poorly phrased, not re- searchable. Relation to the problem statement illogical and poorly de- scribed.	In principal researchable, but unclear phrasing/ word- ing. Link to problem state- ment logical but poorly articulated	Mostly clear and research- able. Relation to problem statement not logical, but not well defined	Well-defined, researchable. Relation with problem statement logical and well defined	Well-defined, researchable. Relation with problem state- ment logical and defined in an excellent way
<b>2.2. Theoretical under- pinning, use of litera- ture</b>  <i>Theory</i>	Absent, no discussion of underlying theory	Some discussion of un- derlying theory, but the description shows seri- ous errors or uses inap- propriate theory.	Basic, reviews of theory but no evaluation.	Overview of relevant the- ury, mostly reviewing, some evaluation. Positioning of the research is rudimentary.	Good and critical review and evaluation of most relevant theory. Positioning of research and choices made well justified.	Sophisticated review and evaluation, clear positioning of research in larger theoret- ical context. Identifies a con- vincing scientific niche
<i>Operationalisation and conceptual framework, strategy for data analy- sis</i>	Absent	Incomplete and unclear.	Basic understanding of con- cepts. No clear application to topic. Unclear link with research questions and methodology.	Basic understanding of con- cepts. Some problems in the application to the topic or in the relation with re- search questions and methodology.	Good understanding and application. Some aspects show originality. Clear links to theory and methodology.	Excellent understanding of concepts, original theoretical contribution, excellent appli- cation to topic and well de- fined links to methodology
<b>2.3 Use of methods and data</b>  <i>Methodology</i>	Missing, or is poorly de- scribed poorly justified (e.g. does not match with the research questions).	Incomplete, with prob- lems in justification (e.g. relation with the re- search questions is not clear.)	Described, but incomplete and/or not well justified.	Described accurately with sufficient justification	Good description, embed- ded and well justified	Original/innovative and methodological approach fully substantiated and de- scribed transparently.



Item	Grade					
	1-3	4-5	6	7	8	9-10
<b>Analysis and presentation</b>	Presentation of results unfocused and incoherent. Analysis fully missing	Some signs of analysis but presentation of results mostly unfocused and incoherent.	Some structure in the presentation of results, but analytical focus is largely missing or incoherent.	Mostly clear and structured presentation of results. Analytical focus weak and not always coherent.	Clear and structured presentation of the results. Analytical focus sufficiently developed so that relevance for the objective and research questions is clear.	Clear and structured presentation of the results. Excellent conceptual and analytical focus. Analysis directly relevant for objective and research questions
<b>2.4. Critical reflection on the research performed (discussion)</b>	No discussion and/or reflection on the research.	Minimal discussion of results within context of relevant, wider scientific debates. The contribution of the thesis is not stated. No reflection on the limitations of the study.	Minimal discussion of results within context of relevant, wider scientific debates. The contribution of the thesis is unclear. Some reflection on limitations	Reasonable discussion of results within context of relevant, wider scientific debates. The contribution of the thesis is articulated, but not very strong. Sufficient reflection on limitations	Good discussion of results within context of relevant, wider scientific debates articulating in a clearly articulated and well grounded contribution of the thesis. Good reflection on limitations	Excellent discussion of results within context of relevant, wider scientific debates. Articulates a strong scientific contribution that goes beyond the state of the art. Good reflection on limitations
<b>2.5. Clarity of conclusions and recommendations</b>	Conclusions and recommendations largely absent	Answers to the research questions unclear and incomplete. Recommendations absent, unclear, unsubstantiated or unconnected	Sufficient answers to the research questions, but mostly incomplete or a repetition of the results. Recommendations mostly clear but problems with substantiation and connection with the findings and conclusions	Answers to the research questions clearly stated, sometimes repetitive or incomplete. Recommendations mostly clear and appropriately substantiated and connected to the findings and conclusions	Answers to the research questions complete and clearly and succinctly stated. Recommendations clear and appropriately substantiated and connected to the findings and conclusions	Answers to the research questions complete and clearly and succinctly stated. Recommendations clear and appropriately substantiated and connected to the findings and conclusions
<b>2.6. Writing skills</b>	Thesis is badly structured. Information often placed in wrong location. Level of detail is inappropriate throughout. Irrelevant information given. Significant problems with spelling and/or grammar	Structure incorrect in some places, placement of material illogical in many places. Level of detail varies widely (information missing or irrelevant). Significant problems with spelling and/or grammar.	Main structure is correct and mostly relevant information is included. Placement of material and/or argumentative structure often illogical. Numerous spelling or grammatical errors	Main structure is correct and mostly relevant information is included. Placement of material in different chapters and/or argumentative structure mostly logical but not always to the point. Few spelling or grammatical errors.	All information presented is relevant and in the right place, with few exceptions. Structure is clear, appropriate and followed through consistently. Clear argumentative structure with a good flow. Few spelling or grammatical errors	All information presented is relevant and in the right place. Structure is clear, appropriate and followed through consistently. Writing style shows excellent command of language with clear argumentative structure and excellent flow. Few spelling or grammatical errors
<b>3 COLLOQUIUM</b>						



Item	Grade					
	1-3	4-5	6	7	8	9-10
<b>3.1. Graphical presentation</b>	Presentation has no structure. Slides poorly prepared	Presentation has unclear structure. Most slides poorly prepared.	Presentation has structure but quality of slides is mixed. Use of text, tables, graphs and graphics often not appropriate	Presentation has a clear structure with only few exceptions. Slides are mostly of sufficient quality with appropriate use of text, tables, graphs and graphics	Presentation has a clear structure. Slides have a good lay-out with appropriate use of text, tables, graphs and graphics.	Presentation has a clear structure. Slides have a good lay-out with appropriate use of text, tables, graphs and graphics.
<b>3.2. Verbal presentation and defence</b>	Insufficient delivery and defence	Unclear and insufficient delivery. Response to questions often insufficient	Delivery is mixed: Often hard to follow. Response to questions not always sufficient	Delivery mostly of sufficient quality, but with some exceptions. Response to questions mostly sufficient	Clear and engaging delivery. Response to questions shows good understanding.	Clear and engaging delivery. Delivery and response show full mastery of the subjects.
<b>4 EXAMINATION</b>						
<b>4.1. Thesis defence</b>	Student is not able to defend the thesis. Responses show no understanding.	Student has difficulty to defend the thesis. Responses show insufficient understanding	Student is able to defend some basis elements and choices made in the thesis. Shows sufficient understanding in responding to questions, but with clear limitations.	Student is mostly able to defend the thesis. Responses show sufficient understanding, including awareness of most choices made and the limitations of the study. Limited ability to place thesis in a scientific or practical context.	Student is able to defend the thesis Responses show good understanding, including awareness of most choices made and the limitations of the study. Student is able to indicate where the work could have been done better and is able to place thesis in a scientific or practical context.	Defence is a free and open exchange of excellent scientific quality. Responses demonstrate full understanding and mastery.
<b>4.2. Knowledge of study domain</b>	Student does not master the most basic knowledge	The student does not understand all of the subject matter discussed in the thesis.	Student understands the subject matter of the thesis on a textbook level.	Student understands the subject matter of the thesis, including the literature used.	Student shows a good understanding of the subjects discussed in thesis: and is aware of current discussions in the literature related to the topic.	Student shows excellent understanding of the subjects discussed in the thesis and is able to connect the thesis to wider relevant scientific debates.



