



Quantitative Environmental Sciences: Guidelines for Master's Thesis 2023/2024

1. Finding a Master's topic

<i>Date</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>What</i>
4 Oct. 2023	Supervisors	Supervisors present ideas for a Master's thesis project and meet the students (more information will follow in September).
Oct./Nov./Dec. 2023	Students	Students develop an idea for a master project with input from members of the department. Students should review the current state of knowledge and formulate a research question and possible hypotheses. Students formally ask a member of the department to be the thesis supervisor.
Oct./Nov./Dec. 2023	Supervisors Students	Meetings: supervisors and students jointly develop a project idea and discuss how to carry it out. Supervisors should give students enough space to come up with their own ideas, but students have to accept potential limitations on what is practical and affordable. Supervisors give input but should not do the thinking, planning, executing and writing for the students. Be aware that the Master's thesis will be a public document and you cannot therefore agree to keep data or results private!

2. Master's project design

<i>Date</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>What</i>
14-15 Dec. 2023	Students	Students attend the final master thesis presentations by the master students from the previous year.
Dec. 2023 to Jan. 2024	Students	Students work out a study design. This includes deciding what kind of data should be collected and whether experiments/surveys etc. should be carried out. Attention should already be paid to how the data will be analyzed. At this stage a provisional budget and timetable should also be drawn up.
Jan. 2024	Supervisors	Supervisors arrange further meetings and deadlines with the students (e.g. participation in research group meetings).



8-11 Jan. 2024 Presentations 12 Jan. 2024	Students	Students finalize their project ideas and present their project plan during the course UWW260 (10 minutes presentation and 10 minutes discussion). Supervisors and scientific staff attend the project presentations and give ideas and suggestions for improvements.
29 Jan. 2024	Students	Students write the formal master project proposal and hand it in by or before 29 January 2024 to Jordi Bascompte and the supervisor(s).
Until 6 Feb. 2024	Supervisors	Supervisor(s) read the proposal and give feedback to the students. Jordi Bascompte, in consultation with supervisors, evaluates the proposal and the presentation (with passed/not passed) to fulfill the credit point requirements for UWW260.

3. Doing the Master's project

<i>Date</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>What</i>
Feb. to Sept. 2024	Students	Students carry out the project : e.g., pilot studies, preparing data sheets, organizing material and helpers, experiments, surveys, discussing the project with others, analyzing and writing. Students should act on their own initiative. They should try to stick to the timetable and be flexible in changing procedures if necessary. They should keep the supervisor informed and attend group meetings and seminars (as determined by individual supervisors).
Feb. to Sept. 2024	Supervisors	Supervisors should also ensure that the project is going according to plan and provide help with experimental design, data collection, analysis, etc. Serious problems or concerns should be raised with the student and the course organizers as soon as possible. Regular meetings are desirable, but their frequency will vary according to the supervisor.
Sept. to Oct. 2024	Students	Students construct an outline or plan , mostly consisting of detailed notes. This plan should include the central message of the manuscript, define the materials and methods, summarize questions and problems, define principal findings and results, describe the conclusions and implications, organize and group related ideas together, identify important references, etc. Students convert the outline into narrative form and develop a first draft thesis (note that this should capture the main points and ideas, but don't worry about incomplete sentences and leave gaps if necessary). Students discuss the draft thesis with the supervisors.



4. Final Master's thesis and Master's presentation

<i>Date</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>What</i>
29 Nov. 2024	Students	Students hand in a PDF of the final Master's thesis to the program director and the supervisors.
12 & 13 Dec. 2024	Students	Students present their master's thesis and indicate how their findings fit into the broader research field. Talks should last 20 minutes with 10 minutes for questions and comments.
At the latest of 16 Dec. 2024	Supervisors	Supervisors attend and evaluate the final presentation . Supervisors give written or oral feedback on the thesis and presentation to the students after the presentation.
13 Jan. 2025	Students	Students hand in a PDF of the final corrected Master's thesis to each supervisor, program director (Jordi Bascompte) and program coordinator (Claudia Hegglin). This is the version that will contribute to your final thesis grade! In addition, students should provide a bounded copy to the program coordinator till end of January.
20 Jan. 2025	Supervisors	Supervisors fill in the assessment form (grade the thesis) and hand it in at latest of 20 January 2025 to the program coordinator.

Vacation during Master Thesis project

Master students are entitled to up to 4 weeks of vacation. The holidays must be discussed and approved in advance with the supervisor(s).

The master thesis is carried out over a period of two semesters. An extension is only possible in the event of:

- 1) Longer illness (at least 8 weeks). A medical certificate must be submitted.
- 2) Maternity leave.
- 3) Part-time study (half of the courses in the first semester, second part of the courses in the third semester. The master thesis split in two semesters, the second and fourth). A part-time study must be discussed at the beginning of the first semester. It is the student's responsibility to find a master project that allows a splitting of the master project.