

GRADING GUIDE – HUMAN GEOGRAPHY master thesis 60-credits

Course code: HGO4090 Master thesis, 60 credits

Type of examination: Master thesis and oral examination

<https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/iss/HGO4090/index.html>

I. About the 60-credits Master Thesis in Human Geography

The master thesis constitutes independent academic research and the core of the master's degree programme in Human Geography. The master's thesis prepares students for developing and carrying out an independent academic research project. Students gain experience in the use of research methods and in linking theory to empirical evidence. Students develop their theses under the guidance of an academic staff member.

The fulfillment of HGO4090 implies the delivery of a master thesis for evaluation and an adjusting oral examination on the thesis and its topic.

The 60-credits master thesis reflects research carried out over the period of two semesters. Students are encouraged to start working on the thesis in the second semester, allocating time corresponding to a 10-credits course workload. The workload increases to 20-credits the third semester, and full-time workload (30-credits) in the fourth and final semester of the programme.

High academic quality in terms of formulation of the research question, argumentation and presentation of the material is required of all master's theses in human geography, both 60 and 30 credits. The assessment of the individual thesis must take into consideration the required workload involved in the production of the thesis.

II. Criteria for evaluating a master thesis in Human Geography

The evaluation of a master thesis is based on an overall assessment of the thesis as academic work. The following criteria should be considered in evaluating a master thesis in human geography:

Aim of the thesis – Problem statement

- The aim of the research should be clearly formulated. The thesis should have clear and limited research questions.
- The student should address the scientific relevance of the study (theoretically, methodologically and/or empirically), as well as its relevance for the discipline and/or society.

→ *Does the thesis have a clear aim/research question(s) and focus?*

Theory and previous research, literature review

- The thesis should include a review of the relevant research field, providing a critical assessment of previous research on the chosen theme/topic.
- The thesis should be informed by a selected theoretical framework/point of departure, concepts and model of analysis. These should be presented in a coherent and argumentative way, explicitly indicating how they contribute to address the research questions.

→ Does the thesis demonstrate a satisfactory overview of the research field?

→ Is there a critical discussion of the literature presented?

Methods and the reliability and validity of the data

- The thesis should include a detailed presentation of the method(s) used, explicitly stating the reasons for the choice of methodology.
- The student should explicitly address the strengths and weaknesses of the methods chosen.
- The thesis should provide an exact account of how the data may be influenced by problems during data collection.
- A discussion of ethical issues of the data gathering process should be provided.
- Detailed explanation of how the data are treated.
- If the thesis does not include primary data collection, there must be a critical review of information sources.

→ Does the thesis demonstrate a satisfactory use of methods?

→ Is there a critical discussion of the methods used?

Analysis

- There must be a clear “red thread”, i.e. link, between research questions, theory, method and the use of the data.
- The interpretation of the empirical material presented in the thesis must be informed by and based on the a critical assessment of the chosen theoretical framework.
- (The findings must be completely based on the data collected.)
- The research questions must be answered explicitly and fully.

→ Is the argument made well formulated and anchored in the presented material?

→ Does the thesis demonstrate appropriate, independent and critical analysis?

Conclusions

- The conclusions of the study must be formulated in a clear and concise manner, highlighting the main finds of the research.
- The findings must be discussed in a wider empirical perspective, and theoretically.
- Suggestions of policy implication of the findings and future research may be given.

→ Does the thesis answer its own research questions?

Structure and form

- Does the thesis have a well organized and logical structure?
- Is there any unnecessary content in the thesis outside of the “red thread”?
- Is use of concepts consistent?
- Does the thesis comply with established scientific norms and formal rules regarding referencing in academic writing?
- Does the thesis comply with the formal requirements established by the master’s programme in Human Geography?

III. Formal requirements for the master thesis

The following requirements apply for 60-credits master theses:

- Course work equivalent to 60-credits must be completed before delivering the thesis for evaluation.
- The length of a 60-credit master's thesis is maximum 48 000 words all inclusive (summary, table of contents, bibliography, annexes, etc.).
- There is no lower word limit, but the programme recommends a minimum length of 38 000 words.
- The thesis will include a summary of 1-2 pages, to appear after the cover page.
- The master thesis must be page numbered, and include a table of contents and list of references.
- Font size 12 points, line spacing 1 1/2.
- Projects involving the use of personal information must be registered at Norsk senter for Forskningsdata (NSD), se Personvernombudsordningen for forskning (<http://www.personvern.uio.no/pvo/forskstu.html>)

About the cover page of the thesis

The cover page must include the following information:

- Full title of the thesis
- Full name of the student
- Semester (Spring/Autumn), year of delivery
- Study programme, department, faculty, university
- Word count (total)

About the length of the thesis

- Theses that exceed the word limit of 48 000 words will be rejected, and a new submission deadline will apply.
- If there is a need to deviate from the word limit, the student must, together with his/her supervisor, apply to the head of studies three weeks before the submission deadline. The application must be academically justified.

IV. Guidelines for the oral examination

The oral examination takes place after the thesis has been graded.

The aim of the adjusting oral examination is to engage into academic dialogue with the candidate on the basis of the master thesis. The evaluation committee will provide general feedback on the thesis and address both strengths and weaknesses of the work, as well as potential areas in need of clarification.

The evaluation committee can adjust the final grade of thesis as a result of the oral examination, either one grade up or one grade down. Adjustments apply normally in situations where the committee is in doubt about the grade most appropriate for the thesis, or when the thesis is at the edge of another grade. Deviation from this rule must be justified by the committee in written form.

Karakterskala for masteroppgaver i samfunnsgeografi – HGO4090/4080 (oversettes!)

A:

En særdeles god og velskrevet oppgave som er godt disponert, har en godt presisert problemstilling, avansert og adekvat teori- og metodebehandling, en særdeles vel gjennomført analyse samt svært godt formulerte konklusjoner eller anbefalinger. Kandidaten viser usedvanlig god reflekterende og analytisk evne og uvanlig stor grad av faglig modenhet og selvstendighet.

B:

En meget god og velskrevet oppgave som er godt disponert, har en presisert problemstilling, adekvat teori- og metodebehandling, en vel gjennomført analyse samt godt formulerte konklusjoner eller anbefalinger. Kandidaten viser god reflekterende og analytisk evne og stor grad av faglig modenhet og selvstendighet. Mindre mangler kan aksepteres.

C:

En relativt velskrevet oppgave som er tilfredsstillende på de fleste områder: stort sett bra disponert og presisert, en noenlunde adekvat teori- og metodebehandling, en tilfredsstillende analyse samt stort sett greit formulerte konklusjoner eller anbefalinger. Kandidaten viser en viss reflekterende og/eller analytisk evne og en viss grad av faglig modenhet og selvstendighet. En del mangler kan aksepteres.

4

Alternativt en oppgave med en mer original problemstilling og/eller et høyere teoretisk og metodisk ambisjonsnivå, men hvor gjennomføringen viser svakheter av teoretisk og/eller metodisk art.

D:

En oppgave som har en del faglige kvaliteter, men som samtidig har vesentlige mangler eller svakheter på ett eller flere av følgende områder: disposisjon, formuleringsevne, presisering av problemstilling, teori- og metodebehandling, analyse, formulering av konklusjoner eller anbefalinger. Kandidaten viser en viss svakhet når det gjelder reflekterende og/eller analytisk evne og har relativt lav grad av faglig modenhet og selvstendighet.

E:

En oppgave som har enkelte faglige kvaliteter, men som samtidig har vesentlige mangler eller svakheter på de fleste av følgende områder: disposisjon, formuleringsevne, presisering av problemstilling, teori- og metodebehandling, analyse og/eller formulering av konklusjoner eller anbefalinger. Kandidaten viser klare svakheter når det gjelder reflekterende og/eller analytisk evne og har lav grad av faglig modenhet og selvstendighet.

F:

Opgaven er preget av så alvorlige feil og mangler av teoretisk, metodisk og fremstillingsmessig art at den ikke kan godkjennes.