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INSTRUCTIONS FOR THESIS

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1 OBJECTIVES OF THESIS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The thesis is a research project or other project which consists of studying the topic, doing the actual work and writing the written report. In addition, the thesis process includes group guidance, individual guidance and participation in required seminars. As a rule, the thesis is done alone. If the entirety or the scope of the thesis so requires, the thesis can be assigned to a group of several students. In case of a group project, each student's share will have to be clearly indicated and assessable. Each student will also have to take part in the presentation seminar.

The objective of the thesis is to encourage the student to critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and to the development of one's own work and field. With the thesis, the student demonstrates that s/he is able to act as a specialist or a supervisor in the future career. S/he demonstrates that s/he is able to draw up a research or project plan, keep a schedule, keep up contacts with several parties, write reports, acquire information independently, analyse and deal with acquired information and material, document one's work and see to the language and outward appearance of the documents and thesis. (Table 1.)

When quoting literature or other sources directly or indirectly, the original source always has to be mentioned. In a word-for-word quote quotation marks or indentation is used. After each paragraph, there is a reference unless the paragraph expresses the writer's own thinking. Each cited figure or table will have to take the thinking further, and their sources clearly stated. The University of Applied Sciences has the Urkund program in use which is utilised in checking the origin of the texts in theses and other written assignments to prevent plagiarism. Research ethical principles are followed in every way in the thesis.

The thesis done at the University of Applied Sciences always includes *theoretical* study of the topic and its *empirical* application either using scientific methods or e.g. as a result of a project.

Table 1. Responsibilities related to thesis.

Student	Supervising teacher	Employer/client
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has sufficient informational, methodological etc. skills to start doing the thesis - Is responsible for his/her own thesis - Looks for the topic of the thesis actively and discusses it with the supervisor - Makes sure that co-operation with the client is fluent - Signs for his/her part agreements related to the thesis and follows the conditions and practices agreed - Acquires research permissions, if needed - Draws up a research or project plan which includes the implementation schedule and reports regularly to the supervisor of the advancement of the thesis - Participates in the guidance and the seminars and presents the thesis in various phases and acts as an opponent to another student - Implements the thesis as planned and is in contact with supervisor in various phases of the thesis - Writes a research or project report following the instructions for thesis - Submits the thesis to the Urkund checking - Submits the finished report in electronic form to Theseus and a written version of the thesis with covers to the client and to the supervisor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supervises, within allocated resources, theses assigned to him/her - Assists and supports students in finding a thesis topic - Tells the students in his/her supervision clearly when s/he is available for guidance - Makes sure that the requirements set for the thesis are met - Arranges the seminars and other meetings related to the thesis - Complies with the conditions and practices agreed in the contract on completing the thesis for a company/organisation - Follows up the advancement of the thesis and assesses the thesis - Writes the assessment statement - Draws up the maturity tests and sees to the necessary arrangements concerning the maturity test - Submits the grades of the thesis and the maturity test to be entered into the study records - Makes sure that the student submits the reports to the parties involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appoints a supervisor for the students in the company/organisation - Signs as a client all contracts related to the thesis and complies with the conditions and practices mentioned in them - Contacts the supervising teacher if necessary - Provides the prerequisites for completing the thesis

2 THESIS PROCESS

Matters dealt with in this chapter are general principles related to various phases of the thesis process. The thesis process includes the starting, planning, implementation and reporting phases.

2.1 Starting Phase – Choosing the Topic

Before starting the thesis, the student completes all those study modules that give the student the readiness to complete the thesis, contents-wise and methods -wise. The thesis starts with choosing the topic. The topic is discussed with the supervisor and with the possible representative of the client.

The thesis completed at the University of Applied Sciences is an applied research and the purpose is that the topic comes from the working life. The objective is that all theses are projects for the working life and thus serve the real needs of the working life. With the project it is meant that at least one of the following conditions is met:

1. A contract is made with the client
2. The client's name and supervisor is written in the thesis passport
3. The student is paid to complete the thesis

Besides the usefulness, novelty value and the author's own interest and motivation can influence the choice of topic. After the representative from VAMK has approved the topic, the student draws up a thesis plan.

2.2 Planning phase - Planning of the Research or the Project

The thesis starts with going into the topic more deeply and drawing up the thesis plan. The student looks for information on previous studies on the topic. This way the student gets an idea of the significance, topicality, novelty and additional value of the thesis from the point of view of the client and the study/project. The background of the thesis, research problem or task, purpose and objectives, most important concepts and/or theory, methodological solutions (such as research an-

gle, data acquisition, analysis methods and/or implementation of the project and/or phases of the development project) as well as the preliminary schedule for the process are described in the thesis plan.

The research problem in the form of a question tells to which basic question an answer or a solution is looked for. More detailed questions/objectives can be derived from the problem, which support and help in problem solving. There has to be a clear and concise practical problem in the project type thesis as well, to which a solution is looked for in the thesis.

The student draws up a thesis plan and presents it in the starting seminar or submits it to the supervisor to be checked and approved. The supervisor grants a permission to move on to the implementation phase.

2.3 Implementation Phase – Theory and Empiric of the Study/ Project

The research process continues after the approval of the thesis plan by summing up the background and objective and by writing the theory part (theoretical frame of reference). Studying previous studies and projects and other relevant literature and theories in the field gives a good basis for planning and describing the practical work. The planning of the empirical (practical) part of a research thesis comprises the target group, research angle, criteria for selecting methods for information acquisition and material analysis

In the interim seminar the student presents the theoretic background of the research or project and the plan for the implementation of the practical part. The supervisor can also give the student a permission to proceed to the practical part without the interim seminar, whether it is a research or a development project in question.

2.4 Reporting Phase – Analysis and Publication of the Results

The reporting of the thesis comprises the reports of both the theory and the practical part. The structure of the thesis is as described in table 2 (the headings are changed to describe the contents of the thesis). The project can be e.g. a design

project or some other specialist assignment with a predefined/clear objective. In a development project, the problem is known but the objectives are not clear at the beginning of the project. A development project can, therefore, be e.g. defining/developing a new procedure.

Table 2. Examples of contents of the thesis.

Research	Project	Development project
1. Introduction 2. Background, research problem(s) and purpose of the research 3. Theoretical frame of reference 4. Research methodology 5. Results 6. Conclusions and discussion –discussing the results – ethical questions –reliability of the results References Appendices	1. Introduction 2. Background and purpose of the project 3. Theoretical background 4. Approach and implementation of the project 5. Outcome of the project 6. Conclusions and discussion – assessment of the phases of the project and resource management – keeping the schedule, utilising the results of the project and assessment – continuation of the project and most important new ideas – conclusions References Appendices	1. Introduction 2. Needs analysis and description of the present state 3. Theoretical background 4. Description of the development process 5. Description of the development operations 6. Description of the results of the development 7. Conclusions and assessment – reliability – usability – transferability – conclusions References

The results of the practical part in a research or a project are published in their own chapter. When publishing the results, the research ethical and confidentiality issues should be taken into account both on the part of the client and other parties involved in the thesis. A sincere and objective analysis and description of the results are important in the publication. Attention should be paid to the clarity of the text and tables and graphs.

A thesis completed at the University of Applied Sciences cannot be classified as secret but all theses are either saved electronically into the Theseus system (<http://www.theseus.fi>) or submitted to the university library in a book format. In

addition, the student submits at least one paperback copy to the supervisor to be archived and to the client. The supplement of the thesis can be classified if the thesis includes confidential information from the client's point of view. The thesis can also be written so that name of the client is not mentioned.

The thesis ends with the chapter Conclusions and Discussion in which the substance and the process of the thesis are assessed, how well the student has succeeded. In the conclusions the most important results or the significance of the project outcome and attainment of the objectives is assessed (finding a solution to the research problems). The discussion should focus on assessing sincerely the approach, suitability of methods and results, reliability and feasibility of results. Finally, possible suggestions for further studies are presented.

Before finishing the thesis, the student sends the thesis in Word or pdf-format in an email attachment as well as an email address received from the supervisor, of type xxx.VAMK@analysis.orkund.com, to Urkund. Urkund checks the thesis over 24 hours and sends an email of the checking to the supervisor. There must not be any copy protection or other protections active in the version that is sent.

2.5 Ending Phase - Assessment of the Thesis and Maturity Test

The time for the presentation of the thesis is agreed with the supervisor and an opponent is named for the occasion. After the supervisor has given the publication permission and after the student has submitted the thesis passport, the supervisor assesses the thesis. The supervisor is responsible for the assessment, taking into account the comments from the language teachers and possible views of the client on the quality and usability of the thesis.

In the *presentation seminar* the student presents his/her finished thesis orally to the audience in the language of the degree programme. The written report is submitted to the supervisors and to the opponent two weeks prior to the presentation. The students act as opponents in turns. The opponent's task is to ask questions and assess the thesis and the presentations critically but in an appropriate manner.

The purpose is to bring up the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis and the opponent's reasoned opinions on the thesis. The opponent fills the in Opponent's assessment form and submits it to the supervisor of the thesis in the presentation occasion. The presentation seminar is public.

The theses are assessed on the scale from 1 to 5 and attention is paid to the management of the research or project process, theoretical background, implementation, results and reporting. In an excellent thesis (grade 5) the topic is significant with regard to the development of the field and the theory and practical part of the research or project together form clear and logical entirety. In an excellent thesis, the reliability of the results and suitability of the methods (validity) have been dealt with. Qualitative and/or quantitative methods have been used well, taking into account qualitative and/or statistical assessment. In an excellent project, commendable expertise has been shown, and methods used and results have been assessed. The EQF level 6 criteria have been taken into account in the assessment criteria. If the supervisor suggests either grade 1 (pass) or 5 (excellent), another examiner will have to read the thesis as well.

2.6 National Thesis Competition

Thesis is a national thesis competition between Universities of Applied Sciences the purpose of which is to develop the quality of theses and strengthen the thesis practices in the UASs. The objective of the competition is also to increase the profile of the polytechnic degrees and to bring up their characteristics, e.g. close relation to working life (Thesis 2010). These completed for Polytechnic degrees or higher Polytechnic degree can enter the competition.

Table 3. Assessment criteria in the Thesis Competition.

Connection to the professional practises in the field	Methods used and results (research result, product or activity)	Reporting
Field-specific trends of development (topicality of the topic) Operational environment and culture (significance in the development of professional practices) Specified development need or research task Applicability and usability value of the thesis	Appropriateness Reliability Illustrativeness Innovativeness	The functionality of the thesis as an entity (restriction, emphasis, logic; compatibility with the output) Communicativeness to the target group (expert communications, fluency of the text) Criticality and analyticalness Professional development of the doers

The same criteria are applied to both theses completed for the Polytechnic degrees and higher Polytechnic degrees. The theses are assessed in relation to the objectives and requirements of each degree (cf. e.g. the National Frame of Reference for Degrees and other knowledge and skills, Reports of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2009:24 sekä A 352/2003 § 7 ja A 423/2005 § 7a)

2.7 Maturity Test

For the polytechnic degree, the student has to write a maturity test in the field of his/her thesis which shows knowledge in the field and language skills. The University of Applied Sciences decides on the language of maturity test when the student's language of primary and secondary education has been some other than

Finnish or Swedish (A 15.5.2003/352). The students studying the English-medium degree programme whose language of primary and secondary education has been Finnish or Swedish, write the maturity test in Finnish or Swedish, not in English. The students studying in English-medium degree programmes whose language of primary and secondary education has been other than Finnish or Swedish write the maturity test in English.

The student agrees with the supervisor on the writing of the maturity test after the student has submitted the thesis for the assessment. With the maturity test, the student shows that s/he masters the topic of the thesis and the language. The maturity test is written in a supervised test situation without any source material. The supervisor gives two topics of which the student chooses one. The topic can be a heading or phrasing of the heading can be left to the student.

The student has three hours to write the maturity test. The text has to be at least 300 words (3-4 pages). The handwriting must be clear and capital and small letters clearly indicated. A blank line is left between paragraphs. Students with dyslexia have a right for special arrangements, provided that s/he has an expert's statement on it.

Both the supervisor and language teacher check the maturity test. The assessment is pass or fail.

An approved (pass) maturity test

- deals with the topic/assignment given appropriately
- concentrates on relevant issues
- has a logical structure
- is analytical in structure and well divided into paragraphs
- well argued
- is written in fluent and flawless language

The maturity test can be assessed as fail if there are grave and reoccurring flaws and defects in the language, structure or contents. The student can sign up for a

new maturity test after having gone over the checked maturity test and having received extra guidance. The language of the maturity test is mentioned in the Degree Diploma.

2.7.1 Instructions for Publication

After the supervisor has approved the final version of the thesis the student is to

1. Primarily enter the thesis in Theseus- electronic library in pdf-format, before applying for the graduation. The thesis can be converted to pdf-format in the word processor by choosing Save as and then by choosing pdf as file format. The thesis is saved at the address www.theseus.fi. While saving, you will be inquired if you wish your thesis to be dealt with like a book (all rights reserved) or do you want so called creative commons licence for your thesis, which means that other people may use your thesis without your permission. You will also have to give an email address to which information of the saved thesis is sent, as well as your student number and password. Eventual large attachments can be saved separately. The thesis will not be shown immediately in Theseus but the library staff will first check the saved information and publishes the thesis after that. If the thesis has more than one author, only one of them saves the thesis in Theseus. Additional information can be found at <http://www.theseus.fi/web/guest/ohjeita>. In addition, the student submits at least one soft cover copy to the supervisor. The supervisor will submit the copy to the student office for archiving.
2. If the student does not give permission for publication, s/he will submit a copy in hard covers and two soft cover copies to the supervisor. The student acquires these copies at his/her own expense. The hard cover copy goes to the library and one of the soft cover copies to the archive and the other is kept by the supervisor. In addition, the abstracts have to be submitted in an electronic form to the supervisor for the library. The hard cover copy can be ordered e.g. from Boxfix (Smedsby Bokfix, Dollinmäentie 13, 65610 Mustasaari, tel. (06) 3222 164, kerstin.lund@netikka.fi).

The publication of the thesis is a requirement for the graduation. A finished thesis has to include all data needed to assess the objectives of the thesis, reliability of the process, conclusions and their generalisation. If the thesis is a unique work, a presentation or an exhibition, it has to be documented in pictures or video so that one can get a good idea of the thesis without seeing the original production

3 CONCLUDING WORDS

The thesis completed at a university of applied sciences and related instructions are developed continuously. The purpose is that each student group complies with the instructions that are valid at the starts of the thesis process. In addition to these instructions, the student should get familiar with literature concerning thesis writing and literature concerning methodology that is relevant to the student's own thesis.

The instructions will be updated when necessary and the month of update is given on the cover. The students are asked to give suggestions for improvement to their supervisors.

The supervisors are asked to convey the suggestions to the Chairman of the Thesis Team for updating the instructions.