



**A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS ON WRITING A THESIS FOR
THE DEGREE *MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN GLOBAL HEALTH***

Introduction

The Master's programme in Global Health is a two-year full time post graduate degree at Centre for International Health (CIH), Department of Global Public Health and Primary Care, University of Bergen (UiB).

The main objective of the programme in Global Health is to raise awareness of current challenges in global health. Students are being qualified to identify and critically analyse key factors shaping the health and well being of populations in low and middle-income countries and to formulate effective and appropriate responses to complex health related issues.

The study comprise two main components: a tuition part (first year) and a research assignment/thesis (second year). The first year comprises a set of compulsory courses and a selection of elective courses/individual studies, giving a total of 60 ECTS credits. The final year consists of research and preparation of a thesis (60 ECTS credits). The total ECTS credits requirement is 120.

During the first semester, the students follow the compulsory core courses: Major global Health problems; Statistics; Epidemiology; Health systems and Research theory and methods. In addition, there are compulsory weekly research seminars. In the second semester, selections of elective courses are offered, to be chosen as advised by the supervisors and according to the specific research topic the student has chosen. In parallel, the students are supposed to develop a research proposal, in close collaboration with the main supervisor.

Benchmarks:

- Preparation of research proposal start December first semester.
- Detailed research proposal due by 15 April, including a plan for applying for ethical clearance in case of a field study. The protocol is to be approved by the supervisor.
- The fieldwork normally starts at the end of the first/beginning of the second year of study (May – August), and the duration may vary according to the extent of fieldwork that is planned. For students doing their fieldwork outside Bergen, the usual time for return to Centre for international health is within October/November of the second year, allowing sufficient time for data analysis and write-up of thesis.
- The thesis should be submitted by 15 May in the last semester of the second year
- Final exam is scheduled before the end of June in last semester, on a date set by the Centre for International Health. Deadline for application to sit for final exam is 1 May.

The core courses and the agreed elective courses have to be successfully fulfilled before the student can apply to sit for the thesis defence. Remember application to sit for exam, the form will be sent to you by CIH's student advisor.

Research Proposal

A full proposal should include:

1. title of the project
2. abstract
3. introduction/Background
4. aim/objectives
5. design methods/data collection
6. expected outcome/planned analyses/theory
7. limitations of the study
8. ethical considerations, ethical review and approval
9. time frame
10. budget (if fieldwork is included)
11. literature references
12. annexes (questionnaires, question guides or other data collection tools)

Data collection

The choice of research methods for a field-study depends on the identified study objectives. Research methods might include quantitative data collection tools (for example surveys or trials), qualitative methods (for example interviews or focus group discussions) or a combination of both. You may also use secondary data (hospital records, registers etc.). Due to relative time constraints and limited financial resources, it might be difficult to plan a large scale quantitative survey or a long term in-depth study. However, a limited field-study might serve as a pilot where new issues are explored or where the study takes place in a limited geographical setting. Several practical issues need to be considered when planning a field-study: research/study permission from the relevant authorities, funding, transport, the need for interpretation, ethical issues etc.

Thesis requirements

The thesis must:

- be concerned with a global health research problem, which should be clearly formulated and justified
- have clear objectives/research questions
- be based on relevant and appropriately described materials and methods
- present results in a clear and balanced way
- present a relevant and critical discussion of materials, methods and results and relate this to pertinent literature within the field
- fulfil the usual formal demands for scientific presentations and include a title page, a table of contents, an abstract, list of references, and correct use of language and good structure or layout.

Writing up the thesis

You may choose between two formats:

1. Thesis as a monograph

The Master thesis should be about 40-80 pages with 1.5 line space (1 page is approximately 300 words), excluding tables, figures, references and annexes.

It should include:

- a) title of project
- b) abstract
- c) introduction/background
- d) aim/objectives
- e) design methods/data collection and theories or models where relevant
- f) findings/results
- g) discussion (including limitations of the study)
- h) conclusions, recommendations.
- i) reference list
- j) annexes

2. Thesis as a scientific paper with a mantle

The thesis can be formed as a scientific paper and a mantle. One paper is sufficient. The paper may have more than one author, but the student must be the first author.

When a paper is the basis for the master thesis, the thesis should be organized as follows:

The mantle:

- a) title page
- b) content list
- c) foreword (voluntary), including acknowledgements
- d) introduction
An introduction for the paper including a literature review (more extensive description than possible in a paper) on the topic and the rationale for performing this study
- e) a thorough description and justification of methods
- f) if relevant, a more in depth presentation of models and theories related to the work (10-15 double space pages)

The paper:

The paper itself, including abstract, tables and figures (if any), reference list.

The paper should be written for publication in an international journal with peer-review evaluation. It should be written in the format asked for by the specific

journal chosen, and the manuscript should be prepared as for submission. Double spacing should be used

Annexes:

Guidelines from the journal, details of methods (like questionnaire, interview guide), informed consent form, ethical clearance.

Total number of pages: 30-50 (1 page is approximately 300 words), excluding annexes.

The Master thesis should be submitted in Mitt UiB within the deadline 15 May.

Supervision

The Master thesis is written up under the supervision of an assistant professor, associate professor or a professor employed at the Faculty of Medicine. In addition, you are recommended to have a co-supervisor at your local home institution. Dependent of needed expertise/specialisation you may also have appointed a second co-supervisor. Such co-supervisors could be specialists working in other parts of the university, other universities, other research institutions, or international organisations.

The University of Bergen provides no payment for such supervision.

Identification of supervisors

Supervisors will be identified for each student in the first semester. Each student has generally a right to 40 hours of supervision (including examination) per study year, on average about one hour per week. This includes reading of drafts. If a student has more than one supervisor, the 40 hours will be divided; normally 30 hours are then assigned to the Faculty advisor.

Roles and responsibilities

As a student, you are expected to:

- Select your proposed area of study in consultation with academic staff at CIH/IGS
- participate fully in the basic courses and the elective courses agreed with your supervisor(s), and participate in the research seminars
- prepare a research proposal in collaboration with your supervisor(s)
- present your proposal to teachers and fellow students at research seminars
- if undertaking primary research, discuss with the supervisors any ethical issues associated and secure ethical approval from relevant bodies
- produce work in accordance with the schedule agreed with your supervisors
- ensure that material is presented in sufficient time to allow for comment, discussion and alterations before proceeding to the next stage
- keep record of meetings with supervisor and agreed action points

Be familiar with:

- research ethics guidelines

- referencing guidelines
- rules about plagiarism

Feedback on supervision and plan for next meeting:

After each meeting with the supervisor the student should write a short summary of the major points discussed and agreed upon, and a confirmation of the next meeting. This can be done through e-mail. You are of course free to agree on other arrangements with your supervisor(s).

Meet the submission deadline!

Supervisor(s) are expected to:

- assist the student in choosing a relevant study subject
- assist in the appointment of (an) appropriate co-supervisor(s)

The main supervisor will be responsible for:

- discussing the type of guidelines and form of contact that would best suit the student, and agree on a schedule of meetings
- advising the student on the plan for his/her work
- providing guidance in the chosen field of study, including application for ethical approval
- advising on data and literature sources
- suggesting specialists whom you may consult for additional advice
- providing the supervisory sessions as contracted
- giving advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work in order to meet the submission deadline
- reading through drafts and give feedback

Assessment:

You will be required to sit for an oral exam to “defend” your thesis. The thesis will be read by two examiners, an external examiner not employed by UiB, and an internal examiner, i.e. academic staff at CIH/IGS. At the exam, you will be given about 20 minutes to present your thesis, followed by a discussion with the two examiners. Your supervisor(s) is (are) allowed to be present. Time frame is 1.5 - 2 hours. You will be informed about the grade (thesis + oral exam) immediately after the oral exam.

You are welcome to contact the students’ secretariat if you have any specific questions concerning your exam.

Please note that you need to submit your application to sit for exam within deadline (1 May), see page 2, first paragraph.