

Welcome as a master student in Environmental toxicology

Your thesis is the ultimate, independant research work that finish off your master degree.

The master thesis requires constant work from the day you start in the laboratory until you hand in a pdf file.

The thesis is independtant work. This means you will be supervised when needed but no one will tell you what to do and when to do it. As a master student you are entitled to 40 hours of supervision from your main supervisor and 10 hours from your co-supervisor each semester. This includes practical work in the laboratory, talks in the office, and reading and comments on the thesis. You have to plan your experiments and time yourself. You ought to get started with your work early and work systematically to avoid hitting rock bottom at the final leg.

We advise you to utilise start and end of semesters when there is no teaching. This means when BIO300/MOL300 is finished, the two weeks at the beginning of semesters before teaching starts and the two weeks at the end of semesters. By doing this you will get eight extra weeks in the laboratory. More if you use your summer break.

If you work part time you need to plan well and use your time. Additional money is always nice but make sure it does not interfere with your work on the thesis.

Expectations!

A master thesis is 60 credits and this corresponds to 40 weeks of full time work. In other words, 40 hours work each week for 40 weeks. When you take courses in parallell with your lab work you need to increase you total workload per week. Working in the laboratory should mainly be done during daytime and weekdays and preferably during office hours of your co-supervisor. Both because you can not expect to get help outside of normal office hours, but also because of health and safety regulations in the laboratory. As a master student, your supervisor and co-supervisor expect you to keep appointments and deadlines and if not, you give notice as soon as possible. Of course, you can expect the same from your supervisor and co-supervisor.

Read!

Read master thesis from other students to get to know how they are written. They are all built on the same template - introduction, material and methods, results and discussion. Pay attention to the introduction with a theoretical background which builds up to the aim of the study. How previous research is used by citing original articles from peer-reviewed journals. Further on, notice how the theoretical base is used when the student's own results are discussed in regard of what is known from the field. In the discussion, you have to show you are familiar with research done in your field, both old and newer research. Read articles relevant to your study. It is easy to start with review articles to get an overview and knowledge of the field, but continue with original papers. These are the ones you will be using and citing in your thesis. The more you read, the easier it will be to write the introduction and the discussion. Make sure the articles you read are from peer-reviewed journals. Get to know the different search engines. [Web of Knowledge](#), [ScienceDirect](#) and [PubMed](#) has different user interfaces so spend some time getting to know them. Or you can use the University library and search directly from their website. You can also order books and articles from their site.

When you are reading, you also have to familiarise yourself with reference tools like Endnote, ReferenceManager or BibTex. Writing your thesis without using a reference tool is close to impossible.

Language!

Unless your native language is Norwegian, you should write in English. Most importantly is the use of correct language. Formulations, use of specialised terms and scientific expressions, spelling and grammar are all important and might influence your final grade.

Write!

You should write every time you do an experiment. Make figures, write figure legend and explain in the text what the reader sees. It does not matter if you have to redo the experiment. Writing exercises are important! You should write methods as you perform your experiment. Try to find the original literature and don't accept what is written in the protocol without questions. Read and write in your introduction. The more you read and write, the easier it will be to re-write the finished product. Add sections you want to include. If your thesis takes a different route than what was initially intended, there will be no problems excluding paragraphs that do not belong anymore.

Writing groups!

Many students find it highly valuable to be part of [writing groups](#). Here students will write on their thesis and the other group members will read and comment during the process.

Discuss!

Discuss with your supervisor and co-supervisor and ask them questions. Do not expect to be answered immediately. You might be pointed in the correct direction so you can find the answer yourself. Discuss with the other students. Ask questions. Be curious.

Group meetings!

Group meetings are held once a week. This is the place for information; lab routines, lab duties and general information regarding the group. All group members will present their project at a group meeting during the semester - master students, PhD students, researchers, guests and bachelor students. This is a small group and a nice atmosphere to present in. The group meetings are also a place to air problems in the lab. Experiments do not always go according to plan and helpful suggestions from other group members can solve your problem. Group meetings are mandatory so you have to plan your day accordingly. Lectures, conferences, travels, sickness, exams are all valid reasons for not participating.

Be social!

It is always nice if you take part in the social activities of the group. We have lunch at 11.30 and the more that join the better. Lunch is a social arena and a forum for informal discussions and simple problems can be solved here.

External recourses!

Many of us have during our work with the master thesis had motivational problems and felt overwhelmed by all we have to do. Do not despair as this is absolutely normal. Studentsamskipnaden i Bergen, the student's welfare organisation, has many services for students. [Sib Health](#) offers dental care, medical doctor and psychologist. [Sib Councelling](#) offers counselling for students, both booked appointments and drop-in. Use Studentsamskipnaden, counsellors at the department or your supervisors. Our job is to help you.

Good luck!