



LUDWIG-  
MAXIMILIANS-  
UNIVERSITÄT  
MÜNCHEN

MASTER OF SCIENCE PROGRAM IN  
EVOLUTION, ECOLOGY AND SYSTEMATICS



## Master's thesis guidelines

### Master's thesis project (26 ECTS credits)

- The master's thesis consists of an independent research project over a period of 24 weeks.
- You can only start your master's thesis if you have successfully completed 60 ECTS-credits including one IRT plus linked skills course and one of the mandatory courses.
- The thesis project can be carried out under the supervision of any professor or group leader within the LMU Faculty of Biology (see the *list of internal supervisors*). Group leaders or faculty members who are not on this list may co-supervise projects, but only together with a faculty member on the list who will act as the official supervisor.
- No ECTS credits can be awarded for research courses for which students receive pay.
- The topic of the project should be in the field of *Evolution, Ecology or Systematics*. In most cases, the research project will follow the plan developed during the IRT3 module (*Grant Proposal Writing*).
- The master's thesis is to be written in the format of an academic journal article (Abstract, Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion, Literature Cited). The total length of the thesis should be 60,000 – 100,000 characters (40–60 pages excluding attachment).

### For thesis projects with start on August 1, 2024 or later

Rules for the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools for examination-relevant activities

1. The use of AI tools for examination-relevant performances is possible.
2. The use of AI tools to optimize, translate and correct the spelling and grammar of self-generated texts and to optimize self-generated illustrations is permitted without indication.
3. Text sections and illustrations de novo generated by AI tools and used in the thesis must be clearly marked by footnotes/annotations at the appropriate places and the AI tool must be indicated analogously to literature sources. The prompts used are listed in the appendix.
4. Sections of the text generated through iterative use of AI tools should be marked.
5. The author is responsible for the correctness and proper presentation in written performances and presentations.
6. Sources / references must be cited in accordance with the rules of good scientific practice.

### External master's thesis project

It is possible to carry out a master's thesis project at another LMU faculty, university, or research institution if the Examination Board of the Master of Science program in Evolution, Ecology and Systematics approves the external project. In this case, **the student is responsible for finding an internal supervisor** to sign for the project, ensuring that its content and execution meet the faculty standards prior to starting the thesis project. For this, student and external supervisor should provide a short outline of the goals of the master's thesis project for the internal supervisor.

Whether a master's thesis project is considered to be an external or internal one depends on your supervisor: If your supervisor is included in the *list of internal supervisors*, the master's thesis project will be regarded as an internal one - even if the project does not take place in the Biocenter or another building of the Faculty of Biology of LMU Munich.

After having arranged for an internal supervisor, but **prior to** starting the master's thesis project, the student must apply for its approval to the Examination Board of the Master of Science program in Evolution, Ecology and Systematics through the Examination Office ("Prüfungsamt"). Approval of the Examination Board must be obtained before the project

begins, which in practice means that students will have to submit the combined *External Master's Thesis Application and Registration Form* to the Examination Office via E-mail ([bpa@bio.lmu.de](mailto:bpa@bio.lmu.de)) or in person (LMU Biocenter, B00.056) **at least 2 weeks prior to starting the external master's thesis project.**

In addition to the filled and signed form the application for an external master's thesis project must include:

- a brief project description (1–2 pages),
- a timetable with monthly planning that is signed by the external supervisor.

### **Master's thesis disputation (1 ECTS credit)**

As part of their thesis work, the students present their research to their supervisor(s), co-workers, and fellow students. The disputation that should not exceed 45 minutes begins with a presentation of the thesis (around 20 minutes) and is followed by questions and discussion.

The graded disputation should take place within the group where the research was carried out. The internal supervisor must attend the disputation, even in case of an external master's thesis project. Attendance may be by video-conferencing. It is recommended that the disputation takes place within two weeks after submitting the thesis. It can occur before thesis submission.

EES-students are also expected to give a short presentation of their research at the annual EES conference, which is not graded.

The "remaining" 3 credits for the completion of 30 ECTS for the master's module are awarded for

- the regular participation in the lab meetings of the research group in which the master's thesis is conducted (1.5 ECTS),
- the completed colloquia list (1.5 ECTS).

### **Registering the thesis**

The thesis project and its official starting date must be registered with the Examination Office. The applicable registration is the:

- *Internal Master's Thesis Registration Form* for internal projects,
- *External Master's Thesis Application and Registration Form* for external projects.

Please note that the **starting date** of the thesis has to be **on a Monday!** The registration form can be submitted via email or in person anytime during the opening hours of the Examination Office. It has to be submitted by the Monday on which the master's thesis project starts at the latest.

If you plan to graduate before the start of a new semester, the master's thesis should start by the beginning of March (in case of a master's thesis in the summer semester) or by the beginning of September (in case of a master's thesis in the winter semester). You need to both submit and defend your thesis successfully **before** the start of a new semester if you do not wish to be enrolled for another semester.

Once registered, the thesis **must be completed within 24 weeks**. The exact due date will be provided by the Examination Office at the time of registration.

### **Extensions of the submission deadline**

Extensions of the submission deadline are not granted in order to do more experiments or analyses, or to repeat failed experiments. An interruption of the thesis is only allowed in cases where the student is unable to work on the project due to medical reasons. In such cases, the

student must apply to the Examination Office using the form *Application for Master's Thesis Extension* and provide medical documentation of the exact dates that she/he was unable to work. The deadline can only be extended for this period of time.

### Submitting the thesis

The thesis can be submitted up to four weeks before the official submission date. **The latest by the individual submission deadline** that the student received upon project registration **two hard copies** of the master's thesis with **fixed, non-spiral binding** must be **submitted**.

- The **first hard copy** of the master's thesis must be **submitted to the Examination Office**. It is recommended to do this in person, so that it is confirmed that the thesis was submitted in time and arrived properly. However, if you do not manage to submit it during the office hours of the Examination Office, you can put the hard copy of the master's thesis in the mailbox of the Examination Office next to the porter in hall B of the Biocenter. In that case, you should request the porter to add a date stamp to the master's thesis of the day on which you hand in the thesis.
- The **second hard copy** of the master's thesis should be provided by the student **to the (internal) supervisor** by the individual submission deadline.

For the hard copy of the master's thesis to be submitted to the Examination Office **the filled and signed last page (including statement of originality) is to be included** (please see the different versions for thesis projects with starting date before or after August 1, 2024).

### Grading of the thesis

After the thesis is submitted, the internal supervisor will be contacted by the Examination Office and asked to provide within two weeks:

- a signed hard copy or digital version of thesis evaluation with the thesis grade, and
- the date and grade of the thesis disputation.

For external thesis projects the external supervisor is to send an evaluation of the student's work to the internal supervisor after the submission deadline. Supervisors should contact their students directly to inform them of their grades and provide feedback. The Examination Office does not inform students of their grades, nor provide the evaluations.

### Insufficient master's thesis project

- **Late submissions are not accepted.** If the master's thesis is not submitted by the submission deadline, the thesis will be marked "insufficient" and ECTS credits cannot be awarded.
- If a master's thesis is marked worse than "sufficient" (4.0), it can be repeated only **once** at the next possible time.