



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 your first semester (i.e. the two mandatory modules "Lab Methods" and "Computation Biology" and 18 ECTS credits from the compulsory elective modules) and at least 30 ECTS credits from the compulsory elective modules of the second and/or third semester.
- The master's thesis project should be carried out under the supervision of a member of the Faculty of Biology of the LMU Munich (see the list of so-called [internal supervisors](#) in the "[downloads](#)" section of the master's website).
- The topic of the master's thesis project should be in the field of biology. The topic can only be changed once and only within two weeks after the beginning of the project.
- The total length of the thesis should be 40-60 pages, excluding attachment.

External master's thesis project

It is possible to carry out a master's thesis project in another institution or faculty than the Faculty of Biology of the LMU Munich if the Examination Board of the Master of Science program in Molecular and Cellular Biology approves the external project. For external projects, an external supervisor that is authorized to examine is required (i.e. the supervisor needs to be a professor or should at least be habilitated). Moreover, it is necessary to arrange for an internal supervisor from the LMU Faculty of Biology. The internal supervisor is responsible for assigning the grades.

Whether a master's thesis project is considered to be an external or internal one depends on your supervisor: If your supervisor is a member of the faculty (which he/she is if this person is mentioned on the [list of internal supervisors](#), that can be found in the "[downloads](#)" section on the website of the master's program), 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 LMU Faculty of Biology.

Prior to starting a master's thesis project with an external (non-faculty) supervisor, **the student is responsible for finding an appropriate member of the faculty (= internal supervisor)** to co-sign for the project, ensuring that its content and execution meet the faculty standards. For this, student and external supervisor should provide a short outline of the goals of the master's thesis project.

After having arranged for an internal supervisor but **before** starting the master's thesis project, the student must apply to the Examination Board of the Master of Science program in Molecular and Cellular Biology for carrying out the master's thesis project externally. Approval of the chairperson of the Examination Board must be obtained before the project begins, which in practice means that students will have to submit their application via the

Examination Office (room B00.056 of the LMU Biocenter) at least 3 weeks prior to starting the external master's thesis project.

The application for an external master's thesis project must include:

- a formless application, stating the reasons why you would like to do your thesis externally, signed by the student,
- a brief project description (1-2 pages), a timeline indicating when the project will be carried out and the contact information (including the postal address) of the habilitated external supervisor, signed by the external supervisor, and
- a confirmation of the internal supervisor that he/she agrees with the project description and the internal supervision, signed by the internal supervisor.

Master's thesis defense (1 ECTS credit)

As part of their thesis work, students should present their research to their supervisor(s), co-workers, and fellow students. The defense begins with a presentation of the thesis (around 20 minutes) and is followed by questions and a discussion. The graded defense should take place within the group where the research was carried out or in the group meeting of the internal supervisor. The internal supervisor must attend the defense, even in case of an external master's thesis project.

It is recommended to have the defense take place within 2 weeks after submitting the thesis (it can occur before thesis submission).

Registering and submitting the thesis

The official [starting date](#) of the thesis project must be registered at the Examination Office (room B00.056 of the LMU Biocenter - please pay attention to the opening hours). The [registration form](#) can be downloaded from the "[downloads](#)" section of the master's website. Both the student and the (internal) supervisor must sign this form.

Please note that the [starting date](#) of the thesis (not the registration date) has to be on a **Monday!** The registration form can be submitted anytime during the opening hours of the Examination Office, but by the Monday on which the master's thesis project starts at the latest.

As a guideline, please keep in mind that in order to graduate before the start of a new semester, master's theses should be registered and 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 master's thesis must be completed within **24 weeks**. The exact due date will be provided by the Examination Office at the time of registration.

Please note that **late submissions are not accepted**. If the master's thesis is not submitted in time, the thesis will be marked "insufficient" and ECTS credits cannot be awarded. Extensions of the 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 for health reasons. In such cases, the student

must apply to the Examination Office (by submitting a formless “application for the prolongation of the master’s thesis”) and provide medical documentation of the exact dates that he/she was unable to work. The deadline can only be extended for this period of time.

Two hard copies of the master’s thesis with **fixed, non-spiral** binding must be submitted **by the individual submission deadline** that the student received upon registering the master’s thesis project.

The first hard copy of the master’s thesis for the Examination Committee must be submitted to the Examination Office. It is recommended to do this in person (please pay attention to the opening hours of the Examination Office), 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 on the ground floor 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 for the Examination Committee, a [form \(including a statement of originality\)](#) has to be filled out and this **is to be included as the last page of your thesis**. The form can be found in the “[downloads](#)” section on the website of the master’s program.

Grading of the thesis

After the thesis is submitted, the (internal) supervisor will be contacted by the Examination Office and asked to provide:

- 1) a confirmation of successful participation in the group seminar,
- 2) a signed hard copy of the thesis evaluation with the grade,
- 3) the date of the thesis defense, and
- 4) the grade of the thesis defense.

For projects conducted externally, the external supervisor must send an evaluation of the student’s work to the internal supervisor within two weeks 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 for the master’s thesis.

Please note that it is not possible to improve your grade of the master’s thesis if you passed it (i.e. if you received a grade 4.0 or better).

Insufficient master’s thesis project

If a master’s thesis is marked worse than “sufficient” (4.0), it can be repeated only **once** at the next possible time. Please note that if you have not finished your master’s thesis by the end of your fifth semester, your master’s thesis will be marked as “insufficient” (i.e. you will only have one more opportunity to finish your master’s thesis successfully).