

**Master's Thesis Internship
Sustainable Business and Innovation
Course manual
2022-2023**



Course code: GEO4-2606
Credits: 45 EC

1. General information

Entrance requirements

- Letter of acceptance MSc Sustainable Business and Innovation
- Passed at least five out of six examinations of:
 - Business and Sustainability Challenges (GEO4-2601) or Innovation Management (GEO4-2268)
 - Understanding and Assessing Technologies for Sustainability (GEO4-2608)
 - Toolbox 1: Environmental assessment and management approaches (GEO4-2602)
 - Toolbox 2: CS implementation: theory and practice (GEO4-2603)
 - Governance and Change Management for Sustainability (GEO4-2604)
 - Qualitative Innovation Analytics (GEO4-2260) or Sustainable Business Research Methods (GEO4-2609)

Lecturers and topics

For an overview see the Blackboard community *Sustainable Business and Innovation > Master's thesis*

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Board of Examiners: Examencommissie.geo@uu.nl. Requests for the Board can be filed via OSIRIS Case.

Copernicus Institute secretary's office: secretariat.SD@uu.nl

Course material

B. Malmfors et al., *Writing and Presenting Scientific Papers*. Nottingham: UP, 2004 (2nd edition).

Note: Due to Covid-19 restrictions, some parts of the Master's thesis process will be different from what has been described in this manual. E.g. presentations may be held online. Please consult your supervisor and/or programme leader for the latest information, regulations and procedures. This course manual will describe the thesis process in normal times.

2. Course position and description

The Master's thesis represents the culmination of the Master's programme, and provides proof of the capability of the student to formulate and carry out (semi-) independent research. Students can apply the knowledge they have acquired in the courses of the programme in an individual research trajectory. The thesis is the ultimate test to see if students fulfil the learning outcomes of the programme.

Students will specialise in a subject that fits with the current research within the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development. Depending on their ambition and interests, students focus on one of the research themes and develop their own research proposal with support from their supervisor. After the research proposal has been approved the student executes the research and reports the result in the form of a written thesis and an oral presentation.

The supervisor acts as an intellectual guide, assessor and main contact with the university during the thesis period. The research can (partly) take place in an organisation other than the university, depending on the data needed to answer the research question. In general, many firms and institutions are possible locations to perform parts of your MSc thesis, including those in other countries. Please consult your thesis supervisor about the suitability of the organisation of your choice.

3. Learning objectives

After completion of the course, the student is able to:

- Independently acquire theoretical and methodological knowledge that is used to gain an advanced understanding of the domain of Sustainable Business & Innovation in the context of both organisations and society at large;
- Independently plan and conduct an academic research within the domain of Sustainable Business & Innovation in a creative way;
- Independently apply knowledge, research methods, and problem-solving abilities with the aim of making both a scientific and professional contribution to the domain of Sustainable Business & Innovation;
- Demonstrate to have insight into the complex interactions between science, innovative technology and society and to be able to reflect critically upon the roles of science and technology in organisations and society;
- Demonstrate the academic and professional skills related to Sustainable Business & Innovation in an empirical academic research project;
- Apply knowledge and understanding in such a way that they demonstrate a professional approach to the research project;
- Communicate the conclusions of the research as well as the knowledge, reasons and considerations underlying these conclusions, to an audience of specialists (mandatory) and non-specialists (optional);
- Conduct a full research cycle within a restricted amount of time.

Assessment matrix:

Master's Thesis Sustainable Business and Innovation (GEO4-2606)

After the course, the student is able to:	Content written thesis 70%	Oral presentation 10%	Process 20%
Independently acquire theoretical and methodological knowledge that is used to gain an advanced understanding of domain of Sustainable Business & Innovation in the context of both organisations and society at large	x		x
Independently plan and conduct an academic research within the domain of Sustainable Business & Innovation in a creative way	x		x
Independently apply knowledge, research methods, and problem-solving abilities with the aim of making both a scientific and professional contribution to the domain of Sustainable Business & Innovation	x	x	
Demonstrate to have insight into the complex interactions between science, innovative technology and society and to be able to reflect critically upon the roles of science and technology in organisations and society	x	x	
Demonstrate the academic and professional skills related to Sustainable Business & Innovation in an empirical academic research project	x	x	x
Apply knowledge and understanding in such a way that he or she demonstrates a professional approach to the research project	x	x	x
Communicate the conclusions of the research as well as the knowledge, reasons and considerations underlying these conclusions, to an audience of specialists (mandatory) and non-specialists (optional)	x	x	
Conduct a full research cycle within a restricted amount of time			x

4. Structure of the course

Students are expected to follow a series of steps throughout the course. These steps are described below. The standard process, if all steps are taken correctly, can also be seen in the chart with process steps (see Appendix 1).

Step 1: Orientation phase

To learn more about possible topics and to get inspired by other students, you attend ten thesis presentations by other students and presentations by members of staff, guest lecturers and possible other lectures connected to the research themes of the Copernicus Institute. It is important that you do this in the 1st year of your Master's programme because there is less time to do this in your 2nd year. You should attend at least 6 presentations of students from your own Master's programme. The other 4 presentations may be attended at other programmes or at presentations by Copernicus staff members. Presentation dates will be posted on the Blackboard community and the website. Make sure you always sign the attendance list. The attendance will be registered at the Copernicus Institute's secretary's office. You need to have attended at least 10 presentations to be allowed to register for your own presentation and thus to be eligible for a grade for the Master's Thesis.

You may also find inspiration for a topic in the university's Master's thesis database: <https://studenttheses.uu.nl>.

The next thing you need to do is to select a topic with a supervisor. The supervisor must be a staff member of the Copernicus Institute and hold a PhD. Guest lecturers are not eligible to be thesis supervisors. Possible topics and potential supervisors are posted on the Sustainable Business and Innovation community Blackboard page. These fit with the contents of the SBI programme and the research of the different research groups in the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development. Supervisors are required to accept you if you wish to write your thesis on their topic, unless they have already reached their supervision capacity. The supervisor will inform you about this. If the supervisor has no more places available, the topic will be removed from the website as soon as possible. If you develop your own topic, supervisors may refuse supervision. The reason for this is that we cannot guarantee sufficient quality of supervision on topics that lie outside the area of expertise of supervisors. The day you and your supervisor agree on supervision will be noted as the starting date of your thesis project. Please inform the Copernicus Institute's secretary's office (secretariat.sd@uu.nl) and let them know that you will be starting your thesis work. This is also the time to enrol for the Master's thesis in OSIRIS (course code GEO4-2606). Your thesis proposal will not be approved if you have not enrolled for the course. Based on the starting date that was registered at the secretary's office, a deadline for the research proposal will be set. You also have to make decisions on modes of supervision with your supervisor.

If you go abroad for your thesis research it is mandatory to apply for it in OSIRIS.

- Go to [OSIRIS Student](#)
- Click on the 'Stay Abroad' tab*.
- Click on 'New request' (bottom left).
- Select the correct application request: 'Stay abroad other'.
- Fill out the form and upload your approval from the Master programme leader.
- Click on 'Submit'.

*A new window will open in the old OSIRIS student lay-out. In this window, please click on 'stay abroad' again. You may have to log in again in case your session has expired.

Step 1b (optional): Finding an internship

This step is usually taken parallel to the orientation phase or after the official thesis start.

It is encouraged that you go to an external organisation to conduct part of the research. Working at an external organisation often eases collection of the data, and provides you with professional work experience. However, the internship has to fit with the research theme you selected. This needs to be discussed with your supervisor during the first meeting. You can only sign an internship agreement after you have found a thesis supervisor who approves the internship and your research proposal has been approved. The research you conduct will be primarily judged on academic impact. It is therefore of vital importance that you communicate well with both your supervisor and the internship organisation. If the internship does not fit with the research theme of your supervisor or fails to meet the quality level of academic research, your supervisor may refuse to further supervise your project. You are primarily responsible for finding an internship and for what you get out of it. Your supervisor and the course coordinator can help or advise you however.

A number of internships are posted on the SBI community Blackboard page. Internships may be also be found on the website <http://internships.geo.uu.nl>.

The **university supervisor** will always have the **final responsibility** for the assessment of the Master's thesis resulting from the internship. The internship supervisor at the organisation can be asked by the supervisor to give input for the grade regarding 'process' (which counts for 20% of the total grade).

Legal aspects internships

Data collection for a thesis can be done via an internship. The internship can be at a company, a research institute, a NGO etc ("the company" in this paragraph).

The student, Utrecht University and the company sign the internship contract. An internship contract is mandatory! There are different contracts available.

- If you are an EU student and you are doing your internship in The Netherlands, it is preferable you use the standard UU contract, to be found on Blackboard.
- If you are a non-EU student and you are doing your internship in The Netherlands, you need a Cospa-contract. This is approved by the IND. With this internship contract, you do not need a work permit. You can find it on Blackboard.
- There is no standard contract available for doing an internship abroad. Be careful what agreements you enter into. If you are going to do an internship in an "code orange or red" area (as indicated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the university will in general not approve the internship as it is too dangerous. This also goes for risks associated with Covid-19.

Fill in all the details of the internship contract and send it [to the internship coordinator \(Jantien Minderhoud, j.p.minderhoud@uu.nl\)](mailto:j.p.minderhoud@uu.nl) to be checked and signed. **Only sign it yourself after approval by the internship coordinator.**

Who signs the contract?

As you are undertaking your internship as part of a Master's programme, Utrecht University has to sign it. *Under no circumstances sign it yourself before Utrecht University has signed!*

Every time that a student agrees to collaborate with a company they should immediately show the UU contract or Cospa contract. If the company does not want to sign it or wants to use its own contract, inform Jantien Minderhoud (j.p.minderhoud@uu.nl) and your thesis supervisor.

If you are unclear about any details of the contract, please contact Jantien Minderhoud well before the proposed start date of your internship.

If any part of the contract is unclear, legal advice will be sought, which can delay the signing and the start of your internship, or may even mean this specific collaboration will be stopped.

Payment

Most students get paid by the company for doing an internship. Utrecht University is not a party in that agreement, and any payments are between you and the company only.

Insurance

Utrecht University has a liability insurance policy for students causing damage at their place of internship. Only if the student is actually liable, the insurance will pay out. The insurance does not pay the first 50.000,- euros. The university does not have an insurance for accidents (“ongevallenverzekering”), so it may be a good idea that you arrange this yourself.

Non-disclosure agreements (NDA)

A Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) is a contract between Utrecht University and a company, which says that it is not allowed to disclose any information of your work at the company to other parties. This is certainly not preferred by the university as your work needs to be properly assessed and you have to give a public presentation about your thesis. If the company insists on a NDA, make sure it does not last longer than the remainder of your study time. Otherwise you and the university are still liable after you have graduated. A NDA can be a disadvantage for you, e.g. if you want to use your research to publish an article or to continue your research after graduation (PhD, work at a research institute).

If, according to Utrecht University, the content of a NDA is unacceptable it will not be signed by a representative of Utrecht University. This may mean your project at the company cannot take place. The UU standard internship contract contains a clause regarding confidentiality, which is acceptable for Utrecht University. It is highly preferred you use that contract.

Step 2: Proposal phase

After the orientation phase you can start the proposal phase in which you write a research proposal. This can take a maximum of 8 weeks (full-time) after the registered starting date.

Note: do NOT start an internship at the host organisation or go abroad until the proposal has been approved. The primary aim of the research proposal is to guide you through the rest of the research. However, by writing a good research proposal you also convince others that you are able to conduct high-quality research that is original, relevant and feasible, using appropriate theories and methods. Finally, you demonstrate that you can write the research clearly and attractively. Follow the instructions given by your supervisor carefully and make extensive use of the feedback you receive. In addition you can use the knowledge from the course Qualitative Innovation Analytics to help you with writing the research proposal. Finally, an e-learning module is available on the SBI community Blackboard page to help you write a proposal.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the Sustainable Business and Innovation programme your thesis will also be interdisciplinary. But your thesis can be more social science oriented (most of the time supervised by supervisors from the Innovation Studies or Environmental Governance groups) or more natural science oriented (most of the time supervised by supervisors from the Energy & Resource or Environmental Science groups). The focus has some small implications for the structure. This is highlighted in the explanation below.

The proposal consists of a **maximum of 5.000 words** (not counting appendices, tables and graphs etc), and the structure of the first chapters follows closely the outline of a scientific report. In each proposal the following points need to be addressed:

- Fill in the research proposal information form
- Add a title page with your name, a title and the name of your supervisor (and for an internship add the internship organisation name, place, and supervisor)

- *Introduction*
 - Societal background or problem
 - Scientific background and previous studies. What is the underlying scientific problem and what are the most important contributions in this area?
 - Identification of the gap in literature: what hasn't been done yet? This is not necessarily exhaustive. A more in-depth literature survey can be part of the research work.
 - Based on this, the research aim, question and optional sub-questions and research framework.
 - Short elaboration on the research questions. If required, clarify your questions and you can briefly state how you approach the problem theoretically and methodically.
 - Scientific relevance, explain how this study contributes to filling the gap in literature and what you add theoretically or methodologically to the field of sustainable business and innovation.
 - Societal relevance: how do you help to solve the societal problem?
 - If required, a brief outline of the proposal
- *Theory (if you opt for the natural science oriented thesis this section is not compulsory. In that case, discuss with your supervisor to what extent theory needs to be included in the introduction)*
 - Explain what theory you use
 - Explain how you use the theory, do you build theory, or do you test theory?
 - Background: briefly explain the theory
 - Why is this theory appropriate?
 - The concepts that you use from the theory and why these are relevant
 - Give definitions of your concepts
 - Argue why concepts are related, if possible state hypotheses
- *Methodology*

In the methodological part of your proposal you provide a justification for the methodological choices that you have made in order to realize the goal of your research.

 - Justify your research design
 - Explain your data collection (desktop research, interview, observation, questionnaire) and the kind of data you will collect
 - Provide an operationalization (how will you measure your concepts and provide questionnaire items or give an interview scheme)
 - Discuss your sampling strategy
 - Explain how you will analyse your data (e.g. Regression analysis, pattern matching, coding and identify relations, value chain analysis, LCA, EMS, C2C, EIA)
 - The reliability and validity of your methods
 - Include a section on ethical issues related to data collection, data handling and data storage. This includes information on informed consent from research subjects with regard to their participation in interviews and surveys as well as data management practices in line with GDPR regulations. You can find an informed consent form on the SBI Blackboard community.
 - You are strongly advised to use the informed consent forms available on Blackboard when asking for informed consent for participation in interviews. Please discuss with your supervisor if you make adjustments to the form. Also note that supervisors can ask for signed informed consent forms, so store them properly on your U-drive.
- *Background chapter (optional)*
 - Description of technologies, e.g. different types of recycling technologies, or of relevant sector, for e.g. bioplastic material. Any kind of background information that does not fit under theory or methodology but that is needed to understand the issue at hand

- *Activities and time table*
 - Include the starting date agreed upon with the supervisor (see step 1). Note that writing the proposal is part of the overall time available for the Master's thesis. Then start planning from this day onwards (include also the hours).
 - Provide a time table with:
 - the start date and period writing the proposal
 - a list of activities leading up to answering the research question (think backward from final results to data/sources)
 - a milestone for each activity: when is it finished?
 - make sure to include time for writing draft versions of the thesis, meetings to discuss them with the university supervisor and time for rewriting and revision
 - Note that a 45 EC thesis will take 31.5 weeks full-time work. The number of full-time working weeks can be spread over a longer period if students work *part-time*, e.g. if you are taking electives during the thesis, or if you are planning holidays (also check and include the supervisor's availability e.g. leaves, sabbaticals, holidays). If the planning deviates from 31.5 weeks full-time work, it should be indicated very clearly in the planning in order for the deadline to be set according to your planning and not automatically after 31.5 weeks full time.
 - In the time planning please also make sure you take into account absence of the supervisor, especially during the summer holiday. It is your responsibility to ask the supervisor about this and include it in the planning. Note that most of July and August are part of the academic vacation period. Absence of your supervisor (especially in August) may make it impossible to finish the thesis process (including presentation and grading) in time before the next academic year.
 - Include all deadlines of the MSc thesis process (see chapter 5, Planning and Deadlines and chapter 6, Extensions).
 - Include the available **45 hours for supervision** (including reading hours of the supervisor(s)).
 - The most important agreements you made about your working relationship and supervision modes. These are important for grading the process (20% of your final grade; see *Master's thesis Process Rubrics & Assessment Form on Blackboard*).
 - It is not possible to write a thesis for any other amount of EC than 45 EC.
- *Reference list*
 - It is recommended to use a reference manager (e.g. Mendeley) to generate a consistent list of references.
 - Refer to (peer-reviewed) articles.

After finalisation of your proposal, send a **Word** version (to check the maximum number of 5000 words) for approval to the university and (if applicable) internship supervisor. After your supervisor has approved the proposal, you can send it, together with the *Master's thesis research proposal information form*, to the secretary's office (secretariat.sd@uu.nl). The form is available on the Blackboard community *Sustainable Business and Innovation > Master's thesis > General thesis information > 2022/2023*. Your supervisor will suggest a second assessor to the secretariat. The secretary's office will send the research proposal to the second assessor (see chapter 7, Examination and requirements). Within 10-15 working days after the submission of your proposal, you will be notified by email whether or not your proposal has been approved. If approved, you will be notified of your thesis deadline (based on the planning you provide in the proposal) and your 2nd assessor.

While you are waiting for the approval of their research proposal, you should continue conducting the research, as the 10-15 working days count towards the thesis deadline. However, you are not allowed to go abroad nor start an internship before approval of the research proposal has been received. In

principle, students are only allowed to start their internship or go abroad after their proposal has been approved.

On rare occasions where the internship needs to start immediately and/or students have to go abroad, the following conditions apply:

- UU supervisor should give their written approval; the supervisor will only do this if the subject of the internship/research is considered promising with respect to acquiring approval;
- the internship/research proposal may still be rejected (!); all risks and possible consequences are your own and your internship provider's responsibility.

So, if you still do so this is fully at your own risk.

Step 3: Research phase

During this step you are expected to conduct research and write your thesis.

Students are requested to take the first initiative for contact with the selected supervisor. The exact content of meetings, and order will depend on the said agreement between supervisor and student. It is expected that students have regular contact with their supervisor and show responsibility and commitment throughout the thesis writing process.

Students should ensure to create a transparent structure of the thesis and argumentation; define the necessary terminology and ensure consistency (do not use different words for the same thing); use as few words as possible while still being clear. Anything that does not contribute to answering the research question is redundant. Students should be aware that there is a **limit of 30,000 words** for the entire thesis. Count the words from introduction to conclusion/discussion. The table of contents, preface, reference list, words in tables and graphs etc. are not included.

Structure and content of the final thesis (based on Master's thesis Final Thesis Rubrics & Assessment Form (see Blackboard)):

- Title page
 - Top of the page start with "*Master's Thesis – Master Sustainable Business and Innovation*"
 - If applicable: Title for the Internship research
 - Your name
 - Name of university supervisor
 - If applicable: Name of internship organisation and –supervisor
- Abstract. Add a well-written structured abstract to the thesis that summarises all aspects of the thesis in maximum **400 words**. The structured abstract should include distinct labelled sections, e.g. Introduction, Theory, Methods, Results, Discussion/Conclusion
- Preface in which the work context is explained (*optional*).
- Executive Summary (in English) where the company's question is answered (*obligatory* for students that did an internship); What advice follows from the research? Make sure that these recommendations follow from your results, that they are in line with the research question and that they are useful for the company/organisation. Don't be too speculative and try to avoid normative terms like 'must' or 'should'.
- The structure of the first chapters of your thesis is very similar to that of your research proposal. Often you can adapt and extend these parts of your proposal to your current work and include the comments that were given by the second assessor (if any). Most work will probably be a further specification of the methods section. Finally, do not forget to change future tense to past tense or present tense!
- Results

- Present the actual results. Start with general points (overall model performances, general descriptive results or overall impressions). Then become more specific (for example link to hypotheses).
- Use tables or figures to present results if required and discuss the tables. In case of qualitative research, illustrative quotes can help explain the context and bring text alive.
- Acceptance/Rejection of hypotheses
- Discussion
 - Theoretical implications. Link the results with the theory section or specific hypotheses. How did the thesis extend any current theoretical insights and add to the literature? This should also link back to the knowledge contribution in the introduction. Give alternative explanations in case of unexpected findings. Give avenues for further research here.
 - Limitations: What are the limitations of the research? Use the concepts of reliability and validity to help you here. You can also perform a sensitivity analysis, if relevant. Be critical, but convince the reader that your research still has an added value.
- Conclusion
 - Restate the research question and a very short summary of what you have done (the only time repetition is allowed).
 - Provide the answer to the research question. Do not simply repeat your results!
 - Recommendations: Include managerial and if applicable policy implications. What advice follows from the research? Make sure that these recommendations follow from your results, that they are in line with the research question and that they are useful for managers, policy makers and in case of an internship for the company/organisation of the internship). Do not be too speculative and try to avoid normative terms such as 'must' or 'should'.
 - End with one paragraph that provides the take home message of your thesis
- References
 - See above (step 2, proposal phase)
- Acknowledgements
 - You can include a short word of thanks to those who made this research possible. Please remember that this is part of a professional publication. It is not appropriate to thank all your friends for the great student life you had during the past five years, or to personally thank people for the coffee they drank with you.

Step 4: Completion phase

Registration for final presentation

One month before your final deadline, hand-in a draft version of your thesis to your supervisor, so they can get an impression whether you will be finishing in time and whether you can present at the earliest date *after* your prescribed deadline. For this you need the (verbal) permission of your supervisor. After you receive permission, you can register for a presentation at the secretariat (secretariat.SD@uu.nl). Upon registration, it will be checked whether you have attended the ten required number of presentations (see chapter 7, Examination and requirements).

Submission of final thesis

Hand in your definitive final report at the latest on the prescribed deadline (see Appendix 1, step 4b). Send a **Word** file to your supervisor (to check the maximum number of 30,000 words) and 2nd assessor, and send *the same file* to the Ouriginal 'Receiver address' (your supervisor will supply you with this address). Ouriginal will be used to check your thesis for plagiarism. Send a **pdf** to the Copernicus Institute's secretary's office, sign the Statement of Originality and complete the

evaluation form Master's thesis via <https://www.formdesk.com/universiteitutrecht-geo/MScthesisevaluation>.

After your thesis has been approved, it has to be uploaded into the thesis archive. Within one month after the grade has been registered in OSIRIS, you will receive a request by email to upload the reviewed thesis (in PDF format) through OSIRIS Case for the purpose of the thesis archive. The thesis archive is only accessible to employees. **This is an obligatory part of your examination.**

(In this respect please note the following:

Sometimes companies do not want the content of your thesis to become publicly available. At the same time, you have the obligation to upload your thesis to the master's thesis database.

Utrecht University's policy is one of 'open science'. Therefore, we do not advocate putting a thesis under embargo. If an embargo comes up after you have already started doing research, this may mean you have to stop your research.

If you do mark your report as confidential (embargo), the abstract should be open to the public.

Final presentation

The presentation should be given at the earliest opportunity after the deadline set at the start of the thesis project (see letter of proposal approval), but only with your supervisor's permission and after you have attended at least 10 presentations yourself.

Please be aware that your supervisor's permission for delivering your final presentation does not imply that your final thesis grade is sufficient. The rubric & assessment form of the report can be found on the Sustainable Business & Innovation Blackboard community. Read it carefully and use it to pre-assess your own work!

The presentation takes a **maximum of 20 minutes**. Students are also expected to answer questions for 20 minutes after the presentation. The presentation should roughly follow the structure of the research report:

- Problem description and research question
- Research method
- Main results
- Discussion
- Conclusion

Avoid aiming to include everything from the research project, but rather focus on the highlights. Be sure to think of main messages, and how to convey them to the audience. Be prepared for questions from audience members who are less familiar with your work.

5. Planning and deadlines

The Master's thesis is 45 EC, which corresponds to 1260 hours or 31.5 weeks. During the thesis period there are four fixed deadlines (assuming full-time work; this needs to be adjusted in case of part-time work):

- After 8 weeks: submit the research proposal
- Between 8 and 31.5 weeks, regular discussions of individual draft chapters, every 3-4 weeks
- At 31.5 weeks: submit the written thesis
- After 31.5 weeks: at the first opportunity, present your Master's thesis.

In the time planning please also make sure you take into account absence of the supervisor, especially during the summer holiday. It is your responsibility to ask the supervisor about this and include it in the planning. Note that most of July and August are part of the academic vacation period. Absence of

your supervisor (especially in August) may make it impossible to finish the thesis process (including presentation and grading) in time before the next academic year. Therefore, graduating in August is only possible if your supervisor is not on holiday. The supervisor is not obligated to work during the academic vacation period. Note that this can mean you graduate in September and need to stay enrolled for another month.

6. Extensions

If unexpected delays or other problems come up, discuss these with your supervisor and/or study advisor. If required you can ask for an extension. Always give appropriate reasons for the delay. Only in case of delays caused by circumstances beyond your control are you eligible for an extension, e.g. illness, family circumstances and sometimes issues with data collection. Always include a new time plan with your extension request. **Asking for an extension (well in advance of the deadline) is always the responsibility of the student.**

A distinction is made between extensions for less than 2 weeks en extensions for longer than 2 weeks.

- If the requested extension is 2 weeks full-time (80 hours) or less, the supervisor and yourself can come to an agreement together. The supervisor emails the new deadline to the Copernicus secretariat: secretariat.sd@uu.nl.
- Extension requests of more than 2 weeks full-time (80 hours) require the approval of the Master's thesis coordinator as well. Email the extension request form including proof (if applicable) of the experienced delay and your thesis supervisor's approval to the Master's thesis coordinator. You can find the form and email address of the Master's thesis coordinator on the SBI Blackboard community: Master's thesis > General thesis information > 2022/2023.

Note that only requests from students that are enrolled for the course in OSIRIS will be considered. This means that you cannot receive any extension, grade or a judgment on the research proposal, if you are not enrolled.

The maximum extension for the *research proposal* is 4 weeks, full-time. **Note:** the final thesis deadline will remain the same i.e. 31.5 weeks after the starting date. If no research proposal is handed in on or before the deadline, the proposal will automatically be rejected and students will have to start the course over with a different supervisor and a different topic.

The maximum length of an extension of the *thesis* itself is 8 weeks, full-time. In this case, the deadline is moved by the number of weeks of the extension. The amount of EC cannot be changed.

7. Examination and requirements

During the thesis process there are several deliverables you have to submit in order to pass the course. All deliverables are judged by your supervisor and an independent second assessor. The second assessor is a member of the staff from the Copernicus Institute and has a PhD. Grades are given within 10 working days. If the supervisor and second assessor cannot come to an agreement on an assessment, they need to contact the programme leader first of all. If no solution can be found, the programme leader will ask the Board of Examiners to appoint a 3rd assessor. The 3rd assessor will give a binding grade. The Board of Examiners may take up to 6 weeks to reach a decision. You need to remain enrolled as a student at Utrecht University for the whole time, until you have graduated.

First, it is compulsory to attend **ten presentations** of fellow students, members of staff, guest lecturers and possible other lectures connected to the research themes of the Copernicus Institute, **before you start working on your own thesis (i.e. in the first year of study)**. At least 6 presentations should be by students from your own Master's programme. The other 4 presentations may be from other programmes (Sustainable Development, Innovation Sciences, Water Science & Management, Energy Science, or other relevant Master's programmes), or presentations by Copernicus staff members. Presentation dates will be posted on the Blackboard community and the website. Do not forget to sign the attendance list on these occasions. You cannot register for your own thesis presentation unless you have attended at least **ten presentations**. The secretary's office has an overview of the number of presentations attended by each student (secretariat.SD@uu.nl).

Secondly, there are three deliverables:

- The first product is the **research proposal**, which can be graded as "approved", "approved if conditions are fulfilled" or "rejected" (see step 3, research phase for further advice). While waiting for the 2nd assessor's assessment of your proposal, please continue working on the thesis. It is not allowed to go abroad or start an internship before the proposal has been approved. If you still do so, this is fully at your own risk (see step 3, research phase). If the proposal is approved, you can continue with the research, but the 2nd assessor might give you some additional advice. If the proposal is judged "approved if conditions are fulfilled", then there is a list of concerns that needs to be addressed. You have four weeks to address these issues and to hand in an adjusted proposal. Your deadline for the final thesis will not be adjusted, so your deadline will still be 31.5 weeks after the starting date. If a proposal is rejected, you will have to start the course over with a different supervisor and a different topic.
- The second is the **written final thesis**, which makes up 70% of the course grade. The thesis needs to be handed in before the deadline (or extended deadline). If no (further) extensions are possible you need to hand in the thesis for grading on the day of the deadline. The thesis will be checked for plagiarism, using advanced anti-plagiarism software (see step 4 Completion phase).
- Third, you give an **oral presentation**¹ about the *research after you have handed in the final version of your thesis*. Your supervisor and second assessor are both present at the presentation. The supervisor chairs the presentation. If one of them is not available, they are responsible for finding a replacement. The supervisor and second assessor jointly give a grade for the presentation which counts as 10% of the final grade.

Finally, you receive a grade for the process, which is 20% of the final grade. This grade is at the discretion of your supervisor who may decide to include opinions of other supervisors who were involved in your project, such as internship supervisors. However, this is at the discretion of your supervisor.

The supervisor and the second assessor sign the rubric & assessment form, which means they take responsibility for all the grades given and comments supplied. The rubric & assessment forms for both the proposal and the thesis can be found in the SBI Blackboard community, in the folder Master's thesis.

To pass the course, the grade for the written thesis must be at least 5.50 (counting for 70% of the final grade) AND the weighted average of the grades for the thesis, process and presentation has to be sufficient (≥ 5.50).

¹ For online presentations, please see instructions in the SBI Teams environment

If the thesis grade is satisfactory (≥ 5.50) but the weighted average is unsatisfactory, but within reparation limits ($4.00 \leq \text{grade} \leq 5.49$), the student may re-write the thesis within 4 weeks and/or redo the presentation at the next opportunity. The supervisor decides what elements need to be revised/re-done. After satisfactory reparation, the final grade for the entire course is a 6.00.

If the thesis grade is below 5.50 but the weighted average is satisfactory (≥ 5.50), the student may re-write the thesis within 4 weeks. After satisfactory reparation, the grade for the thesis is determined as 5.50 and this will be used to calculate the new weighted average final grade.

If the thesis grade is below 5.50 and the weighted average is unsatisfactory, but within reparation limits ($4.00 \leq \text{grade} \leq 5.49$), the student may re-write the thesis within 4 weeks. After satisfactory reparation, the final grade for the entire course is a 6.00.

Summarizing:

Thesis grade	Weighted avg	Repair	Final grade
≥ 5.50	≥ 5.50	n/a	= weighted avg
			Final grade if repair is satisfactory
≥ 5.50	$4.00 \leq \text{grade} \leq 5.49$	Thesis and/or presentation	6.00
< 5.50	≥ 5.50	thesis	= weighted avg, where thesis counts as 5.50 (70%)
< 5.50	$4.00 \leq \text{grade} \leq 5.49$	thesis	6.00

If the weighted average is below 4.00 or the reparation is not satisfactory, the student has failed the course and the project ends. In that case, the student will have to start the course over with a different topic and possibly a different supervisor.

If no *final* thesis has been handed in by the deadline (+ extension if applicable), students will need to hand in the thesis as it is at that moment (i.e. on the day of the deadline) and it will be graded for product (i.e. thesis itself) and process. If the thesis is handed in after the deadline, the supervisor can decide that students have not fulfilled the effort requirements and therefore grade the thesis with NVD (Niet Voldaan; not fulfilled). In effect, that means students have to start a new project with a new supervisor.

Students need to follow-up on agreements made with the supervisor or other external parties. Students are expected to operate in a professional manner towards the supervisor and external parties. If students fail to follow-up on agreements, behave unprofessionally too often or if the working relationship becomes unworkable, the supervisor can end the project. Ending the project means that the student will have to start the course over with a different supervisor and a different topic.

If the student has made a formal complaint regarding the supervisors inability to follow up on agreements or regarding unprofessional behaviour, they may ask the Master's thesis coordinator to continue the project with a different supervisor. If this request is honoured a new supervisor is appointed. Students can use the data that was already collected for the thesis to finish the project.

If the supervisor is unable to continue supervision for reasons that are not related to the student and their behaviour (e.g. medical reasons), students can continue the project, but the Master's thesis coordinator appoints a new supervisor. Students can use the data that was already collected for the thesis to finish the project.

If a student drops out during the course, the programme leader and the study advisor will be notified by the thesis supervisor. To make sure that students are well taken care of, the study advisor will invite the student for a meeting in order to discuss and provide advice on which further steps to take.

8. Course feedback group

Not applicable

9. Course evaluation

After completing the course, please fill out the Master's thesis evaluation form via <https://www.formdesk.com/universiteitutrecht-geo/MScthesisevaluation>.

10. Deadlines for graduation

If you have fulfilled all the requirements of your study programme, the Board of Examiners will approve your graduation. If so, they will send you an email confirming your graduation and informing you of your official graduation date.

Please note: you must still be enrolled for your study programme on the graduation date. So do not terminate your enrolment before you have received the email informing you of your graduation date. Also (if applicable), if you have not received the email in August, you have to re-enroll for the next academic year.

Don't forget to hand in all necessary information to graduate on time. You will be notified by the Student Affairs Office Geosciences when you have nearly completed the programme. On the SBI website you can find important information on the dates and deadlines you'll have to respect: <http://students.uu.nl/en/geo/sbi/practical-information/graduation>.

In order to graduate, you need to make sure that all grades are entered correctly in OSIRIS and that you have fulfilled all requirements of the programme. This means checking your academic progress report in OSIRIS. Also check that your name is spelled correctly and your date and place of birth are mentioned correctly. In case of questions of doubts about the file, please consult the study advisor or the Student Affairs Office Geosciences.

Please note: when you wish to graduate at the end of a month, there are strict deadlines in place for handing in grades, checking files and graduation which are generally 10-15 days *before* the end of the month. All deadlines can be found on the student website and in the table below. Go to the website of the programme, click Practical Information > Graduation for all the necessary information. In case of any questions or uncertainties: ask Student Affairs or the study advisor.

Graduation deadlines for 2022-2023 are:

Deadline hand in grades at Student Affairs Office	Graduation date
23 September 2022	30 September 2022
21 October 2022	31 October 2022
18 November 2022	30 November 2022
16 December 2022	23 December 2022
20 January 2023	31 January 2023
17 February 2023	28 February 2023
24 March 2023	31 March 2023
21 April 2023	28 April 2023
19 May 2023	31 May 2023
23 June 2023	30 June 2023
21 July 2023	31 July 2023
25 August 2023	31 August 2023

The *graduation ceremony* (when you get your degree certificate) is held four times a year; generally in September, January, April and June. This is not the same as the graduation date (which is once a month as explained above). Therefore, it is possible that you receive your diploma a few months after the official graduation date. The dates for the graduation ceremonies can be found on the website, under Practical Information > Graduation. Again, strict deadlines apply. It depends on your graduation date when you can attend a graduation ceremony.

Appendix 1:

Students must follow these steps and phases throughout the Master's thesis process – Sustainable Business and Innovation

1. Orientation phase

- a. Attend 10 thesis presentations by fellow students and/or staff (in 1st master year)
- b. Choose one topic proposed by staff supervisor
- c. When a supervisor accepts description of the subject, student and supervisor inform the department secretary (secretariat.sd@uu.nl) and mark the start of the Master's thesis
- d. Enrol via OSIRIS (GEO4-2606)



2. Proposal phase

- a. Write a research proposal *in Word* (within 8 weeks after registered start date)
- b. When the supervisor agrees, the proposal is sent to the 2nd assessor via the secretary's office
- c. The 2nd assessor assesses the proposal
- d. When the proposal is accepted the date for submission of the final thesis is set



3. Research phase

- a. Start the internship (if applicable) and follow research plan outline in the proposal
- b. Student regularly convenes with supervisor (initiative is prime responsibility of student)
- c. Proposal may be adjusted during the research process (after consent of supervisor)



4. Completion phase

- a. student registers for thesis presentation at Copernicus secretary's office, at the earliest one month before thesis deadline (approval supervisor is needed!)
- b. student hands in final thesis (at the latest on deadline set), comprising of:
 - **Word** copies for supervisor, 2nd assessor and Ouriginal
 - digital **pdf** version for the secretary's office (secretariat.SD@uu.nl)
- c. student gives final presentation at first available presentation date
- d. supervisor and 2nd assessor agree on grade for thesis content (70%) and presentation (10%), and supervisor determines grade for process (20%)
- e. supervisor sends in signed rubric with final mark and plagiarism assessment report to student administration, education coordinator and student
- f. Student fills in course evaluation and uploads **pdf** of thesis via OSIRIS.