

Background information to supervisors of degree projects, Master of Science Programmes in Biology and Applied Biotechnology, Uppsala University

Thank you for accepting one of our students to do a degree project under your supervision!

This guide provides a short overview and help to those who will receive master students in Biology or Applied Biotechnology for a degree project. The complete, comprehensive course information is available via the course web pages (www.ibg.uu.se/student-en/programme-pages/master/master-programme-biology/degree-project/; www.ibg.uu.se/student-en/programme-pages/master/master-programme-applied-biotechnology/degree-project/). Contact information to coordinators handling degree projects in biology is also available via the course web pages.

At Uppsala University students conclude their two-year master education by doing a degree project of 30 or 45 hp (20 respectively 30 weeks of fulltime work). The purpose is to give the student training, under supervision, in the scientific process and research procedures: planning, performing, critically evaluating and reporting research.

For this purpose, the student should be assigned a problem that he or she is expected to work on under guidance, but as independently as possible. The problem should be defined such that it is possible to reach some results and conclusions as well as write a report, within the time available. We need a project plan of c. two pages in good time (at least a couple of weeks) before the student starts the degree project. This plan should be jointly discussed and written by the supervisor and the student (although the supervisor is main responsible at this stage). The plan describes the background, the scientific question and the kinds of methods to be used, and provides an outline of the expected outcome of the study. It should also have a tentative time plan. Please feel free to contact the student's coordinators at Uppsala University concerning this project plan.

While working at your department the student should take part in departmental activities, such as seminars, to the same extent as students in your department normally do.

The student will be contacted by his/her coordinator for delivery of expected reports. About half-way through the project we want the student to report on the progress of the work. The midterm reporting may entail a short oral presentation and/or a short written. The coordinator will give the student instructions for this procedure.

The final report of the thesis work should be written in English or Swedish as a scientific report in your field but also taking into consideration the particular guidelines that the student receives from his/her coordinator. The student also writes a one-page popular scientific summary of his/her work in Swedish (or in English if the student is not proficient in Swedish), and presents his/her work orally at a Master presentation arranged by the coordinator. The students act as opponents for each other and each master student in addition has an external opponent. Senior Ph.D. students and postdocs are appropriate for this task. The opponents review the written report and participate during the oral presentation, asking questions and commenting on the scientific content of the degree report.

Both the full report and the popular scientific summary are posted at the university web site. If you wish to postpone this publication so that you can first publish or patent the data, please let us know at the latest when the student submits the final version of the report. Normally, the students hand in their reports via Urkund, an automated search engine that searches for similarities with other reports to detect possible plagiarisms. The student's report then becomes

part of this database, not accessible from the outside. If you do not wish that the work is analysed this way, for reasons of secrecy, please notify the coordinator and student BEFORE the student is to hand in his/her report. The student then of course should submit the report directly to the coordinator. Unless there are specific reasons against it, we would like to ask that as much as possible of the report be sent through Urkund (the introduction, materials and methods, parts of results and discussion), since unfortunately we see increasing plagiarism in students' reports.

The student has instructions for writing the report and when to hand it in, but suggestions, corrections and encouragement from the supervisor concerning content and organisation of the thesis are very valuable. It is also valuable if you encourage the student to start writing early, and to set off sufficient time for writing at the end. Our experience tells us most students need to devote at least three weeks to full time writing at the end to produce a good report. Since the coordinators are not experts in the various fields that our students choose for their theses, you are kindly requested to approve the scientific content of the paper before the student hands it in to the coordinator. As a supervisor you should also comment on language and structure of the report.

The project work is assessed as Failed or Passed. The coordinator only sees the final version of the thesis, and listens to the oral presentations; mid-term and final. Therefore, we need your assessment concerning the actual work as well. This kind of feedback can best be provided via the supervisor's certificate form that is available via the course web page. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact us!

We hope the project will be satisfying both to you and to the student!

Coordinators/examiners of Degree projects in Biology and Applied Biotechnology
Biology Education Centre
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