

HGO4090 – Master's Thesis (60 credits)

Examination format

Written thesis and oral examination

Purpose

The master's thesis is the central component of the MA programme in Human Geography. It provides students with the opportunity to carry out an independent research project, enabling in-depth engagement with an empirical, theoretical, and/or methodological problem relevant to the discipline.

Through the thesis, students are expected to formulate a clear, researchable problem, situate their work within relevant academic literature, apply appropriate theoretical perspectives, and use suitable methods to generate and analyse data. The thesis should reflect sustained academic effort corresponding to a 60-credit workload and demonstrate increasing independence, analytical maturity, and scholarly judgment.

The oral examination follows the assessment of the written thesis and serves as an academic conversation in which the candidate discusses the choices, arguments, and contributions of the thesis, allowing for clarification, contextualisation, and critical engagement in dialogue with the examiners.

Formal requirements

The thesis should have a minimum length of 24,000 words and a maximum length of 36,000 words, including cover page, summary, table of contents, preface, footnotes, and acronyms, but excluding references and appendices.

When two students write together, the assignment can be up to 10 percent longer than individual assignments (max. 40,000 words). See guidelines for joint work.

A summary of 1–2 pages must follow the cover page. Following your summary, a brief AI statement should be provided, in which the specific use of AI tools is accounted for. Be clear about which tools have been used, how you have used them, and state clearly how it has helped you produce the final submission.

Formatting should use font size 12, line spacing 1.5, and include page numbering and a table of contents.

A complete reference list is required, using a recognized style (e.g., APA 7th edition) consistently.

A cover page is required, and must include:

- Full title of the thesis
- Student's name
- Semester and year of submission
- Study program, department, faculty, university
- Total word count

Submission guidelines

All coursework equivalent to 60 credits must be completed before submission.

~~Students with P~~projects involving personal data must ~~submit the be registered at Sikt~~
~~notification form to ensure compliance with data protection legislation.~~

Theses exceeding the word limit will be rejected and require resubmission.

Theses with extensive quantitative or GIS material may be shorter than stated in the formal requirements.

Evaluation focuses on quality rather than word count.

Evaluation criteria for written thesis

The thesis will be evaluated by an academic committee based on the following criteria:

Aims and research questions. The thesis must have a clearly formulated aim and focused research questions. It should demonstrate scientific relevance – whether theoretical, methodological, or empirical – and explain its contribution to knowledge in the field.

Theoretical framework and literature review. The thesis should place the study in its academic context through a critical review of relevant research. The thesis should also apply a coherent theoretical framework, where chosen concepts, theories and/or models of analysis are employed in ways that allow the thesis to answer the research questions.

Methods. Methods must be described, including reasons for their selection, strengths and weaknesses, and ethical considerations. The thesis should explain data collection and analysis procedures and address potential limitations.

Analysis. The analysis should be systematic, logical, and independent, and establish a clear link between research questions, theoretical framework, methods, and data. Findings must be grounded in empirical material and interpreted through the chosen theoretical framework. Arguments should be well formulated and supported.

Conclusions. Conclusions must summarise the main findings clearly, discuss their contribution to the discipline, and situate them in a broader theoretical and empirical context. Suggestions for policy implications or future research may be included but are not required.

Structure and form. The thesis should have a logical structure, consistent use of concepts, meaningful integration of empirical material, [represent an independent academic contribution to which the student takes full ownership](#), and ~~compliance be compliant~~ with academic norms for referencing and [with](#) the program's formal requirements.

Evaluation criteria for the oral examination

The oral exam is an academic conversation between the candidate and the examiners, and may be conducted on campus, in hybrid form, or digitally, depending on examiner availability.

During the exam, the examiners will provide a brief overall assessment of the thesis, highlighting points for discussion. The academic conversation will then be based on questions from examiners that invite reflections from the candidate on the research design, theoretical and methodological choices, analytical arguments, and broader academic context of the work. The final grade may be adjusted based on performance in the oral exam.

The performance will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Reflection and justification. The candidate must defend decisions made during the research process, including problem formulation, methodological choices, and theoretical perspectives. Strengths, weaknesses, and ethical considerations should be addressed.

Critical engagement. The candidate should reflect on the thesis' contributions and limitations, situate it within the broader academic context, and respond thoughtfully to questions. This includes discussing alternative interpretations and possible improvements.

Academic dialogue and communication. The candidate should respond professionally, using precise, well-reasoned arguments grounded in the thesis and relevant literature. Answers must demonstrate constructive engagement with examiners' questions and maintain clarity and academic tone throughout.

Examiners will explain (1) the written thesis grade and (2) the final grade after the oral exam, in accordance with UiO regulations. The candidate may request to know the written thesis grade at the start of the examination. Otherwise, the final grade (combined written thesis and oral exam) as well as the original thesis grade will be communicated at the end.