

Memo to COB's degree project students

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Carin with Leif, Bodil, Stina, Margaret and Anders

1. Before starting

(a) Visit Tina Ledje (christina.ledje@biol.lu.se) at the BI office in the Ecology building, and check that you are entitled to carry out a degree project, which subject you can do it in, and what kind of degree project you should do.

(b) All students doing degree projects, whether their project is to be carried out within the department or externally, must visit Torbjörn Säll (see page 6 below), who is responsible for degree projects within COB. If you don't know what you want to do or who to have as a supervisor, you can discuss this with him.

(c) You have to be registered (registration is done in the BI office) before you begin your degree project. The registration form can be found at <http://www.biol.lu.se/courses/master-s-degree-projects>

Students who are not registered are not insured.

(d) External degree projects cannot be registered until there is a supervisor at COB. Even if you have a supervisor at the place where you intend to do your external degree project, it means that you *must* have an internal supervisor (contact person) at COB.

(e) You also have to have the subject of your project approved by the person who is the scientific director within the subject area that you are going to do your project in. Torbjörn Säll or your COB contact person can make sure that this is done. If you are not going to do your degree project in any of COB's research groups, it is particularly important that you inform the scientific director at COB and your COB contact person about the project very early. The external supervisor is sometimes expected to provide COB with a short project outline before you register.

(f) Degree projects planned to be carried out during the summer must be registered before June 15.

(g) You should have read this memo and the information about degree projects that are to be found on BI's web site at

<http://www.biol.lu.se/courses/master-s-degree-projects>

before you begin your degree project.

(h) Your term fees must be paid for the term(s) during which the project is carried out.

2. Course start

(a) During the first week you should collect your laboratory journal from the BI office. You must document all your project work in this. There is no need to work with double systems. Instead you should use this logbook to do your calculations, put in gel photos, write down media solutions and so on. The book may of course be replaced by a book in

another format if you so wish, but you must then pay for it yourself. The most important thing is that it is a book, and not a loose-leaf system. It is also a means of training you in the way you should document your laboratory work. All breaks for holidays, illness and so on should also be written up in the book. It is used as part of the final assessment and marking of your work. This book is often left with your supervisor for further reference to your results. If you have any questions you should discuss this with your supervisor. There is usually, however, no problem with your making a copy for yourself.

(b) During the first week you and your supervisor should draw up a time plan and research plan. Remember to allow time for writing-up and for preparing a presentation. If your time plan overruns by more than 20 per cent you cannot be given a Pass with Distinction (Väl godkänd)! Documented absences are, of course, not counted in; that is why it is important to document everything in your laboratory journal. Your time plan should be brief (1-2 A4 pages) and contain the following points:

- Title of the project.
- Supervisor; if s/he is external then the name of COB's contact person should also be given.
- Description of the research task, including a short background and aims.
- Time framework: here you should give an overview of the project plan, including methods, at about a weekly level. Don't forget to allow some time for report writing.
- A project worth 30 hp (higher education credits) should take about 18 weeks.
- Both the student and the supervisor should sign the document.

3. During the project

(a) If you experience any problems with your supervisor you should contact Torbjörn Säll as soon as possible. If he is informed early it is much easier to do something about the problem.

(b) Try to go to as many as possible of the seminars, group meetings and so on that are organized within your research group and in the department you are placed in.

4. The report

Your degree project will be presented in the same way as a scientific report in English. During the course of your project you are expected to read a number of articles from different scientific journals. In consultation with your supervisor you should decide on the construction of the written report according to one of the scientific articles read. This should be done at a relatively early stage of the degree project as it will influence the writing process. In order to obtain clear instructions on the arrangement of the text you should follow "Instructions for authors" for the journal you choose. Discuss with your supervisor the ways in which your report can differ from these instructions, for example, a considerably longer text may be acceptable. Materials and methods should be presented in more detail than is normally given in "Instructions for authors". Instructions should be given about the presentation of figures and tables and what information

should be presented in the legends for the figures. The same applies to the list of references and the references given in the text of the article.

You should make sure that you begin writing as early as possible. You can write large sections of the introduction as well as the materials and methods section during the laboratory stage of the project. It is very important here that your notes in the laboratory journal are clear enough and complete.

(a) Before writing up

- With your supervisor choose the journal you want to use as a template. Note that certain journals, for example Science and Nature, cannot be used since their format differs considerably from the majority of journals.
- Study carefully the structure of the articles in the journal chosen.
- Find on the internet “Instructions for authors” for the journal chosen and read them carefully.

(b) When your project begins to take shape

- Does the introduction contain relevant information? Does the stated aim correspond to the project?
- Could another student replicate your work by following the materials and methods part of your description?
- Are the figures clear? Can the figures be understood only by reading the legends to the figures?
- Are the tables clear? Can they be understood only by reading the accompanying text?
- Are the results described accurately in the figures and tables? Are all the figures and tables necessary? Do you refer to figures and tables in the results and discussion?
- Are the results discussed in relation to the results of other people? Refer to results that both support and oppose your own, if there are any. Is the discussion only a repetition of the results?
- Have you given your references according to the “Instructions for authors”? Have you given all your references both in the text and in the list of references?
- Is there a date on the web addresses?

(c) Common mistakes that should be checked before you hand in your project

- Are numbers given correctly in figures, tables and text?
- Space between numbers and units.
- Decimal point, not decimal comma?
- Have you used the spell check? US or GB? Be consistent.
- Is your use of abbreviations consistent?

(d) Cheating and plagiarism

Make sure that you *never* present anyone else’s work, for example, text, figures or results, as if it were your own material. This also applies to material you have found on the internet. You may, of course, refer to other people’s work, but then you have to rewrite it in your own words and refer to it in the proper way. If you quote, that is use someone else’s formulation in your text, this must be clearly stated. The same thing applies if you use someone else’s figure(s). If you are unsure, you should discuss this with your supervisor. To prevent and deter cheating and plagiarism, all degree projects carried out at COB are sent to a checking tool, called Urkund, on the net. Here, the text

is checked against the data in Urkund's databases at the same time as the text is being submitted to the database. This prevents the degree project from being used by any other student in the future.

At Lund University all suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism are reported to the Disciplinary Committee. This means that if teachers suspect that plagiarism is being committed they are obliged to report it. The consequences of plagiarism often take the form of exclusion/suspension from all teaching during a certain period of time, often two months.

5. Examinations

(a) The examination committee consists of the scientific director or another person chosen by him/her and an external opponent. The opponent is considered as external if s/he comes from another postgraduate studies subject. S/he can also be someone from another group within COB. The student's supervisor is not a member of the examining committee, but is present as an observer (in the same way as at a disputation). An internal COB supervisor (contact person) for a degree project student who has carried out his/her degree project externally is allowed, however, to be a member of the committee. If the examining committee is unable to agree on a grade unanimously, the supervisor has the final decision.

(b) In cases where the supervisor is unable to be present when the examination committee meets, for instance, in the case of external degree projects, the supervisor must submit a written report or report by telephone to the COB representative on the examining committee. It is also important that the laboratory journal is available and is used as part of the grading process. In cases where the supervisor is unable to be present when the examining committee meets, the laboratory journal must be attested by the supervisor.

(c) At COB the following guidelines are applied to the grading process. The following factors are taken into account in the assessment:

- The execution of the project itself: independence, theoretical knowledge and ability, laboratory skills, accuracy and reliability, the ability to acquaint oneself with the literature and to find relevant literature by oneself, the ability to arrange and analyse results, the ability to plan one's work by oneself, taking initiatives etc.
- The report: independence in writing the report, the arrangement and structure of the report, presentation and arranging of data, linguistic skills, the typographic appearance of the report etc.
- The seminar: presentation skills, structure and clarity in the seminar, the ability to discuss the results in a scientific context etc.
- The assessment of the project's execution is more important in the grading process than the report and the seminar.

(d) According to the decision of the Faculty of Science, University of Lund (16 June 2004) two criteria apply to the grade Pass with Distinction (Väl godkänd): 1. The degree project student shall have shown clear ability to complete a research task independently. This includes the student's demonstrated creative skills regarding the formulation of problems, problem solving and deductions, and the ability to place his/her results into a

more specialized context, e.g. a scientific problem area or relevant area of application in biology. 2. The project must not have overrun the timeframe by more than 20 percent.”

(e) As part of the examination you are required to hold an open seminar at your department or the section where you have been placed. In most cases the examining committee will be present. After your presentation the examining committee will discuss your project with you, and after that the rest of the audience can ask you questions. Finally, the examining committee meets by themselves and decides your grade. The examiner writes a grade certificate which is handed in to BI for registration in LADOK.

6. After the Examination

(a) When the degree project has been approved it is reported to BI by the supervisor or scientific director.

(b) When your report is completely finished, you should send the document to johanna_b.jonsdottir@biol.lu.se

(c) You are required to write a popular scientific summary in accordance with the template that Susanne Pelger outlines at the information session on how to write popular scientific material. You send this to susanne.pelger@kanslin.lu.se This summary must be approved before your degree project can be registered.

(d) We ask you to take part in the web-based course evaluation. You will be given a link to this from johanna_b.jonsdottir@biol.lu.se

Professor Torbjörn Säll

Department of Cell and Organism Biology

Biology Building (room 129)

Sölvegatan 35

SE-223 62 Lund

Phone: 046-222 78 58

E-mail: Torbjorn.Sall@cob.lu.se