

Independent project in landscape
architecture, 30 hp



Study Guide

Master Project in landscape architecture, 30 hp

Institutionen för landskapsarkitektur, planering och förvaltning

SLU, Alnarp

WORK PLAN (PROGRAMME FOR DEGREE PROJECT)

An individual work plan must be drawn up for the degree project. It has two important functions: it acts as a guide for completion of the work; it is an agreement between the student and the Faculty (represented by the supervisor).

The work plan must provide clarity as regards the objectives of the work and the way in which those objectives will be achieved. During preparation of the work plan an active approach is developed, to the problem to be dealt with, and an analysis is made of what has to be done. A preliminary structure for the end result is also created.

A first draft of the work plan is prepared by the student. This is then developed in consultation between student and supervisor and are supposed to be finished in an early stage of the working process. As soon as it is finished and the form is signed by the student and the supervisor, it should be handed in to the course leader. Deadline for handing in the work plan to the course leader is 3 weeks after the course start.

The examiner will be appointed, and will approve of the work plan and sign the form.

The work plan should contain the following:

Preliminary title – in Swedish and English. It is important to think about searchability when choosing a title.

Background – a description of the background to the choice of topic (theme) and a short explanation for the choice, with a clear description of the topic or issue to be examined. In this section, students can answer questions such as - What is the context or state of the problem area in which the problem/task/design is contained? - Why have you chosen this task? – What are your motives? Particular emphasis should be placed on the boundaries of the study.

Objective – a formulation of what you wish to achieve with your work. Describe what you intend to do. If, for example, you intend to present a proposal for planning/designing a site, the objective of your work may be to test and describe different options and their consequences; to make suggestions for change or to formulate a programme of the overall objectives which in your opinion should direct such change. The aim of the degree project can also be to test a theory/issue in a certain situation or to describe your process from idea to proposal. Include a description of the target groups for your work.

Questions/hypothesis – describe the central questions you will investigate.

Approach and/or method – a description of the methods you will employ for obtaining answers to your questions. – How do you intend to achieve your objectives?

Form of presentation and submission – a description of how the work will be reported. The form of submission must be discussed in the initial phase of the work. An oral presentation, in the form of a presentation seminar, must always be included. A popular science poster is also mandatory.

Timetable – Describe the work process, i.e. when you intend to carry out the different component parts of the work.

State the time (year + week) you will start the work and the estimated time (year + week) of completion and submission.

The timetable must show the scope of the different components of the work spread across the 20 weeks (800 hours) available to you. The starting up process including drawing up the work plan correspond to about one week's work. Preparations for the presentation, opposition and poster correspond to about one week's work.

Revisions of the work plan must be submitted in writing to the course leader. This should include a short explanation and be approved and signed by the supervisor.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

A degree project to the value of 30 hp corresponds to 20 weeks of full-time work, i.e. 800 hours of work. Within landscape architecture, degree projects of different types can be done. This leads to the structure, the final product and the presentation varying in certain ways. Boundaries are important and are established in the initial phase of the work by the student in consultation with the supervisor.

The degree project must deal with a problem within the chosen subject, with aim/objective formulation, description of methods, facts, inspirations and/or ideas (the actual work) and a reflective section.

For example, a design project of a Landscape Architecture nature can involve inventory and analysis of a site, in-depth studies of the literature and study visits to the type of place or activity to be designed, followed by reflections on the choices made during the design process. If the student has decided to work with a place, this can mean testing different approaches and methods. If the student has decided to investigate a method, this can mean testing it in different places. Reflections can comprise a concluding section or be included in different phases or parts of the work.

It is possible for two students to carry out a joint project. It is also possible e.g. to start a degree project jointly and finish it individually.

For students who are interested in continuing from undergraduate education to postgraduate, the degree project can be an initial part of their postgraduate studies. In such cases, the nature of the project must be discussed with the Faculty's Director of Studies.

In brief, the structure can consist of the following:

- Clarification of the project framework and its boundaries
- Interpretation of the background/task/problem
- Formulation of the question or hypothesis
- Choice of method
- Execution of the actual work
- Reflection, discussion and conclusions

Reflections, discussion and conclusions

In the reflective section the student must critically examine results and methods, as well as their own work process. For example, the reflections can include:

- A discussion on the methods/theories applied and reflections on how these affected the results
- A discussion on the reasons behind the choices made and approach adopted.
- The source of the idea/s
- How the problem was identified and dealt with
- Relevance
- The signification of the result; what did the study contribute to? And what further questions did it lead to?

The scope of the reflections and the degree of depth should be decided in consultation with the supervisor. The reflective section must be reported in writing but can be placed separately, for example in conjunction with a design– or planning project.

It is important that there is transparency as regards the main decisions.

SUPERVISION

The student is the project leader and has the initiative in the dialogue with the supervisor. The supervisor must be an employee of the LTV Faculty.

The student is given a supervision resource that is related to the scope of the work. For a work of 30 hp at advanced level, a supervision resource of 20 hours is provided. This includes face-to face supervision time, time for reading, etc. up to submission and examination.

The supervisor helps the student during the course of the work in the way agreed by student and supervisor at the start of the work. This can for example be through regular, scheduled meetings or at the request of the student. Regardless of the model used, it is the responsibility of the student to take the initiative for supervision!

As a starting point, meetings of the following type can be recommended:

- starting meeting
- planning meeting – when the work plan with boundaries, questions, methods and approach, structure and content, the end product and the timetable are discussed, formulated and finished.
- review meetings – often several times during the course of the work
- structure meeting – when the work is nearing completion and is to be compiled.
- final meeting – final submission and presentation are discussed.

EXAMINATION

The student decides on the way and format in which the work will be presented, in consultation with the supervisor.

There are four occasions for examination each Study Year. You choose which one suits you the best. No later than 3 weeks before the examination day, you should notify the course leader that you want to hand in your work for examination. Before notifying the course leader, you must collect an okay from the supervisor.

For examination, the student submits a pdf and **two** printed examination copies of the work to the course leader.

The degree project is examined by one main examiner and one co-examiner, appointed by the course leader. The main examiner must hold at least a doctorate (or equivalent) within the main subject area.

The written report submitted is examined, as is the student's presentation at the seminar. The supervisor and at least one of the examiners must be present at the presentation. Examination of the work submitted and the seminar concludes with the student being awarded a grade F, 3, 4 or 5.

The examiners submit their statement to the course leader. The course leader checks that all required components are fulfilled. When so, the course leader gives the statement form to the course administrator, who register the result in Ladok and handles the publication in Epsilon.

OPPOSITION

– A SHORT GUIDE AND CHECKLIST

Aims of opposition

Opposition of a work has two aims:

- to develop the ability to analyse a work objectively and honestly
- to identify all essential strengths and weaknesses in the work.

Checklist

- Aims and boundaries
Is the title relevant? Does the author deal with the subject given in the titles? Have suitable boundaries been set? Is the research question answered?
- Choice of approach
Are all the essentials included in the work? Is the method reasonable and can it be used in the work?
- Structure of the work
Is the work clear? Have the different sections been given suitable space and is the order logical? Should the structure have been different and in that case, how?
- Factual content
Does the work contain facts or conclusions that are inaccurate or that can be misunderstood? Is the literature and other sources interpreted correctly? Is any important investigation missing? Are the conclusions adequate and correctly justified? Are the sources dealt with critically?
- Oral presentation
For example, the following points can be commented upon:
 - Suitability for the audience
 - Structure and content of the talk

- Enthusiasm
- Use of aids
- General impression of the presentation
- Visual presentation

Constructive opinions

Being an opponent does not mean offering only negative criticism. Positive opinions should also be given. **Constructive criticism should always be the aim.** The opponent should in the first instance keep to main lines. If certain types of error occur repeatedly in the work, it is sufficient to exemplify this by pointing out one or two.

The opponent has around 10 minutes to present his/her opposition (if 2 opponents 7 minutes each), so think carefully about what you want to say and use this time well!.

The opposition must be summarised in writing and submitted to the author, and also reported (e-mail or print) to the course leader.

Graded: Pass or fail.

POSTER

A poster is a good way to communicate complex material and knowledge in a more easy to understand way, and offers a short cut into your work and results. Make it inviting to read and look at!

To make a poster is a mandatory part of the Master Project course. The poster should summarize the results of the master project. The motive for doing a poster is for the student to train the ability to make a popular scientific summary. Of importance is that the poster communicates clearly and understandably to the viewer.

It is not mandatory to follow the template for SLU Thesis Day. View the template as a guide on how to compress your message. The important thing is that the poster communicates to the viewer. You can find the general instructions from SLU Thesis Day at the Student Web. These instructions you may look at if you like. The SLU Thesis day template is not mandatory to use, you may choose another design.

Some facts:

- It is important that the poster communicates to the viewer
- The size of the poster should be preferably A1 or A2 (or the size recommended by SLU Thesis Day), but not A3 (too small).
- Use Power Point (or another program), and convert it to a printable pdf.

Hand in the poster as a pdf to marie.larsson@slu.se, at the latest on the day for presentation/examination. Hang a printed poster in the corridor outside Studio, on the day of presentation/examination.

Graded: Pass or fail

PRESENTATION

The degree project must be presented at a seminar. The aim of this is to give students the opportunity to talk about their work and receive opinions from other students, the opponent, lecturers, and other interested parties.

The seminar is planned in consultation between student and supervisor.

Example of structure and content

- Introduction by supervisor (2 min)
- Presentation of work by student (20 min)
(If two students on one work = 30 min)
- Questions from/discussion with opponent (10 min) (if 2 opponents, ca 7 minutes each)
- Questions from/discussion with examiners (20 min)
- Supervisor or examiner closes the session.

PASSING REQUIREMENTS

Submission of work plan (programme) that has been approved by the supervisor

Submission and presentation of the final product, and marked by the examiners

A plagiarism check of the final product

Published in Epsilon (by the course administrator and SLU Library)

Completed and reported opposition of the degree project of a fellow student

Submission, and passed, of a popular scientific poster