

INTRODUCTION

A thesis landscape architecture of 36 ECTS (LAR 80436 in the University's Study Handbook) is compulsory for master students who follow the master programme Landscape Architecture and Planning (MLP), specialization landscape architecture. The typical characteristic of this thesis is that it entails in addition to research a substantial design component. It is possible to take a second thesis with less credits than 36 or to increase the first thesis with 3 credits to 39 ECTS.

This study guide is, in principle, written to guide landscape architecture students through the logistics of the compulsory master thesis, but it also contains useful elements for those who include a second thesis in their master programme. A master thesis can be undertaken individually or with two to three persons.

In order to streamline the thesis process as much as possible, there is a specific routing that you should follow. This routing runs from contacting the thesis coordinator up to your final thesis examination. It is in the benefit of the landscape architecture staff and student that you adhere as much as possible to this routing. The study guide at hand will take you through the routing protocol.

PREQUALIFICATION

The WUR Study Handbook does not give specific prerequisites for a master thesis. It is, however, expected that a student has passed with good results the following master landscape-architecture courses:

- 'State of the Art Practices in Landscape Architecture' (LAR-33306),
- 'Design Theory' (LAR-32306), and
- 'Advanced Design Research Methods' (LAR-34306).

Furthermore, the full completion of the design 'Atelier Landscape Architecture and Planning' (LAR-60318) is an absolute necessity for a successful thesis process. The completion of the 'Internship Landscape Architecture' (LAR-70421 up to LAR-70439) is advisable.

In the course 'Advanced Design Research Methods' (LAR-34306), you practice with the development of a design-thesis research proposal. The examination of this course is in the form of a written preliminary thesis proposal. It is, thus, in your advantage to know your thesis subject at the start of the ADRM course.

In case of a second research or design thesis, the advised prerequisites depend on the subject and objectives of the thesis. In case of a theoretical research thesis, for example, it is advisable to have passed the Design Theory lecture course.

ROUTING

The routing is as follows:

1. Contact the thesis coordinator (at present this is Ingrid Duchhart – Gaia room B223 use the subscription list for an appointment)

The thesis coordinator discusses with you your ideas for a final thesis. In this first conversation, we will discuss among other things, your fascination and your personal learning goals. We also look at the running and upcoming PhD research and other research projects of the chair group Landscape Architecture, so that we can make the best match between your learning objectives and the research, interest, and capability of the available landscape-architecture staff. It is possible to include a second supervisor. This second supervisor can be drawn from the Landscape Architecture chair group itself or from another Wageningen University chair group. External supervisors can be invited from another university, research institutes, such as Alterra or Deltares, or from a professional (landscape architecture) bureau, office, or company. However, the chair group Landscape Architecture will always remain the first responsible body in the form of a first supervisor and the examiner.

Keep in mind that you contact the thesis coordinator at least two months before the start of your thesis. This is particularly important if you do not have a clear vision on your thesis subject. To focus and thus to be able to establish the supervisor(s), the thesis coordinator will ask you to prepare an initial thesis proposal. This proposal could be the same as the one you prepared within the ADRM course, but this is not always necessary. The full proposal will be prepared under the supervision of the assigned supervisor(s).

2. Contact supervisor(s)

The thesis coordinator will contact the intended supervisor. As soon as the supervisor agrees to supervise, the student will continue the contacts and elaborates his/her thesis proposal.

3. Study space and computer requirements

If you require study space, access to computers and software, you should contact Lidy van der Lugt for the allocation of the space and hardware. For the software you need to contact Monique Janssen. Keep in mind that the availability of study space is limited, so contact Lidy van der Lugt in time (approximately two months before you start your thesis).

4. Thesis contract

As mentioned earlier, in collaboration with your supervisor, you prepare a final thesis proposal. This proposal forms the basis for a formal thesis contract. This contract can be downloaded from the WUR site under the header 'forms'. This contract needs to be signed by the supervisors and the examiner (Adri van den Brink).

The signed original of the thesis contract plus a copy must be handed to the thesis coordinator. The thesis coordinator will then provide Lidy van der Lugt with the original. Take care that also your supervisors receive a copy of the fully signed contract. Keep a copy yourself.

It is advisable to include in your thesis contract a detailed time planning including moments of progress reflection. The contract will establish the weight of your thesis (in ECTs) and the required contact hours between the student and supervisor.

5. Research starts according to contract

Once the thesis contract is finalised, you start with your actual research and design activities (although usually there is an overlap with the writing of the proposal). You do your research and design work under the guidance of your supervisor(s) and according to your planning as agreed upon in your contract. Any deviations from the planning must be discussed with your supervisor(s). During the period you work on your thesis, it is strongly advised to attend at least five colloquia of fellow students.

Typically the research part of your thesis will contain landscape analysis, reference studies, the development of a theoretical framework, and the development of design guidelines.

6. 'Green Light' Presentation

A 'green light' presentation is a presentation to benchmark your progress and to assess the accomplished research and design work. A 'green light' presentation is typically scheduled 6 weeks before the date of your thesis examination. Your work is usually presented as a beamer presentation and often supported by posters. In principle, you present for your supervisor(s) and one member of the landscape architecture staff who was not involved in your tutoring ('green light' observer).

After your presentation of approximately 20 minutes the supervisor (s) and the invited 'green light' observer will consult on the quality of your work. The qualification will be expressed as follows:

- Green light, the staff is satisfied with your progress and expects you to finalise your work in a satisfactory way within a time period of about 6 weeks.
- Orange light, the staff is positive about your progress but also sees serious shortcomings. You will be asked to prepare a new presentation that addresses the shortcomings. You may or may not be able to finish within a period of 6 weeks.
- Red light, the staff is not satisfied with your work. There are major flaws and a substantial revision is required. Only after these revisions have been addressed you can request your supervisor permission to organize for a new green light session.

The 'green light' procedure starts in agreement with your supervisor. In principle, the student takes the initiative and is responsible for the invitations

and for making room reservations. Consult with the supervisor(s) about the invitation of the 'green light' examiner.

7 Colloquium and Examination

After your work is assessed with a 'green light' you prepare your final work. This includes your thesis report, designs, a beamer presentation (Powerpoint or Indesign) and three posters. To help you to prepare concise and challenging posters, you are advised to image that you are participating in one or the other competition; e.g. Archiprix, IFLA, Stedelijk Interieur, Mooi Nederland. The requirements you can find on the subsequent websites.

A final presentation of your thesis results, i.e. your colloquium, your thesis report (see also point 8), posters, and a final examination by your supervisor(s) form the basis for your assessment. In case you have only one supervisor or the second supervisor is from outside the WUR, the presence of a second landscape-architecture staff member as an observer is compulsory. He/she can be the same staff member as the one present at your 'green light' presentation. The chair holder, Prof. Adri van den Brink, too will be present.

You first defend your work in a public colloquium of about 20 minutes which is followed by the oral examination. After this the supervisors, observer, and examiner determine your mark. The marking follows a standard Excel sheet. Your mark is forwarded to Lidy van der Lugt, who enters it into CSA (central student administration).

8. Hard and soft copies

You have to provide (at least) three hard copies of the thesis report. Two copies are for your supervisor(s) and one copy is for the library. The hard copy posters need to be handed in to your supervisor.

You also have to provide your thesis document in pdf format (300 dpi and 72 dpi), as well as separate folders with 10 crucial illustrations (300 dpi), the colloquium 'beamer' presentation, posters (300 dpi and 72 dpi), and an abstract in the English and Dutch language, maximum of 300 words.

The hard copy for the library has to be handed to Lidy van der Lugt and the digital materials to Monique Jansen. Lidy van der Lugt needs to upload your thesis, so provide her too with a pdf version of your thesis.

To allow sufficient preparation time for your supervisor(s) and examiners, the final thesis products need to be handed in 2 weeks before the examination date.

9. Financial compensation

You can request Audrey Raijmann (management assistant for the chair group Landscape Architecture) for a compensation of a part of your thesis costs. This is a fixed amount of money (currently Euro's 150,00). You have to provide the receipts of printing costs that are confirmed with a signature of the thesis supervisor.

10. What if there are problems?

What if you experience problems during your final thesis studies process? You might have difficulties with your health, guidance, or finances. Wageningen University has a professional Student Counselling Service (DSB) comprised of student deans, psychologists, and student physician. In the case of problems, do not delay but contact as soon as possible your study advisers (Stijn Heukels or Jan van Nieuwenhuize). Issues related to supervision and the like, can be in first instance be discussed with your supervisor(s), then with the thesis coordinator or the chair Landscape Architecture.

Note: the students have to keep in mind the general examination dates (see Study Handbook or WUR sites). Take also care that your master contract is signed (at least half a year before your final exam) and approved by the secretary of the examination committee (Environment and Landscape) and that you register for the final masters' exam (Watch out, this is not the same as registering for the final thesis!). In case of unclarity please contact the study adviser.