This document provides an overview of all thesis regulations, documents and procedures that are implemented for the EMBC+ Master Programme update December 2017
Thesis work – an introduction

Thesis work is an integrated part of the EMBC+ Master Programme and is credited for 30 ECTS. All students are doing thesis work during their fourth semester in one of the member institutes of the network (main or associated).

During thesis work students are focusing on a specific subject for a certain amount of time. The students work independently albeit under supervision of a thesis supervisor and promoter (promoter can be the supervisor). During thesis work, students are able to apply techniques and knowledge they gained during the courses in the three previous semesters. The final product is a written report stating the main results presented in a scientifically correct way. Thesis students also present and discuss their results on a thesis symposium.
THESIS WORK – TIMELINE OVERVIEW

- November Academic year 1:
  - Partners of the EMBC+ network are invited to send updated research lines in which they would like to receive thesis students to the EMBC+ coordination office.
  - Thesis research lines are checked and approved by the management board and bundled in a Thesis Research-line catalogue.
- December Academic year 1:
  - The Thesis Research-line catalogue is provided to the students which enables them to find a thesis topic that matches their interest. Students will contact potential thesis supervisors and negotiate a topic.
- May Academic year 1:
  - Students submit a thesis project to the coordination office making use of an electronic form available on their personal student page. Thesis project descriptions include a title, an abstract, a work plan, contact details of supervisor and promoter and an agreement of the promoter to welcome the student for the particular thesis subject.
  - Students can submit own thesis topics, only after approval by the EMBC+ management board. Therefore, students have to contact the EMBC+ coordination office before March of year 1, in order to discuss the feasibility of the topic, the partner, and so on.
  - Research projects are checked and approved by the management board.
- June Academic year 1:
  - Thesis students prepare a digital object about their selected thesis subject. This digital object is a short (3 minutes) multimedia object in which the topic, methodologies and work plan of the thesis are presented. These digital objects will be shown on the final thesis event and will be provided on the website. The final aim of the digital objects is to inform students about the different topics that will be studied and to give them the chance to discuss and interact about for example techniques used during the thesis work.
- July-August Academic year 1:
  - Depending on the selected thesis topic, students have the possibility to prepare the thesis work by collecting samples, literature study, first practical work,…
- January-June Academic year 2:
  - Students work full-time on the thesis project at the respective thesis institute.
- June Academic year 2
  - By the end of the first week of June (the exact date may change yearly) students submit the thesis in electronic and paper format to the EMBC coordination office. A thesis submission form is available on the personal student page. Upon submission, students receive an email of confirmation. Students who did not manage to submit the thesis in time have a second opportunity in early August.
  - Week 2 & 3 of June: The coordination office sends the thesis and thesis evaluation forms to the thesis evaluators. Each thesis is evaluated by 3 evaluators. All evaluations are collected at the coordination office. At the end of week 3, students will receive the written feedback from each of their 3 evaluators in an anonymous way; students will not be able to check which evaluator has written which comments.
  - Week 4 of June: All students come together during the thesis symposium. At this symposium each thesis is presented through an oral presentation followed by a public debate including the thesis evaluators and the public present in the room. In case evaluators cannot be present physically, interaction is possible through Video Conference. All the presentations are taped and broadcasted in real time.
  - End of week 4 of June: All presentations and thesis reports are evaluated and a final score is set jointly. This score will appear on the diploma.

Remarks:
• Students who do not submit the final thesis in June also give a presentation during the thesis symposium and will receive a score for this presentation which will be taken into account for the calculation of the final thesis score.

• Students submitting their thesis early August will go through the same evaluation process as described earlier: Three independent evaluators will read and evaluate the thesis. Depending on the rules of the host institute, an extra thesis defence can be organized locally. Final scores are agreed on and provided to the coordination office by mid September.
THESIS GUIDELINES

Publication of Research topics for theses on EMBC+ website

- Each year, thesis research lines are collected by the Coordination office. On the EMBC+ website research lines from EMBC+ Partner Universities and EMBC+ Associated Partners will be posted. Thesis research lines will be available online at all times.

- Each research line must be documented with: 1. Title, 2. Responsible scientist (+ email address), 3. Research Institute, 4. Short abstract (maximum 20 lines)

Responsibilities of thesis (co-)promoter / thesis supervisor

- **Promoter**:
  - professor or post-doc (depending on the local regulations of the host institute)
  - member of the host institute of the students (EMBC+ partner: main or associated)
  - fully responsible for the implementation of the thesis work (can be a supervisor as well)

- **Supervisor(s)**:
  - at least 3 years of relevant scientific experience
  - does not have to (but can) be a member of the host institute
  - responsible for the daily follow up of the thesis

- **Co-promoter**: if applicable,
  - this can be any person relevant for the thesis at the professor or post-doctorate level (can be a supervisor as well)
  - does not have to (but can) be a member of the host institute

Preparation of the Thesis

- EMBC+ students can start with the preparation of the thesis (literature study, introduction, collection of samples,...) during semesters 2 and 3. However, this must not interfere with the other courses planned in these semesters. In principle, semester 4 (January to June) is fully available for the thesis preparation and thesis submission. Therefore, these activities have to be supervised by the thesis promoter/supervisor. **The students, stimulated by their supervisors, will organise their thesis work in a way that enables them to submit the thesis in the first session exam period (June).** Only with motivated exceptions, thesis submission is possible in August (for concrete dates see end of this document)

- The thesis research host institute receives a contribution for the thesis organization of 400 € per student. Additional consumable costs generated by the thesis project cannot be charged neither to the student, nor to the EMBC+ central budget. At the start of semester 4, students receive 150 € from the EMBC+ coordination budget to pay the thesis mobility costs, including the travel to the thesis event in June.
Thesis format

The thesis must be written in English, and should have the format of a scientific publication.

Contents:
- Executive Summary (max 400 words)
- Abstract (max 200 words)
- Introduction & Aims
- Material and Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements
- References

Remarks on the thesis format:

The expected level and quality of the thesis should equal a scientific publication in a peer-reviewed journal. This means that the thesis is not evaluated on the basis of the number of pages, but much more on the basis of quality and conciseness of the work.

The Executive Summary (400 words) contains a summary of all relevant information documented in the thesis (introduction, M&M, Results, Conclusion).

The Abstract (200 words) is conform the summary but without detailed information about methods and results.

The Introduction should contain the state of the art of the subject, with references to relevant recent literature; when the thesis is part of a broader research project, the content of the project can be mentioned as well.

The Aim of the thesis is presented clearly (if opportune together with the working hypotheses, which have to be discussed in “Discussion” and “Summary”).

The Material & Methods section contains the design of the research: e.g. experimental design, area description, sampling methods, analysis methods, statistical design and methods,....

The Results section gives an overview of the most important data, both in written text, figures and tables. All the raw data have to be added in annex and on CD/DVD at the end of the thesis. Copies of the data will be archived at the VLIZ (Flanders Marine Institute – Data Centre). The data have to be presented in a logical order; each table, figure,... must be attended by a legend which contains all necessary information to understand the table or figure,...

The Discussion section offers a critical analysis of the interpretation of the data, compared to the available literature.

In the Conclusions, a brief summary of the main findings (original data, lesson learned,...) is given.

The Acknowledgements refer to the funding agencies, field workers,....

The Reference list is limited to the literature cited within the text.
Data ownership

- All data belong to the institute of the thesis promoter/supervisor according to the data policy between the collaborating institute partners. Depending on this data policy, EMBC+ students might send their thesis in for publication to a peer-reviewed journal (only after consultation with the thesis promoter).

- The EMBC+ coordination office is not responsible for any eventual conflicts within this context.

- Each thesis should contain the following phrase on the inside of the front page: ‘*No data can be taken out of this work without prior approval of the thesis promoter / supervisor (*)’

(*): this has to be discussed beforehand by the promoter/co-promoter and the thesis supervisor

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is considered to be a form of fraud and an irregularity within the EMBC+ study programme. To commit plagiarism is to present (parts of) a source as original and your own, without adding any acknowledgements. It can relate to different forms of production, such as texts (written, oral), images (photographs, film, graphs, diagrams, figures, etc.), databases, ideas,... When fraud is detected in the Master Thesis, the full examination board of EMBC+ will discuss and decide about the consequences for the student.

Data policy

- All thesis output will be archived on the Marine Data Archive (MDA). This archive was developed by VLIZ to provide a backup and storage system for files (data, metadata, graphics,...) related to marine sciences and if required, to be able to share them within a context with other scientists. All files stored in the MDA ‘shared’, are restricted within the context and data can only be used conform the data policy of this context.

- The Data Policy-document will be generated after the thesis has been submitted completely. The student and the thesis promoter will receive a completed and signed copy after submission.

Thesis Presentation/Defence

- **End of June**: EMBC+ students will present the results of their thesis work during the EMBC+ Closing Event, to be organized by one of the EMBC+ partner universities. Students give an oral presentation (15 minutes), and afterwards the members of the reading committee of the thesis will interview the student.

- If the thesis is not submitted during the first session exam period of the second master year, the thesis can be submitted in August. **However, students (and supervisors) will be strongly encouraged to finalise the thesis by June.**
THESIS EVALUATION:

In general:

- The Thesis manuscript counts for 75% of the final grade; the oral presentation for 25%. In case students finalize their work in August, they have to present the state of the art of their progress of the thesis in June. Even if results are still missing, the ‘oral’ part of the presentation will be graded (final grading on the thesis will not take place when the thesis work has been finalized).

- The full thesis has to be submitted in PDF file to the EMBC+ coordination office.

- The student has to submit three hard copies of the thesis to the EMBC+ coordination office. The hard copies have to be sent at the latest on the day of the submission deadline (postmark counts).

- The Examination/Reading Committee of the thesis consists of three members, containing TWO members who have to belong to one of the six EMBC+ partner institutes:

  1. Reader 1: (co-)promoter and supervisor give 1 score together (cf. evaluation form) (in case of a problem, the EMBC+ management board will negotiate)

  2. Reader 2: external to the host research group

  3. Reader 3: from the EMBC+ consortium (6 universities) but external to the host institute

  4. The final thesis score will be deliberated by all the members of the reading committee and communicated to embc@ugent.be.

- The thesis promoter proposes a possible composition of the Examination Committee of his/her Thesis in March of semester 4.

- The examination committee for each thesis has to be approved by the EMBC+ Management Board in April of semester 4.

The readers should have a Ph.D. or at least 3 years of relevant scientific experience.

(*): this has to be discussed beforehand by the promoter/co-promoter and the thesis supervisor

Concretely:

Following aspects are evaluated (including their respective weight in the score):

- Written report:
  - Title, Abstract, Summary: 10%
  - Introduction, Background and context: 15%
  - Methods: 15%
  - Results: 20%
  - Discussion: Interpretation within the research context: 30%
  - Layout: 10%

- Oral presentation:
In the scoring table below the score band from “Insufficient” to “excellent” is explained for each of the above listed aspects.

**Thesis Content:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade and score band (out of 20):</th>
<th>Insufficient</th>
<th>Sufficient to Satisfactory</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - &lt;10</td>
<td>Omission of either Abstract or Summary. Executive summary repeats the Introduction. Main conclusions are incompletely presented. Purpose is not clear &amp; focussed summary and/or abstract.</td>
<td>Abstract and summary present the methods from the study. The purpose of the study (i.e. hypothesis, objectives, questions) is specifically summarised. Summaries complicated by inclusion of much superfluous material.</td>
<td>As for Good, but description includes some material of little relevance.</td>
<td>As for Very good, but only material of particular relevance is summarised. Indicative of highly developed skills in discerning and summarising the salient outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 13</td>
<td>No reference to relevant literature. Evidence of Library skills. Presents insufficient understanding of the question. Aims and hypotheses are not stated.</td>
<td>Presents enough information to identify the topic but with little prioritising. Sparse or irrelevant referencing. Little evidence of Library skills. Only some critical awareness of results is displayed. Aims and hypotheses are not stated.</td>
<td>Description of topic demonstrates an acceptable grasp of the subject material. Evidence of a reasonable familiarity with the relevant literature. Presents a proposal for new research, but indicates limited evidence of capacity for original and logical thinking.</td>
<td>Demonstrates strong grasp of the subject matter. Comprehensive referencing indicating discerning research of the topic. Identifies the strengths and limitations of previous work, and presents a logical progression to the research topic. The aims and significance of the new work are clearly stated. Displays some original insights and capacity for creative and logical thinking.</td>
<td>Displays strong ability to organise, analyse and express ideas and arguments in an original, sophisticated and discriminating manner. Mastery of the subject matter is demonstrated through an interesting and complex account of the significance of the research topic, and the importance of the questions posed. Richly supported by relevant citation. Indicates a foretaste of an original contribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - 15</td>
<td>Poor analytical skills. Methods are sometimes used inappropriately for the particular research question. Formulic application of methods demonstrates very poor understanding of the procedures used. Level of detail is insufficient to allow a reader to repeat the procedure.</td>
<td>Materials and Methods are presented without context. Sometimes used inappropriately for the particular research question. Formulic application of methods demonstrates little understanding of the procedures used. Sufficient detail is presented to allow repetition of the procedure.</td>
<td>Sufficient detail is presented to allow repetition of the procedure. Materials and Methods chosen are presented in context. Appropriateness of the methods chosen is established. Use of the methods is mainly correct.</td>
<td>As for Good, but methods are consistently used correctly. Succession of methods employed demonstrates a clear understanding of strengths / limitations of each procedure.</td>
<td>As for Very good, but also demonstrates innovative adaptation of methods and procedures, as appropriate to the peculiarities of the research question. Selection and adaptation of methods indicates highly-developed analytical capacity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 - 17</td>
<td>Results of marginal relevance. Errors in the presentation of results. Random and undisciplined demonstration of results. Limited structure.</td>
<td>Tables &amp; Figures are presented without context. Some superficial results are included. Errors in the presentation of results. Presentation of results demonstrates only a basic understanding of relevance to the topic. Unclear presentation of results. Random layout, with some omissions or inaccuracies.</td>
<td>Appropriate Tables &amp; Figures are presented. Important results are highlighted in the text of the Results section. Correct presentation of Tables &amp; Figures (e.g. Title, axis labels, units given, appropriate captions). Few factual errors in the presentation of the results.</td>
<td>As for Good, but without errors in the interpretation of results. Presentation is stabilised to exclude superficial results. Logical sequence to presentation demonstrates a well-developed capacity to analyse issues, organise material, and present results clearly and cogently.</td>
<td>As for Very good, plus capacity for critical analysis is further demonstrated through presentation of the results in a manner that builds the scientific argument. The results section establishes the basis for discussion without itself becoming discursive.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Failure to place the topic in context resulting in a largely irrelevant discussion. Inadequate knowledge displayed related to the research question(s). Very serious omissions / errors in logic and/or major inaccuracies included in the interpretation.</td>
<td>Some relevant points presented, but discussion is descriptive rather than argumentative / analytical. Basic or confused grasp of the context. Some irrelevant material in focus and structure. Conclusions are not well argued or poorly substantiated. Lacking evidence of capacity for original and logical thinking.</td>
<td>Basic contextual understanding indicating average critical awareness and analytical skills. Pros and cons are recognised but without resolution. Blows are stated rather than developed and are insufficiently supported by evidence and relevant citation. A convincing scientific argument is not made. Weak conclusion or jumps to a conclusion.</td>
<td>Content well understood. Research outcomes are placed within the scientific context. Well supported by synthesis of evidence and relevant citation. Uses appropriate structure to resolve issues in a convincing argument. Conclusions are balanced and well-reasoned.</td>
<td>Displays penetrative insight, originality and creativity to make original arguments in own voice. Arguments are simply supported by evidence and relevant citation, reflecting deep and broad knowledge and critical insight. Evidence of extensive reading demonstrated through discursive selection and synthesis of relevant literature. Conclusions generate original outcomes for subsequent study.</td>
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### AGENDA FOR THESIS SUBMISSION AND DEFENSE 2017-2018

**First session exam period:**
- Manuscripts of the thesis (in pdf format) should be submitted to the EMBC+ coordination office by **June 4, 2018, 4 pm.** Guidelines on the submission procedure will be communicated by May 18th 2018.
- Oral presentation and defense is organized on June 25-29, 2018, in Ostend (Belgium).

**Second session exam period:**
- Manuscripts of the thesis should be submitted by **August 7, 2018, 4 pm.**
- Oral presentation of the preliminary results of the thesis presented in June 25-29, 2018 (together with all first session students).