

## 9. Independent project (degree project)

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### 9.1 Starting points

#### *Important concepts*

At SLU, we use the term *independent project* or *degree project*. The term *Master's thesis* can be used for independent projects (degree projects) of at least 30 credits at second-cycle level. In this chapter, *independent project* is used. Bachelor's essays (G2E) are at first-cycle level and Master's theses (A2E) are at second-cycle level.

#### *Policy*

As of the autumn semester 2018, the same wording is used in all course syllabuses for independent projects. The intended course learning outcomes for independent projects have been worded in line with the qualification requirements. Independent projects are handled in accordance with the same procedures and responsibilities as other higher education.

Independent projects at first-cycle level can be carried out individually or in pairs. If it is done in pairs, it must be possible to assess individual student efforts.

Independent projects at Master's level are normally carried out individually. Course coordinators can make exceptions.

#### *National regulations*

The annex to the Ordinance for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences contains a complete list of all degrees SLU offer.<sup>1</sup> "A requirement for the award of a Higher Education Diploma is completion by the student of an independent project (degree project) within the requirements of the programme."

All independent projects must follow a course syllabus, just like other courses. See chapter [6. Course syllabus and course dates](#).

#### *SLU rules*

An independent project can only be classified into one main field of study (subject). Double classification is never allowed. See SLU's examination procedures for a complete list of degrees and main fields of study. Programme syllabuses for programmes that lead to professional qualifications include specific requirements.

At SLU, we use the same wording in all course syllabuses for independent projects.<sup>2</sup> Each programme board can add programme-specific intended learning outcomes, both for professional and general

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<sup>1</sup> Ordinance for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (1993:221)

<sup>2</sup> Joint course syllabuses for independent projects. Decision by the Board of Education on 17 May 2017 (SLU ID: SLU ua 2017.3.1.1-2294).

qualifications. However, this must be done restrictively and only if it is vital to add something which is not included in the joint intended learning outcomes. The Board of Education approves any exemptions.

An independent project carried out and assessed at another higher education institution can be transferred and included in an SLU qualification if it meets the objectives and other requirements for the intended qualification.

### *Links*

[Lokal examensordning – regler för examina på grundnivå och avancerad nivå vid SLU](#) (SLU's examination procedures for first cycle and second cycle level – only in Swedish). Includes teaching and research duties for SLU's main fields of study

## 9.2 Course syllabus

### *Important concepts*

Joint independent project wording at SLU is included in Slukurs.

### *Policy*

All independent projects must be checked for plagiarism (in Urkund) and published within the framework of SLU's electronic publishing system, Epsilon. The amount of supervision (in hours) must be included under additional information in the course syllabus.

### *SLU rules*

#### *Level and scope*

Independent projects are offered at the following level and scope:

- G2E, 15 credits (Bachelor's essay)
- A2E, 30 credits (Master's project)
- A2E, 60 credits (Master's project), when decided by the programme board

#### *Entry requirements*

Entry requirements for joint independent project wording at SLU are included in Slukurs.

#### First-cycle level (G2E)

Knowledge equivalent of 120 credits, of which 60 credits within the main field of study. At least one course at specialisation level G2F must be carried out in connection with an independent project. At least one course relevant to the project subject must be carried out before carrying out an independent project.

#### Second-cycle level (A2E)

Knowledge equivalent of 30 credits at second-cycle level within the main field of study. Independent project with a pass grade at first-cycle level or a Bachelor's degree. At least one course relevant to the project subject must be carried out before carrying out an independent project. English knowledge corresponding to English 6.

Approved entry requirements exemptions:

- Veterinary students admitted to the Veterinary Medicine programme VY009.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> New programme syllabus for the Veterinary Medicine programme. Decision by the Board of Education on 12/10/2016 (SLU ID: SLU ua 2016.3.1.1-3818).

- The entry requirements for the main fields of study **business administration** (first- and second-cycle level) and **environmental sciences** (second-cycle level) must include method knowledge (at least 5 credits) in the independent project course syllabuses.<sup>4</sup>

### *Language*

#### *General qualifications*

- Bachelor's project – course language: Swedish (main rule).
- Master's project – course language: English (main rule).
- Programme boards can decide to offer Bachelor's projects in English (requires a new course syllabus).
- Programme boards can decide to offer Master's projects in Swedish (requires a new course syllabus).

#### *Professional qualifications*

- Professional programme – course language: Swedish, but the project can be written in English.

#### *Who is responsible for what?*

- The Board of Education approves joint wording for course syllabuses (joint objectives, entry requirements, etc.).<sup>5</sup>
- The Board of Education approves any exemptions. They are subsequently listed in the course syllabus in question.
- Each programme board then establishes their course syllabuses. Programme-specific intended learning outcomes may be added, but restrictively.

### *Instructions*

See chapter [6. Course syllabus and course dates.](#)

## 9.3 Work plan

### *SLU rules*

The student must write a work plan, following consultation with their supervisor, as soon as possible. This is done to facilitate planning and implementation of the independent project within the given timeframe. The work plan can include the following information:

#### *Project description:*

- Preliminary title
- Background/problem description
- Purpose and issue/hypothesis
- Material and method
- Implementation and demarcation
- Form of presentation

#### *Schedule, including the dates when the following happens:*

- project beginning;
- collection period, revision and compilation of the material, editing text/pictures;
- handing in the preliminary version to the supervisor;

<sup>4</sup> Independent projects. Decision by the Board of Education on 13/12/2017 (SLU ID: SLU.ua 2017.1.1.1-4818).

<sup>5</sup> Joint course syllabuses for independent projects. Decision by the Board of Education on 17/05/2017 (SLU ID: SLU ua 2017.3.1.1-2294).

- handing in the project to the examiner;
- presentation preparation (assessment) and public discussion and examination;
- final presentation;
- possible completion and handing in the final version to the examiner.

#### *Change of independent project subject*

- If there are special reasons, a student may be allowed to change subject (within the main field of study) during the current course date. This is dealt with in the same way as a revision of the work plan.
- Possibilities for changing independent project subject are limited by the availability of supervisors.

#### *Deadline*

- The deadline specified in the work plan counts as the first exam session;
- An exam session is regarded as spent if the project is not handed in by the deadline specified in the work plan;
- The work plan may not limit a student's right to submit their independent project even if the schedule is not followed.

#### *After a course ends*

If a student did not achieve a pass grade, occasional supervision may be offered after the course ends. Regardless of whether the student receives further supervision or not, they are entitled to a renewed final assessment.

#### *Who is responsible for what?*

The supervisor confirms that the work plan has been written in consultation with the student. The student and course coordinator, who represent SLU, approve the work plan.

If the work plan cannot be followed, the student and supervisor must jointly revise it or write a new one. The supervisor and student must propose the revised work plan and notify the course coordinator. The course coordinator must approve a revised work plan.

#### *Links*

There are examples of work plans and agreements between external partners/organisations on the SLU web.

## 9.4 Implementation organisation

#### *Important concepts*

Independent projects can be carried out in two ways: **with** a joint course start, teaching steps and joint conclusion or **without**. Both alternatives must meet the objectives and requirements in the course syllabus in question. Also see Instructions.

#### *Policy*

Before the beginning an independent project, students have the right to be clearly informed of what is expected of them and what support is available. This applies to teaching, number of supervision hours, library support and any other resources such as laboratory, computer and workplace access, etc. It cannot be expected that the student carries out other tasks than those connected to an independent project and the intended learning outcomes in the course syllabus.

## *SLU rules*

### *Admission, registration*

A student is registered on an independent project course after their registration form (individual or course-date specific) is signed by the course coordinator or the person delegated by the course coordinator. It must also be checked if the student meets the entry requirements.

### *Grading criteria*

There must be clear grading criteria for independent projects, just as for other courses. Each programme board decides whether to use the SLU-wide grading criteria for independent projects. The grading criteria will state if it is possible to receive higher than a pass grade (4 and 5).

The deadline specified in the work plan counts as the first exam session, but the work plan may be revised. If there are special reasons (see section [8.6 Special reasons](#)), or other reasons related to the project which are beyond the student's control, and the revision is done before the original deadline for the project, it must still be possible to receive higher than a pass grade (4 and 5, where applicable).

### *Student remuneration*

If the student receives financial remuneration from SLU or externally, this is regulated in a special agreement. Where applicable, this is an agreement between the student and the external partner.

### *Supervision*

A student has the right to 10 hours of supervision for an independent project of 15 credits, and 20 hours for a project of 30 credits. Supervision can occur individually or in a group.

### *Change of supervisor*

- If there are special reasons, a student may be allowed to change supervisor. The student must submit a written request, specifying their reasons, to the course coordinator (or equivalent), who then decides on a possible change of supervisor, unless the head of department has said otherwise.
- The possibility of changing supervisors is limited by the availability of supervisors.

### *Presentation*

Examination formats and requirements to pass a course are listed in the course syllabus.

- all independent projects must include a **summary in English**;
- at second-cycle level, all independent projects must include a **popular science description** in Swedish or English;
- all independent projects must be **presented orally**, and each student must at least **publicly discuss and examine** one other independent project.

### *Assessment and grade*

The same examination and grading deadlines that apply to other courses apply to independent projects as well. See chapter [8. Examination \(tests\) and compulsory steps](#). In addition, examiners can decide that completion is allowed after the deadline has passed, and that it counts as part of the examination session. Such supplementary work may affect the grade for the independent project, provided it is done before the grading decision has been made.

Independent projects must be reported in Ladok with the original title and the title in English (translation). This means that for projects written in English, only the English title is required. For projects written in Swedish, a translation of the title in English is required.

### *Publication*

Independent projects with a pass grade must be published in SLU's electronic publishing tool, Epsilon.

The SLU library can provide document templates and publishing advice. See [Annex 7: What must be included on the front and title page of independent projects \(degree projects\) at SLU](#) to learn more.

The course coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the administrator receives the final version of the passed project. The administrator uploads projects with a pass grade in Epsilon, and the library reviews bibliographic information before publication.

The supervisor or external partner cannot control the process of making the independent project public since it is in opposition to the Freedom of the Press Act and the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act. In exceptional cases, publication can be postponed (reading embargo):<sup>6</sup>

In principle, independent projects should be published immediately after receiving a pass grade. In exceptional cases, publication may be delayed for twelve (12) months. The relevant department decides what is best. If there are special reasons, publication can be delayed over 12 months. In such cases, publication is delayed gradually – 6 months at a time – until the purpose for the delay has been resolved. Publication delays over 12 months require a special decision from the faculty in question. The work plan can include possible publication delay.

*Changes* to independent projects published in Epsilon are only allowed in special cases. Examples: fact or format errors which affect readability, or offences to the law. Supplementary documentation in the form of corrections (an errata page) should be chosen instead of changing the file.

Publications can only be removed from the web (depublication) completely if there are special reasons. Special reasons for depublication can be plagiarism or offences to the law. [Annex 8: Depublication process for pdf-files already published in Epsilon](#) contains information on work flow and who does what. [Annex 9: Changing a pdf file already published in Epsilon](#) describes how to make changes to an already published file.

*Who is responsible for what?*

#### *Student*

The student is responsible for writing a work plan and schedule in consultation with their supervisor. The student carries out their independent project with the aim to meet the intended learning outcomes. The student initiates meetings with their supervisor in accordance with the stipulated supervision hours (10 hours/15 credits or 20 hours/30 credits). A student's right to supervision only concerns a specific course date.

#### *Supervisor*

The supervisor's function is to supervise the student to help them meet the intended learning outcomes. The supervisor should inform the student of the available number of supervision hours, help them plan their independent project and co-write their work plan. A supervisor can supervise several students within the same course date. In certain cases, a student is allowed several supervisors – one must act as the principal supervisor, the others as assistant supervisors. If necessary, the supervisor must submit bases for assessment to the examiner. If a student did not achieve a pass grade, occasional supervision may be offered after the course ends.

#### *Head of department*

The head of department at the department where the principal supervisor works is responsible for ensuring that there are supervision resources.

#### *Examiner*

The examiner and supervisor cannot be the same person. The examiner assesses and grades a student's independent project, using the intended course learning outcomes and grading criteria as the

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<sup>6</sup> Independent projects. Decision by the Board of Education on 06/09/2017, Section 47/17 (SLU ID: SLU ua 2017.1.1.1-3635).

starting point. The examiner must make the grading decision without any influence from the supervisor. If necessary, the examiner can require bases for assessment from the supervisor. If several students have written an independent project, the assessment of student performance must be individual. If necessary, the examiner may request that each student provides a report of their individual work on an independent project.

Students who do not receive a pass grade for the course date in question have the right to be reassessed in the same manner as for other courses.

#### *Course coordinator*

The course coordinator has a general role and coordinating function at department level, and they approve the work plan. The course coordinator is contacted if, for example, there are cooperation problems or if the student wishes to change subject or supervisor. The course coordinator is also responsible for applying course evaluation procedures on independent projects.

#### *External partners*

Agreements with external partners are made through separate agreements, and between SLU and the partner in question, not the student (any remuneration exempted). In cases where the student carries out their project externally and has an external supervisor, they must also have a principal supervisor at SLU who is responsible for ensuring that the project is carried out in accordance with SLU guidelines and a course syllabus.

#### *Instructions*

Independent projects can be included in the following:

a) a course **with** joint beginning, teaching steps and conclusion.

In courses with established course components, supervision can be individual or in a group, as well as scheduled.

b) a course **without** a joint beginning and teaching steps.

It is very important to write and follow a work plan when students carry out an independent project alone without an established course date (e.g. within a research project, abroad or with an external client). Other teaching steps may also be included in these independent projects; the work plan states how to carry them out.

#### *Archiving*

As of the autumn semester 2018, all independent projects are digitally archived in Public 360.<sup>7</sup> The published version in Epsilon is downloaded automatically. This means that independent projects published in Epsilon will be preserved. Preservation occurs in accordance with the governing document Strategi för bevarande av elektroniska handlingar (strategy for preserving electronic documents).<sup>8</sup> The responsible department is responsible for archiving and ensuring that independent projects are published in Epsilon, i.e. meet the publication and archiving requirements. The library is responsible for technological solutions.

#### *Links*

SLU's document templates for student works contain the following:

- front and title pages (Swedish)
- front and title pages (English)

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<sup>7</sup> Decision by the head of university administration on 12/06/2018 (SLU ID: SLU ua 2018.2.1.2-1923).

<sup>8</sup> Strategi för bevarande av elektroniska handlingar (strategy for preserving electronic documents) (SLU.ua.2016.2.1.2-1990-2),

- content/insert (regardless of language)
- instructions for the insert template.