

Syllabus

for course at advanced level

Master's Degree Thesis (one year) in Business Administration
Examensarbete i företagsekonomi för magisterexamen

**15.0 Higher Education
Credits**
15.0 ECTS credits

Course code:	FE4430
Valid from:	Autumn 2016
Date of approval:	2016-06-13
Department	Stockholm Business School
Main field:	Företagsekonomi
Specialisation:	A1E - Second cycle, contains degree project for Master of Arts/Master of Science (60 credits)

Decision

This syllabus was approved by the Educational Committee of the Stockholm Business School, Stockholm University, 2016-06-13.

Prerequisites and special admittance requirements

15 credits from the first semester within the Master's programme in Accounting.

Course structure

Examination code	Name	Higher Education Credits
4430	Master's Degree Thesis (one year) in Business Administration	15

Course content

A one-year master's thesis is characterised by its close connection to current research within one particular subject area. The course is an opportunity for students to deepen their knowledge of the on-going discussion in the field of research the thesis bears upon and to formulate a research contribution.

The course consists of the empirical and theoretical study of a problem in business administration, the study of the philosophy of science and research methodology as relevant to the student's own thesis work as well as the writing of preparatory assignments, reviews and a master thesis.

Learning outcomes

Intended Learning Outcomes

The overall aim of the one-year master's thesis course is for students to practice to independently and on the basis of scientific theory and methodology deepen their understanding of the on-going discussion in the research field the thesis concerns and to formulate a research contribution with potential relevance for the discussion and knowledge formation in that field.

The intended learning outcomes are based on the demands on knowledge, skills and approach drawn up for the Master's Degree in the System of Qualifications of the Higher Education Ordinance, supplement 2. After completion of the one-year master's thesis course students are expected to be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding

1. Independently identify, develop and formulate a business related problem grounded in prior research.

Competence and Skill

2. Critically discuss, analyse and apply theory to the problematising process; to the analysis of empirical data and the production of a research contribution.
3. Thoroughly explain and motivate the choice of research approach, using arguments based on theory of science and research methodology.
4. Demonstrate accuracy and rigor in terms of scientific akribi, academic formalities and specified time frames.

Judgement and Approach

5. Make a scientifically based attempt at producing a research contribution to prior research within the subject of the thesis.
6. Evaluate one's own work and its contribution to knowledge with respect to scientific, societal and ethical aspects.

Education

The course consists of workshops and seminars, three individual tutorials (three hours in total) and a significant portion of self-study on the part of students. Assessment for the course will be continuous and is based upon peer reviews, seminar activities and the final thesis.

The course workload comprises 400 hours equivalent to 15 ECTS (40 hours per week equivalent to 1,5 ECTS).

The language of instruction is Swedish or English.

As a rule the thesis is written in groups of two. If specific and valid reasons exist, the supervisor decides whether an exception should be made, allowing the thesis to be written individually or in a group of three.

The thesis should in all areas (problematization, literature review, theoretical framework, analysis/interpretation, discussions and conclusions) be closely linked to research articles published in scholarly peer-reviewed academic journals.

The thesis may comprise a maximum of 15 000 words, excluding abstract/summary, table of contents, notes, references and appendices.

It is not possible to change supervisor during the course. A student wishing to change supervisor must reregister for the next thesis course and upon availability enrol in a thesis group.

Forms of examination

The main part of the examination focuses the finished thesis, supplemented by a lesser part based on peer reviews. The assessment tasks are weighted in relation to their importance to the overall course assessment. The results from the assessment tasks are added up to a final course score that is translated into a final grade.

Assessment tasks

The course contains the following weighted assessment tasks:

- Write two individual peer reviews of and criticize a course colleague's thesis manuscript as well as active participation in seminars: assesses intended learning outcomes 1–6; constitute 20% of total course points.
- Write a thesis: assesses intended learning outcomes 1–6; constitutes 80% of total course points.

Grading

After completion of the course, students will receive grades on a scale related to the intended learning outcomes of the course. Passing grades are A, B, C, D and E. Failing grades are Fx and F. A grade Fx can be completed for a grade E.

The thesis course comprises 0–100 course points. Receiving a final passing grade requires ≥ 50 course points and ≥ 50 points from assessment task 2. The scale for the final grade is tied to fixed score intervals: A: 90–100; B: 80–89; C: 70–79; D: 60–69; E: 50–59; Fx: 45–49; F: 45.

All assessment tasks are assessed on a 100-point scale. Each assessment task is awarded 0–100 points. The score for a single assessment task is the number of points multiplied by its percentage weight, and the combined total of score points for all weighted assessment tasks for the course are added up to a final score between 0 and 100 which then translates into a corresponding final course grade between A and F.

The student is responsible for completing the course's assessment tasks: that a sufficient amount of course points is earned and a passing course grade is obtained.

A passing grade (A–E) in the course is obtained when a student has achieved ≥ 50 course points and ≥ 50 points from assessment task 2.

A failing grade (Fx or F) in the course is obtained when a student has not achieved ≥ 50 course points:

- If 45–49 course points are achieved, a grade Fx is obtained, which can be completed for a grade E within 3 semester weeks after receiving instructions from the examiner. If the complementary task is not completed within this time limit, the course grade Fx is confirmed, implying that the student must re-register for the course and that previously acquired course points are forfeited. Note that first-time registered students have priority access to the thesis groups.
- If 45 course points are achieved, a grade F is obtained, implying that the student must re-register for the course and that previously acquired course points are forfeited.

Re-registration implies that first-time registered students have priority access to the thesis course's group registration.

Students receiving a passing grade may not retake the examination or complete the thesis to attain a higher grade. A passing grade may not be turned into a failing grade upon the request of a student.

Assessment areas, assessment criteria and levels of performance

To assess students' performance in the course's eight assessment areas (expressed as abilities) with associated assessment criteria and quality levels have been defined, of which three are used in assessment task 1 and five in assessment task 2.

Assessment task 1: Individual peer review and opposition

Assessment task 1 is examined by the supervisor.

Assessment area 1: argumentative ability (30/100 points)

- Assessment criterion: ability to logically and on scientific grounds argue for the thesis' merits and shortcomings.
- The performance level is specified in the range of 0 – 30 points.

Assessment area 2: critical ability (30/100 points)

- Assessment criterion: ability to critically reflect upon and evaluate the different parts of the thesis.
- The performance level is specified in the range of 0 – 30 points.

Assessment area 3: constructive ability (40/100 points)

- Assessment criterion: ability to give constructive and quality improving criticism on the reviewed thesis.
- The performance level is specified in the range of 0 – 40 points.

Assessment task 2: Thesis

Each of the following five assessment areas includes a critical-constructive ability to relate and evaluate from different theoretical perspectives and with distance and self-awareness evaluate ideas, beliefs, opinions and approaches; and independently think, research, experiment, decide and create.

Assessment area 1: ability to problematise (20/100 points)

- Assessment criterion: ability to rationalize, discuss, formulate and motivate a problem both theoretically and empirically to subsequently identify the research question and/or derive relevant hypotheses to finally formulate a purpose and a contribution to knowledge.
- The performance level is specified in the range of 0 – 20 points.

Assessment area 2: theoretical awareness (20/100 points)

- Assessment criterion: ability to critically pursue theoretical arguments and justifiably use theoretical concepts when problematising, when evaluating previous research, and when developing a theoretical framework relevant to the research question or hypotheses underlying the thesis.
- The performance level is specified in the range of 0 – 20 points.

Assessment area 3: methodological awareness (20/100 points)

- Assessment criterion: ability to systematically pursue scientific, methodological, research ethical and source critical reasoning; and to apply these in practical research as well as in writing.
- The performance level is specified in the range of 0 – 20 points.

Assessment area 4: analytical ability (30/100 points)

- Assessment criterion: ability to rely on relevant and appropriate methods of analysis to make sense of the data collected; to apply and engage theoretical ideas, concepts, and reasoning with the findings from the analysis of empirical data when discussing and concluding towards the production of and contribution to knowledge.
- The performance level is specified in the range of 0 – 30 points.

Assessment area 5: language use (10/100 points)

- Assessment criterion: ability to express herself/himself in writing, describing events, telling a story, structuring arguments, organising a text for the most effective flow, mastering language, grammar, and scientific formalities.
- The performance level is specified in the range of 0 – 10 points.

The assessment criteria are further developed in the study guide.

Grading Criteria

The following grading criteria designate the qualitative demands made upon the student's collected course performance, and that reflects the degree to which the student meets the learning outcomes. A higher grade-level presupposes the abilities at lower levels.

A (Excellent) ☐

The student demonstrates ability to evaluate and relate to the content of the course from a comprehensive, critically reflective perspective, as well as to transfer and apply insights in new, meaningful contexts.

B (Very Good) ☐

The student demonstrates ability to, from an overarching and coherent perspective of the field, understand and use concepts to explain how different aspects of the course relate to each other, interconnect and become meaningful.

C (Good) ☐

The student demonstrates ability to discuss the content, tasks and complex issues dealt with in the course from several well-developed but mainly independent perspectives.

D (Satisfactory) ☐

The student demonstrates satisfactory ability to discuss the content, tasks and complex issues dealt with in the course in a way that, albeit in-depth and elaborate, is decidedly one-dimensional.

E (Sufficient) ☐

The student demonstrates sufficient ability to discuss the content, tasks and complex issues dealt with in the course in a way that is decidedly one-dimensional.

Fx (Fail) ☐

The student's knowledge, skills and abilities display minor flaws, overall or in significant parts.

F (Fail) ☐

The student's knowledge, skills and abilities display major flaws, overall or in significant parts.

Interim

If the course is discontinued, or its contents are substantially altered, students have the right to be examined according to this syllabus once per semester for three further semesters.

Limitations

This course may not be included in a degree together with a course, taken in Sweden or elsewhere, of identical or partially similar content.

Misc

Student who does not complete the thesis work on time is not entitled to additional supervision time. The student is however always entitled to have the thesis work assessed at subsequent examination sessions. Therewith, the student loses the possibility to get a higher grade than C.

Exemption from an assessment task is granted if the student presents a valid reason and a written certification (such as illness and a medical certificate), whereupon the student may re-sit the assessment task at a later date decided by the course director, and while maintaining previously acquired course points.

Application for exemption should be submitted to the Director of studies (Student Services) immediately after, or during planned absences well before, the date when the assessment task is carried out. A granted exemption expires at the end of the immediately following semester. Further information can be found on the school's webpage, under the heading Examination.

Required reading

Recommended reading

Bryman, Alan. Social Research Methods. Oxford: Oxford University Press, latest edition.

Bryman, Alan and Bell, Emma. Business Research Methods. Oxford: Oxford University Press, latest edition.

Farquhar, Jillian Dawes. Case Study Research for Business. London: Sage, latest edition.

Swanborn, Peter. Case Study Research, What, Why and How? London: Sage, latest edition.