Handout for the Appraisal of Bachelor- and Master Theses

Aims:
- a more consistent and fairer appraisal of theses with the aid of a list of criteria
- increase of transparency of the requirements for a bachelor- or master thesis on the students' part
- increase of transparency in finding the appropriate grades

1. Grading scale in literal sense

**Very good**: a really outstanding performance that does not only show no deficiencies in the below mentioned criteria, but gives the supervisor as well as the appraiser an excellent impression.

**Good**: a performance that is settled above the average requirements/achievements, and is recognizable and presentable – also to the outside – as „good performance“ concerning the quality of the content, methods, individuality, and moreover, presentation and outer form.

**Satisfactory**: a performance that achieves the required objective in „a satisfactory degree“, but showing certain deficiencies

**Sufficient**: a performance that fulfills the requirements just sufficiently, but differs in several parts from the expectations

For bachelor- and master theses the whole-numbered grades 1 (very good), 2 (good), 3 (satisfactory), 4 (sufficient) and 5 (failed) are admitted as well as the intermediate grades 1.3, 1.7, 2.3, 2.7, 3.3 and 3.7.

2. Profile of requirements

By completing a bachelor- or master thesis the student provides the proof that he/she is able to work under guidance on a given task in a scientific way. Neither bachelor- nor master thesis have to show a student’s own scientific research performance. On the basis of the project specifications of the advisor, the student shall adapt the subject, i. e. do the practical work, look for additional literature, concepts and methods, analyze the data and apply them to the own issues.

3. Checklist for the appraisal
   i. **Overall impression**
      The student has worked independently after a short training phase.
      He/she has submitted own ideas.
      He/she has carried out active literature search to solve problems or to show new methods.
      He/she has brought new impulses in the discussion with the advisor.
      He/she has accepted proposals and hints and was capable of implementing them (or to make alternative proposals).
      He/she has been capable of constructively presenting the results in talks or presentations.
      He/she has worked efficiently and in compliance with a time schedule.
ii. **Practical work**
The student was capable of reproducing practical work independently after demonstration,
He/she has conducted the practical work correctly and faultlessly, according to usual standards.
He/she has worked properly and in compliance with safety regulations.
He/she could modify methods and protocols usefully to optimize the results.
He/she could interpret the results and plan subsequent actions.
He/she has learnt from mistakes.
He/she has (where appropriate) worked cooperatively in teams.

iii. **Written paper**
The summary is accurate and comprehensible.
Objectives, achieved results and methodological assessment of the obtained successes (or failures) are clearly worked out.
The results are consistent and reflect the introduction or the task, respectively.
The paper is well-structured and meaningfully organized and contains all necessary information (structure of the chapters, table of contents, reference list, list of abbreviations etc.)
Methods are described sufficiently precise and reproducible.
Data are presented and interpreted correctly (labels and legends of figures and tables, error bars in graphs etc.).
The discussion shows an independent assessment of the results and a meaningful placement in the context of literature.
Appropriate usage of specialistl terminology.
The paper is almost free of spelling and grammatical errors, contains full sentences etc. (proofreading by a third party is recommended).

iv. **Further criteria of appraisal**
Difficulty of the task. When applying the grading scale, the difficulty of the task, the given context of the work and the amount of the task should be taken into consideration. Not all subjects are equivalent, but the person who is responsible for the task should be aware of the complexity of the subject. In some cases, unforeseen or unpredictable problems occur in the course of the work. Some works are embedded in long-established processes in a working group, others enter new territories. These facts should be adequately taken into account during the appraisal.

This handout has been adopted by the Academic Committee of the Department of Biology on January 27th, 2014.

Jörg Simon
Chairman