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Projects and exam assignments; types and sizes

Guidelines for students and teachers.

The following is not a set of rules, but guidelines for supervisors, teachers and students to define the right scope for their project or exam assignment.

Workload expectations should always be discussed with the relevant course teacher or project supervisor.

The guidelines for the workload are based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), in which workload is the same for all levels of education. Consequently, this guide is relevant for all teachers and students on the IT University (Bachelor, Master of Science, Master and Diploma).

1 ECTS standard

In the ECTS system, 1 ECTS equals 30 work hours. A year of full-time studies is 60 ETCS, which amounts to 1.650 work hours per year[1]. Workload includes every relevant activity within a course or project - preparation time, confrontation time, exercises, research and writing and studying for the exam[2].

A student following 30 ECTS of activities per semester is a full-time student.

2 Course workload

The IT University has courses that span 12 (Board of Studies EBUSS) and 14 weeks (Board of Studies ITU). This means that 45 work-weeks per year is an artificial comparison between full-time employment and student life. The distribution of time spent during a semester is very much dependent on the specific course, teacher and student.

A 7,5 ECTS course should represent around 206 hours of activity, total. It is difficult to be more specific when speaking about all courses, but it serves as a basis for calculation. If we assume it will take 40 hours to prepare for exam in a 14 week course, this leaves an average of 11,8 work hours per week in those 14 weeks.

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[1] ECTS Users' Guide, p. 59; http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learningpolicy/ doc/ects/guide_en.pdf

[2] "Course descriptions contain 'learning outcomes' (i.e. what students are expected to know, understand and be able to do) and workload (i.e. the time students typically need to achieve these outcomes)."; http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc48_en.htm

We encourage all course teachers to estimate time for reading, exercises, assignments, reports and other course activities.

3 Types of written work

The IT University has three types of written work that are relevant to distinguish. We will use these terms throughout the text:

- **Projects**: sometimes termed "individual projects". A project is not related to a course. It is an independent achievement, where the goals and contents are formulated solely by the student(s), but with an attached supervisor. Projects are examined as exam type D. The thesis is considered a special kind of project, and is examined as exam type E.

- **Exam assignment**: Exam assignments conclude a course or a project as the final submission, and it will be a basis for the examination. In a course the exam assignment can stand alone as the sole basis for the examination (Exam type C) or it can be followed by an oral exam (Exam type D). Exam assignments in courses will usually not be as free-form as in projects, as it may have a predefined problem or a set of limits that align the learning outcomes of the assignment closely with the course contents.

- **Mandatory assignments**: smaller assignments that are not a basis for the exam itself - instead they serve to qualify the student to take the exam. This is the main distinction between mandatory assignments and exam assignments. Mandatory assignments can take many forms, and while they should be included in the general workload assessments, the guidelines for written material described here *do not* apply to mandatory assignments.

4 Project sizes

In the following, we assume standard pages of 2.400 units per page, including spaces and notes. We get an accurate number of standard pages by dividing the total number of units (with spaces) in a document by the relevant number above.

The body of a project constitutes the standard page range.

The body of the project is composed of the preface, all original text that is part of the original argumentation and message, plus any citations.

The body does not include front page, colophon, table of contents, abstract, list of references/bibliography or appendices.Illustrations and charts are not included in the body. There is no upper or lower limit to the page span of these elements.

The exact division can be tricky at times, but a general rule of thumb is that the body is the line of argumentation, while the appendix material serves to substantiate the argument(s).

The size of a project varies, depending on the subject area and on the balance between text and production.

These are the **recommended standard page spans for projects without at ITU:**

- 7.5 ECTS project standard page span: 15 pages + 2 additional pages per group member (also counting the first member)
- 15 ECTS project standard page span: 20 pages + 4 additional pages per group member (also counting the first member)

Example: In a 7.5 ECTS project with 2 group members, 15 + (2 x 2) = 19 pages is the standard page span. If one person wrote this project alone, the upper limit would be 17 pages.

A +/- 10% margin is considered within the normal range. These limits are not firm, and can be tailored to fit the situation, but it is a strong recommendation that any deviations be made clear by the supervisor.

4.1 Exam assignments in courses

The recommendations for exam assignments in courses do not differ much from projects in terms of size., but more in scope of subject; it is often specified beforehand by the course teacher whether production is a part of the project, and how much emphasis this should be given.

The size of an exam assignment in a course can be assessed from the weight in relation to the full course ECTS. Typically, a 15 ECTS course entails anexam assignment that can be assessed to some fraction of the full activity weight.

If, for example, the weight of the exam assignment is set to 7.5 ECTS of the 15 ECTS course, the size and scope can be assumed to be that of a 7.5 ECTS project. Assignments sizes in other distributions can be made from this basis.

4.2 Thesis, bachelor and final project

The thesis, bachelor and final project (for Diploma and Master students) are special cases. The general rules become even looser when the thesis is in question. They describe a work of a highly independent and individual nature, where the sufficient workload, page limit and curriculum is decided by what is appropriate.

These are the recommended standard page spans for a thesis report on the MSc programmes:

- Digital Innovation & Management (DIM): 60 pages + 20 extra pages per group member (i.e if a student writes the thesis alone, the recommended number of pages is 60)
- Digital Design and Communication (DDK): 75
- Software Development and Technology (SDT): 50
- Games: 50 -75
- E-Business (EBUSS): 50 -150

A +/- 10% margin on these page spans is considered within the normal range.

The page span and distribution of workload between research, production and text should be closely discussed and renegotiated with the supervisor, with the specific ambitions of the thesis in consideration.

The scope of Bachelor, Diploma and Master projects are more comparable to regular projects of similar size. The sizes given for projects (as described above under "4 Project sizes") can be used as a jump-off point to the discussion with the supervisor.

4.3 Anatomy of an exam assignment

The work process can be divided into these three parts:

- Research - reading the curriculum and empirical studies (any activities that does not directly produce elements of the hand-in)
- Production (examples: a website, software, graphics, a game, 3D models, video or sound production, a concept)
- Text (the central body of work in any hand-in)

All exam assignments will have a text part, but production or empirical studies are not a requirement.

4.4 Production

Production affects the sizeof an exam assignment, and can reduce the page limits. How much is heavily dependent on programme tradition. In software development and games, the emphasis on production is generally more significant than in business and design & communication.

As a general recommendation, the reduction of an exam assignmentinvolving production is in the range of 20% to 50% of the above limits, and is discussed between the students and the course teacher or supervisor.

4.5 Curriculum

The rule of thumb for minimum curriculum pages in projects is as follows:

- 500 pages + 300 additional pages per 7,5 ECTS

Example: In a 15 ECTS project, the guideline for curriculum range would be 500 + (300 x 2) = 1.100 pages.

This guideline is extremely flexible depending on the subject area and educational level. It is to be expected that difficult literature (for example of a highly technical, philosophical or mathematical nature) requires time to understand, which can dramatically reduce the number of curriculum pages for a project.

The above curriculum guidelines are also valid for exam assignments in a course (as the course literature itself can be part of the curriculum), but a reduction in curriculum can be relevant when a production is involved.