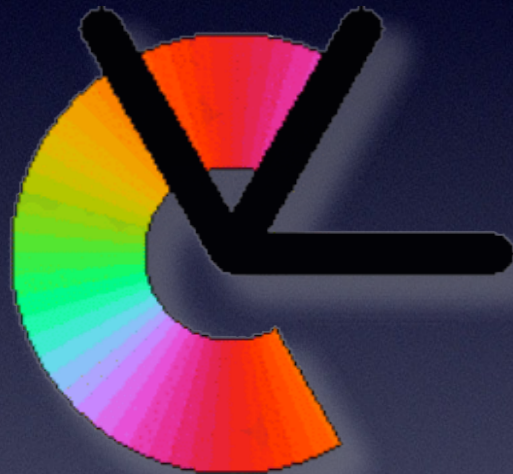


# Masters Thesis Supervision

Introductory lecture



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# Why this course?

- There are many master students each year
- During your PhD studies you will supervise many masters (on average 15)
- We need to maximise utility of supervision:  
$$U = \text{benefit}/\text{time\_spent}$$
- Good ideas on supervision should be shared

# Who is here?

- Examiners: Per-Erik, Maria
- PhD students: Karl, Johan, Zhanyu, Yushan, Emil
- Who supervises master students now?
- Who wants to take this course?

# Why this course?

- This course is meant to generate reflection and feedback on the supervision process.
  - for the supervisors (PhD students)
  - for the examiners (e.g. me, Maria, Mårten...)
  - for Master thesis coordinator (i.e. me)
  - for the director of study (i.e. Lasse).

# Course Format

- Examination in the form of a written report.  
Pass gives 3hp.
- Three seminars with active participation
- We will discuss contents today finalize desired contents for the report at the second seminar.
- During the third seminar we will discuss the reports.

# What is the supervisor role?

There are four people (or more) involved in an external masters thesis at ISY:

- The master student (or two students)
- The company supervisor
- The examiner
- The ISY supervisor

Who is responsible for what?

# Schedule

- Report should be handed in once the student has passed. e.g. sometime in August.
- If the student is delayed, you may also finalize and hand in the report in October (even though the student has not finished).
- Second seminar in April (after students half-time meeting). Date: TBA
- Final seminar in October where reports are discussed.

# Frequently Asked Questions

Last time the course ran, the report content also had an item for a supervision FAQ

Let us look at the FAQ items I received from 2016...



# FAQ 1

When I started supervising Master's students I would have liked to know the answer to this question:

**Q1:** The student's writing style is poor. What do I do?

## **Answer**

If you understand what is being said, do not waste time marking all spelling errors. Point out spelling errors and suggest better technical terms if necessary.

As early as possible point the student to good spell-checkers and grammar correction tools (e.g. [grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com))

Do not try to make the text nicer for the student. What is important is the content of the work.

# FAQ 2

When I started supervising Master's students I would have liked to know the answer to this question:

**Q2:** What is the most important thing to look out for or keep track of?

## **Answer**

I think the most important thing is to have a regular "heartbeat" from the student to quickly recognize if something is going badly. If the thesis is done externally it is also, from experience, very important to make sure that the student is getting appropriate support from the company in the form of time and equipment.

# FAQ 3

When I started supervising Master's students I would have liked to know the answer to this question:

**Q3:** What do I do when my student does not listen to my advice, or does not understand the difference between advice and required changes?

## **Answer**

Probably the best method is to have an in-person meeting, where the important parts are strongly emphasized.

# FAQ 4

When I started supervising Master's students I would have liked to know the answer to this question:

**Q4:** How to explain what is expected in related work and background without giving explicit references and thus answers ?

## **Answer**

Point the student to an earlier masters thesis with a good related work section.

Use guiding questions which force the student to think more widely and abstractly while requiring answers which are effectively answered by references.

# Masters thesis supervision (3hp)

## Aims

The aims of this course is to make the course participants reflect on the masters thesis supervision process in order to make it more efficient. This will save future time and effort for all involved.

## Method

Each participant makes an activity log, and then writes a reflection report on the supervision process after the master student is finished. During the second seminar we will discuss how to write these reports. The reports are then discussed at a final seminar.

## Examination

Written report, active participation at seminars

# Masters thesis supervision (3hp)

## The suggested report contents

Things to reflect on include:

1. the student's plan, and feedback given on plan  
what was the purpose of the feedback? how did it work?
2. meetings with student
3. half-time checkup and feedback given
4. feedback given by supervisor on thesis
5. examiner's final feedback on thesis
6. the presentation seminar given by the student

For each of these consider: purpose of the activity? How effective was it? Possible improvements?

The reflection document shall be written according to a standard template (not finalized yet), and will be evaluated with pass or fail. Upon a fail one additional opportunity is given to update the document.

# 2016 Report content

1. Analysis and reflection on a number of **topics** (e.g. the thesis plan)
2. For each topic
  - a. Describe topic briefly, with emphasis on your participation
  - b. Estimate time spent
  - c. Describe what works well
  - d. Describe what is problematic, and why
3. We will finalize the report structure at seminar 2.