

# Group supervision of master thesis students

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# Context

Total time for supervision, grading AND defense is 15 norm hours!

More pair-writing of the thesis to be encouraged

On-time bonus is key part of teaching income of IMM; thesis is reason no 1 for finishing degrees late

Method courses should set the stage for thesis

Cand. Merc. Profiles have distinct by methods, theory, topics

Cand. merc .and negot. are on-campus, full-time programs

→ meeting times are mandatory for students

At cand merc, thesis process is already structured by several MANDATORY deadlines

Course description & info on profile homepage = binding framework

# Pedagogical advantages

Enhanced reflexivity – learning from role models & failures of others

Enhanced language awareness

Deeper engagement with theoretical/ methodological/ analytical questions

Shared learning environment encourages students to ask questions

More rewriting of texts – improved texts (depends on supervision model)

Social connections – next to no writer's block

Decreased likelihood of plagiarism

Better time management & motivation

# Practical advantages

Less meeting time used

Less time for scheduling

Less emails – and mainly group responses

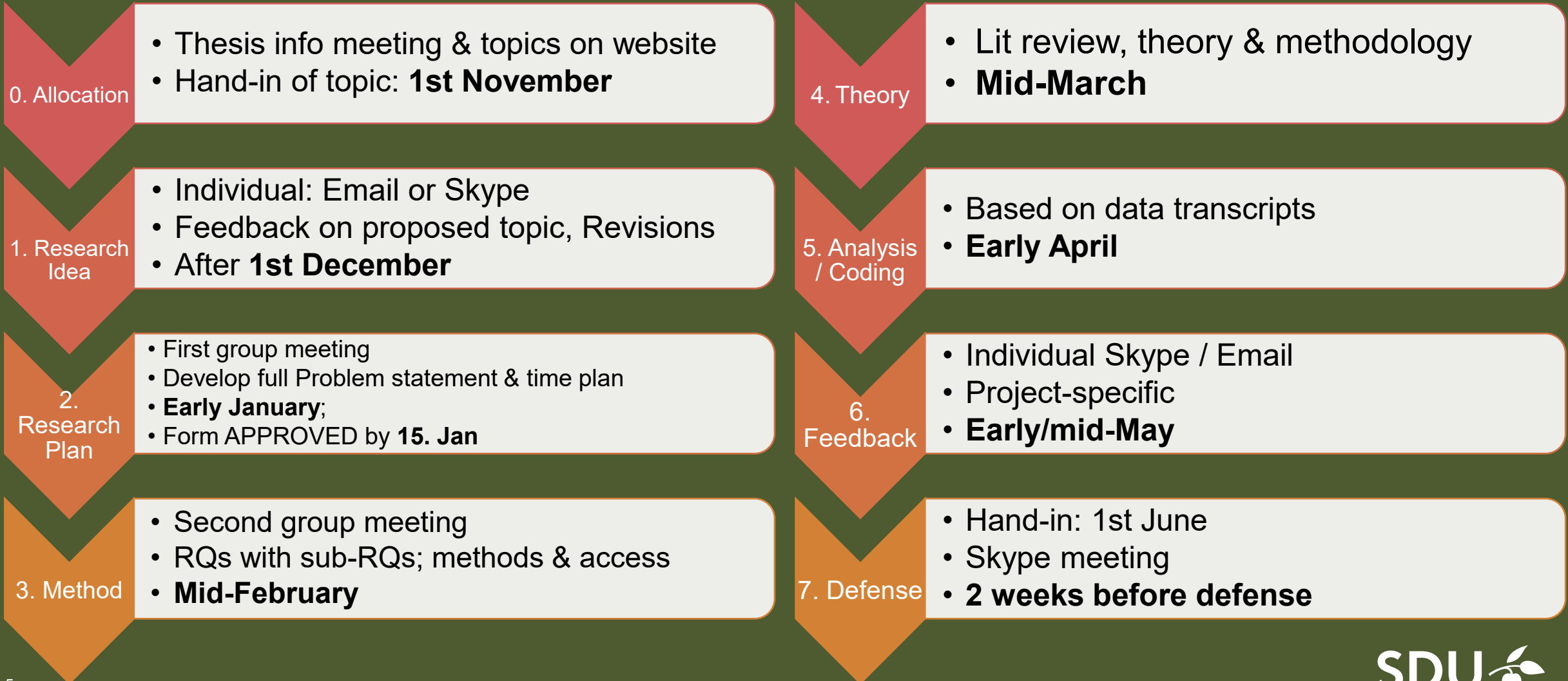
More students show up for supervision

Less repetition of content, especially on basic questions

Informal peer feedback reduces workload of supervisor

More on-time submissions

# Process (exemplary)



# Example Structure of meetings

1. General feedback based on submitted material
2. Questions
3. Student get (written or oral) individual feedback to their material
4. Questions to feedback
5. Topic of the next meeting
6. Further questions  
~ 20-30 min per student

# Students abroad

Submit papers

Participate in meetings via skype

Other students take notes if needed

Virtual feedback groups

→ avoid negotiating meeting times

# Best Practice

Design & use method course as blueprint

Suggest thesis topics by profile/research groups → homogenous groups, efficient peer-feedback

Provide students with a clear timeline, ideally based on method course

Avoid rigidity, communicate clearly that research projects are necessarily unique

Individual 1-to-1 supervision is still important, particularly at start & end of the thesis process



# Virtual/Semi-virtual Thesis Groups and Their Process Management -Perspectives and Best practices

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Reference: WIP paper 2019 with  
Joan Löfgren, Aalto University,  
Finland

# Thesis management -process owner 1 (supervisor)

1. Electronic dashboard (real time overview)
2. All instructions, materials and processes in one place
3. Monitoring of deliveries, deadlines and input
4. Phase-based individual e-commenting and personal (on-line) supervision
5. Elimination of drop-outs and writer's block situation, fast intervention in case of illness/unexpected life events
6. Multiple control of plagiarism and expected quality (Turnitin)
7. Intra-group comparison
8. E-rubrics and assessments

# Thesis management process owner 2 (peer group coordinator)

1. Organizes virtual/local group sessions according to the phases, or on demand, also independently
2. Informal “coffee table” groups, voluntary participation but highly visited due to the perceived benefits and fun
3. Groups meet, present and discuss their ideas, plans and ways forward
4. Key idea: solidarity, benefit for all, cooperation and socialising, creation of collective “we”, sensitivity
5. Self-evolving care-taking, thesis development and problem solutions

# Management of supervision- simple, clear and practical for accreditation

- Process management by the supervisor who is the process owner for the thesis group
- A designated student with the appropriate qualifications as the process owner for peer group management
- Clear and visible tasks for all students (full independence and tasks ownership for the thesis)
- Easy to use (and administrate) system (e.g. mycourses) with transparency and fairness

# Development of thesis group options & systems

- Administration and accreditation needs
- Different needs and settings at different research groups – different forms/options to be available
- Development of thematic areas (per supervisor) for allocation of students
- Development of student wellbeing and empowerment (CSR/SDGs)

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# Discussion