Stockholm University

27 November 2025

MASTER THESIS IN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

COURSE OUTLINE – SPRING TERM 2026

Welcome to the course *Master Thesis in Environmental Law* at the Department of Law, Stockholm University.

1 Purpose and Content of the Course

The writing of the Master thesis is the most advanced part of the Master Programme. While the students will be supervised and get consultations during the writing of the Master thesis, the main part of the course consists of writing the thesis – which shall be done by the student her-/himself.

In parallel with writing the Master thesis, students at the Master Programme in Environmental Law take the course *Methods, Theories and Practices in Environmental Law*. This course is intended to provide more in-depth academic outcomes on environmental law methods, theories and research in transboundary contexts. It is also intended to feed in ideas and insights to the writing process for the Master thesis.

Just like previous courses at the Master Programme, this course aims at encouraging critical legal reasoning among the students, i.e. at reviewing, assessing and questioning structures, principles, institutions and concepts.

The expected learning outcomes of the course are set out in the syllabus, adopted by the Department of Law.

2 Overview and general matters

This course essentially involves the writing of an academic thesis of 15 Higher Education Credits (ECTS) for the Master degree. While most of the time will be spent on writing and researching, it involves certain formal steps and deadlines, intended to facilitate for the

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students to complete the thesis. This includes deadline for deciding the topic, for providing a first outline and for submitting a midway draft.

The entire course – i.e. the supervision and consultations as well as the writing, defence and opposition of the thesis – is in English.

As to the volume of the thesis, it should span 12,000-14,000 words, including *everything* (also abstract, first page, table of contents, table of literature, and footnotes).

3 Supervision

A supervisor is assigned for each student in the writing of the Master thesis. Once the topic is decided, the student will meet with the supervisor to discuss the general ideas of the thesis, the preparation of an outline, and how the supervision will be carried out. The student and the supervisor will meet and communicate on issues relating to the thesis during the course of writing. They should agree on when to meet in accordance with the instructions below. Among the issues on which the supervisor should comment are:

- Subject and problem formulation
- Method and material
- Structure and presentation
- Academic reasoning and argumentation
- Factual knowledge and insight into the subject
- Language and formalities (sources, references, quotations etc.)

4 Deciding the topic for the thesis

As set out in the syllabus, the thesis should highlight environmental law issues in a transboundary context or from a transboundary perspective, in relation to one of the advanced and integrated themes studied in the course Cross-cutting Issues in Environmental Law:

- Environmental law, trade and corporate responsibility
- Environmental law, climate and energy
- Environmental law and human rights
- Environmental law and social-ecological resilience

The subject of the essay should relate to international, European (EU), transnational or comparative environmental law. It can also be interdisciplinary in nature and relate to other subjects of a legal or non-legal nature.

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At an early stage, as set out in the schedule, the students should consult with the assigned supervisor about the topic of the thesis. Soon thereafter, at the date set in the schedule, the students shall inform the course director of the topic chosen for the thesis.

5 Preparing a concept note and an outline for the thesis

Once the topic is chosen, the students shall prepare a *concept note of 1-2 pages*, setting out the preliminary title, and the context, purpose, and key research questions. The concept note will be peer-reviewed by two fellow students, who will be responsible for commenting on the concept note and providing short written feedback. The peer-review feedback should focus on:

- Whether the preliminary title, and the context, purpose and research questions are well connected;
- Whether the context, purpose and research questions have a clear legal focus;
- Whether the concept note seems feasible given the time-frame for the Mater thesis

After the peer-review the students shall prepare an *outline of 4-5 pages*, expanding on the issues above, to be sent to the supervisor for comments.

6 Midway draft of the thesis

At the date set in the schedule, the student should submit their midway drafts of the thesis. This serves several functions to facilitate the writing. It is intended to make sure that the students are indeed proceeding with their theses and to give the supervisor an idea of how the work is developing. It is also intended to help overcoming possible obstacles or difficulties, and to provide feedback to the student. In terms of volume, the midway draft should amount to about half the thesis and focus in particular on:

- Subject and problem formulation
- Method and material
- Structure and presentation
- Factual knowledge and insight into the subject

In addition, the draft thesis should indicate the main ideas for the thesis, albeit at a preliminary stage.

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7 Submission of the thesis

The final version of the thesis shall be submitted at the deadline set out in the schedule. Submitting the thesis after the deadline will impact the grading of the thesis, unless there is a legitimate reason for the delay (eg long-term illness) verified by medical certificate.

The thesis should include an *abstract of 150-200 words*. The abstracts should also be circulated to all the other students before the defence. Thus, it will be possible for all participants to get a sense of the thesis before the defence.

8 Defence and opposition

Each defence will take 45 minutes.

1. The opposition starts with a short presentation 5-10 minutes (not more!) of the thesis by the opponent, not the author. This presentation should include the purpose of the thesis, the method employed, a *short description* of the issues covered and the conclusions.
2. After the presentation by the opponent, the author will be asked to *comment* on whether s/he agrees with the presentation, and if s/he does not, to explain.
3. Then the opponent should *highlight a couple of core issues* in the thesis worthy to *critically discuss*; identify positive qualities and possible weaknesses; and ask relevant and critical questions to the author. The discussion should be carried out in a structured manner, *issue by issue*, while the author is allowed to *respond* to any critique.
4. Finally, the opponent will make a short *evaluation* of the thesis.
5. This should be done within *35 minutes*, so that other participants may also comment on and discuss the thesis for about 10 minutes.

9 Examination

The examination includes the writing and defence of the thesis as well as the opposition of another student's thesis.

The examiner in charge of grading the thesis will be someone else than the supervisor.

As set out in the syllabus for the course, in examining the thesis, the following matters will be assessed with respect to the thesis itself and the oral defence.

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Assessment of the thesis:

- Subject and problem formulation
- Factual knowledge and insight into the subject
- Presentation
- Material and method
- Analysis and argumentation including independence of thought
- Conclusions, sources and formalities
- Language
- Oral presentation and discussion at the seminar

Assessment of the thesis defence:

- Insight into the current scenario and assigned role
- Ability to formulate problems
- Ability to independently and systematically argue, based on given conditions
- Ability to adapt argumentation to changing circumstances
- Ability to reflect on ongoing discussions

The language of the examination is English. The final grade in the course is based on the thesis, including its defence.

The opposition is assessed with the grade Pass (G).

Grading criteria are specified below. A student who does not complete her/his thesis within one semester after the first registration on the course cannot get a higher grade than C. Exemptions are granted only in the case of a long-term illness supported by medical certificate.

10 Registration

No specific registration is required for this course. Being part of the Master programme in environmental law, all students approved to the programme are approved to this course.

11 Grade Criteria

The following are the grade criteria (according to the 7-point ECTS grading scale) for all forms of examination:

A
An excellently structured reasoning with a clear focus on the central aspects and with a high relevance in light of the questions posed; extensive reference to legal sources and the

correct use of relevant facts; great ability to engage in abstract reasoning and to make an independent assessment of the problems, including critical reflection.

B
A very well-structured reasoning with a clear focus on the central aspects and with a high relevance in the light of the questions posed; reference to legal sources and the correct use of relevant facts; great ability to engage in abstract reasoning and to make an independent assessment of the problems, including critical reflection.

C
A well-structured reasoning with a focus on the central aspects and with relevance in the light of the questions posed; reference to legal sources and the correct use of relevant facts; ability to engage in abstract reasoning and to make independent and balanced assessment of the problems.

D
A structured and relevant reasoning, which covers some of the central aspects in light of the questions posed; reference to legal sources and the correct use of relevant facts; signs of an ability to engage in abstract reasoning and to make an independent assessment of the problems.

E
A transparent reasoning which observes some aspects that are central to the questions posed; some reference to legal sources and relevant facts; signs of an ability to make an independent assessment of the problems.

Fx
A reasoning which observes aspects that are central to the questions posed but insufficient reference to legal sources and the relevant facts and/or no signs of an ability to make an independent assessment of the problems.

F
A reproduction of disjointed facts with insufficient reasoning.

12 Special Pedagogical Support

Stockholm University provides special pedagogical support to students with documented long-term disabilities. For example, a student may be eligible for alternative forms of examination, such as extended time limits for examinations. If a student intends to apply for alternative forms of examination, s/he should inform the course administrator via email well in advance of the examination and specify what kind of alternative examination is requested. Should the application be submitted later than 3 (three) weeks prior to the examination, there is no guarantee that the alternative form of examination can be granted.

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For further information, students should ask the course administrator at the beginning of the course.

13 Course Evaluation

All students are encouraged to fill in an electronic course evaluation at the end of the course. The course evaluation is an important feed-back from the students, and a means to assess the students' appreciation of the course. It is used for developing the course, teaching methods and for determining the quality of the course.
The electronic form will be available via *Athena* in the last weeks of the course

14 Reception hours

Course director:

Prof. Jonas Ebbesson	Room: C951	On appointment and
Email: jonas.ebbesson@juridicum.su.se		in relation to teaching

Course administrator:

Nägin Chater-Sahab	Room C860	On appointment
Email: EL@juridicum.su.se		Tuesdays and Thursdays 13-15

Teachers/tutors:

Associate Prof. Anna Christiernsson	Room: C982	On appointment and
Email: anna.christiernsson@juridicum.su.se		in relation to teaching
Senior Lecturer Brita Bohman	Room C930	On appointment and
Email: brita.bohman@juridicum.su.se		in relation to teaching