



IT University
of Copenhagen

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Guidelines for students and teachers on workload and project limits



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

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).

The guidelines in this document have been approved by the Board of Studies of ITU¹ and EBUSS². There are several details that separate EBUSS standards from the other programmes, and the differences will be specified where applicable, using the parenthesized abbreviations.

1 ECTS standard

In the ECTS system, 1 ECTS equals 30 work hours. A year of full-time studies is 60 ECTS, which amounts to 1.650 work hours per year³. Workload includes every relevant activity within a course or project - preparation time, confrontation time, exercises, research and writing and studying for the exam⁴.

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.

¹ Programmes under Board of Studies ITU include: BSc in Global Business Informatics (GBI), BSc in Digital Media and Design (DMD), BSc in Software Development (SWU), MSc in IT: E-business (Digital Innovation & Management) (DIM), MSc in IT: Digital Design and Communication (DDK), MSc in IT: Software Development and Technology (SDT), MSc in IT: Games, Professional Master of IT: IT Leadership and Management (ILM), Professional Master of IT: Interaction Design (IND), Professional Master of IT: Software Construction (SKO) and Diploma in IT

² The only programme under Board of Studies is MSc in E-Business.

³ ECTS Users' Guide, p. 59; http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf

⁴ "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 hand-ins

The IT University has 3 types of written hand-ins that are relevant to distinguish. We will use these terms throughout the text:

- **Projects:** sometimes termed “individual projects”. A project is written with no related course. It is an independent achievement, where the goals and contents are formulated solely by the students, but with an attached supervisor. The project and supervisor can be attached to a *project cluster*, but such an activity is characterized by not being credited itself (a 0 ECTS activity). Projects are examined as exam type D. The thesis is considered a special kind of project, and is examined as exam type E.
- **Written work:** on some programmes, written work are termed “mini-projects” or “integrated projects”, which are both descriptive of what written work is. Written work concludes a course as the final hand-in, and will be a basis for the examination. Typically, it is not as free-form as a project - it may have a predefined problem or a set of limits that align the learning outcomes of the written work closely with the course contents. B3 or B4 is the typical exam type for courses with written work.
- **Mandatory assignments:** smaller assignments that may resemble written work in several aspects, but do not form 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 written work. Mandatory assignments can take many forms, and while they should be included in the general workload assessments, the guidelines for written material described herein *do not* apply to mandatory assignments.

When speaking about the text production in projects and written work collectively, we will use the term **report**.

4 Report sizes

In the following, we assume standard pages of 2.275 (Board of Studies EBUSS) or 2.400 (Board of Studies ITU) 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 report constitutes the standard page range.

The body of the report is composed of the preface, all original text that is part of the original argumentation and message, plus any citations. For Board of Studies EBUSS only, illustrations and charts count as 700 units.

The body does not include front page, colophon, table of contents, abstract, list of references/bibliography or appendices. In programmes under Board of Studies ITU,



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 report body is the line of argumentation, while the appendix material serves to substantiate the argument(s).

The size of a report varies, depending on the balance between report and production and the subject area of the report. It is extremely important to match expectations on report size with the supervisor or course teacher.

These are the **recommended standard page spans for reports without production under Board of Studies ITU:**

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

Example: In a 7.5 ECTS report with 2 group members, $15 + (2 \times 2) = 19$ pages is the standard page span. If one person wrote this report 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 course teacher or supervisor.

The recommendations for Board of Studies EBUSS are:

- 25-80 pages for any report, regardless of group size. The specific problem, type of work and quality are factors in determining the appropriate report size.

Again, it is a strongly recommended that the student(s) and the supervisor match their expectations on this matter.

4.1 Written work

The recommendations for written work do not differ much from projects in terms of size. Written work differs 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 a written work can be assessed from the weight in relation to the full course ECTS. Typically, a 15 ECTS course entails a written work that can be assessed to some fraction of the full activity weight.

If, for example, the weight of the written work 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. Report size in other distributions can be made from this basis.



4.2 Thesis, bachelor and final projects

The thesis, bachelor and final projects (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) and 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 writing 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 reports (as described above under “4 Report sizes”) can be used as a jump-off point to the discussion with the supervisor.

4.3 Anatomy of the hand-in

The work in a report process can be roughly 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)
- Report (the central body of work in any hand-in)

Only some reports require a production or empirical studies, but the report is a minimum.

4.4 Production

Production affects report size, 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 a report involving a 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 Report curriculum

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

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

Example: In a 15 ECTS report, the guideline for curriculum range would be $500 + (300 \times 2) = 1.100$ 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 report.

The above curriculum guidelines are not affected by the report being part of 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.