

Course description: Master Thesis (30 hp)

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1. General information

1.1 Content and objectives

This course is the final course in the Master of Laws Programme in European Intellectual Property Law. The aim is for the student to use his/her knowledge acquired to date in the programme and carry out an independent, sophisticated research project. The student shall plan and write an academic paper on a suitably focused subject area within European intellectual property law. The subject for the Master thesis can be interdisciplinary.

The Master thesis project consists of writing a coherent academic paper. During the process of writing the final academic paper the student will have to submit several preparatory memoranda related to the approach research questions and subject. These are to be presented and discussed in a group at the seminars as well as individually under the guidance of the supervisor who will also provide written feedback.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of the course, the student is expected to be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding, including both general knowledge of the area of intellectual property law and considerably advanced knowledge of the area that the academic paper discusses, including insight into current relevant work in research and development;
- display the ability to systematically and independently identify, formulate and delimit intellectual property law questions as well as plan and use appropriate methods to complete the Master thesis within specified time frames;
- demonstrate deeper knowledge as well as the ability to apply relevant legal scholarly methods, and, within the boundaries of the academic paper's subject area, make assessments considering relevant scholarly, social and ethical aspects;
- identify his/her need of additional knowledge and take responsibility for the development of his/her knowledge; and
- display the ability to clearly in oral and written format report and discuss his/her conclusions and the knowledge and arguments that form the basis for the conclusions.

1.3 The Course Structure

The course consists of 20 weeks of full-time studies.

Lectures will cover issues concerning the choice of the legal scientific method or methods, treatment of the topic, and the search for appropriate ways to approach the research problem. The seminar series will cover academic writing (with examples from the students' own essay

memoranda), formulation of research questions and appropriate delimitation of the topic. Feedback will be provided in writing, individually and in seminar discussions.

In the seminar series, the student has the opportunity to discuss in group important questions for a scholarly project. Topics regarding developing and presenting judicial arguments are also addressed, such as scholarly techniques for writing and formulation, including quotation techniques, appropriate ways to use and refer to source material, accuracy, and other formal requirements.

The Master thesis project includes, in addition to presenting the author's own work in an appropriate form, also serving as discussant and critically reviewing and evaluating another student's Master thesis.

The degree project will be in English.

1.4 Compulsory Elements

Participation in at least 80 per cent of all seminars and lectures is compulsory. In the event of special circumstances, the head of the course can grant exceptions.

Participation in the seminar discussions on the first and second drafts, the opposition and the final seminar is compulsory.

2. Supervision and examination

Each student will be part of a group. The group is assigned a supervisor. The role of the supervisor is to act as a guide for the student through the writing process, and to discuss and give feedback to the work of the student, both in group supervision and individually. The time for supervision is calculated to cover the reading of the drafts (first, second, third, opposition and final thesis) and the discussion and feedback (both oral and written) given at the pre-set meetings and seminars (group and individual). It is particularly important to respect the deadlines for submission since the timeframes are set to allow the supervisor and other students to read the drafts and prepare feedback for the seminars. Any other possibilities for feedback, i.e. beyond the pre-set occasions, be it through mail, phone or in person, is subject to the goodwill of the supervisor and is not calculated within the allotted timeframe for supervision.

The examiner is responsible for deciding the grade of the final thesis on the basis of the grading categories and grading criteria.

3. Course content: Seminars, submissions, feedback and discussions

See the schedule for dates and deadline for submissions.

2.1 First Draft

2.1.1 Guidelines of submission

1-2 pages outlining the choice of topic, problem background, tentative research questions/purpose/delimitations/method and material. The student is welcome to contact the supervisor before the submission to discuss the topic.

2.1.2 Seminar

Each student presents a description of his or her suggested thesis topic. At the meeting the suggestions are discussed from the perspective of relevant research questions, the purpose of the study, methodology and material etc. Students are required to read all drafts in the group and to participate in the discussions by giving feedback and asking questions. The supervisor leads the discussions and provides input.

Approximate time per student/topic for discussion: 20-30 minutes.

2.2 Second Draft

2.2.1 Guidelines of submission

Draft Chapter 1 (4-5 pages) with the following sections: Introduction/Problem background, Research questions, Purpose, Delimitations and Outline. Tentative Section on Method and material. Preliminary table of contents.

2.2.2 Seminar

At this stage, the problem background and the relevant research questions should be defined. The discussions will concern the draft Chapter 1 and its sections, and all students are expected to come with constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement. The supervisor leads the discussion and provides feedback and input. At the end of the second meeting, the topic, research question, delimitations, method etc. should be in place so that each student is able to start writing the thesis.

If needed, the supervisor should also make room for discussion on relevant issues related to e.g. referencing and other research-related questions.

Approximate time per student/topic for discussion: 30-60 minutes.

2.3 Individual Feedback (Draft 3...)

At least one draft is to be discussed individually between supervisor and student sometime during the period of weeks 7-16.

The supervisor will give individual written and oral feedback. The time, place and mode of communication for submission of draft(s) and discussion in regards to feedback is a matter for the supervisor to decide. It is suggested that the time plan is agreed between supervisor and student immediately after the second draft discussion. If deemed necessary by the supervisor, more than one draft may be submitted and reviewed during this time.

The feedback should relate to the material content as well as the formal requirements of the thesis. Remember that the supervisor needs time to read and prepare feedback, and it is important to adhere to the time plan for submission and discussion.

2.4 Opposition Seminar

2.4.1 Guidelines for submission

The author is expected to send in as complete a version of the thesis as possible.

2.4.2 Seminar

The purpose of the opposition seminar is to provide the author with detailed and constructive feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, which will give the author with excellent possibilities for finalising the thesis. At the seminar, each thesis will be subject to opposition for 60 minutes.

The session will actively involve the author, the supervisor and two other students (1st opponent and 2nd opponent), but the rest of the students in the group are expected to be present. Each student will thus, in addition to the role as respondent, read and take on the role of 1st opponent to one thesis and 2nd opponent to another thesis. The opponents are responsible for making the discussion as productive as possible.

The session will start with the possibility for the author to give a short comment. The 1st opponent will then have approx. 30 minutes for opposition. The 2nd opponent will then have approx. 15 minutes. During the oppositions, the supervisor will only interfere or comment if necessary. At the end of the session, the supervisor gives his or her comments to the author (15 minutes).

Both opponents are required to each produce an opposition protocol (to the author and the supervisor) as well as make written comments in the thesis. The supervisor will give the author written comments on the thesis.

Approximate time per thesis: 60 minutes.

Further information will be published on the course website before the opposition seminar.

2.5 Final Seminar

2.5.1 Guidelines for submission

The complete final thesis.

2.5.2 The seminar

The final seminar is conducted in whole class. Each student will present the research results during approx. 20-30 minutes, which will then be subject to discussion for which another student is acting as discussant.

Further information in regards to the Final seminar will be published on the course website in due time.

4. Schedule

Please see the course website.

Updated schedules will be distributed on several occasions during the course, for instance before the Opposition seminar and the Final seminars. Please note that although two days are blocked in the schedule for the second draft seminar, Opposition and Final seminars, these will only take one day per group.

As mentioned, the individual meeting (3rd draft) is decided by the supervisor and communicated to the student.

5. Grading Criteria

A (Excellent)

- The contents are relevant and demonstrate excellent insight into the area of intellectual property law, the specific theme for the academic paper, and its relation to other parts of the legal system.
- The structure and outline are clear and logical.
- The project is carried out independently, combined with the ability to incorporate and develop the supervisor's comments.
- The presentation of the material is logical, to the point, and focused on well-formulated main issues with appropriately justified limits of the subject matter.
- The academic paper reflects substantial detailed knowledge of the methods chosen for the topic.
- Development of the legal argument is highly analytical, systematic and critical.
- Conclusions and positions taken are placed in a larger social or scholarly context.
- Over-arching issues that are relevant for the chosen research questions are taken into consideration in an appropriate way.
- The language is concise and stylistically correct.
- Citations, footnotes or endnotes, and the list of sources used are very accurate and thorough.
- The academic thesis is completed within the agreed timeframe.
- The positions taken in the thesis are skillfully presented and defended.

B (Very good)

- The contents are relevant and demonstrate very good insight into the area of intellectual property law, the specific theme for the academic paper, and its relation to other parts of the legal system. The structure and outline are clear and logical.
- The project is carried out systematically and with a critical approach. It is characterized by independent work combined with the ability to incorporate and develop the supervisor's comments. The presentation of the material is coherent and generally focused on main issues with appropriately justified limits of the subject matter.

- The academic paper reflects a very high degree of knowledge of the methods chosen for the topic.
- Development of the legal argument is analytical, systematic and critical. Conclusions and positions taken are placed in a larger social or scholarly context.
- Over-arching issues that are relevant for the chosen theme and research questions are taken into consideration in an appropriate way.
- The academic paper is well-written.
- Citations, footnotes or endnotes and the list of sources used are accurate and thorough.
- The academic thesis is completed within the agreed timeframe.
- The positions taken in the thesis are skillfully presented and defended.

C (Good)

- The contents are relevant and demonstrate good insight into the area of intellectual property law and the specific theme for the academic paper.
- The structure and outline are generally clear and logical.
- The project is carried out for the most part independently.
- The presentation of the material is coherent and generally focused on main issues.
- The academic paper reflects a high degree of knowledge of the methods chosen for the topic. Development of the legal argument is generally analytical, systematic and critical.
- Conclusions and positions taken are placed in a larger social or scholarly context.
- Over-arching issues that are relevant for the chosen theme and research questions are taken into consideration in an appropriate way.
- The academic paper is well-written.
- Citations, footnotes or endnotes, and the list of sources used are accurate and thorough.
- The academic thesis is completed within the agreed timeframe.
- The positions taken in the thesis are presented and defended in an acceptable way.

D (Satisfactory)

- The contents are relevant and demonstrate good insight into the area of law.
- The structure and outline are generally clear and logical.
- With a fair amount of help from the supervisor, the student has carried out a coherent study, but parts are more descriptive at the expense of the elements that focus on the main issues and problems.
- The academic paper reflects good knowledge of the methods chosen for the topic.
- Development of the legal argument is generally clear, systematic and critical.
- Conclusions and positions taken are placed in a larger social or scholarly context.
- Over-arching issues that are relevant for the chosen research questions are taken into consideration in an appropriate way.
- The academic paper is well-written with only minor linguistic errors.
- Citations, footnotes or endnotes, and the list of sources used are accurate and thorough.
- The academic thesis is completed for the most part within the agreed timeframe.
- The positions taken in the thesis are presented and defended in an acceptable way.

E (Sufficient)

- The contents are acceptable, although certain deficiencies exist.

- The structure and outline, formulation of the issues, analysis and development of the arguments are mostly coherent, but many parts are descriptive at the expense of the elements that focus on the main issues and problems.
- The academic paper demonstrates a basic ability to use the methods chosen for the topic. Development of the legal argument is generally clear, systematic and critical.
- Conclusions and positions taken are placed in a larger social or scholarly context.
- Over-arching issues that are relevant for the chosen research questions are taken into consideration in an appropriate way.
- The student has completed the study with considerable help from the supervisor.
- The writing is acceptable, although there are a number of errors.
- Citations, footnotes or endnotes, and the list of sources used do not have major defects.
- The academic thesis is completed later than the agreed timeframe.
- The positions taken in the thesis are presented and defended in an acceptable way.

Fx (Insufficient)

- Minor deficiencies exist such that the student does not fulfill all the requirements necessary for a grade of E.

F (Entirely insufficient)

Considerable deficiencies exist such that the student does not fulfill all the requirements necessary for a grade of E.

Essential elements of assessment:

1. Ability to identify, formulate and critically analyse questions
2. Knowledge of details and insight into the subject
3. Written presentation - systematic, clear and logical presentation of the material, with focus on presentation of the central issues
4. Familiarity with relevant material and ability to use relevant material
5. Accounting for chosen method or methods; Relevance of the method or methods; Consistent use of the method or methods
6. Independence
7. Consideration of the social, scholarly and ethical aspects of the selected question
8. Substantiated conclusions with deeper discussion of the subject area
9. Mastery of scholarly accuracy, i.e., specificity and precision in reporting references and sources
10. Clear, correct and concise language, using established terminology
11. Ability to receive and answer relevant criticism and comments
12. Ability to adhere to the determined schedule for the project

6. Course Management

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