

**Rudolf Steiner University College - RSUC**

# STUDENT HANDBOOK



## RSUC MASTER DEGREE PROGRAMME

Educational Research, M.Ed.

Social and Environmental Research, M.Ed.

*Research in your field of practice*

**RSUC - August 2011**

**Dear master student!**

We are pleased to welcome you to the RSUC master degree programme, and we hope it will be a rewarding and exciting journey for you.

With this handbook we give you an overview of the structure and content of the programme. If you read it through we hope you will get two main insights: One deals with the journey and the steps that the programme is inviting you to take. Each module builds a capacity and a step towards becoming a researcher. The other insight has to do with content and details related to each module and to the academic and organisational supporting structure. In the last section you will also find important practical information. For questions and further information, you are welcome to contact the student counsellor.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Arve Mathisen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Arve" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Mathisen".

Arve Mathisen  
Programme Director

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## The Framework

The RSUC Master programmes were first offered in 2005, after having been approved by NOKUT (The Norwegian Agency for Quality Insurance in Higher Education) with an equivalent of 120 ECTS credit points. The main aim was to develop educational research in relation to Waldorf Schools in the Nordic countries. Since the study was offered in English, students from all Nordic countries have participated, but also quite a few students from abroad, including Germany, Austria, USA and India. From 2009, cooperation with Crossfields Institute has developed the programme also towards English students in Environmental and Social Education. Starting in 2009, both study options were offered as a three year part time study.

Students come from different professional backgrounds: Many are connected to transformative education through engagement in the Waldorf Schools, Biodynamic Agriculture and Curative Education. Some students have come from state schools or other educational backgrounds. The international environment of the programme is inspiring, connecting this diversity and richness of experience in a community of practitioners and researchers. A new culture of research gradually develops close to the practitioner.

## The idea of the programme

In life and work, as in the scientific quest, we need to learn to cultivate our own questions and find our own paths. The master programme is an invitation to design an individual learning path within a set framework of degree courses:

The first year gives a (Module A) and a methodological (Module B) foundation for research within the student's own field of practice. It is designed as a process of ripening one's own question and locating it in the context of a broader understanding of the whole field of educational research. This process takes place in two steps: first performing a general orientation within the fields of knowing, learning and teaching, (A) and then, out of this context, finding and formulating your own questions and methods based on a course in research methods (B). This leads to a seed point: formulating your own research question and performing a guided individual project work for the second year (Module C). The aim is to become a scholar in your own field of study. For this second year, all students design their own study programme. They engage in a chosen topic/project in their own field of work or interest. Their findings serve as the experiential basis for a concluding module on Philosophy of Education (Module D) and a first sketch of the master thesis. The beginning of the third year is a course in critical reading and writing (Module E), which leads into the concluding work of a master thesis (Module F).

The programme has a strong research focus, necessary to fulfil the qualification requirements for Ph.D work after completion of the programme. A distinct emphasis is therefore on academic reading- and writing exercises and methodological issues.

## The two study options

There are two study options within the master degree programme; Educational Research (ED) and Environmental and Social Education (EN). In most or all modules, the students from the two study options have common courses, depending on the size of the groups.

### **Educational Research (ED)**

The study option 'Educational Research' is an invitation to deepen your professional area of interest within education. It is open for educational practitioners of all subject areas.

### **Environmental and Social Education (EN)**

This study option is particularly relevant for practitioners working with the environmental and social context of education. It is open for educational practitioners of all subject areas working with transformative education with a focus on the interplay between man, nature and the social.

## Entry requirements

The two study options have the following entry requirements

### ***Master in Educational Research (ED)***

For the degree course in Educational Research in Steiner/Waldorf Education, the applicant must have three years of relevant teaching practice and in addition fulfil one of the following requirements:

Teacher or kindergarten qualification from RSUC or an equivalent institution abroad

Other teacher or kindergarten qualification

Steiner/Waldorf specialist subject qualification of at least three years duration

Bachelor degree (or cand.mag.) in Education

Tertiary Education from outside Norway, which is a parallel to the above

Students should be able to master English as a working language. The college can demand documentation.

### ***Environmental and Social Education (EN)***

For the experience based degree course in Environmental and Social Education, the applicant must have at least three years relevant professional experience in the relevant fields, and in addition, fill one of the following requirements:

Teacher or kindergarten qualification from RSUC or an equivalent institution abroad

Other teacher or kindergarten qualification

Steiner/Waldorf specialist subject qualification of at least three years duration

Bachelor degree (or cand.mag). in Education

Bachelor degree (or cand.mag.) in the natural sciences, or agriculture/horticulture

Tertiary Education from outside Norway, which is a parallel to the above<sup>2</sup>

Students should be able to master English as a working language. The college can demand documentation.

## Visiting students

Upon request, visiting students can apply for participation in single modules. Applications are sent to: RSUC Administration, Professor Dahlgate 30, 0260 Oslo, Norway. Study fees and student agreements are made on an individual basis, based on the number of ECTS credits. After completing the course, certificates for the single modules are issued.

## The Study Programme

The programme consists of a structured series of modules in an integrated learning path. Each module consists of a combination of taught week-blocks and written assignments to be done between the courses. The sequence from A-F of the modules must be followed, unless other study agreements are made.

### Year 1

Module A:	Ecology of knowing, learning and teaching	15 ECTS credits
Module B:	Methods in Educational Research	15 ECTS credits

### Year 2

Module C:	Becoming a scholar in your field	30 ECTS credits
Module D:	Philosophy of Education	15 ECTS credits

### Year 3

Module E:	Critical Reading and Writing	5 ECTS credits
Module F:	Master Thesis	40 ECTS credits
<b>Total:</b>		120 ECTS credits

## Module descriptions

A description of each module follows:

### Module A. Ecology of Knowing, Learning and Teaching

*Time:* Autumn semester 1st year

*Place:* Rudolf Steiner University College, Vidaråsen, or as announced.

What is the nature of knowing, learning and teaching? And how does it manifest itself in your field of practice? All research needs a concept of knowing to build on, and in particular educational research. In this module, you will explore the nature of knowing, learning, teaching and research in relation to your own field of practice.

*Qualifications and Goals:* After this module students should understand basic concepts in theory of knowledge, learning and teaching, and be able to relate this to the history of science. Within this framework, they should also have a clear concept of Steiner's epistemological stance, and its relation to his pedagogical ideas. Based on careful self-observation of their own ways of knowing, students should begin to explore and express their

own individual epistemology related to their own field of practice. The findings should be discussed in relation to basic concepts in theory of knowledge and learning and/or to Steiner's epistemological stance. The students will know the basics of academic writing, referencing, using search databases, as well as the topic of academic integrity and plagiarism.

*Course Content:* The nature of knowing; the concept of epistemology and its importance in theory of science; in epistemological stances in the history of science; in Rudolf Steiner's epistemology. Sensing and thinking; current philosophical stances. Ways of knowing; body and knowledge, will and knowledge, feeling and knowledge. Ecology of knowing; the interplay between the senses. Self-observation and self-education; exercises in observing with precision actions and inner experience. Writing exercises: reflection-in-action expressed in short texts. Introduction to basic research tools and techniques, and to the topic of academic integrity with special regard to plagiarism.

*Teaching-training activities:* Lectures, guided exercises, group-work, reading groups.

*Form of examination:* Individual paper based on specific questions.

*Evaluation:* Passed/failed.

## **Module B. Methods in Educational Research**

*Time:* Spring semester 1st year

*Place:* Rudolf Steiner University College, Vidaråsen, or as announced.

All research needs a method and all master theses will have a chapter on the method that has been used in the study. In this module, you will begin to understand and practice selected features of quantitative and qualitative methods in educational research.

*Qualifications and Goals:* After this module students should understand basic concepts in scientific research. They should also understand and be able to apply basic procedures in quantitative and qualitative research methods concerning how to gather and analyse data. Students should have formulated a preliminary research problem for their master thesis and have gotten a first idea of what kind of method they will use in their own research.

*Course Content:* The interrelations between epistemology, methodology and methods. Basic concepts in the theory of science, such as objectivity, subjectivity, validity, and reliability. Basic concepts of descriptive and analytic statistics, and exercises related to these. Examples of previous research relevant for Steiner Waldorf education. Interplay of theoretical studies and practical exercises in data gathering and data analysis. Problems and challenges in the different phases of the research process. Research design and research strategies. Exercises in observing with precision on the levels of outward actions and inner experience. Grounded theory, educational action research and art-based research methods.

*Teaching-training activities:* Lectures, case-studies, guided exercises and group work.

*Form of examination:* An individual paper based on specific questions.

*Evaluation:* Passed/failed.

## **Module C. Becoming a Scholar**

### KNOWLEDGE, THEORY AND LANGUAGE IN YOUR FIELD OF RESEARCH

*Time:* Autumn and spring semester 2nd year

*Place:* Rudolf Steiner University College, Vidaråsen, or as announced.

Research is a field of communication, where the voice of the researcher enters into an existing ongoing dialogue. To do this and to contextualize your own question and exploration of a field of study, you need to explore knowledge, theory and language of that particular field. Within a given framework the students develop their own study plan and peer-mentoring groups. The plan is approved during the first module. The framework of the course as a whole is an 'individual guided project'.

*Qualifications and goals:* Students should through the course understand the role of theory, literature and previous research in the field of a future master project. They should be able to reflect on use of theory and recognize the significance of language, metaphor and imagination.

*Course Content:* The module aims at deepening each students understanding of their field of study. This includes reflection on the role of theory, literature and previous research in the field of their future master project. In addition to studying the thoughts and tools of theory work another central aim of Module C is to establish collaborative networks among students and links to existing research networks within the field of study.

*Teaching-training activities:* Lectures, reading, group work, peer mentoring, guided exercises.

*Form of examination:* Group assignment, individual assignment and 'project report'.

*Evaluation:* Passed/failed

## **Module D. Philosophy of Education**

*Time:* Spring semester 2nd year

*Place:* Rudolf Steiner University College, Vidaråsen, or as announced.

In European culture, philosophy is the mother of all kinds of science. Until the middle ages all scientific knowledge was considered as branches of Philosophy, except Theology. Physics was initially called philosophy of nature. Educational thinking was part of philosophy up to the 19th century, in some countries even until the middle of the 20th century. The field philosophy of education is nowadays most often a branch or aspect of educational science and the interest in this field has grown among students of education during latter decades. Philosophy of education encompasses many different areas such as epistemology, ethics, social and political philosophy and philosophical anthropology.

*Qualifications and goals:* After this module students should be aware of the different philosophical aspects of education and environmental thinking and have some knowledge of the historical development of these aspects, as well as how they are discussed today. In

particular, they should be able to relate their own field of research and practice to one or more philosophical aspect of education.

*Course content:* The historical development of educational and environmental thought and the main issues of Philosophy of Education discussed today, such as democracy and education for citizenship; feminism; post-structuralism; the role of nature and environment; identity and identity formation. Steiner's philosophical and educational thinking is discussed in relation to these issues.

*Teaching-training activities:* The course literature will be discussed in seminars. Seminar discussions are initiated by lectures prepared by the students on aspects of the course content. All the course literature should have been studied before the start of the module.

*Form of examination:* Giving a 30 minutes lecture on one aspect of the course content and participating actively in the seminars.

*Evaluation:* Passed/failed.

## **Module E. Critical Reading and Writing**

*Time:* Autumn semester 3rd year

*Place:* Rudolf Steiner University College, Vidaråsen, or as announced.

*Qualifications and Goals:* This module aims at giving the students experiences and deeper understanding of academic writing with concrete focus on the form and structure of a master thesis. After this module the students should have knowledge of the particular challenges pertaining to the different parts or chapters in their master thesis, and they should be able to use and recognize various academic writing styles. Students should come to understand that writing is not something one does after the research has been finished, but that writing itself is part of the research process. Furthermore, that writing is an existential act, in which one positions oneself as an academic person.

*Course Content:* Different structures and solutions for organizing a master thesis will be presented and discussed. Each part of the thesis, for example the literature review, the methods chapter etc., offers specific writing challenges. Advices and examples on good academic writing will be given while the students work to find their own ways of structural and stylistic expression.

*Teaching - training activities:* Through lectures, workshops, individual writing exercises and critical reading groups, the different aspects of academic writing will be presented, discussed and put into writing practice.

*Form of examination:* Participation.

*Evaluation:* Passed/failed

## **Module F. Master Thesis**

*Time:* Autumn and spring semester 3rd year

*Place:* Presentations takes place in Oslo at the Rudolf Steiner University College.

The master thesis is your apprenticeship piece as a researcher. All the faculties that have been trained separately through the different modules now must come together in a performed piece of writing. Students work independently with their master thesis with supporting guidance from assigned mentors. By Christmas in the third study year, each student must have an approved first draft and work plan for the completion of the thesis. Delivery is normally in mid April and examinations take place around 25th of May.

*Form of examination:* Thesis evaluated with grades A-F. A formal examination with oral presentation (30 minutes), dialogue with a censor (30 minutes).

## Ways of working within the study programme

### **Literature and reading skills**

To practice and learn critical reading in relation to specific scientific questions dealt with is an essential part of the study programme. To practice this skill in a structured manner, reading groups are introduced from the very beginning of the programme.

Literature lists for each module are distributed on the learning platform and updated every study year. Students are responsible for having the required reading material available for the study groups and assignments of each module.

### **Assignments and writing skills**

A major part of the study programme is to practice academic writing skills. Through a sequence of writing exercises, this is introduced in the teaching blocks and further trained in assignments within each study module. The aim is to cultivate a self-reflective culture of critical practice in which students develop their own capacity and style of writing, connecting their experiences as practitioners on one hand and their academic reading on the other. Through mentoring, you get written feedback on your assignments as they progress through the study.

Written assignments can be delivered in several languages; English, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish or German. When the assignments are presented by the student at the beginning of the modules, oral presentations must be held in English.

The assignments are connected to the different modules and available on the learning platform.

## **Academic writing and Waldorf Steiner education**

Being a RSUC master student means beginning to participate in the community of educational researchers. Research is a public activity. One of the overriding purposes of the master programme is to establish links and connections between Waldorf Steiner educational thinking, on the one hand, and relevant, contemporary educational research, on the other.

This purpose entails some practical consequences for the academic writing in relation to Waldorf Steiner education. Students who select a Waldorf Steiner related topic need to familiarize themselves with contemporary educational theories and approaches to research, and engage in a competent dialogue with them. What are the similarities and what are the differences? How can similarities and differences be clarified? What you write as a researcher should be understandable at least by other researchers in the field. What you write as a student in Steiner educational research should therefore be understandable also to a non-Steiner educationalist.

## **Learning platform: RSUClearn.com**

The distance learning part of the programme has its own learning platform, where students get access. All vital information related to modules and study blocks are found here. All written assignments are delivered through the learning platform.

The platform is also used for student group work and joint writing. Students are responsible for being updated on the student information given through the platform.

## **Research articles**

At the RSUClearn platform, you will have access to course literature and links to research databases. Here you can search relevant research articles within your field of study.

## **Mentoring**

An important element in the programme through its different stages is the mentoring process. Individual mentoring is given in Module C (14 hours) Module F, writing of the master thesis (40 hours).

The mentoring is a required part of working with the thesis, and all students in this module must sign a mentoring contract with the mentor(s). Based on the thesis proposal, students are given a main mentor from the RSUC. Students can apply for an additional mentor. This second mentor, usually a specialist in the field, must be proposed by the student. The RSUC must approve of the second mentor and make formal agreements before the contract can be signed. RSUC will cover the costs for maximum 10 hours of specialist mentoring. The main mentor will be an advisor regarding both the content of the thesis and the processes of writing and researching.

The students have the responsibility of taking contact with, and seeking advice from the mentor. The mentor shall answer requests from the student within a reasonable amount of time, and if necessary give information about when the reply will be given.

There is also a crucial element of peer-mentoring between the students. To develop as a researcher, you need multiple perspectives, dialogue and friendly critique. You also need to develop capacity of critical text reading and of giving critique.

## **Evaluation**

Each assignment and module is evaluated, and students are given feedback on their texts and exercises. The format of the evaluation is a combination of written and oral feedback.

## **Thesis and final exam**

Students hand in four bound paper copies of the thesis.

Oral presentation: The student first presents the thesis (30 minutes).

Socratic dialogue: then participates in a dialogue with the external censor (30 minutes).

Each thesis is evaluated by an external and internal censor. The thesis is graded A-F.

## **Evaluation criteria for censors**

In the evaluation of the master degree thesis, the below list of criteria should be considered. The list is not in order of preference.

1. **Originality**  
in dealing with; questions, methods, results and form
2. **Relevance**  
and contextual awareness of research questions and research results
3. **Coherence**  
in method and content, with reference to the research question
4. **Language**  
clarity and precision, authenticity and power of expression, syntax and style
5. **New insights and/or new practices**  
contributions to new knowledge and/or new ways of understanding and/or new practices
6. **Reference to theory**  
theoretical context awareness, sufficient coverage and correct representation
7. **Formal aspects**  
correct use of references, bibliography, lay-out, text volume, spelling

## **Final evaluation**

Based on these criteria, the master thesis as a whole is finally graded from A to F. If a candidate is judged with grade F, the oral presentation will not take place.

### **Oral presentations**

The oral presentations will be held in English and should give a summary of the essential content of the master thesis to a collegial audience (30 minutes). Thereafter, the censor will be given 30 minutes to ask questions on the delivered thesis or oral presentation.

The censor can raise or reduce the given grade one level as a result of this oral presentation and discourse.

## Practical Information

### Study calendar

The study calendar for each study option and cohort is announced at [www.rshoyskolen.no/master/](http://www.rshoyskolen.no/master/)

### Study fees and payments

Study fee for the academic year 2011-2012 is NOK 11000 per semester. Payments are done by invoice. There might be changes in the study fee during the course of the study programme.

Study results (ECTS) are registered after each semester only when the study fee has been paid. Unpaid invoices will be sent for debt collecting after a second reminder.

If a student has difficulty with paying the fee in time, he/she must contact the study counsellor before the last day of payment to agree upon a payment plan. Unpaid fees can lead to suspension from the study programme.

### Accommodation

RSUC organizes accommodation for all students in modules hosted at Vidaråsen (Norway). You will receive information about rooms, meals, payments and other relevant issues from in due time. Information about accommodation in England will be given in due time. Payment for food and accommodation should be done directly to Vidaråsen/Ruskin Mill in connection with the module. For more information about Vidaråsen, see [www.vidaraasen.no](http://www.vidaraasen.no)

### Student welfare organisation membership

All students studying in Norway have, by law, to be members of a Norwegian student welfare organisation. RSUC students are members of SiO, ([www.sio.no](http://www.sio.no)). Upon arrival, you will get a student card which enables reduced fares for air, train or bus tickets. Look for 20% reductions in stationary and equipment. The fee is NOK 410 per semester.

### Study agreements

Study agreements are to be signed by the end of the first study week. They specify the legal and economical agreements, rights and duties of the University College and students for the period of the programme.

## Credit point delivery

After completion of a semester, credit points are registered. Credit points are delivered when all written assignments are passed, all mandatory exercises performed, and when the student has been sufficiently present at the module. Students are informed yearly about their credit point status. The study programme awards 120 ECTS credits over 3 years.

## Presence during the modules

Students are required to be present during the taught modules as partial fulfilment of the requirements to obtain the credit points allocated to each module. If a student is absent more than 18% of a taught module, the student can apply for compensating the absence with a written assignment of appropriate size. If the absence is larger than 40% of a module, the student might be obliged to participate in the same module once more to pass the module.

## Approved leave from studies

Application for approved leave of studies can be done for maximum one year at a time. An application is found on the learning platform under Main library – documents – RSUC study information.

It is the responsibility of the student to contact the study counsellor in due time when he/she wishes to take up the studies again.

## Information during studies

Information is published on the learning platform or sent by mail. Students are responsible for being updated on the given student information. Questions regarding information can be directed to the study counsellor.

## Student democracy

Every year two students from the master degree programme are elected to represent the class in the student council of RSUC.

## Quality assurance and study evaluation

Student evaluations are done in connection with every module. The results are published on the learning platform after each module. The programme has during its first 5 years actively involved the students in course development and improvement.

## Rights to complaints

Applicants have rights to complaints on issues of admission to the programme, in accordance with the admission criteria and statutes of RSUC. Students have rights to complaints regarding evaluation of module examinations and the master thesis. Complaints should be directed to the study counsellor.

### **Contact information**

Rudolf Steiner University College

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0260 Oslo

Norway

#### *General administration*

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### **Master programme**

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