

General Guideline for Master Theses at UAS BFI Vienna

Created by:	Breinbauer
Reviewed by:	Schlattau
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Scope and effective date

This guideline applies for all master degree programmes as well as onsite continuing higher education programmes finishing with a master's degree as per § 9 FHG (University of Applied Sciences Act) at UAS BFI Vienna, but not for online continuing higher education programmes. If degree programmes or continuing higher education programmes are offered in cooperation with other universities, the Academic Council may establish divergent guidelines in consultation with the provider. This guideline is effective from 1 September 2023. Students who have already agreed or been assigned a master thesis topic by the effective date are exempt from this guideline.

Master Thesis

1. This guideline for master theses summarises the **(minimum) standards in effect for all UAS BFI Vienna degree programmes**. In addition, there may be more specific guidelines pertaining to a particular degree programme or continuing higher education programme which meet the specific requirements of the respective programme in accordance with these general guidelines.
2. The completion of a master or continuing higher education programme requires an approved master thesis and a comprehensive final exam (=master exam).
3. The **master thesis may be written in German or English**. It is **an academic piece of work** in which the student **independently, individually and thoroughly** addresses and answers **one or several suitable research questions** relating to a specialist topic or field of research in the respective degree or continuing higher education programme. In view of the methodological diversity of master theses, independent **collection, analysis and refinement of empirical data or theoretical approaches should be emphasized** in particular.
4. The director of the degree or continuing higher education programme must ensure that a sufficient number of **master thesis supervisors** are available for each student cohort. Primarily lecturers of the respective degree or continuing higher education programme qualify as master thesis supervisors. Master thesis supervisors need to meet the following requirements:
 - a) hold an academic degree (at least level 7 EQF or equivalent master/diploma degree), and

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- b) be a lecturer at UAS BFI Vienna or UAS BFI Vienna EEC GmbH, or – in continuing higher education programmes – lecturer at specified cooperation partner institutions
- c) or provide evidence of their expertise necessary for the supervision through subject-relevant work in other higher education institutions.
- d) The supervisor should not work in the same organisation as the supervised candidate.

If one of the conditions a or b/c is not met, a full-time lecturer – or in continuing higher education programmes the academic director or a qualified person nominated by the academic director – must act as the first supervisor.

5. As a rule, the **master thesis topics** are suggested by the students themselves. The proposed master thesis topic must be clearly related to either the curriculum of the degree or continuing higher education programme or the UAS research profile. Master theses can also be assigned in the context of research projects of the degree programme or the UAS. Joint collaboration on a topic by several students is permissible if the students' individual performances are clearly discernible and can thus be assessed separately (§ 19 para. 1 FHG).
6. The schedules for drafting and supervising a master thesis are to be arranged for each degree or continuing higher education programme in accordance with this guideline. These schedules are to be communicated to the students and lecturers in time.
7. If the master thesis is commissioned by a partner firm of the degree or continuing higher education programme, a **co-supervisor** may be appointed from among the firm's staff by the degree or onsite continuing higher education programme director. The co-supervisor also needs to hold an academic degree and is specifically charged with (co-)supervising the student in content matters. In particular, he: she should be available for the student to talk to and provide him: her with the relevant practical information needed to successfully write the thesis. and supporting the student with practical information related to the thesis. Main and co-supervisor need to hold coordination meetings. The final written assessment of the master thesis is to be drawn up by the main supervisor. The co-supervisor will not be remunerated.
8. Once the potential master thesis supervisors (hereafter simply: supervisor) have been identified, the students contact a possible supervisor for their proposed master thesis topic and – unless the supervisor has to decline supervising the thesis out of hand (e.g. for capacity reasons) – submit a corresponding **research proposal**. The research proposal is a written outline of the work plan for the master thesis and serves as a basis for the communication between student and supervisor. If the research proposal is not satisfactory, the supervisor may also

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refuse supervising the master thesis. In continuing higher education programmes, the research proposal is approved by the academic director and the supervisor.

9. Using the respective form, student and supervisor conclude an **agreement** on the **supervision of the master thesis**. The supervision agreement needs to be signed by both parties and forwarded by the student to the degree programme director or, in continuing higher education programmes, to the academic director and the head of the Executive Education Center.

Students who do not yet have a supervisor by a certain date set by the programme director need to report this to the degree programme director or head of the Executive Education Center. If at that time no high-quality research proposal can be produced either, the master thesis cannot be submitted at the first deadline.

10. The **body of the master thesis** should, as a general rule, comprise between 24,000 and 36,000 words.
11. Regarding the **quality requirements of a master thesis**, students are referred to the *Assessment Form Master Thesis*.
12. In consultation with the supervisor, in a master thesis the internationally recognized rules of citation appropriate to the respective subject or the specifics of the degree or continuing higher education programme are to be applied. In addition, we refer to the current **Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice** of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (cf. OeAWI website), which are to be complied with. Further, the [“Guideline for gender and diversity sensitive language and usage of pictures – for students, lecturers and employees of the UAS BFI Vienna”](#) is also to be observed.
13. The approvable draft version of the master thesis can be submitted to the supervisor for a first assessment by 30 November in three-semester or by 30 April in four-semester master programmes. Two additional submission deadlines determined by the degree or continuing higher education programme director will be communicated in the penultimate semester at the latest. Information on how to submit the final version of the thesis is to be provided in accordance with the procedure specified in the respective degree or onsite continuing higher education programme. If the student cannot meet the deadlines for valid personal or job-related reasons (e.g. accident, prolonged illness, birth of a child confirmed by a doctor or hospital, important job-related reasons confirmed by the employer), the supervisors/degree programme directors/continuing higher education programme directors must be notified in due time by the student. Insufficient reasons lead to forfeiture of a submission date.
14. For the written assessment and evaluation, the *Assessment Form Master Thesis* is to be used. The submitted thesis needs to undergo a routine electronic plagiarism check, which is carried out by the supervisor according to the guidelines of the respective degree or onsite continuing higher education programme and

documented in the *Assessment Form Master Thesis*. In addition to this electronic check, the supervisor also needs to do manual plagiarism checks for content. In case of substantiated plagiarism, the master thesis will be declared invalid and no further formal and textual assessment of the thesis will be conducted. The submission is to count towards the total number of possible submissions (§ 20 FHG). This incident is communicated to the academic director, who will issue a formal warning to the student and determine the further course of action. Should the student be caught plagiarising again, they will automatically be expelled from the study programme. In justified suspected cases of plagiarism, ghost-writing or third-party authorship (e.g. automated texts generated by Artificial Intelligence) or for other violations of good scientific practice, UAS BFI Vienna reserves the right to summon the student to the Good Scientific Practice Ombudsperson at UAS BFI Vienna.

15. In total, there are three possible submission deadlines. The third submission of the master thesis within this period must be assessed by a board of examiners. If the **student is unable to meet a submission deadline** or if the submitted master thesis is rejected or assessed as negative due to considerable flaws, the student cannot take the master exam on the next possible date. If the master thesis is assessed by a board of examiners, the board consists of the degree or onsite continuing higher education programme director or a delegated member of the respective internal programme staff, the original thesis supervisor and a lecturer with expertise on the subject nominated by the programme or continuing higher education director. The original supervisor and the nominated lecturer draw up two independent assessments. Should the assessments differ significantly from each other, the chair of the board takes a decision on the final grade. If the thesis is not submitted or the submitted thesis not approved and graded a pass at the final submission date, in degree programmes the final year of studies may be repeated once (if the repeat year has not been claimed yet). The degree programme director must be informed of the repetition within one month after the result has been communicated to the student.
16. Every master thesis must be forwarded electronically, in a format specified by the degree or continuing higher education programme director, to the person responsible in the respective degree or continuing higher education programme. If the master thesis has been graded a pass (approved), the student has to submit **a copy**¹ of the final version to the programme coordinator electronically or as hardcover. A master thesis must include the following: A confirmation that the student has written the thesis autonomously and has not used any impermissible aids ("Sworn Declaration") and a Non-Disclosure Notice for confidential theses.² For hardcover copies, the following additional requirements apply: the

¹ Diverging modes will be communicated by the respective degree programme after approval by the academic director.

² Non-disclosed theses have to be signed by the programme director and the author; otherwise, the non-disclosure is not valid. In principle, non-disclosed theses are not made available electronically. If the Effective from: 1 September 2023

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color of the **cover** shall be black. The **lettering** on the spine of the master thesis (no adhesive labels!) shall be done as follows: colour gold, with the name in the lower part (first name Xxxxx; last name YYYYY in capital letters), and the year at the top end of the spine (when the master thesis is upright). If applicable, the Declaration of Consent that the master thesis can be made available electronically is to be included as well. By forwarding the hardcover or electronic master thesis to the library, the degree or continuing higher education programme ensures adherence to the publication requirement.

17. **The supervisor must grade the master thesis within three weeks** and prepare a **written assessment**. This assessment is forwarded or made available to the respective student.
18. A **modification of the master thesis topic** is only permitted in justified exceptional cases (e.g. job change). The degree or continuing higher education programme director decides on the student's respective request for modification after consulting the supervisor.
19. A **change of supervisors** is only permitted in justified exceptional cases (e.g. if the supervisor does not fulfil his:her supervising duties). The degree or continuing higher education programme director decides on the student's requested change after consulting the supervisor.
20. A master thesis **can be eligible for non-disclosure for up to five years from its approval date**, which can be applied for by forwarding **the respective form** to the degree or continuing higher education programme director. Non-disclosure is to be granted if the student can substantiate in time that important legal or economic interests of the student are at risk. If non-disclosure is granted, the respective application form is to be integrated into the master thesis immediately after the sworn declaration and must be signed and stamped by the degree or continuing higher education programme director.
21. The master thesis being approved and forwarded to the library is a prerequisite for the student to be admitted to the **oral master exam** (§ 19 para. 2 FHG).

Declaration of Consent has been signed, however, the thesis will be made available electronically once the non-disclosure period has expired. Theses which are not intended for non-disclosure must not contain a Non-Disclosure Notice. In this case, the Declaration of Consent for electronic availability shall be signed.