

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

Guideline for „Master Theses and Master Exams“ at the UAS BFI Vienna

I. Master Theses

1. This guideline for master theses summarises the **(minimum) standards valid for all UAS BFI Vienna degree programmes**. In addition to those, there may be more specific guidelines which are relevant to one master degree programme only. These are in accordance with these general guidelines. Any programme-specific specifications must be enclosed in the appendix of the general guidelines.
2. The **master exam**, which is the final exam in the master programme, is an **overall exam** which consists of the **master thesis** and the oral exam to be taken before a board of examiners. (pursuant to §3 Abs.2, Z 6, FHStG/Universities of Applied Sciences Act). The presentation of the master thesis is part of this final board exam (pursuant to § 16 Abs. 2, Z 1, FHStG).
3. The master thesis can be written **in German or English**. It is **an academic piece of work** in which the student works on, and answers **one or several useful research questions** in an **independent, individual and thorough manner**. The research questions relate to an interesting topic or field of research relevant to the degree programme in question. In view of the required innovative character of a master thesis, it is **desirable** that **empirical data be collected and analysed**, which should also be considered when the thesis is graded.
4. The degree programme director has to see to it that there are a sufficient number of **supervisors** for all students in any cohort. Full-time lecturers (primarily) and part-time lecturers can supervise master theses. Part-time lecturers need to meet the following requirements:
 - a) They must possess an academic degree (at least a master or master degree),
and


Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

- b) must be lecturers at the UAS BFI Vienna, or
- c) must be able to provide evidence of their expertise relevant to this supervising task by subject-relevant work in other institutions in the tertiary sector
- d) The supervisor must not work in the same firm as the supervised student.

If one of these conditions is not met, a full-time lecturer must act as the first supervisor.

Part-time supervisors are recommended to participate in the workshop on bachelor and master theses (master thesis part).

5. As a rule, the **topics** are suggested by the students themselves. The proposed master thesis topic is supposed to be related to either the degree programme's curriculum or the UAS research profile. Master theses can also be part of research projects within the degree programme or of the entire UAS. In this case, the students have to choose a topic from those suggested to them. In addition, the degree programme director can also offer topics which are derived from one of the current UAS research topics. Joint collaboration on a topic is permissible if the students' individual performances are clearly discernible and thus can be graded separately (§ 19 (Abs 1 FHStG/ Universities of Applied Sciences Act)).
6. The schedules for drafting and supervising master theses are arranged for each degree programme in accordance with this general UAS guideline. These schedules must be communicated to the students at the beginning of their degree programme (with the exceptions of Quantitative Asset and Risk Management, and Strategic HR Management in Europe, where the schedules are communicated at the beginning of the second term).
7. If the master thesis is commissioned by a partner firm of the degree programme, a **co-supervisor** can be appointed from among the firm's staff. This co-supervisor also needs to hold an academic degree, and is in charge of especially supervising content-related matters, and supporting the student with practical information related to the thesis. Main supervisor and co-supervisor need to hold regular coordination meetings. The final written assessment of the master thesis needs to be done by the main supervisor. The co-supervisor will not be remunerated.

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

8. The students contact the potential supervisor after they have been informed of the list of supervisors, and submit a **research proposal** unless the supervisor has to refuse supervising this thesis due to lack of work capacity right away. The research proposal is a written outline of the schedule of the master thesis, and serves as a starting point for communication between student and supervisor. If the research proposal is not satisfactory, the supervisor can also refuse to supervise the thesis.
9. The template for the **research proposal** students have to submit can be found on the in-house e-learning platform).
10. The student and the supervisor also have to sign a **supervision agreement** (for which a form is available). In this agreement the subject area of the master thesis also needs to be stated. This allocation of the subject area is checked and, if necessary, still modified by the degree programme director after consultation with the supervisor. The agreement needs to be forwarded to the programme director.

Students who have no supervisor by a certain date (which is set by the programme director) have to report this to the programme director. If by the same date no satisfactory research proposal has been submitted either, the student cannot take the master exam on the first date offered.
11. The **body of the master thesis** must comprise between 24,000 and 36,000 words.

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

12. Regarding the **qualitative and content requirements** of a master thesis, students have to be referred to the *Assessment Form Master Thesis* of the UAS BFI Vienna.

13. The **formal and referencing requirements** of the UAS BFI Vienna are to be strictly observed (Haslehner et al., "Bachelor- und Masterrbeiten an Fachhochschulen", in its current edition). Quotations and abbreviations in **master theses on law subjects** have to be in accordance with Peter Dax; Gernot Hopf, AZR, *Abkürzungs- und Zitierregeln der österreichischen Rechtssprache* und europarechtlicher Rechtsquellen, MANZ Verlag Wien, current edition. In addition, we refer to the the current **Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice** of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (cf. website OeAWI), which must also be observed. Furthermore, the the **guidelines on gender-sensitive language and images** are to be adhered to (cf. UAS BFI Vienna website, "Guidelines on Gender-sensitive Language and Images).

Students who want to use a **questionnaire to generate data** for their master theses are referred to the software which needs to be ordered from the research coordination.

If UAS BFI Vienna students or graduates are supposed to be the respondents, the UAS Academic Council and the quality manager of the UAS have to approve this questionnaire. Degree programme directors will decide about surveys within their degree programmes.

14. For information on the structure of the master thesis, students are referred to the UAS e-learning platform and the relevant template.

15. The **final draft of the master thesis which has been approved** has to be submitted to the supervisor by 30 November at the latest (in the third semester; (with the exceptions of Quantitative Asset and Risk Management, and Strategic HR Management in Europe, where the deadline is 30 April in the fourth semester). A programme-specific procedure indicates how to submit the final version of the thesis.

16. If **the deadlines** (first, second, or third and final submission) are **not met**, the students must **inform** the supervisor and the programme director in writing (by e-mail, cc-ed to the programme director).

17. An **extension of the deadline** can only be granted if there is a vital reason for it (e.g. an accident, protracted serious illness, important professional reasons, or birth of a child), which all need to be confirmed in writing by a doctor, a hospital, or the employer.

18. The submitted thesis needs to be checked routinely and electronically for **plagiarism**, which is carried out by the supervisor. Once the supervisors have officially agreed to supervise, their UAS-mail addresses are communicated to the plagiarism software coordinator. This person will create an account in time,

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

through which the lecturer can carry out the plagiarism check. In addition to **this electronic check, the supervisor also needs to do a manual (content) plagiarism check**. The result of this check is communicated to the programme director or the person in charge of master theses. In **case of plagiarism the master thesis will be declared invalid**, and the rules for negatively assessed master theses apply. This incident is communicated to the head of the UAS academic council who will issue a formal warning to the student. Should the same student be caught plagiarising again, he/she will be expelled from the degree programme. In justified suspected cases of plagiarism or ghost-writing, the UAS BFI Vienna reserves the right to invite the student to the Good Scientific Practice Ombudsman of the UAS BFI Vienna.

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

19. For the **written assessment, the Assessment Form Master Thesis of the UAS BFI Vienna (available on the UAS e-learning platform) has to be used** Observance of the formal criteria (see part 1 of the form, assessment of the formal criteria) is a minimum requirement. This means that if not all listed formal criteria are observed (completeness, declaration of honour, required number of characters, formatting, academic style, spelling, grammar and punctuation, appropriate quoting of academic sources, literature references etc.), the thesis cannot be assessed and approved (“nicht approbationsfähig”), and has to be rejected. In this case, contents of the thesis are not assessed, and the lecturer only needs to complete the first part of the assessment form, and label it as “cannot be approved/nicht approbierfähig”. Formal shortcomings, e.g. insufficiently adequate spelling will result in points deducted in the respective category. If all formal criteria are met, and met fully, no points will be deducted. Subsequently, the lecturer can assess the contents of the thesis (part 2 of the assessment form). In the writing space provided for comments, the supervisor’s reasons need to be documented in order to make the reasons why points have been deducted clear to the student, and allow him/her to improve the thesis in this respect.
20. In order to ensure transparency, the assessment form needs to be made known to the supervisors and the students when the topics are confirmed.
21. If a **student is unable to meet the deadline** or if the submitted master thesis is rejected for considerable flaws, he/she cannot take the master exam on the first possible date. If the student does not cite a vital and acceptable reason before the date of submission, the first submission deadline has passed. If the thesis contains serious content flaws, the supervisor needs to communicate per e-mail the changes that need to be made to secure a pass grade. The next submission is possible by 30 April (in Quantitative Asset and Risk Management, and Strategic HR Management in Europe by 31 August); the final submission has to be by 31 August (in Quantitative Asset and Risk Management, and Strategic HR Management in Europe by 20 December). In the three-semester master programmes, the programme director can fix a second submission deadline close to the first (31 January); in this case the next and final submission deadline for the master thesis is 30 April (second resit). The master thesis submitted on the final submission date needs to be assessed by a board of examiners.

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

22. This board consists of the programme director or a delegate member of the degree programme staff team, the original supervisor of the thesis, and a lecturer nominated by the programme director who can demonstrate relevant expertise on the subject. The original supervisor and the nominated lecturer have to draft an assessment each. Should the assessments differ significantly from each other, the head of the boards takes a decision on the final grade. If the thesis is not approved and graded a pass after the final submission, the student can petition for a repeat year. This petition must be handed in within two weeks after the final grade has been communicated to the student.
23. If the master thesis is graded a pass, the student has to present **a bound copy**¹ of the final draft (with the full name and the year of submission on the hardback cover) to the course coordinator. The **cover** must be black. The **lettering** on the back (no adhesive labels) has to be done as follows: the letters must be in gold, with the name in the lower part (first name (Xxxxx), family name (YYYYY, in capital letters), and the year in the upper part of the back of the copy. The hardback thesis contains the following additional declarations: declaration of honour (the student declares that he/she has not used any non-permitted aids), non-disclosure (for theses excluded from online publication for a period of 5 years maximum), or a declaration of consent that the thesis can be made available electronically.² Every approved master thesis must be sent electronically to the responsible person in the respective master programme in a form defined by the study programme management.
24. **The supervisor must grade the master thesis within 3 weeks, and must draft a written assessment (using the assessment form, see below). This assessment is also communicated to the course coordinator, and then to the programme director or the lecturer in charge of master theses, who after inspection passes the assessment on to the student.**

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

² Non-disclosed theses have to be signed by the programme director and the author; otherwise the non-disclosure is not valid. Non-disclosed theses are not electronically available. Once the non-disclosure period expires, the thesis will be made available electronically. Theses which are not intended to be excluded from publication must not contain a non-disclosure note; in this case a declaration of consent for electronic use is required.

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

25. A **modification of the topic** of the master thesis is only acceptable in exceptional cases (e.g. when changing jobs). It is the programme director who decides on these petitions for modification after consulting the supervisor.
26. A **change of supervisors** is only acceptable in exceptional cases (e.g. if the present supervisor does not fulfil his/her supervising duties). It is again the programme director who decides on these petitions for modification after consulting the supervisor.
27. A master thesis **can be excluded (i.e. barred from public access) for up to 5 years after the date of assessment**. This petition needs to be granted if the student can prove that relevant legal or economic interests of the students are at stake. If this petition is granted, the form needs to be integrated into the final hardback copy of the thesis (immediately after the declaration of honour), and has to be signed and stamped by the programme director.
28. The assessed and approved master thesis, which has been also submitted to the library, is a prerequisite for being admitted to the **oral master exam** (pursuant to § 19 Abs. 2, *FHStG*).

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

II. Master Exam

1. Contents of the Oral Master Exam

The master exam, which is the final exam in the master programme, is a cumulative exam which consists of the master thesis and the oral exam to be taken before a board of examiners. (pursuant to §3 (2) Z 2, FHStG)). The oral exam is a comprehensive exam and consists of the following exam parts (pursuant to § 16 (2) Z 1-3):

- Presentation and defensio of the master thesis
- Oral exam which examines interrelations of the topic of the master thesis to the relevant subjects of the curriculum
- Oral exam on other curriculum-relevant contents of the course

The **pool of potential examiners** (*Prüfungskommission*; a pool of examiners for final exams in the master programme from among all the full-time and part-time lecturers of a UAS degree programme

The **board of actual examiners** (= *Prüfungssenat*; actual team of examiners for individual oral final exams) consists of the following people:

- the chair (programme director or delegated member from the examiners' pool)
- the 1st examiner (an expert on the subject in which the master thesis has been written, and a representative of the pool of examiners)
- the 2nd examiner (another expert lecturer of the examination pool, and also a representative of the pool of examiners)

2. Duration and Procedure of the Master Exam

After a brief presentation of the master thesis by the candidate, there will be questions on the master thesis. There are questions on the master thesis proper, e.g. on the methodology used, but also questions on interrelations with other relevant subjects of the curriculum. Additionally, other curriculum-relevant contents of the degree programme can be addressed. Finally, questions can also lead to detailing and describing solutions to research problems.

There can be time for preparation. The exam should last 30 to 50 minutes per candidate.

- Presentation and defensio of the master thesis

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

- Oral exam which examines interrelations of the topic of the master thesis to the relevant subjects of the curriculum
- Oral exam on other curriculum-relevant contents of the course

Only one candidate at a time is examined.

The following points need to be considered in carrying out the master exam:

- The degree programme director informs the students at the start of the final semester (3rd, or 4th semester for Quantitative Asset and Risk Management, and Strategic HR Management in Europe) about the exam dates, and the grading criteria in an appropriate manner.
- In order to specify the exam topics, the candidates are given a reading list in advance. These exam topics will serve as the basis for the oral exam about interrelations to the master thesis, and other curriculum-relevant subjects. The exam will concentrate on comprehension and overview. In addition, small-scale case studies and similar materials can serve as the starting point for the remainder of the exam.
- There can be time for preparation.
- For the exam records, the same form must be used by all UAS degree programmes .


Further details regarding contents and procedures of the oral exams will be communicated by the individual degree programmes.

3. Overall Grading of Master Exams

How the the four exam parts (master thesis, presentation and defensio of the master thesis, oral exam about interrelations to the master thesis, and the oral exam about other curriculum-relevant contents) will be weighted needs to be communicated to the students before the master exams. (pursuant to § 16 (2) Z 4 FHStG).

Grading the master examination will follow this grading scale (§17 (2) FHStG):

- **Pass with distinction** (for outstanding performance)
- **Pass with merit** (for a clearly above-average performance)
- **Pass** (for all other pass grades)
- **Fail** (for an insufficient performance in the master exam)

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

The (overall) grade will be decided by the board (*Prüfungssenat*) jointly and immediately after the oral master exam. In this discussion, neither the candidate nor any people listening in on the exam will be present.

These in-house decisions on the final grade will be based on, and informed by, the Austrian school grading system. The grades awarded for the individual exam parts will result in a final overall grade (i.e. pass with distinction, pass with merit, pass, fail).

The exam results need to be given in the **exam records**. In an attachment, the questions asked and the answers graded have to be briefly documented. The result of the oral exam has to be communicated by the board to the student immediately after the grade has been decided on.

The chair is responsible for keeping the records and for the joint grading process. The records need to be signed by all members of the board.

Bezeichnung:	Guideline Master Theses and Master Exams	erstellt:	Breinbauer	freigegeben:	Kollegium	
Gültig ab: Ersetzt Version vom:	01.09.2019 01.09.2016	geprüft:	Breinbauer/ Schiessl/ Englisch: Ebersberger	freigegeben am:	06.05.2019	

4. Exam and Resit Opportunities

Resit of the exam

- If the candidate fails, the exam can be taken again only twice at the most.
- The (board) master exam is graded a fail if at least one exam part is a fail.
- A resit is always a comprehensive exam, for which there is only one final grade. If it is a fail, the entire exam has to be taken again.
- The resits will be taken in front of the same board if possible.
- If a student fails to show for an exam, this will be considered equivalent to a fail.

If a student does not take the exam on the main exam date, the reasons for the no-show need to be communicated in advance to the programme director. If no satisfactory explanation is given, the exam will be automatically considered the equivalent of a fail.

For all dates within a year, the exam contents are the same as those communicated for the main date. Any other later dates (e.g. if a leave of absence has been granted) are the exam dates communicated for the next academic year, starting with the next official main date. For those dates, however, the current exam contents, which may have been updated, apply. The programme director decides on any changes in the exam contents, e.g. if the curriculum has changed considerably.