

# Master thesis supervision: Information sheet

Thomas Brudermann, University of Graz

May 2021

I appreciate your interest to write your master thesis under my supervision. This document outlines the terms and conditions under which I am willing to accept the supervision of your master thesis.

## 1. General requirements

I am supervising master theses in the following programs:

- Joint Master in Sustainable Development,
- Joint Master in Circular Economy and
- Master Programs in USW (mainly Sustainability and Innovation Management).

I will accept supervising your thesis, if I have sufficient capacities in the respective semester, and under the following prerequisites:

- The topic relates to my expertise; i.e. the topics I cover in my teaching and research (see syllabi of my courses and publication list).
- You can demonstrate some familiarity with these topics (e.g. by prior participation in relevant courses).
- You hand in a sound research proposal with a suitable method to answer your research question(s) and a reasonable work plan.
- The research questions are relevant and the research process is likely to generate results that are publishable in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

I will not accept supervision if

- the topics of your thesis are beyond my expertise and not related to my research and teaching or
- you are not a student in one of the mentioned programs.

## 2. Inquiring thesis supervision

If you contact me regarding thesis supervision, please attach a two-page summary of your proposal, including your intended research question and proposed method. Based on this summary I will reply whether I see potential for the project, and whether I am in principle willing to supervise your thesis.

If my first answer is positive, please prepare a full research proposal according to the guidelines of the SIS Institute. Based on your proposal I will make the final decision whether I can supervise your thesis or not.

### 3. How does the supervision look like?

A master thesis project is self-reliant and self-dependent work, in which you demonstrate your capability to plan and implement a small research project independently. My job is not to tell you what to do and when. I will however support you in your project.

To ensure continuous progress and adequate supervision we will have regular meetings, e.g. before completing a major milestone. Please send me a written update prior to every meeting (at least 2 working days before the meeting).

Meetings are arranged on request and when necessary; one meeting lasts for max. one hour. For each meeting you will compile meeting notes to summarize the main outcomes of the meeting (TODO-list, what we agreed upon, etc.) and mail these notes to me within 2 working days. This is to avoid misunderstandings and to document the work progress.

**My support will mainly be for the contents of your thesis and not for formalities. I support you with regards to**

- Narrowing down the topic
- Formulating the research question(s)
- Literature search
- Planning of the empirical part and selection of an appropriate method

**My support will not include**

- Spell, grammar and style check (but I will tell you if such a check is necessary)
- Method teaching (for this, please attend respective courses – I however will try to help solving specific problems)
- Plagiarism check – this will be done after submission. If you plagiarize text or engage in any other form of academic misconduct, you will bear the consequences.

If you require my feedback I am happy to provide it. It however might take time (depending on the magnitude of your inquiry, and my own schedule). Please consider this in your time plan.

**Your duties are**

- Self-dependent work and compliance with academic writing/working standards
- Organization of meetings when necessary (after sending me a progress update)
- Compilation of meeting notes for every meeting we have, and send them to me within 2 working days (docx format, file name convention: Meeting\_MT\_YourName\_Date.docx)
- Completion of the project within an acceptable time span (i.e. one year, see below).

## 4. Time plan

Your research proposal should include a time plan, and it is your duty to stick to this time plan and keep deviations to a minimum.

A master thesis is worth 30 ECTS, which corresponds to one semester of full work load (40 hours per week). I am aware that you might not be able to work full time on your master thesis due to other duties. Nonetheless a master thesis project should be completed within one year, unless there are important reasons that make it impossible (i.e. emergencies in the family, long sickness or paternal/maternal leaves).

In practical terms this means that you will have my full support during this year. If you take longer without urgent reasons being present, my support will be reduced to the legally required minimum (essentially I will grade your thesis when it is completed).

## 5. Thesis completion

Before you submit your thesis I can provide a pre-check, and I will inform you of major weaknesses or problems in the thesis (given you are still in year 1 of your thesis project). If you wish such a pre-check, please plan for two weeks of response time (during holiday seasons it will possibly take longer).

Please use a standard layout and a citation style which is based on (author, date). Please refer to the thesis guideline of the institute for details.

The word count of your thesis should be between 18,000 and 25,000 words, excluding references and supplements.

## 6. Assessment of the thesis

I will assess the thesis according to the following criteria.

### **Criterion 1: Content – Logic of the structure and scientific argumentation (40%)**

- Is there a consistent and well-arranged abstract/summary presenting the most important findings of the thesis?
- Is the research question well defined and is the structure of the report based on this question?
- Are the sources of the statements laid open, respectively are the calculations and assumptions comprehensible?
- Are the linkages between the sections of the thesis clear? Is the prior section the basis for the subsequent?
- How sophisticated is the analysis in regard to autonomy, independent scientific thinking, and originality?
- Are central concepts and terms well defined?
- Does the thesis incorporate critical appraisal?

## **Criterion 2: Methods (40%)**

- Competence – Does the candidate show sufficient familiarity with current knowledge and research methodology?
- Application of methods – To what extent is the selection and application of research methods comprehensible? Is there a reflection on the selection of the methods in regard to their fit for the research question?
- Presentation of results – Is the presentation of the results clear and logical? Are the results related to the research questions? Is it obvious that the methods led to the results?
- Generalizations – Are generalizations supported by facts and possible limitations of the applied method discussed?

## **Criterion 3: Formal Aspects (20%)**

- Literature – Is there a proper selection of sources in regard to quality, actuality, and variety?
- Citations – Is there a correct and consistent way of citations? Is there a complete list of references?
- Headings, tables, figures, lists, etc. – Are the headings in the text consistent with the tables of content, list of figures/tables? Are there mistakes in the structure of the report? Are there titles of the tables/figures? Are they informative? Are there eventually citations of sources?
- Formatting and Layout – Is the format of the report consistent and correct? Is the layout attractive for readers?

The overall score will translate into the grading as follows:

90 - 100%	Excellent (1)
76 - 89%	Good (2)
65 - 75%	Satisfactory (3)
50 - 64%	Sufficient (4)
00 - 49%	Fail (5)

*Note: This document is for information only and may contain mistakes.*