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Each year, students in our six master programmes compile and submit excellent master theses. To acknowledge the efforts of students and supervisors the Curricula Commission Environmental Systems Sciences awards the

Master Thesis Award of Excellence 2025

Alumni who completed their studies between 01 May 2023 and 31 December 2024 are invited to apply for the award. Eligible are master theses graded "Excellent (1)" within the following programs:

- ESS / Geography
- ESS / Economics
- ESS / Sustainability and Innovation Management
- ESS / NAWI-TECH
- Sustainable Development (entrance university: Graz)
- Circular Economy (degree awarding university: Graz)

Submissions must include

- The completed submission
- The self-assessment on pages 2 to 5
- The submitted master thesis in PDF format
- The review/grading of the main supervisor

All submissions will be assessed by a jury with regards to the following criteria:

1. Relevance of the topic for the broad field of sustainability
2. Concise and clear research question(s)
3. Thorough implementation of the project
4. Clarity of writing
5. Critical reflection on the conducted research
6. Advancement of scientific or practical knowledge
7. Additional aspects brought forward by the applicant.

Electronic Applications are welcome anytime - Deadline January, 31th 2025

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For the Curricula-Commission Environmental Systems Sciences

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thomas Bruderermann
Chair of the Curricula Commission ESS



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We expect each student to grade themselves with the below form, and give a clear explanation why they deserve the grade (with examples from the thesis when appropriate).

Item	Points for item			Explanation
	1	2	3	
1. Relevance of the topic				
1.1 Connection to existing research	The context of the researched topic is described in detail. However, no interconnection is made between what is known and what will be researched.	The context of the researched topic is described in detail, and an interconnection is made between what is known and what will be researched.	The context of the research is described in detail. As a result, the research question emerges from the described context and the described research gaps.	
1.2 Delineation of the work compared to existing research / novelty of the work.	The delineation of the research compared to existing work is unclear, and the research is not novel.	The delineation of the research compared to existing work is clear, but the research is not novel.	The delineation of the research compared to existing work is clear, and the research is not novel.	
1.3 Contribution of the work to existing research	The work makes a clear contribution to the research field.	The work makes a clear contribution to the existing research field, and on top of that has consequences for other research fields.	The work makes a clear contribution to the existing research field, and on top of that has consequences for other research fields, and fields outside of research (e.g., the public or private sector)	
2. Concise and clear research question(s)				
2.1 Clarity of the research questions	The research questions are unclear and unfalsifiable.	The research questions are clear and defined sharply.	The research questions are clear and defined sharply. The research	



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			question is not unfalsifiable.	
2.2 Boundaries to the research	The research was conducted within clearly described spatial and temporal boundaries, but this is unclear in the research questions.	The research was conducted within clearly described spatial and temporal boundaries, and this becomes clear in the research questions.	The spatial and temporal boundaries are sharply described.	
3. Thorough implementation				
3.1 Theoretical underpinning	There is some discussion of the underlying theory, but the description shows serious errors.	The relevant theory is used, but the description has not been tailored to the research at hand or shows occasional errors.	Clear, complete and coherent overview of relevant theory on the level of an up-to-date review paper.	
3.2 Use of literature	Some peer-reviewed papers in reference list but also a significant body of grey literature.	Relevant peer-reviewed papers in reference list but also some grey literature or text books. Some included references less relevant	Almost exclusively peer-reviewed papers in reference list or specialized monographs (not text books). All papers included are relevant	
3.3 Use of methods and data	Research is not reproducible due to insufficient information on data (collection and/or treatment) and analysis methods	Some aspects of the research regarding data-collection, data-treatment, models or the analysis methods are described insufficiently so that that particular aspect of the research is not reproducible.	Description of the data (collection, treatment) or models as well as the analysis methods is complete and clear so that exact reproduction of the research is possible.	
4. Clarity of writing				
4.1 Structure of the text	Main structure is correct, but lower-level hierarchy of sections is not logical in places. Some sections	Most sections have a clear and unique function. Hierarchy of sections is mostly correct. Ordering	Well-structured: each section has a clear and unique function. Hierarchy of sections is	



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	have overlapping functions leading to ambiguity in placement of information.	of sections is mostly logical.	correct. Ordering of sections is logical.	
4.2 Language of the text	The text is ambiguous in some places but this does not always inhibit a correct interpretation of the text.	Formulations in text are clear and exact, as well as concise.	Textual quality of thesis (or manuscript in the form of a journal paper) is such that it could be acceptable for a peer-reviewed journal	
4.3 Graphical representation	Lay-out is mostly clear. Tables, graphs and graphics in few places only	Lay-out is clear. Appropriate use of text, tables, graphs and graphics.	Lay-out is functional and clear. Clever use of graphs and graphics	
5. Critical reflection of the conducted research				
5.1 Critical reflection on the conducted research	Only some possible weaknesses and/or weaknesses which are in reality irrelevant or non-existent have been identified.	Weaknesses in the research are indicated and weighed relative to each other. Furthermore, (better) alternatives for the methods used are indicated.	Not only all possible weaknesses in the research are indicated, but also it is indicated which weaknesses affect the conclusions most.	
5.2 Critical reflection on the conducted research in light of existing research	Only trivial reflection vis-a-vis existing literature.	Only most obvious conflicts and correspondences with existing literature are identified.	Results are critically confronted with existing literature. In case of conflicts, the relative weight of own results and existing literature is assessed.	
6. Advancement of knowledge				
6.1 Consideration of Audience	Audience not taken into account.	Audience hardly taken into consideration.	Audience taken into consideration and clear and to-the-point conclusions for each audience group are specified.	



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<p>6.2 Clarity of the conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Weak link between research questions, results and conclusions</p>	<p>Conclusions are linked to the research questions, but not all questions are addressed. Some conclusions are not substantiated by results or merely repeat results.</p>	<p>Clear link between research questions and conclusions. Conclusions substantiated by results. Conclusions are formulated exact and concise. Conclusions are</p>	
<p>6.3 Recommendations given</p>	<p>Recommendations are absent or trivial,</p>	<p>Recommendations are well-linked to conclusions.</p>	<p>Recommendations are well-linked to conclusions and original.</p>	
<p>7. Other aspects that are considered relevant</p>				