

Guidelines for writing a master's thesis

As part of the master's program of Sociology at the University of Potsdam, a master's thesis must be written. Depending on the study regulation, it has to amount to 24 or 30 ECTS/LP. You need to meet certain criteria in order to register your thesis. The formal guidelines for the master's program of Sociology can be found below.

The students are expected to work on a topic independently and in accordance with scientific standards. The skills to do that can be acquired in the colloquium for the writing of final theses of Prof. Dr. Verwiebe. There, you will have the opportunity to share and discuss your ideas and outline, though you cannot enroll in the colloquium on Puls.

Counselors and subject areas

Prof. Dr. Verwiebe, Dr. Nina-Sophie Fritsch, Dr. Licia Bobzien and Cristina Mejia Samper are responsible for supervision.

A master's thesis written at the Chair of Inequality Research and Social Stratification Analysis can cover a wide range of topics and research designs. Among others, the following topics can be of interest:

Subject areas

- Poverty and deprivation
- Occupational biographies and career trajectories
- Gender and education
- Labor market, professions and social inequality
- Digitization
- Discrimination and social exclusion
- Mobility, migration and forced migration
- Religion and secularization
- Urban sociology and change
- Change of values and attitudes
- Welfare systems and politics
- Health
- Family, change of family structures

You should choose your topic yourself and ensure your counselor agrees with it. You can use either quantitative, qualitative or theoretical designs. Two and more students can write a master's thesis together only if responsibilities for each part are explicitly stated. The students are assessed individually. The workload increases with every additional student.

Methods

Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used. Some examples are:

- Document analysis and case studies
- Using standardized data
- Internationally comparative data (e.g. survey data)
- Development and testing of measuring tools
- Longitudinal studies and temporal developments
- Qualitative interviews and focus groups
- Regional data
- Webscraping and Big Data analysis
- Image and video analysis

Please note: The chair can assist you if you are interested in conducting a secondary analysis of already existing survey data (e.g. micro-census, European Value Study, SOEP). Please contact the Chair's secretariat for more information.

Your way to a place for the supervision of your thesis at the Chair of Social Structure Analysis and Social Inequality – Flowchart for the supervision of thesis

If you are interested in having your thesis supervised by the chair, you should prepare a short synopsis. Please use [the form provided by the chair](#)

Submission of the exposé via the chair's own form on the website:

Deadline for winter semester 23/24: 06/19/2023.

Deadline for summer semester 24: 01/06/2024

Acceptance for supervision at the chair

The decision about the supervision of the thesis at our chair will be made after the application deadline. You will be notified about the decision via email. In parallel, please observe the formal guidelines of the corresponding study and examination regulations in the respective courses of study. You will find important information on the pages of the examination office of the WiSo Faculty. The contact person is Dr. Birgit Kletzlin. (Formal registration at the responsible examination office)

After a confirmation of supervision on our part and a consultation meeting for the official registration, you can then discuss the topic, the concrete implementation of your research idea, as well as the supervision modalities with your supervisor in more detail.

The supervision commitment is limited to six months, which corresponds to the approximate period within which the master's thesis should be completed. If the completion of your master thesis requires more time, this must be discussed with your supervisor.

There are 4 consultation dates:

1. Appointment for the topic identification and registration of the official topic
2. Appointment for the concretization of the topic.
3. Appointment for the writing phase.
4. Appointment for the final phase.

Consultation appointments for the official registration

You will receive a 1st appointment with the first examiner, who is usually also the supervisor.

Further procedure

- Agreement on the topic and concretization of the title of the thesis with the supervisor as well as finding a second supervisor in consultation with the supervisor.
- The form "Binding notification of supervisors/second reviewers for Bachelor's and Master's theses" must be signed by both reviewers.
- Submission of the form by the student to Dr. Kletzin.
- Completing the topic assignment form for the final topic, observing the deadlines.
- Countersignature of the topic assignment form by both reviewers, then submission to Dr. Kletzin by the chair.
- The examination board confirms by its signature.
- The topic can be picked up at the examination office at the Neue Palais in due time - continue with the registration.

Registration of the thesis in the study office/examination office

With the confirmation of the topic by the examination board, the registration of the thesis can be done:

- Within one week after confirmation by the examination board, the thesis must be registered in the study office/examination office.
- Late registration will result in a new topic having to be assigned.
- If the registration is made in person during office hours in the study office/examination office, the registration will be carried out immediately during office hours and noted in the examination system.
- The deadline for submission will be set and communicated.
- The original topic assignment sheet with registration date and submission date will be handed over to the student.

Final discussion

Three weeks before submitting the final paper, a binding meeting for the final version of the paper is to be arranged with your supervisor. This is followed by the author's fine-tuning of the final paper. This meeting is just as important as the initial meeting.

Writing the master's thesis

Formal Guidelines

Master of Sociology (study regulation starting winter semester 2014/15)

„(1) Once the student has attained 90 ECTS/LP, she or he is entitled to the immediate allocation of a topic for her or his master's thesis. Should the appointment of ECTS/LP be delayed, it is sufficient to both have attained 60 ECTS/LP and be enrolled in examinations that according to § 9 Abs. 4 or Abs. 5 BAMA-O total another 30 ECTS/LP. (2) The master's thesis and its disputation amount to 30 ECTS/LP. It has to be finished within six months and 90 pages DIN A4 should not be exceeded. Furthermore, § 30 BAMA-O applies.“ translated and paraphrased from: Auszug aus den Amtlichen Bekanntmachungen Nr. 16 vom 11.9.2014 – pp. 1221 - 1242.

Master of Sociology (study regulation starting winter semester 2020/21)

„(1) The master's thesis and its disputation amount to 24 ECTS/LP. (2) Once the student has attained 72 ECTS/LP, she or he is entitled to the immediate allocation of a topic for her or his master's thesis.“ translated and paraphrased from: Auszug aus den Amtlichen Bekanntmachungen Nr. 13 vom 21.7.2020 – pp. 687 - 692.

The length of the master's thesis is approximately three pages per credit point. With 24 credit points, this would be approx. 72 pages. Remember to adhere to the Chair's citation guidelines. All theses are checked for plagiarism through the software Turn-it-In. The screening for plagiarism follows the corresponding guidelines of the University of Potsdam from October 20, 2010.

A **statement of authorship** has to be included in every university work and has to be signed by the student. You can find further information (e.g. regarding team work) in your study and examination regulations. With this statement the student affirms that she or he has acted in scientifically correct manner, has written the thesis independently and only used the references listed in the bibliography. More information can be found in the plagiarism guidelines (abridged version in English).

Whilst you are writing your thesis, **regular consultations** with your counselor are mandatory (every four to eight weeks). The **final meeting** is held three weeks prior to submission – this way final recommendations can still be included.

Submission of the master's thesis

The thesis is to be **handed in both timely and threefold** bound as a hardcover (either at the examination's office during office hours or via mail – the stamped date counts). Further it is to be handed in on an electronic medium (e.g. CD, USB stick) both in word and PDF format. If the thesis is written in any other language than German (for which the consent of both reviewers is needed), a short summary in German is to be included. Due to the pandemic, the master's thesis can be handed in solely electronically at the moment (at the examination's office).

Evaluation of the master's thesis

The master's thesis will be evaluated within six weeks. The following content-related and formal criteria are referenced in evaluation.

Content-related criteria	Formal criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phrasing a clear research question - Accomplishing the goal of the thesis (answering the research question) - Independence (developing and arguing for a distinct position) - Good structure, straight reasoning (common thread) - Proper use of professional terminology and sound choice of sources - Quality of empirical and theoretical research (knowledge and use of methods, analysis and interpretation of findings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completeness (title page, table of contents, bibliography, if applicable a list of tables, illustrations and an appendix) - Clarity (general structure, structure of chapters) - Linguistic and orthographic accuracy - Proper use of sources - Adhering to the citation guidelines

Assessment of the master's thesis

The examination office forwards your thesis to your reviewers. They examine the thesis, grade it and provide written explanations and feedback. The first reviewer is usually the counselor. If the second reviewer approves of the first assessment, she or he will sign it. If both assessments differ by more than 2.0 or if one assessment is worse than 4.0, a third reviewer is assigned by the examination board.

Disputation/Thesis defense

Once your thesis has been assessed, you and your reviewers will find a date for the thesis defense. The defense usually lasts 45-60 minutes. At first, you have of 10-15 minutes to present your findings. Preparing a presentation is recommended. Afterwards, the reviewers will ask questions about the thesis. We recommend going through both the reviewers' written feedback and the following points of your thesis beforehand: 1. research question and relevance 2. method 3. findings 4. implications of the findings. Afterward, your grade will be added in Puls by the examination office once they receive the minutes of examination.

Tips and helpful links:

- Information about how to work academically (from generating ideas to research, citation etc.) can be found on the website of the [central study board](#)
- Please use the [University Library](#) for your research
- Relevant documents can be found at the [examination office of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences](#)