

ETH Zurich
Study Administration
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www.istp.ethz.ch**MSc Science, Technology and Policy (MSc STP) – Programme Regulations 2019
(updated on 30/06/2023)****Master's Thesis Guidelines****1. Preamble and learning goals**

The Master's thesis concludes the Master's degree programme in Science, Technology and Policy. With the Master's thesis, students demonstrate their ability to conduct scientific research based on the theoretical and methodological knowledge acquired during the MSc programme. The thesis addresses a particular policy issue chosen by the student and does so in an interdisciplinary manner. Policy analysis plays a significant role in the research and the resulting thesis.

Writing the Master's thesis involves a full-time semester workload (six calendar months full-time, 30 ECTS). Because the thesis must be completed within six months, students are advised to refrain from taking additional courses and/or, as far as financially possible, from pursuing paid employment during this time.

2. Prerequisites

Students can commence work on the Master's thesis when both of the following conditions are met:

- a. They have completed their Bachelor's degree.
- b. They have acquired the number of ECTS points required for the Master's degree in all categories, with the exception of credits for electives and the Master's thesis itself.

The minimum number of credits required in each category is:

Courses in social sciences:	27 credits
Minor in natural sciences and engineering:	27 credits
Case studies:	12 credits

3. Supervision

The Master's thesis should be supervised by two professors, who serve as supervisor and co-supervisor, respectively. One of these professors must be from the social sciences. The other professor should be from the natural or engineering sciences or the social sciences.

The supervisor must be an ETH Zurich professor. She or he has the lead role in supervising and mentoring the student and grading the thesis. The co-supervisor can be from ETH or another academic institution. Subject to approval by the ISTP studies director, the co-supervisor (whether from within ETH Zurich or another academic institution) can also be a postdoctoral researcher or senior researcher/scientist with demonstrated experience in advising Master's and doctoral students. Such a co-advisor must be independent of the supervisor, i.e., she or he should not be a staff member of the supervisor.

Subject to approval by the supervisor and the ISTP studies director, the Master's thesis research can also be undertaken outside ETH Zurich under the co-supervision of a professor or postdoc/senior researcher at that institution (meeting the same conditions as for the co-supervisor within ETH Zurich, see above). In such cases, the supervisor (who must be an ETH Zurich professor) should assess the submitted Master's thesis independently of the ETH-external co-supervisor and provide a separate assessment and grading proposal. If both supervisor and co-supervisor are from within ETH Zurich, they may provide a jointly agreed assessment.

The supervisor and co-supervisor must, under any conditions, have full access to data and other material when assessing and grading the thesis, if necessary, under a non-disclosure agreement with the external institution. Research findings reported in a Master's thesis must be replicable by third parties, normally by everyone in the respective scientific field and, in exceptional cases, at least by the supervisor and co-supervisor. Students are also responsible for determining where their research requires approval by the ETH Ethics Committee and, if applicable, secure approval with support from their supervisor.

According to a directive by the rector of ETH Zurich, research for the Master's thesis as such cannot be paid for. That is, paid work time (e.g., in the context of an internship or as a research assistant) cannot be used for work on the Master's thesis. Reimbursements (e.g., for travel costs, additional charges for food or accommodation) are permitted.

The supervisor and co-supervisor have the following duties:

- a. Define the topic of the Master's thesis in consultation with the student.
- b. Define the tasks in writing.
- c. Determine the date on which the student can begin the Master's thesis and the date on which the student must submit the thesis.
- d. Define the criteria for assessment of the Master's thesis.
- e. Assess and grade the thesis.

4. Start date and duration

The Master's thesis must be completed within 28 weeks. These 28 weeks include 26 weeks of work and 2 weeks for holidays, sick leave, and other brief absences.

Students are free to choose a start date in agreement with both supervisors. The start date is then registered in *myStudies*, subject to approval by the supervisor.

This binding deadline for each student is displayed on *myStudies*. If it is missed without notification, the Master's thesis will be graded as "failed".

The Director of Studies can extend the deadline under exceptional circumstances. The reasons must be stated in a written request by the student and the request must be approved by the Studies Director.

5. Format and content

a. Length

There is no required or maximum length. A rule of thumb is 40-50 pages, excluding appendices.

b. Front-page layout.

The front page must include the following information:

- ETH and ISTP Logo.
- Thesis type (Master's thesis).
- Name of the student.
- Student ID number.
- Master's degree programme in Science, Technology and Policy.
- Title of the Master's thesis.
- Supervisor and Co-Supervisor, with their academic title and institution.
- Date of submission (dd/mm/yyyy).

c. Declaration of originality

Students must submit a signed declaration of originality when they submit their Master's thesis. Each copy needs to contain a declaration of originality.

<https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/main/education/rechtliches-abschluesse/leistungskontrollen/declaration-originality.pdf>

If this student uses AI tools for language editing, this is acceptable but must be declared in the declaration of originality. Using AI tools for the substantive content of the thesis is not allowed.

d. Citation etiquette

All students are required to follow the guidelines «Citation etiquette»:

<https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/baug/ifu/eco-systems-design-dam/documents/master-thesis/ifu-esd-masterthesis-plagiarism-en.pdf>

See also the webpage on plagiarism on the ETH student portal:

<https://ethz.ch/students/en/studies/performance-assessments/plagiarism.html>

Please be aware that supervisors will normally run Master's theses through PlagScan or a similar platform to identify plagiarism problems before assessing the content of the thesis.

6. Performance assessment

The Master's thesis will be graded, and this grade will serve as the student's performance assessment for this unit of the study programme. Theses are graded on a scale from 1 -6. Students must achieve 4 or higher in order to pass.

Only the written Master's thesis is evaluated. Presentation of the Master's thesis is not compulsory; however, the ISTP encourages students to present their thesis in a setting of their choice.

The Master's thesis evaluation form lists the criteria that will be used to evaluate the thesis.

The form can be found at:

<https://istp.ethz.ch/education/MSc-ETH-STP/master-thesis.html>

The supervisor and co-supervisor will evaluate a student's thesis independently. The scores for each criterion are averaged. The average of all these scores will constitute the final grade. The main supervisor will coordinate the grading process and submit the student's final grade to the study secretary. The supervisor and co-supervisor are free to submit separate evaluation forms or a jointly filled in form.

A Master's thesis that receives a grade lower than 4 may be repeated once. If repeated, it must address a new topic and can be supervised by the same or different persons, subject to the rules above.

Repeating a Master's thesis that has received a grade of 4 or higher is not possible.

7. Process

a. Finding a topic and supervisors and preparing the thesis proposal.

Students are free to develop their own thesis topic or to select a topic suggested by a prospective supervisor and/or co-supervisor, and they are free to choose a supervisor and a co-supervisor whose interest aligns with a particular topic, subject to the above rules. The thesis must focus on a policy-relevant issue, and policy analysis should play a significant role in the research and resulting thesis. Once a topic is identified and agreed upon by both the student and the supervisor, the student will draft a thesis proposal of around 2 - 5 pages. This proposal must be approved by the supervisor before the research starts. The proposal should cover the following points:

- Supervisor and co-supervisor.
- Research question and its relevance.
- References and relevant scientific literature.
- Potential theoretical arguments addressing this question.
- Empirical research strategy and timeline.

b. Registration in *myStudies*.

After the student, supervisor, and co-supervisor agree on a topic and a start date, she or he must register for lecture number “**860-0900-00 Master’s Thesis**” in *myStudies*.

The starting date must be no later than 3 months after the end of the semester within which the registration takes place.

To register the thesis in *myStudies* students need to submit:

- Title of the thesis (the title can be changed later).
- Start date.
- Names of the supervisor and co-supervisor.
- Thesis proposal.

The thesis must be completed within 28 weeks (see above).

c. The main supervisor must confirm the thesis in *myStudies*.

The supervisor must confirm the thesis in *myStudies* for the student to be able to formally begin the Master’s thesis.

The student office approves the registration in *myStudies*. Students can start the Master’s Thesis only when the status in *myStudies* is “Definite”.

d. Submission and evaluation.

The final written thesis must be submitted to the supervisors on the day of submission. Any corrections made afterwards will not be taken into consideration when grading the thesis. The declaration of originality must be included with the submitted thesis copy for the submission to be considered valid. Students and supervisors must decide together on whether the final Master’s thesis will be submitted in hard copy form or whether a digital submission is acceptable. Both supervisors will evaluate the final version of the master’s thesis (see above).

In addition, students must submit a PDF version of the Master’s thesis to the Study Administration: info@istp.ethz.ch

The supervisor will, subject to the consent of the co-supervisor, communicate the grade and the grading sheet(s) for a thesis to the Study Administration within eight weeks after submission, and preferably sooner.

The supervisor and co-supervisor must send the grading sheet(s) to the student. They will commonly meet with the student in person or online to provide more detailed feedback.

e. Awarding credit points.

Students will be awarded 30 ECTS credit points upon successfully completing the thesis.

f. Publication in the ETH Research Collection.

Students have the opportunity to publish their Master's thesis in the ETH Research Collection. To publish Master's theses in the Research Collection, a letter of recommendation from the main supervisor is required. You can find further information on the webpage:

<https://documentation.library.ethz.ch/display/RC/Master%2C+Bachelor+and+Semester+Theses>

g. Degree request

Once the Master's thesis is successfully completed and all credits for completing the degree are obtained, students may request their diploma. https://ee.ethz.ch/studies/main-master/degree_request.html

30 June 2023

Prof. Thomas Bernauer



Director of Studies D-GESS, MSc STP