

Guideline: Theses

Owner: Head of Degree Programme (Master's degrees)

Approved by: Quality and Risk Management Development Team

Date: 29 August 2025

Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Actors and responsibilities in the thesis process	5
3. Ethical principles and good scientific practice	6
3.1. Ethical review	6
3.2. Research permits	7
3.3. Consent.....	7
3.4. Data management plan and processing of personal data	7
4. Thesis process	9
4.1. Planning	9
4.2. Implementation	10
4.3. Finishing touches.....	10
4.4. Maturity test.....	10
4.5. Archiving and publication	11
5. Thesis assessment	12
6. Credit transfer for a thesis.....	12
7. Additional information	13
7.1. HAMK instructions	13
7.2. Other instructions	13

1. Introduction

This Guideline describes the thesis process at Häme University of Applied Sciences. It defines the concepts, principles, course and responsibilities of the thesis process. The Guideline applies to studies leading to a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree.

This guideline is based on legislation on universities of applied sciences and HAMK's Degree Regulations. The Thesis guideline is complemented by the thesis instructions, Assessment guideline, and Guideline on the recognition of prior learning.

The aim of the thesis is to build up both the student's general workplace skills and their sector-specific professional competences. The theses respond to workplace needs and are produced as development projects or as part of the projects of HAMK Research Units.

The scope of a Bachelor's thesis is 15 credits, while the scope of a Master's thesis is 30 credits. The thesis process consists of three parts: planning, implementation and finishing. All these parts have the same scope: five (5) credits in a Bachelor's degree and ten (10) credits in a Master's degree. A Master's thesis is broader and more in-depth and analytical in its approach than a Bachelor's thesis.

Writing a thesis is a learning process during which the student learns to work with a research-focused, analytical and development-oriented approach. The thesis is often relevant to workplace development or HAMK's research and development activities. It may also be associated with developing the student's enterprising activities. Its objective is to analyse and solve a problem on the agreed scale and schedule. A thesis may draw on HAMK's multidisciplinary approach, and it may also be produced in cooperation between several degree programmes. As a rule, a thesis is produced individually or with a division of responsibilities that allows each student to demonstrate mastery of the thesis process as a whole and their individual competence. The student also has access to the necessary individual arrangements during the thesis process.

The thesis process at HAMK relies on Wihi, a system for guiding and managing thesis projects.

The key principles of a thesis include:

- the thesis is workplace and research-oriented
- the thesis topic arises primarily from the world of work or, in some cases, from the students themselves, including topics related to their enterprising activities
- the thesis promotes the development of the student's professional competence and improves their employment opportunities.

At HAMK, a thesis can be either research-focused or practice-based, or a portfolio or article thesis. A research-focused thesis comprises applied research and is closely linked to the world of work. A practice-based thesis includes a concrete development assignment carried out in a workplace. A student may also collect material related to the thesis during their studies and use it to create a portfolio thesis. In an article thesis, the student plans and writes one to four articles. If the student has published articles related to their professional field during their studies, they can also compile them into an article thesis.

Regardless of the implementation method, all theses should comprise a report with an introduction, sections describing the knowledge base, implementation and results of the thesis, as well as conclusions and reflection. Here, the knowledge base refers to the theoretical background and previous research evidence relevant to the topic. Different sections of the thesis are put together in different ways, depending on the chosen model.

An acceptable thesis is assessed on a scale of 1 to 5. Different assessment criteria are emphasised in case of the various thesis implementation methods.

Other documents may also be created during the thesis process, including a research permit decision and privacy statement, for which HAMK's records management plan defines a storage period, storage location and party responsible for storage.

2. **Actors and responsibilities in the thesis process**

The student is the author/researcher of the thesis and consequently responsible for carefully following good scientific practice and other guidelines.

The thesis supervisor is a representative of HAMK staff assigned by the Head of Degree Programme. The supervisor guides the student in producing the thesis, monitors the student's progress and has the role of lead examiner. The main emphasis of the supervision process is on small groups, and individual guidance only covers the special questions and challenges of each thesis.

The second examiner participates in the assessment process by reading the completed thesis and giving their own assessment of it. A system of two examiners ensures the quality and equality of assessment.

The thesis coordinator coordinates the theses of the degree programme as a whole. They receive the topic proposal and approve it, or ask the student to supplement it. The coordinator proposes a thesis to a supervisor or directly appoints a supervisor as well as possible additional supervisors and examiners for the thesis.

A **communications teacher** guides thesis reporting and participates in assessing the thesis report in Bachelor's theses.

An **English language teacher** checks the English abstract of Bachelor's theses from a linguistic point of view. If a student in a Finnish-language degree programme completes their thesis in English, the English language teacher guides the student regarding linguistic aspects of the thesis report and gives an assessment of the reporting when the thesis is finished. In degree programmes delivered in English, the English language teacher similarly guides the student regarding linguistic aspects of the thesis report and gives an assessment of the reporting.

The linguistic aspects of Master's theses are not checked.

The commissioning organisation of the thesis refers to a business and industry partner of the thesis, which may be a company, a public body or a third-sector operator.

3. Ethical principles and good scientific practice

The student must know and comply with universally accepted ethical principles and familiarise themselves with the premises of good scientific practice. The universal principles apply to all fields of research in Finland:

- The author of the thesis respects the dignity and autonomy of human research participants.
- The author of the thesis respects material and immaterial cultural heritage and biodiversity.
- The author of the thesis conducts their research ensuring that it does not cause significant risks, damage or harm to research subjects, communities or other subjects of research.

Responsible conduct of research applies to all theses, regardless of the field of study. It includes ensuring that you have the necessary research permits and consents, using an appropriate research method, dependable implementation of data collection and processing, and appropriate referencing. In addition, each discipline has its own ethical standards with more detailed guidelines on research ethics.

See separate instructions for the actions taken in case of actual or suspected cases of fraud.

3.1. Ethical review

If an ethical review needs to be conducted on a thesis, the student and the thesis supervisor apply to the Ethics Committee for it together before applying for a research permit. An ethical review is typically required if the focus of the study is on minors under the age of 15 without separate consent of their parents, or if the study involves interfering with the physical integrity of research participants (for example, collecting data with a smart ring). The approval of the Ethics Committee is attached to the research permit application.

3.2. Research permits

In all fields, responsible conduct of research includes ensuring that you have the required research permits. In the planning phase of the thesis and before the collection of research data starts, the student and the supervisor must consider whether the thesis will require research permits. Permit practices and the prerequisites for granting the permit vary by organisation.

Under HAMK's research permit guidelines, a research permit is required for all research, development projects and theses targeting the staff or students of HAMK.

3.3. Consent

Before data collection starts, the research subject is asked to give their informed consent to participating in the study. The student documents the consent that the subject has given orally, in writing, digitally or in some other way.

In research designs in which informed consent cannot be asked, a statement from the Ethics Committee must be requested as a rule.

3.4. Data management plan and processing of personal data

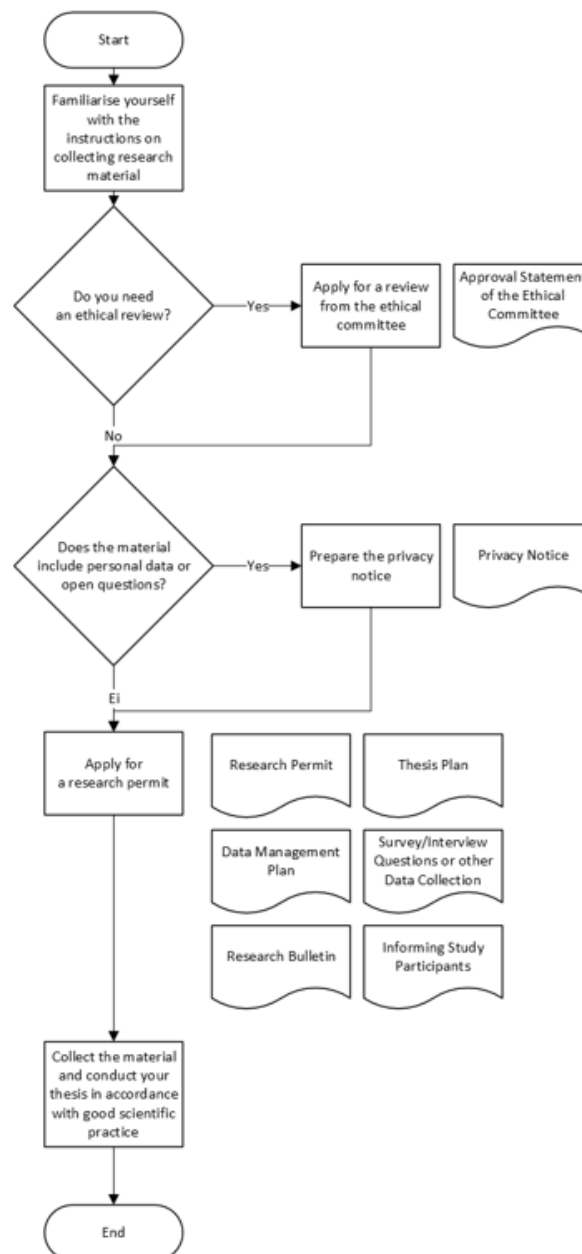
In connection with the thesis plan, the student draws up a data management plan that describes the processing of research data during the thesis process. The data management plan ensures that the collection, processing, storage and destruction of datasets are carefully planned and carried out. The data management plan must be drawn up and saved to Wihi before data collection begins. In case of any changes to the collection or processing of data, the student must update the data management plan. The student also saves the data management plan as an attachment to the completed thesis.

Once the thesis has been completed, the student ensures that the research data collected by them is processed in keeping with the data management plan. If the student wishes to hand over the research data collected for the thesis to HAMK for further use in teaching or research, a written agreement to this effect must be signed (Appendix 3). If the thesis is connected to a HAMK project, the agreement on handing over the research data to HAMK should be made using the dedicated template (Appendix 4).

Theses and their datasets should include as little personal data as possible. If personal data are processed for the purposes of a thesis, the life cycle of the processing should be planned in advance. The student ensures that

- the research participants are informed about the processing of personal data in a privacy statement
- the personal data are deleted or anonymised
- secure procedures and devices are chosen for the collection, saving, storage and destruction of personal data.

Figure 1 Documents needed for the collection of research data.



4. Thesis process

The entire thesis process relies on Wihi, a system for supervising and administrating thesis projects.

4.1. Planning

The thesis process begins with a discussion on the topic and negotiation between the commissioning organisation and the student, on the basis of which the student prepares a **topic proposal** in Wihi. A **thesis agreement** is drawn up before starting the thesis process and signed by a representative of the commissioning organisation, the student and a degree programme representative. The student produces a **thesis plan** that is consistent with the selected method. The thesis and thesis plan are prepared using HAMK's document template for theses.

If research data are collected as part of the thesis the student must, in connection with the thesis plan, draw up a **data management plan** that describes the processing of the research data during the thesis process.

Before starting work on the thesis or at the latest in its planning phase, the student completes an **Open Badge of a thesis expert**. After completing the Open Badge, the student is familiar with the progress of the thesis process, responsible conduct of research and principles of sustainable development at the level required by HAMK's Thesis guidelines. Research data for the thesis may not be collected before the badge has been successfully completed.

A **planning seminar** is organised when the student has written down some of the knowledge base, outlined and described the work as a whole, drawn up a provisional table of contents, and planned the research method(s) that they will use. In a practice-based thesis, the implementation of the operating process is also planned. The student presents them at the planning seminar and receives feedback, based on which they complement the thesis plan if necessary.

4.2. Implementation

The implementation phase focuses on the core contents of the thesis, in other words data collection and analysis. The student attends an **interim seminar** during the implementation phase of the thesis. At the time of the interim seminar, the analysis and reporting process of the thesis data should be well underway, and the main contents will have been written. Another student who is roughly at the same stage acts as an **opponent** for the thesis. The opponent comments on both the text of the report and the presentation on it given by the author. The opponent produces a written report on their actions in this role.

4.3. Finishing touches

In the final phase of the thesis process, the student focuses on writing the report and finalising the research results. The student writes their conclusions, a reflection section and an abstract in Finnish and in English. While doing this, the student takes into account the feedback received from the supervisor, the interim seminar opponent and the commissioning organisation. The student then carries out a plagiarism check on the thesis. The supervisor reviews the plagiarism check analysis and, if necessary, asks the student to make the necessary corrections to the thesis.

At this stage, the English teacher comments on the abstract. No linguistic review is conducted on the abstracts of Master's theses. Once the entire thesis is completed, the student submits it to Wihi for assessment. The student requests the supervisor's permission to present the thesis at the final seminar and to publish it. The student is responsible for ensuring that the final version of the thesis is saved to both Wihi and Theseus/the internal thesis archive

At the final seminar, the student presents their thesis. The final seminar is a public event to which the commissioning organisation and others can be invited. The final seminar presentation is assessed (see assessment criteria). The presentation should highlight the practical aspects and workplace links of the thesis. The student also provides a short assessment of their learning process at the final seminar.

4.4. Maturity test

Students completing their thesis in Finnish-language Bachelor's degree programmes take a compulsory maturity test that demonstrates their knowledge of the field and their proficiency in Finnish or Swedish. If the student is not required to have the language skills referred to in the Decree on Universities of Applied Sciences, a decision on the maturity

test is made by the university of applied sciences. If the student has received their primary and secondary education in Finnish or Swedish, the maturity test will be taken in their language of education. If the student has received their primary and secondary education in a language other than Finnish or Swedish, they will take the maturity test in English.

Bachelor's degree students take the maturity test under supervision or in the Exam aquarium. The student may register for the maturity test when their thesis is in its final stages and the thesis supervisor has given their permission for this. In the maturity test, the student writes an essay on a topic given by the supervisor. The essay is graded by the thesis supervisor. A Swedish language teacher checks maturity tests written in Swedish. The maturity test is graded on a pass/fail scale.

The maturity test of a Master's degree student is a summary of the thesis report, which is approved by the thesis supervisor. If the student is attending a Finnish-language Master's degree programme but has not previously completed a maturity test (for example, they have completed their Bachelor's degree abroad or in English), they must complete the maturity test as part of their Master's degree.

4.5. Archiving and publication

After receiving permission to publish their thesis, the student must save their work to Theseus, or in some cases HAMK's internal thesis archive. The thesis, its assessment report and the thesis agreement are archived in HAMK's case management system.

The thesis must lend itself to being openly assessed. It may not include secret material. Theses containing secret material are only possible in cases where they are subject to special legislation. The thesis will be public as soon as it has been approved.

In Theseus, theses are available online for everyone. In HAMK's thesis archive, theses can be read on HAMK campuses. If someone wishes to read a thesis residing in the internal thesis archive, it will be e-mailed to them as a response to a request for information.

5. Thesis assessment

Assessment criteria and supplementary assessment rubrics have been defined for Bachelor's and Master's theses.

If the Bachelor's thesis is completed by two students working together, the supervisor may award the students different grades. The assessment criteria are described in the thesis instructions on the website.

Approved theses are assessed on a scale of 1 to 5. Different criteria apply to various methods of producing the thesis, but a uniform assessment scale, which is illustrated as assessment rubrics at the Bachelor's and Master's levels, are followed in all assessment criteria.

- Excellent 5: achieved to an excellent standard
- Good 4: achieved well
- Good 3: achieved mostly well
- Satisfactory 2: achieved with some shortcomings
- Satisfactory 1: achieved with shortcomings
- Fail: the thesis has not achieved the satisfactory 1 level.

The second thesis examiner gives their own assessment of the thesis. The thesis supervisor gives the final assessment, also taking into account the feedback given by the commissioning organisation, and writes an assessment report.

A student who is dissatisfied with the assessment of their thesis may address a request for rectification to the Examination Board.

6. Credit transfer for a thesis

At their discretion, the Head of Degree Programme may credit a Bachelor's thesis completed by a student in previous studies as part of a degree completed at HAMK. For the detailed principles of credit transfer, see the Guideline on recognition of prior learning.

7. Additional information

7.1. HAMK instructions

- Degree Regulations (PDF)
- Examination Board (PDF)
- Thesis instructions (website)
- Assessment guideline (PDF)
- Assessment rubrics (PDF)
- Study guidance plan (PDF)
- Guideline on recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- Guideline for actual and suspected cases of fraud (PDF, under preparation)
- Guideline for individual arrangements (website)
- Data management plan (Word)
- Agreement on handing over research data collected for a thesis to HAMK for further use in teaching or research (Word)
- Agreement on handing over research data collected for a thesis to a HAMK project (Word)

All guidelines and document templates are available on [HAMK's public website](#).

7.2. Other instructions

- Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity TENK:
[Research integrity](#) (website)
[Ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in human sciences in Finland](#) (PDF)
- EU: [General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679](#) (website)
- Finlex: [Data Protection Act 1050/2018](#) (website)
- Finlex: [Government Decree on Universities of Applied Sciences 1129/2014](#) (website)