

Master in Innovation, Human Development and Sustainability  
(MIHDS)

# Guidelines for internship reports, academic and internship-based theses, and their evaluation

*Adopted by the IHDS Scientific Committee in November 2021*

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# Guidelines for internship reports (dual degree track)

## Regulations for the MIHDS internship report

- The completion of an internship and its corresponding report, worth 24 ECTS, is mandatory. It is different from the master's thesis done at Tsinghua University (THU);
- To ensure coherence with THU requirements, the ECTS credits associated with this task must be obtained during the year at UNIGE;
- The **academic supervisor** of the internship report must be an instructor of the MIHDS who holds a doctoral degree. Research and Teaching Assistants and staff from partner organizations involved in the MIHDS can be co-supervisors.
- The attached "Guidelines for evaluating student work" are an integral part of the present Guidelines.

## Objectives of the internship report

- The internship report must generally fit the main focus of the MIHDS and should also align with the student's chosen specialization;
- It must demonstrate the student's ability to critically analyze a sustainability issue, and should propose practical solutions to it, referring, where relevant, to methods taught in MIHDS courses;
- It must demonstrate the student's ability to tackle one or several SDG challenges in a practical and innovative way.

## Academic requirements and timeline

- The internship report must be delivered to the jury **at least 3 weeks before the defense**.
- The defense is public, unless there are confidentiality requirements (which must be authorized by the academic supervisor). The defense lasts at least 45 minutes and includes a 15-minute presentation of the work and a 30-minute question-and-answer period.
- The passing grade is 4. A thesis that obtains a grade below 4 must be corrected and resubmitted, within the deadline for completing the UNIGE requirements.
- **In order for a report to be credited to the current semester, 1. the defense must take place at least 10 days before the grade submission deadline; 2. the final version of the thesis, including any revisions requested during the defense, must be delivered to the academic supervisor before the grade submission deadline.**
- All reports that obtain a grade of 5 and above are published in the UNIGE Open Archive (Archive ouverte). Students must complete the Authorization form<sup>1</sup> and send the final version of their work to the academic advisor who will take care of the publication.

<sup>1</sup> The form is available on the MIHDS General Information page on Moodle

## Specific guidelines for the internship report

Internships and internship reports are subject to approval of the student's proposal by the academic supervisor, the internship supervisor at the proposed organization, and the MIHDS Director. The student is responsible for completing and signing an internship agreement.<sup>2</sup> This agreement is binding for the student and the supervisors. **It must be submitted at least two weeks before the start of the internship.**

Internships can be done at an IGO, NGO, public administration or private company, in Switzerland or abroad. The host organization must provide adequate working conditions and guide the student in defining and completing the proposed tasks, including the requirements linked to the associated academic credits.

The minimum duration of an internship is 480 hours (either 3 months full time or the equivalent part-time).

The internship report:

- has an overall length of approximately 15,000 words, exclusive of appendices and bibliography. The length can be adapted if an important part of the work is devoted to acquisition and analysis of data, practical work such as development of a prototype, preparation of a scientific publication or participation in the GTI summer school;
- presents the organization and the precise context of the internship;
- describes the tasks assigned to and carried out by the intern as well as the deliverables;
- presents the issues of the work in terms of sustainability, in relation with one or several SDGs;
- provides an academic (conceptual/theoretical) reflection on these issues;
- concludes with a coherent synthesis of findings and/or a set of practical recommendations;
- includes a reflection on the added value of the internship for the intern and for the host organization, as well as any challenges encountered;
- can be written in English or French;
- is evaluated by a jury that includes at least the academic supervisor(s) and the internship supervisor(s) at the organization;
- is defended before the jury, who considers the quality of work done during the internship, the quality of the thesis and the defense performance.

## Specific conditions for an internship report completed by a group of students

The internship and internship report can be done by a group of maximum 4 students working under an academic supervisor. The length (+3'000 words per additional student) and depth of the thesis are consequently adapted. **The specific contribution of each student to the report is detailed in an attribution sheet appended to the internship report and signed by all the students.**

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

|  | 1 student | 2 students | 3 students | 4 students |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| Number of words of the internship report | 15'000    | 18'000     | 21'000     | 24'000     |

### Important information for B Permit holders

Cantonal authorities strictly apply relevant laws regarding all forms of student employment. Internships that are required in a study program curriculum, although they do not require a change of B Permit, **must be announced to the OCPM by means of the E Form available on the OCPM website.** The form must be signed by the host institution.

# Guidelines for academic and internship-based theses (Single Degree track)

## Regulations for the IHDS master's thesis

- The master's thesis is worth 24 ECTS credits. It can be initiated from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester and must be completed by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> semester, in accordance with the maximal duration defined by the rules and regulations of the Geneva School of Social Sciences (G3S)<sup>3</sup>;
- There are two possible formats: an internship-based thesis or an academic thesis (see detailed guidelines below);
- The **academic supervisor** must be an instructor of the MIHDS who holds a doctoral degree. Research and Teaching Assistants and staff from partner organizations involved in the Program can be co-supervisors;
- The thesis is graded by a jury composed of the academic supervisor (and co-supervisors) and at least one other juror, either an instructor of the MIHDS or the representative of an external partner.
- The attached "Guidelines for evaluating student work" are an integral part of the present Guidelines

## Objectives of the thesis

- The academic thesis or internship thesis must generally fit the main focus of the MIHDS and should also align with the student's chosen specialization;
- The thesis must demonstrate the student's ability to critically analyze a sustainability issue, and should propose practical solutions to it, where relevant referring to methods taught in the MIHDS courses;
- The thesis must demonstrate the student's ability to tackle one or several SDG challenges in a practical and innovative way.

## Guidelines common to internship and academic theses

- The thesis should be delivered to the jury **at least 3 weeks before the defense** (see below for the composition of the jury);
- The defense is public, unless there are confidentiality requirements (which must be authorized by the academic supervisor). The defense lasts at least 45 minutes and includes a 15-minute presentation of the work and a 30-minute question-and-answer period.
- Students are responsible for organizing the defense, in coordination with their supervisor(s)
- **In order for a thesis to be credited to the current semester, 1. the defense must take place at least 10 days before the grade submission deadline; 2. the final version of the thesis, including any revisions required during the defense, must be delivered to the academic supervisor before the grade submission deadline.**

<sup>3</sup> Available on the Faculty website <https://www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/etudiants/master/reglements/> or [the MIHDS General Information page on Moodle](#)

- The passing grade is 4; a thesis that obtains a grade below 4 must be corrected and resubmitted.
- All theses that earn a grade of 5 and above are published in the UNIGE Open Archive (Archive ouverte). Students must complete the Authorization form<sup>4</sup> and send it with the final version of their work to the academic advisor who will handle the publication.

### Specific guidelines for an academic thesis

The student and academic supervisor must agree in writing on the topic and the main research questions. The subject of the thesis must be submitted by the end of the second semester. The student completes the Subject submission form<sup>5</sup> that contains a 150-200 word thesis proposal and identifies the academic supervisor. The form must be signed by the student and the supervisor and a copy must be submitted to the academic advisor. The connection to SD issues and to one or several SDGs must be strong and explicit.

The academic thesis:

- has an overall length of approximately 30,000 words, exclusive of appendices and bibliography. The thesis can be written in English or in French. If an important part of the thesis is devoted to data management and/or a technical development, the length can be adapted, upon written agreement from the MIHDS Scientific Committee or the IHDS Program Director **obtained at the time of subject submission**;
- presents the topic and includes a state-of-the art literature review;
- makes the contribution of the work to SD challenges explicit;
- includes a bibliography that conforms to academic standards, and a summary;
- is defended before a jury that evaluates the quality of the thesis, the student's defense performance, and the student's work process.

### Specific guidelines for an internship-based thesis

Internships and internship-based theses are subject to the approval of the student's proposal by the academic supervisor(s), the internship supervisor at the proposed organization, and the MIHDS Director. The student is responsible for completing and signing an internship agreement<sup>6</sup>. This agreement is binding for the student and the supervisors. **It should be submitted at least 2 weeks before the start of the internship.**

Internships can be done at an IGO, NGO, public administration or private company, in Switzerland or abroad. The host must provide adequate working conditions and guide the student in defining and completing the proposed tasks, including the requirements linked to the associated academic credits.

The minimum duration of an internship is 480 hours (either 3 months full time, or the equivalent part-time). A shorter internship can be authorized by the scientific committee or the IHDS Program Director, particularly in case of participation in the GTI Summer school.

<sup>4</sup> The form is available on the MIHDS General Information page on Moodle

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

The internship-based thesis:

- has an overall length of approximately 15,000 words. The length can be adapted if an important part of the work has been devoted to acquisition and analysis of data, practical work such as development of a prototype, preparation of a scientific publication or participation in the GTI summer school;
- presents the organization and the precise context of the internship;
- describes the tasks assigned and carried out by the intern as well as the deliverables;
- presents the issues underlying the internship in terms of sustainability
- provides an academic (conceptual/theoretical) reflection on these issues;
- concludes with a coherent synthesis of findings and/or a set of recommendations;
- includes a reflection on the added value of the internship for the intern and for the host organization, as well as any challenges encountered;
- can be written in English or French;
- is evaluated by a jury that includes at least the academic supervisor(s) and the internship supervisor at the organization.
- is defended before the jury that evaluates the quality of the work done during the internship, the quality of the thesis and the defense performance.

### Specific conditions for a thesis completed by a team of students

The academic or internship thesis can be done by a team of maximum 4 students working under an academic supervisor. Team-based academic theses must be approved by the MIHDS director when the subject is submitted. The length (+6'000 words per additional student) and depth of the academic thesis and internship-based thesis are consequently adapted. **The specific contribution of each student to the thesis is detailed in an attribution sheet appended to the thesis and signed by all the students.**

|  | 1 student | 2 students | 3 students | 4 students |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| Number of words of the academic thesis         | 30'000    | 36'000     | 42'000     | 48'000     |
| Number of words of the internship-based thesis | 15'000    | 18'000     | 21'000     | 24'000     |

### Important information for B Permit holders

Cantonal authorities strictly apply relevant laws regarding all forms of student employment. Internships that are required in a study program curriculum, although they do not require a change of B Permit, **must be announced to the Geneva Cantonal Office of Population and Migration (OCPM) by means of the E form available on the OCPM website**. The form must be signed by the host institution.

# Guidelines for evaluating student work

## Context

As part of the program requirements, students seeking to obtain a Master's in Innovation, Human Development, and Sustainability (MIHDS) have to complete a significant written work for academic credit. In line with the program's philosophy of tailoring student education and training to diverse career perspectives and requirements, students have a variety of options for receiving the corresponding ECTS credits<sup>7</sup> (for information on the number of ECTS credits obtainable, please refer to the study plan for the relevant academic year).

The table below illustrates all possibilities, organized on the basis of three basic distinctions: single track versus dual track, academic thesis versus internship-based thesis or report, and individual versus team effort, for teams of up to 4 students. The table uses the terminology applied in the guidelines and refers exclusively to the requirements at UNIGE. Dual track students must write an internship-based report, because the agreement between UNIGE and Tsinghua University (THU) relative to the Dual Degree Master delegates oversight of the academic thesis to THU.

|                         | Single track   |      | Dual track      |                 |
|-------------------------|----------------|------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                         | individual     | team | individual      | team            |
| Academic thesis         | X              | X    | NA <sup>a</sup> | NA <sup>a</sup> |
| Internship-based thesis | X <sup>b</sup> | X    | NA <sup>c</sup> | NA <sup>c</sup> |
| Internship report       | NA             | NA   | X <sup>b</sup>  | X               |

<sup>a</sup> An academic thesis is elaborated at Tsinghua University

<sup>b</sup> Consult the respective guidelines for information on how the GTI Summer School can be accounted for.

<sup>c</sup> The term "thesis" is reserved for use in the single track at UNIGE and the dual track at THU

## Evaluation

The purpose of this document is to provide academic supervisors, internship supervisors and students with general guidelines for evaluating the written work cited above. The guidelines take into account the diversity of contexts in which students elaborate their work, as well as the quality control requirements associated with the accreditation of higher education institutions. With regard to the latter, the present guidelines are in line with the so-called Dublin Descriptors that were elaborated in the context of the Bologna process and adopted by swissuniversities.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>European Credit Transfer System (ECTS): One ECTS is equivalent to 25-30 hours of student investment.

<sup>8</sup>Bologna Follow-Up Group (2005) *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*.

Kopenhagen, p. 9 (available at

[http://ecahe.eu/w/images/7/76/A\\_Framework\\_for\\_Qualifications\\_for\\_the\\_European\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Area.pdf](http://ecahe.eu/w/images/7/76/A_Framework_for_Qualifications_for_the_European_Higher_Education_Area.pdf)).

Rector's Conference of the Swiss Universities, Rector's Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences, and Swiss Conference of Rectors of Universities of Teacher Education (2011) *Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education Area* (available in French at

[https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fileadmin/swissuniversities/Dokumente/Lehre/NQR/2011-09-20\\_nqf-ch-HS-f\\_neu.pdf](https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fileadmin/swissuniversities/Dokumente/Lehre/NQR/2011-09-20_nqf-ch-HS-f_neu.pdf) )



Dublin Descriptors are phrased in terms of competence levels, rather than learning outcomes. For the Master's level, they are grouped under five general headings: knowledge and understanding; applying knowledge and understanding; making judgments; communication; and lifelong learning skills. The competence levels confirm that both scientific and practical skills form part of student qualification at the master's level.

The approach outlined below shows how they are combined in the evaluation framework for the MIHDS. The framework consists of three components; the relative importance of two of the components are expressed as a percentage range, so that the academic supervisor can adjust the relative academic or practical focus.

- Written output: 50%-70%
- Work process: 10%-30%
- Defense: 20%

The academic supervisor (together with the internship supervisor, if relevant) and the student(s) should agree on the relative weights at the beginning of the collaboration and confirm it in writing by means of an email involving all parties concerned, copied to the MIHDS academic advisor.

For internship-based theses (single track) and internship reports (dual track), the academic and internship supervisors should define their respective inputs for the different components and criteria and communicate their approach to the student(s). In particular, agreement should be sought on who participates in the evaluation of the work process.

The list below provides an overview of the evaluation criteria to be considered for each component.

#### **A. Written output (50%-70%)**

- General scientific competence (independent thinking and originality; quality and contextualization of the questioning and its stakes; state of the art of current scientific and practical knowledge; conceptual framework; relevance to sustainable development)
- Methodological competence (complete and accurate description; appropriateness in light of the chosen objectives)
- Findings and conclusions (and recommendations, where relevant)
- Critical reflection (including impact on sustainable development)
- Innovative character of the problem statement, method, analysis, and/or presentation of findings
- For internship theses and reports:
  - Presentation of the organization and its relation to sustainable development; a description of internship tasks and deliverables and a reflection on the added value of the internship
- Formal aspects (logical and appropriate structure; coherent and professional layout; grammar and style; respect of formal requirements for diagrams, tables, citation and bibliography)

In case an important part of the internship thesis or internship report is devoted to

acquisition or analysis of data, or a technical development such as a prototype, or emerges from the GTI Summer School, the supervisors and students should agree on how to adapt and/or complement the evaluation criteria listed above.

#### **B. Work process (10%-30%)**

- Autonomy (independent progress, initiative)
- Work organization (diligence; preparation and documentation of meetings; respect of deadlines)
- Motivation
- Professionalism & team work (where applicable)
- Reasoned use of supervisor feedback

#### **C. Defense (20%)**

- Presentation (clarity of expression, timing, use of visuals, etc.)
- Structure, logic, justification, and critical reflection of the argument
- Handling of questions