



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

This document was adopted by the IHDS Scientific Committee in March 2025, replacing the previous version adopted in November 2024.

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1. 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 in accordance with the content of the agreement signed between UNIGE and THU;
- The **academic supervisor** of the internship report must be an instructor of the MIHDS who holds a doctoral degree (exceptions require the approval of the MIHDS Director). Research and Teaching Assistants and staff from partner organizations involved in the MIHDS can be co-supervisors.
- Sections 3 ("Guidelines for evaluating student work") and 4 ("Guidelines for organizing the thesis / internship report defense and follow-up") are integral parts of the present Guidelines and the rules contained therein.

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.
- Students are responsible for organizing the defense, in coordination with their supervisor(s) and, if necessary, the support of the MIHDS Secretary (see Section 3).
- 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, unless the students and supervisors agree on a closer date for legitimate reasons; 2. the final version of the thesis, including any revisions requested during the defense, as well as the ethics self-evaluation, must be delivered to the academic supervisor before the grade submission deadline.**

- All internship reports are deposited in the UNIGE Open Archive (Archive ouverte) with the level of dissemination chosen by the student and agreed by the academic supervisor and the internship supervisor (no dissemination with access only to the author(s) and academic supervisor; access restricted to the UNIGE community; open access). **Students must complete the Archival Authorization Form¹ and send it together with the final version of their work to the academic supervisor and the MIHDS Secretariat** (secretariat-mihds@unige.ch), who will take care of archiving the internship report.

Specific guidelines for the internship report

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

Internships can be done at an international organization (IO), intergovernmental organization (IGO), non-governmental organization (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). From the beginning to the end of classes (roughly mid-September to Christmas and mid-February to the end of May), internships cannot take up more than 40% of the work week (50% upon written request to the IHDS Director and conditional to a lighter-than-usual course load during the semester in question).³

The internship report:

- has an overall length of approximately 15,000 words, exclusive of appendices and bibliography. The length can be adapted, subject to the written approval of the MIHDS Director, if an important part of the work is devoted to acquisition and analysis of data, practical work such as the development of a prototype or the preparation of a scientific publication;
- 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;

¹ The form is available on the IHDS Master Programme: Information Page on Moodle.

² The form is available on the IHDS Master Programme: Information Page on Moodle.

³ Consult the internship time calculator available on the IHDS Master Programme: Information Page on Moodle.

- 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 supervised by 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.**

	1 student	2 students	3 students	4 students
Number of words of the internship report (exclusive of appendices and bibliography)	15'000	18'000	21'000	24'000

Ethics review

Since October 2022, the Geneva School of Social Sciences requires all Master's students to carry out a reflection on the ethical dimensions of their work; this applies to all MIHDS students whose thesis or internship research was not initiated by that date. Three videos available on the G3S website provide guidance on the key issues of the ethics review.

Concretely, students must complete the form "Self-analysis of the ethical dimensions of the Master's thesis or internship report" available on the G3S website in collaboration with the academic supervisor. For group internship reports or theses, only one form is to be completed.

The completed form has to be approved by the academic supervisor, who sends it to the G3S Research Ethics Review Committee (ethique-autoevaluation@unige.ch) prior to the internship report defense.

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.

2. Guidelines for academic and internship-based master's 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 1st semester and must be completed by the end of the 6th semester, in accordance with the maximum duration defined by the rules and regulations of the Geneva School of Social Sciences (G3S)⁴;
- 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 (exceptions require the approval of the MIHDS Director). 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.
- Section 3 of this document - "Guidelines for evaluating student work" – is an integral part of the present Guidelines.

Objectives of the thesis

- The academic thesis or internship-based 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) and, if necessary, the support of the MIHDS Secretariat (see Section 3).

⁴ Available on the Faculty website <https://www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/etudiants/master/reglements/> or the IHDS Master Programme: Information Page on Moodle

- 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, unless the students and supervisors agree on a closer date for legitimate reasons; 2. the final version of the thesis, including any revisions required during the defense, as well as the ethics self-evaluation, must be delivered to the academic supervisor before the grade submission deadline.**
- The passing grade is 4; a thesis that obtains a grade below 4 must be corrected and resubmitted.
- All theses are deposited in the UNIGE Open Archive (Archive ouverte) with the level of dissemination chosen by the student and agreed by the academic supervisor and the internship supervisor if the thesis is based on an internship (no dissemination with access only to the author(s) and academic supervisor; access restricted to the UNIGE community; open access). **Students must complete the Open Archive Authorization Form⁵ and send it with the final version of their work to the academic supervisor and the MIHDS Secretariat (secretariat-mihds@unige.ch), who will take care of archiving the thesis.**

Specific guidelines for an academic thesis

The student and academic supervisor (and co-supervisor) must agree in writing on the topic and the main research questions. The subject of the thesis must be submitted by the deadline of the official registration for the thesis credits. The student completes the Subject submission form⁶ that contains a 150-200 word thesis proposal and identifies the academic supervisor (and co-supervisor). The form must be signed by the student and the supervisor (and co-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;
- 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 (and co-supervisor), the internship supervisor at the host organization, and the MIHDS Director. The student is responsible for completing and signing an internship agreement.⁷ This agreement is binding for the student and the supervisors. **It must be submitted at least 2 weeks before the start of the internship.**

⁵ The form is available on the IHDS Master Programme: Information Page on Moodle

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

Internships can be done at an international organization (IO), intergovernmental organization (IGO), non-governmental organization (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). From the beginning to the end of classes (roughly mid-September to Christmas and mid-February to the end of May), internships cannot take up more than 40% of the work week (50% upon written request to the IHDS Director and conditional to a lighter-than-usual course load during the semester in question).⁸

The internship-based thesis:

- has an overall length of approximately 15,000 words exclusive of the bibliography and annexes. The length can be adapted, subject to the written approval of the MIHDS Director, if an important part of the work has been devoted to acquisition and analysis of data, practical work such as development of a prototype or the preparation of a scientific publication;
- 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 host 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 supervised by an academic supervisor. Team-based academic theses must be approved by the MIHDS director when the Subject submission form is submitted. The length of the academic thesis and internship-based thesis are consequently adapted (see table below). **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

⁸ Consult the internship time calculator available on the IHDS Master Programme: Information Page on Moodle.

Number of words of the internship-based thesis	15'000	18'000	21'000	24'000
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Ethics review

Since October 2022, the Geneva School of Social Sciences requires all Master's students to carry out a reflection on the ethical dimensions of their work; this applies to all MIHDS students whose academic or internship-based thesis was not initiated by that date. Three videos available on the G3S website provide guidance on the key issues of the ethics review.

Concretely, students must complete the form "Self-analysis of the ethical dimensions of the Master's thesis or internship report" available on the G3S website in collaboration with the academic supervisor. For group theses, only one form is to be completed.

The completed form has to be approved by the academic supervisor, who sends it to the G3S Research Ethics Review Committee (ethique-autoevaluation@unige.ch) prior to the thesis defense.

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.

3. Guidelines for evaluating student work

Context

As part of the program requirements, students seeking to obtain a Master 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 credits⁹ (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 degree track versus dual degree track; academic thesis versus internship-based thesis or internship 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 degree track students must write an internship 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 degree track		Dual degree track	
	individual	team	individual	team
Academic thesis	yes	yes	no ^a	no ^a
Internship-based thesis	yes	yes	no ^b	no ^b
Internship report	no	no	yes	yes

^a An academic thesis is elaborated at Tsinghua University

^b The term "thesis" is reserved for use in the single degree track at UNIGE and the dual degree 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.¹⁰

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;

⁹ European Credit Transfer System (ECTS): One ECTS is equivalent to 25-30 hours of student investment.

¹⁰ Bologna Follow-Up Group (2005) *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*. Copenhagen, p. 9 (available at <https://tinyurl.com/yh4jbuid>). 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 at <https://tinyurl.com/bdh5uc54>).

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 in order to adjust the relative academic or practical focus.

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

The academic supervisor(s) (together with the internship supervisor, if relevant) and the student(s) should agree on the relative weights prior to the defense.

For internship-based theses (single degree track) and internship reports (dual degree 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)

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

Artificial intelligence

The use of generative artificial intelligence in student work in the MIHDS must adhere to the principles adopted by the University of Geneva,¹¹ covering:

- personal *responsibility* of students and instructors;
- respect of *applicable laws*, especially concerning data protection, copyright/intellectual property, official secrecy and confidentiality;
- *academic integrity and transparency*, especially with respect to plagiarism and the declaration of AI-generated text, images, video, or other work;
- economy and ecology, limiting generative AI application to relevant uses of proven value, and implying awareness of the environmental impact of generative AI.

Any AI-related aspects or needs for guidance that may arise in the context of the internship report or academic / internship-based thesis should be addressed by the student and the supervisor(s).

The student must sign the Declaration on the use of generative AI¹², submit it to the academic and internship supervisor(s) prior to the defense, then transfer it to the MIHDS Secretariat (secretariat-mihds@unige.ch) together with the final manuscript of the thesis / internship report and the UNIGE Open Archive Authorization Form.

¹¹ For further information, consult the resources at <https://www.unige.ch/en/university/politique-generale/statement-ai/>

¹² Available on the IHDS Master Programme: Information Page on Moodle

4. Guidelines for organizing the thesis / internship report defense and follow-up

As outlined above, obtaining academic credits for a thesis or internship report is subject to a public defense.

The purpose of this section is to guide students and supervisors in the preparation and follow-up of this defense.

1. Confirming the thesis jury

All theses must be evaluated by at least two persons. In the case of internship-based theses and internship reports, this includes the academic supervisor and the internship supervisor. In the case of academic theses, the student(s) and the supervisor should discuss options for a second juror and, ideally, decide together; in case of disagreement, a decision is made by the academic supervisor.

The academic supervisor and internship supervisor (or academic thesis juror) must participate in the defense and sign the grade report form (see point 6. below).

2. Deciding on the defense date and preparing the Grade report form

The date for the defense is to be decided jointly by the student(s) and supervisor(s).

You should plan this well in advance since the defense has to take place at least ten days before the grade submission deadline¹³ and the final manuscript has to be shared with the supervisors at least three weeks before the defense.

The student(s) complete(s) the Grade report form¹⁴ with their name(s) and student registration number(s) as well as the name of the internship supervisor, if relevant, and send the form to the academic supervisor.

As a general guideline, you should count on sharing your final manuscript as follows:

- beginning of January for a defense to be credited in the Fall semester
- End of May for a defense to be credited in the Spring semester (ordinary session)
- mid-August for a Fall defense to be credited in the Spring semester (make-up session)

3. Defining participation at the defense

The defense of your thesis or internship report is public, but if there are reasons to limit participation for reasons of confidentiality linked to the substance of a thesis or internship report, a closed defense can be organized.

The decision to organize a public or closed defense should be taken jointly by the student(s) and supervisors. In the case of an internship-based thesis or internship report, the internship supervisor has the final word.

¹³ Since the exact date changes every year by a few days, you should check the academic calendar on the website of the Geneva School of Social Sciences or with the academic advisor.

¹⁴ Available on the website of the Geneva School of Social Sciences and the Moodle page of the IHDS Master's.

4. Location, room reservation, and defense announcement

Defenses should be organized in the physical presence of the student(s) and supervisor(s) if circumstances allow. Online defenses are possible but should be exceptional.

Once the defense date and level of participation are agreed, the academic supervisor(s) assume(s) the responsibility for reserving an appropriate room, if necessary with the assistance of the MIHDS Secretariat (secretariat-mihds@unige.ch).

Should the defense be organized at the internship supervisor's facilities, he or she takes care of reservations and logistics.

In case of an online defense, the responsibility for creating the necessary access links goes to the student(s).

All technical support for necessary infrastructure (e.g., computer, beamer, internet access) and logistics (e.g., building access, keys) is the responsibility of the academic supervisor, who can request assistance, if necessary, from the MIHDS Secretariat (secretariat-mihds@unige.ch).

5. Announcing the event

Announcing the public defense and inviting colleagues, friends, and family is the responsibility of the student(s).

6. Defense proceedings

The specific approach to and program of the defense are agreed in advance by the student(s) and the academic supervisor.

That said, a defense should include, at a minimum:

- a 15-minute presentation of the manuscript (depending on the number of students)
- at least 30 minutes of comments, questions, and a responses
- jury deliberation
- feedback by the jury and announcement of the grade

7. Recording the grade

At the conclusion of the defense, the members of the jury (academic supervisor(s), internship supervisor or juror) announce the grade, complete the Grade report form, and sign it.

To recall, the defense counts for 20% of the thesis / internship report grade.¹⁵

The academic supervisor submits the completed and signed grade report sheet to the SDS Student Secretariat (secretariat-etudiants-sds@unige.ch) with the academic advisor Ms. Yali Chen (yali.chen@unige.ch) in copy.

8. Finalizing and submitting the thesis / internship report

All theses and internship reports are deposited in the UNIGE Open Archive (*Archive ouverte* - <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/>).

¹⁵ See "Guidelines for internship reports, academic and internship-based theses, and their evaluation" for a full explanation of the grading approach for theses and internship reports.

Students must complete the Open archive authorization form with the chosen level of dissemination¹⁶, have it signed by the academic supervisor and the internship supervisor if relevant, and send it along with the final version of their work in pdf to the academic supervisor and the MIHDS Secretariat (secretariat-mihds@unige.ch), who will take care of archiving the thesis or internship report.

9. Ethics review

Since October 2022, the Geneva School of Social Sciences requires all Master's students to carry out a reflection on the ethical dimensions of their work; this applies to all MIHDS students whose thesis or internship report was not initiated by that date. Three videos available on the G3S website provide guidance on the key issues of the ethics review.

Concretely, students must complete the form "Self-analysis of the ethical dimensions of the Master's thesis or internship report" available on the G3S website in collaboration with the academic supervisor. For group theses or internship reports, only one form is to be completed.

The completed form has to be approved by the academic supervisor, who sends it to the G3S Research Ethics Review Committee (ethique-autoevaluation@unige.ch) prior to the defense.

¹⁶ Available on the website of the Geneva School of Social Sciences and the Moodle page of the IHDS Master's. Please note that this form also has to be signed by the supervisors, especially the internship advisor.