

Professorship for Public Administration and Digital Government

Guidelines for writing home assignments,

Bachelor's or Master's theses

Reference documents:

FSPO DiGA – Subject-Specific Programme and Examination Regulations for the Master’s Programme **Digital Governance and Administration** (2024): https://www.hsu-hh.de/asv/wp-content/uploads/sites/776/2024/09/2024-09-03_FSPO-DiGA_in_Kraft-getreten_am_01.01.2024_englisch.pdf

If you are writing a thesis at this professorship, you are in most cases studying for a Master’s degree in Digital Governance and Administration (DiGA). If you are enrolled in a different degree programme (e.g. Business Administration), please check for any deviations in the subject-specific programme and examination regulation (FSPO).

1. Layout

Typeface

- Font type: Times New Roman
- Font size: 12 pt
- Line spacing: 1.15
- Justified formatting (“Blocksatz”)
- Hyphenation (“Silbentrennung”)
- Page numbers at the bottom right
- All pages must be numbered consecutively (except for the cover page, the table of content and the lists of figures and tables).

Margins

- Left 3.0 cm, otherwise (right, top, bottom) 2.5 cm

Footnotes

- Font type: Times New Roman
- Font size: 10 pt
- Footnotes include further explanations, background information, critical comments, analogies, examples, etc.
- Footnotes include anything that goes beyond the actual content of the thesis. However, you should carefully consider whether each footnote is necessary or not.

Please ensure **consistent formatting.**

General information

Contact person in the examination office for the DiGA degree programme

- If you have any questions about the examination regulations, e.g. registering for and canceling examinations, entering grades etc., please contact Ms Dimanova at the Examinations Office.

Home assignment (*Hausarbeiten*, FSPO DiGA, Section 13)

- Home assignments should comprise 10 to 35 pages. What length is expected in a specific seminar (within this range) will be announced by the lecturer.

Master's thesis DiGA (FSPO DiGA, Section 14)

- Master's theses should comprise 50 to 90 pages.
- You usually have 12 weeks to complete your thesis.
- If we supervise your thesis at our professorship, this must be reported to the Examinations Office using the "Form for acceptance of Bachelor's/Master's thesis". You can find the form on the [website of the Examinations Office](#). Fill it out and hand it to the member of the professorship who supervises your thesis.

Bachelor or Master thesis other than DiGA

- The focus of this professorship is on Master's theses from the DiGA programme. If you are writing a Bachelor's or Master's thesis from a different programme at this professorship (e.g., political science), please inform yourself about the formalities from the corresponding subject-specific programme and examination regulations (FSPO): <https://www.hsu-hh.de/asv/pruefungsordnungen/>

Finding a topic for home assignment or thesis

- When searching for a topic for your home assignment or thesis, keep in mind that there should be an explicit and recognizable thematic link to the topic of the seminar and/or research interests of the professorship.
- If you would like to write your Bachelor's or Master's thesis at our professorship, please make an appointment for a consultation in advance. Please think about the topic you would like to work on and the question you would like to answer. If you do not have a specific topic, we can recommend topics from the professorship's fields of research.
- For home assignments, discussing the topic via email will suffice.
- After consultation, you will be given suggestions for further reading, which you can use in addition to the literature from your own research. You will be asked to write an exposé (3-5 pages) which should include information on your research question (including its relevance, e.g. the research gap you are addressing), your theoretical framework, your research design and research methods and a first version of the structure of your thesis.

Quality assurance of the work before submission

- Give yourself enough time to write. Even if you work well under pressure, it takes time to fine-tune a text. If you have any questions or problems, don't hesitate to contact your lecturer and don't be afraid to ask 'silly' questions.
- Check: Is your work complete and signed?
- Make sure you check grammar and spelling. At the very least, use the correction function of your word processor program. Submissions full of grammatical and spelling errors are difficult to understand and read, which can affect your grade.
- Is the structure of the text clear and consistent? Does it flow well?
- Is the citation style consistent?
- Is the text written consistently in a scientific style (e.g. without colloquial language)?
- Is the bibliography complete and formatted consistently?
- If available, use the expertise of fellow students or third parties for critical feedback.

2. Formal structure

Table of contents

- List the structure of the paper, including sub-chapters.
- Include the bibliography in the table of contents.
- List any appendices to the paper.
- Provide page numbers for the entries in your table of contents.
- The table of contents can be generated automatically using MS Word.

The overall topic should be broken down into sub-questions/aspects/steps of argumentation, with each heading clearly conveying its purpose. The order of the chapters in the table of contents must be followed in the text. The chapter headings in the table of contents must correspond to those in the text. The titles of the thesis and the chapters should be clear and precise.

Introduction

The introduction gives the reader an overview of what will happen in the text. In any case, it should present the aims and main research question(s), as well as the research gap you are addressing. You should also explain why your research is relevant and how it contributes to filling the research gap. The central theoretical concepts of the text should also be introduced and briefly defined. However, the introduction is more than just a 'technical' summary of the text that follows. It is the first point of contact with the reader. The introduction should therefore capture the reader's interest. Ideally, by the end of the introduction, the reader will be 'hooked' and looking forward to the rest of the text.

Main body

The body of the text deals with the topic in a good balance between breadth (many aspects of a topic, many examples) and depth (one aspect or one example presented in more detail). The main

body usually consists of several chapters. This will always include at least one chapter reviewing the current state of the research literature. For texts with an empirical component, the body also includes a chapter on the research method and one or more chapters with the empirical findings. The exact structure of the main body can vary greatly and should be carefully considered in advance (which chapter should be placed where, how many sub-chapters are needed, how is the argumentative thread structured, do the chapters follow on from each other? etc.).

Discussion/Conclusion

The final chapters (Discussion and Conclusion) aim to generalize the findings in such a way that the entire work feels complete. Therefore, the discussion is also a centerpiece of the thesis and not something you should write quickly at the end. The quality of the discussion improves the more you succeed in linking the arguments of the introduction with those of the main body of the text. If you have carried out empirical research, you should discuss your findings in the light of the existing literature: Did you confirm other research findings? Did you discover something new? How can your results be interpreted? How do they contribute to filling the research gap you defined in the introduction of your paper? Do not forget to also discuss the limitations of your study. The conclusion should answer your research question(s). You can also give an outlook on further research questions, considerations, and practical implications.

Bibliography

- The bibliography (list of references) contains a complete list of all sources cited in the text in alphabetical order. This includes internet sources (e.g., online newspapers, political documents).
- All entries belong in one common list. Do not separate entries by text genre.
- All entries in the list of references should be formatted according to the “APA Style Guide 7th Edition”. There are many websites online that explain with examples how to format according to this style guide. This is just one: <https://libguides.csudh.edu/citation/apa-7>. The easiest way to manage and format your references is by using a reference management programme such as Citavi or Zotero. HSU has a campus licence for Citavi.

Appendix

Key tables or figures should be included in the introduction, body or discussion. If you wish to include additional material (e.g. tables, figures, interview guidelines), you can include it in the appendix after the bibliography.

Declaration on the independent preparation of academic work

Every submission must include a declaration of independence. With this declaration, you confirm that you have written your home assignment or thesis yourself and that you have labeled all content, ideas and thoughts you have adopted by quoting or referencing them. Your submissions can be checked with plagiarism software. For this reason, each entry must also be submitted digitally. Printed and digital versions must be identical.

Enclosed are exemplary templates for such declarations in home assignments and theses:

Version 1 for home assignments:

I hereby declare that I have written this thesis independently. I have only used the resources listed in the list of sources and references and all passages taken literally or indirectly from sources and literature have been marked as such. I have been informed that the use of text generators based on AI language models is not allowed.

Date, Signature

Version 2 for final theses with the addition of an affidavit:

I, the undersigning, hereby declare on oath that I have written this thesis independently and have not used any sources or aids other than those specified. All sources and quotations are correct and complete and are listed in the bibliography. I am aware that false statements in connection with this declaration may be prosecuted. I have documented which AI tools I have used and how I have used them for this thesis (e.g., for translations, for text summaries in the first phase of the literature review to select reading texts) on a separate page (or on separate pages), which I also have signed.

Date, Signature

3. Exemplary cover page

- Name of the seminar, name of the study programme
- Title and – if applicable – subtitle of the home assignment/thesis
 - Regarding Master theses: If no German title is given, the English title will also be listed on the German certificate/diploma. If only the German title is given, the English title can be added later. In this case, the Examination Office will ask for it when recording the title after submission of the Master's thesis.
For all other examinations, this can be agreed between the examiners and students
- Type of text (home assignment, Bachelor's thesis etc.)
- Title and name of the lecturer/thesis advisor
- Name of the student, postal address, email address, matriculation number, class (“Studienjahrgang”), current trimester of study (“Studientrimester”)

In addition to the title page of the submission, which you create yourself, you must also attach the cover sheet for examination papers. You can find and download the cover sheet via ILIAS. The examiners note the grade of your assignment or thesis on this sheet.

Here are current examples of cover pages from students:

Home assignment:



HELMUT SCHMIDT
UNIVERSITÄT

Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg

Home assignment as part of the seminar XYZ

Title of the home assignment

Lecturer:

By [First name] [Last name]

Street and number:

Postal code and city:

Tel:

Email:

Matriculation number:

Class:

Date of submission:

Master's thesis:



HELMUT SCHMIDT
UNIVERSITÄT

Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg

Academic thesis for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) at the Faculty of Business,
Economics and Social Sciences of the Helmut Schmidt University Hamburg

Title in German (language)



Title in English (language)

Primary supervisor:

Secondary supervisor:

By [First name] [Last name]

Street and number:

Postal code and city:

Tel:

Email:

Matriculation number:

Class:

Date of submission:

4. Citation requirements

Citations should be formatted according to the APA style guide mentioned above (see “Bibliography”). Typically, a paragraph will cite multiple references. Be precise when linking your text to references and avoid single references for entire paragraphs. Proper citations are the foundation of good scholarly practice. They are a requirement for a successful home assignment and thesis, and they also minimize the risk of plagiarism. Proper citation takes time, so be sure to set aside some time before submitting your work. It is worth it.

Direct quotations

- Literal reproduction of a quotation
- Always in quotation marks
- Reference in parentheses after the quotation with page number

Indirect quotations

- Paraphrasing, rephrasing, or summarizing an idea in your own words
- Not to be placed in quotation marks
- Reference in parentheses after the text (page numbers, if necessary)

Plagiarism

A brief definition of plagiarism: “Presenting work or ideas from another source as your own, with or without consent of the original author, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement.” (Oxford Students. (n.d.). *Plagiarism*.

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>)

Further information on plagiarism and how to avoid it can be found here:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>

Or in German here:

<https://www.uni-osnabrueck.de/universitaet/organisation/sprachenzentrum/schreibwerkstatt/fragen-rund-ums-akademische-schreiben/was-ist-ein-plagiat-und-wie-vermeide-ich-es/>

For us to check your home assignments/theses for plagiarism, they must also be submitted digitally. Digital and printed submissions must be identical. Please note: Copying and pasting work from fellow students is also not permitted. For example, if your text is very similar to that of a fellow student, e.g., if it contains exactly the same content in every paragraph and has only been worded differently.

5. Submission of home assignments/theses

Submission of home assignments

- An electronic version of the home assignment must be sent to the supervising lecturer as a Word document and a PDF file. You don't need to submit a hard copy.

Submission of Bachelor's and Master's theses

- Three versions of the printed and bound thesis must be submitted to the Examinations Office. As changes to the examination regulations are possible, please always inform yourself about the current regulations regarding submission at the Examination Office.
- You can hand in your thesis in person during the Examination Office's opening hours or post it in the Examination Office's post box (Building H11). If you send your thesis by post, the burden of proof for timely submission is also on you. The date of submission to the postal service is decisive. For this reason, registered mail (Einschreiben) or parcel post (Paketpost) are recommended. Please note: There is no date indication on mobile stamps. The use of such stamps is therefore not suitable as proof of timely dispatch. For further information, you should read the 'Frequently asked questions (students)' (Häufig gestellte Fragen: Studierende) of the Examination Office via ILIAS or contact the Examination Office.
- In addition to the print submission, a data carrier (e.g., USB stick or card) with an electronic version of the thesis identical to the print version must also be submitted to the Examination Office. The Examinations Office asks students to anonymize the metadata of this digital copy, which means that your name should not appear in the title of the documents and should also be removed from the "file properties".
- Postal address of the examination office of the university: Helmut Schmidt University/University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg; Examinations Office (Prüfungsamt); Holstenhofweg 85; 22043 Hamburg.
- Please ensure that the cover sheet is correct and corresponds to your thesis.

6. Assessment criteria for home assignments and theses

Assessment is based on the following criteria (if applicable):

Structure

- You have demonstrated the ability to independently produce an academic text that is coherent, understandable, and unambiguous.
- Your text is structured into (sub)chapters that are coherent and comprehensive in themselves and logically build on one another.
- You have clearly articulated the research question and justified the research problem.
- The introduction and conclusion of your home assignment or thesis accurately and coherently summarize your arguments and overall structure.

Content

- You have presented the state of the art regarding your research question and established references to the literature on your topic.
- You have defined the research gap you are addressing.
- You have selected relevant literature related to your topic.
- You have used an adequate number of scientific texts and other sources in writing your home assignment or thesis.
- You have explained and defined relevant theoretical concepts.
- You have developed a suitable research design.
- You have selected appropriate research methods and applied them correctly.
- You have sufficiently discussed the topic, weighing different perspectives.
- You have answered your research question.
- You have established a clear connection between theoretical arguments and empirical findings.
- You have adequately explained and discussed tables and figures.
- You have formulated and appropriately explained independent lines of thought.
- You have critically reflected on the approach you chose.

Formalities

- Your home assignment or thesis meets the formal requirements of academic work (layout, volume).
- You have cited and referenced correctly.
- Your work meets the linguistic and spelling requirements.