

## Master in Eco-Social Design

### Thesis guidelines

*You can submit your Thesis title request in mySNS: My graduation -> Thesis title request.  
In the Study Guide -> Graduation -> Design and Art -> Master Final Exam you can find the Thesis Regulation as well as the Supervisors and Deadlines: <https://guide.unibz.it/en/graduation/design-art/master-final-exam/>*

The thesis involves the development of an Eco-Social Design project and is practice-based. It is underpinned by applying approaches, methods and practices of design research including appropriate scientific and theoretical considerations (as learnt in the courses of the area *Observe, Analyse & Apply*). It builds upon the work of each student's own design project in Semester 3.

### Individual or collaborative thesis project?

There are three options for a thesis project:

Option 1. Thesis project is developed individually.

Option 2. Thesis project is developed in partnership with another student within the Masters in Eco-Social design.

Option 3. Thesis project is developed in partnership with another student in another Faculty in unibz or in another university approved by the first supervisor.

The requirements for the thesis proposal and final documentation vary - see below for details.

### Calendar and deadlines of degree sessions

The three final degree sessions will be communicated by beginning of each academic year and published online in the Study Guide under [www.unibz.it](http://www.unibz.it) > Services > Info for current students > Study Guide > Graduation > Design and Art > Master Final exam. Before each degree session, timelines and the list of nominated supervisors will be communicated via E-Mail and published in the Study guide.

## Milestones

- 4 - 5 months      **Choice of supervisors and submission of the topic > mySNS**  
 (see [First supervisor and second supervisor](#) & [Thesis title request – page 3](#))
  
- 3 months          **Mid-term presentation and discussion about work-in-progress**  
 with all supervisors of all current thesis students
  
- 1 month            **Submission of written *draft* by email to supervisors**  
 Based on this the first supervisor decides within two weeks, if the thesis is  
 admitted to the exam ([Final exam – page 6](#))
  
- 15 days            **Final exam enrollment and all formal requirements** have to be fulfilled, the  
*final* thesis (printed + pdfA + plagiarism report uploaded in > mySNS  
 ([Description of thesis, Submission of written thesis & Plagiarism check page 4](#))
  
- 7 days              **Submission of summary for portfolio & press > Google Drive**  
 ([Summary for portfolio and press](#))
  
- day 0                **Presentation of the thesis project and exam**  
 (see [Project Presentation and Exam](#))

## First supervisor and second supervisor

Students choose a first supervisor and suggest a second supervisor, who has to be accepted by the first supervisor. Together, they discuss the topic of the Master-thesis. (***TO DO before starting the study graduation process online***). Supervisors may reject a proposed topic and decline to tutor. Each supervisor can tutor a student up to a maximum of 10 hours during the working period. For students doing a collaborative, shared thesis project under Option 2 above it is recommended that the first supervisor is shared if they write a joint thesis (word count 40.000 to 80.000 words). In the shared written thesis, it has to be clearly marked, which part was authored by whom (this is a formal requirement by the Faculty's thesis regulation). However, if students collaborate but choose to write an individual thesis (word count 20.000 to 40.000 words) they should have the same first supervisor but could, if they wish, choose different second supervisors. For Option 3 it is recommended that students share the first supervisor but that the second supervisor originates from their own Faculty and disciplinary domain.

It is highly recommended to meet both thesis supervisors for the total tutoring hours allocated per student. Students are encouraged to consult their supervisors in shared discussions. The first supervisor must teach in the Master in Eco-Social Design. Second supervisors must have a position at any university or research institute or an organization that the first supervisor approves. If the first supervisor is design practitioner, it is recommended to have a second supervisor from design research, social sciences or economics (as taught in the area *Observe, Analyse & Apply*). In case the first supervisor is more theoretically based, it makes more sense to choose a design practitioner as second supervisor.

## Thesis title request

*mySNS -> My graduation -> Submit thesis title request*

Thesis titles request can be submitted by students that have successfully achieved all exams foreseen by their study plan within the given deadlines. Maximum **two** exams (**12 CP**) can be taken during the official working period. Students have to submit the thesis title request through the digital platform of the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano within the planned deadlines; the thesis title has to be approved – through the digital platform of the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano – by the first supervisor in accordance with the second supervisor within the planned deadlines (**by 23:59 of the deadline day**). Requested information: thesis title, name of both supervisors (*students have to choose from **drop down list***), thesis language (English), topic description (abstract, contextual review, project plan -> only one PDF can be uploaded -> not two).

## AlmaLaurea

Few days after submission of the thesis title, students will receive a notification to register with AlmaLaurea and to fill in the questionnaire. Filling in the form is mandatory. Proceed with the Registration through mySNS > AlmaLaurea questionnaire

Further information you can find in the Study Guide: <https://guide.unibz.it/en/graduation/design-art/alma-laurea-survey/>

## Ateliers' workspaces & 24-h access to the library

The Faculty has a limited number of workplaces at student's disposal. Few days after the submission of the thesis title request students will be informed by the Faculty Secretariat about available workplaces. Students interested in have a workspace in the Ateliers have to reserve a place. A week after the exposition of the degree projects all workplaces must be given back in order. Students could ask the 24-h access to the library through the form they will receive from the Faculty Secretariat.

## Presentation areas

Presentation areas need to be defined one month before the application to the final exam with the Faculty Secretariat. Special requests or needs will be taken into consideration (for example large exposition objects etc.). The students will receive the definitive plan of presentation areas. All technical details (for example power connections etc.) have to be discussed with the staff of the Faculty

Management of the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano. At least 15 days before the date of final exam the reservation form has to be handed in to the Faculty Secretariat.

## Description of the 'Thesis'

The Thesis as a series of documented experiments. Experiments can be undertaken in the field, lab and showroom/gallery in physical, digital or hybrid environments, and be situated within and between design practices, studies and exploration. Experiments should involve the activity of generating and constructing manifested outcomes. They should apply appropriate theoretical, methodological and practical considerations and demonstrate how 'research actions' are integrated with 'design actions' leading to 'social actions'. Integration of learning from the *Make & Intervene* and *Observe, Analyse & Apply* courses within the Thesis project is also expected.

Each experiment should be appropriately framed in terms of eco-social issues, contexts, actors, stakeholders, and territory so that the practical outcomes can be understood as (potential) contributions to tangible social or societal changes towards more sustainable, non-alienated, resilient, just and equitable futures.

**The 'draft' thesis** contains as much documentation, content and materials as the student can produce, but without necessarily concluding the final materialised designs, for which there is an additional two more weeks at which time students submit their **'final' thesis**. The draft thesis is defined by the five key criteria listed below. Attention should be paid to describing and demonstrating how the project has made a difference within the context addressed i.e. what was the agency of the project, its actors and collaborators to generate change? The first supervisor, in consultation with the second supervisor, decides whether the student can progress to the exam. Supervisors also give feedback on the draft thesis.

The 'Thesis' is defined by the following criteria, outputs and outcomes to include:

### Title and subtitle

**Abstract** (< 200 words; in all the three languages of unibz for students of the old study regulation and in English only for students of the new Study Regulation)

**Word count.** The main text of the thesis should be between 20.000 to 40.000 words in English.

### Introduction: the topic or theme and the project in general terms

- Description of the core idea and general work
- Description of the report or documentation

- The structure i.e., the chapters, headings and subheadings
- Briefly describe the content of each chapter

### **State of the art and review of literature**

- List, describe, compare and assess the literature about the topic or theme of the project (here you should be able to describe the theoretical foundations of your thesis)
- List, describe, compare and assess already existing projects, case studies or other examples related to the topic or theme of your thesis

### **Research**

- Methods
  - show what methods and instruments taken from non-design sciences (subjects of the Observe, Analyse & Apply Area) you have chosen and provide reasons for the choice
  - show what methods and instruments taken from design research you have chosen and provide reasons for the choice
  - show how these two approaches complement, coincide or provide different viewpoints
- Investigations
  - Describe the investigation you carried out on the base of the chosen methods, their results and how they have influenced your design choices and more in general your project
- Experiments, tests, trials, etc.
  - Describe the experiments, tests, trials, etc., you have undertaken, their results and how they have influenced your design choices and more in general your project
- Processes and procedures
  - Show and fully document the processes (it includes a good photographic documentation of them)
  - Show the developmental stages of the project
  - Show theoretical and practical reflection over time
  - Show how topics from Make & Intervene and Observe, Analyse & Apply were integrated

### **Results and outputs**

Describe results and outputs, i.e., the project, but also other possible results and outputs, showing how they are related to the narrative in the research chapters.

In particular, the **final printed thesis** should include: Complete documentation of the final, tangible, materialized and manifest outputs, and an evaluation and critical reflection on these outputs.

### Scenarios of use-implementation, possible impact and potential future developments

Devise possible scenarios of use-implementation and reflect upon them. Describe how the project could be developed further and what could become in the future. Outline (potential) partners and resources required for these steps.

### Discussion and/or implications and/or further research

### Conclusion

### References

All references and a **bibliography** should be compiled using the Chicago referencing and citation system, see [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). Students can choose Notes & Bibliography style or Author-date style. Alternatively, the American Psychological Association (APA) system of referencing can be used, <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples>.

### Final exam

*mySNS -> My graduation -> Thesis upload*

At least **15 days before the date of the final exam** students have to select the graduation session and pay the two duty stamps (16€ for the Diploma and 16€ for the exam) through mySNS. Suggested browsers: Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome.

After the registration of payments, students can proceed with the exam enrolment.

### Submission of written thesis and documentation

*mySNS -> My graduation -> Thesis upload*

At least **15 days before the date of the final exam** students have to upload the final thesis PDF (**PDF/A format, not a normal PDF: open the document in Acrobat Reader and save as type PDF/A format**) and the plagiarism **report** (not receipt) (<https://guide.unibz.it/en/graduation/design-art/antiplagiarism-check/>) and the uploaded Master-thesis have to be approved by the first supervisor in accordance with the second supervisor within the planned deadlines (**by 23:59 of the deadline day**). After this deadline the thesis cannot be replaced anymore. Prerequisite to be admitted to the final exam is the approval of the uploaded Master-thesis. Supervisors may fail a candidate if the Master-thesis is considered insufficient.

Furthermore, to be admitted to the final exam students have to:

- achieve all mandatory credit points, as specified in the “Master’s Degree Regulation”, excluding the thesis mark credit points;
- pay the tuition fees in accordance with the “Tuition Fees Regulation” or to be exempt.

At least **15 days before the date of the final exam**, students must submit at the Faculty Secretariat following documents:

1. **Three identical printed copies** of the written part of the Master-Thesis (1 for the supervisor, 1 for the second supervisor, 1 for the library archives), inclusive all relevant bibliography and reference sources. The written part of the Master-Thesis has to contain a copyright with following information:

Title and subtitle  
Master-Thesis by Name Surname  
in Master in Eco-Social Design  
Degree session 2022/23, 23.1 (e.g.: 2022/23, 23.1)  
at the Faculty of Design and Art of the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano  
in cooperation with Companies or Institutions  
First supervisor: Name Surname – Second supervisor: Name Surname

2. The **form for the choice of the presentation area**.

3. The **AlmaLaurea** form has to be completed online (Cockpit > Career Hub > AlmaLaurea questionnaire). **Please note that no thesis upload is possible as long as the questionnaire is still open.**

## Plagiarism check

The plagiarism check via Turnitin is a mandatory part of your final examination and needs to be done before handing in the thesis. The complete procedure is outlined in the Students' manual available in the Study Guide: [Info for current students > Study Guide > Graduation > Design & Art > Antiplagiarism Check https://guide.unibz.it/en/graduation/design-art/antiplagiarism-check/](#). The submission to Turnitin does **NOT** substitute the official upload of the final thesis through the Cockpit! Through Turnitin you just upload your thesis in order to do the mandatory plagiarism check and to obtain the corresponding plagiarism report (not the receipt!), which needs to be uploaded along with the thesis file in the cockpit.

## Summary for portfolio and press

Additionally, at least **7 days before the date of the final exam**, the **project description for online media, catalogues and alike** has to be submitted on Google Drive and a copy emailed to the first supervisor for checking. This essential documentation should be concise and attractive for interested audiences, such as: fellow designers and practitioners, partners and stakeholders of the project, potential collaborators, participants, users and/or consumers of the project, etc.). It should make clear which benefits the project generates.

## Elements

- title + subtitle (< 80 characters)
- Student
- Month and year of the thesis
- Supervisors
- Project partners and supporters
- Keywords
- teaser text (< 120-240 characters)
- short description (600-1200 characters, structured by in-between headlines, highlights and/or block quotes); this text is not identical with the abstract, which serves academic purposes, while this short description is tailored towards a broader audience (see above)
- 1 cover image\*
- 2-4 images\* with captions
- optional: URLs to the project's web site, blog, social media page, videos, downloads or alike

\* min. width: 2600 px; RGB; choose images, which work well on web, social media, in magazines and catalogues.

## Project Presentation and Exam

Degree exams are open to the public.

A 20-minute presentation, including a demonstration of the outputs and outcomes.

A 20-minute Question and Answer session with the examining Commission.

## Withdrawal

Students may withdraw from the final exam by sending an E-Mail to the Faculty Secretariat. In this case, students need to enroll for the next final exam session and pay the duty stamp for the exam only. For further information, please refer to the Regulation of the Final Exam.

## Summary of milestones, deliverables and assessment criteria

All dates and deadlines can be found in the [Study Guide](#).



Milestone	Deliverables	Focus & assessment criteria
<p><b>Submission of the topic for the thesis and names of the first and the second supervisors</b></p>	<p>200-word abstract of the project and thesis topic including title and subtitle.</p> <p>2.000-word Contextual Review and detailed Project Plan to include:</p> <p>An introduction to the topic and project and setting and defining the context.</p> <p>Description of the core project purpose and central idea(s) and aims.</p> <p>Description of the project issues, challenges or problems addressed.</p> <p>Description of key actors, stakeholders, collaborators and partners.</p> <p>Description of the initial research questions and/or design brief.</p> <p>A project plan giving milestones, a schedule of tasks, etc.</p> <p>Bibliography</p>	<p>There is no formal assessment at this stage, but students are expected to negotiate the topic with their supervisors.</p> <p>Keywords:  <b>Evolve, build upon Project 3, strengthen topic, key ideas, aims, context, actors</b></p>

<p><b>Mid-term presentation and discussion about work-in-progress.</b></p>	<p>Presentation of work-in-progress to include:</p> <p>Description of the theoretical, methodological and practical foundations.</p> <p>Description of the methods, processes and procedures followed.</p> <p>Demonstration of your practice – how you experimented and explored your topic.</p> <p>Production of tangible design outputs.</p> <p>Description of the results and outputs to date so far.</p> <p>Evaluation of the results, outputs and outcomes so far.</p>	<p>Assessment is focused on the development and execution of the project and its theoretical, methodological and practical outputs. It also focuses on the viability, quality and originality of the project.</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <p><b>Evidence work-in-progress, justify decisions, generate, construct, outputs</b></p> <p>Criteria include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attitude, passion and commitment</li> <li>● Critical analysis, synthesis and reflection</li> <li>● Defense of your proposition and response to critics</li> <li>● Quality of your contextual review, methodological approach and ability to integrate topics from <i>Make &amp; Intervene</i> and <i>Observe, Analyse &amp; Apply</i></li> <li>● Quality and relevance of your experimentation and exploration</li> <li>● Quality of design work (tangible, intangible, digital, analogue, aesthetic and technical qualities)</li> <li>● Quality of project management and collaboration</li> <li>● Quality and effectiveness of presentation techniques and narrative. How well the story convinces.</li> <li>● Ability to manage your project network and involve your target audience(s) and beneficiaries</li> </ul>
--	---	--

<p>Submission of <i>draft</i> written thesis</p>	<p><a href="#">see Description of the 'Thesis'</a></p>	<p>The draft thesis should contain a title, sub-title, list of contents, list of figures, images, illustrations, diagrams etc.), figures should be inserted in the running text, a bibliography and, if required, appendices.</p>
<p>Submission of <i>final</i> written thesis</p>		<p>Assessment is focused on delivery of the <i>final</i> thesis report and the consistency of evidence and justification of the theoretical, methodological and practical aspects of the project in relation to the outputs and outcomes.</p> <p>Keywords:  <b>Evaluation, reflection, synthesis, actual impact, potential impact.</b></p> <p>Criteria include all previously listed and, for project work completed assessors look at the interplay between the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Classical design qualities (novelty, originality, form and function, state of the art in your chosen design sub-field or field)</li> <li>● Defining the Eco-Social agency (real impacts and potential for positive Eco-Social change)</li> <li>● Understanding and managing relations within the project actors, stakeholders, collaborators and partners.</li> <li>● Building new relations to create opportunities for positive change or transition.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Summary for Portfolio and press</b></p>	<p>see <a href="#">Summary for portfolio and press</a></p>	<p>This essential documentation should be concise and attractive for interested audiences, such as: fellow designers and practitioners, partners and stakeholders of the project, potential collaborators, participants, users and/or consumers of the project, etc.). It should make clear which benefits the project generates.</p>
<p><b>Presentation of the thesis project</b></p>	<p>see <a href="#">Project Presentation and Exam</a></p> <p>The presentation should be understandable, convincing and attractive for the whole commission and the audience, including those who are not familiar with the work and its topic.</p>	<p>Assessment is focused on the overall quality of the project and thesis, the tangible outputs and potential and tangible positive Eco-Social impacts.</p> <p>Keywords:  <b>Storytelling, the prototype(s), impact, potential</b></p> <p>All criteria previously listed are considered.</p>

## Summary of criteria & evaluation

All criteria can be summarized as 5 major qualities:

1. **Eco-Social agency**

You should show your project's tangible impacts and potentials for positive eco-social change, and how your research and design approach helped generate these.

2. **Qualities the of designed artefacts and other materialized outputs**

You should produce artifacts with attention to their aesthetic and technical qualities, and how these qualities foster the eco-social agency. How do the artifacts/materialized outputs build upon the state of the art in your chosen (design) disciplines? You should demonstrate the rationale for developing these artifacts/outputs for your research/design/social actions and their effectiveness to progress your inquiry, for example, by answering questions, generating data, engaging actors and stakeholders and prototyping solutions. Boldness and vigour of experimentation and design exploration is desired.

**3. Conceptual framing, critical reflection and future perspectives**

You should demonstrate how you initiated your project showing the 'state of art' and early contextual inquiry setting out the terrain of your project, your starting position and methodological approach. You should demonstrate your abilities for critical analysis, synthesis, reflection and evaluation, and show how you integrated learning from *Make & Intervene* and *Observe, Analyse & Apply* courses. You should show your understanding of the iterative development of your project through your research, and how this generates future perspectives.

**4. Relations, processes, organization and network building**

You should demonstrate how you understood and managed relations and processes with the project actors, stakeholders, collaborators and partners. You should reflect on how the building of new relations and your management of the project generated opportunities for positive change or transition. You should demonstrate how your processes affected your project development, its outputs and outcomes.

**5. Storytelling**

You should demonstrate how your research informed the development of your project narrative and how you chose to make it public. You should reflect on the quality and effectiveness of presentation techniques and narrative and their potential in communicating the project to relevant publics. How well do you think the story attracts attention, convinces and touches audiences? You will also be assessed on how well you defend your proposition and respond to criticism.

All qualities can be seen in all parts of the work: the written thesis including the documentation, the project and the presentation. But still each quality has a part, where it is more visible:

1 & 3: in the written thesis

2: in the artifacts designed and produced throughout the project

4: in the process and management of the project, documented in the written thesis: in publications and strategic communication via diverse and appropriate channels, for example, web, social media, print media, events and other media. In the presentations (mid-term and, above all, in the final exam)

5: in the documentation and presentation.

**Proportionality and Focus**

All works have to tackle all five assessment criteria. Projects will deepen different criteria in different ways. It is expected that a Master's thesis and project will contain unexpected, surprising and innovative elements.

## **MA\_Designer Stamp**

On the evening of the last degree exam, graduated students will receive a MA\_Designer Stamp.

## **Evaluation**

The President of the degree Commission communicates the final degree grade during the “Proclamazione” after the degree exam and confirms the grade through the digital platform of the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano.

## **Degree Ceremony**

The Degree Ceremony for the graduates of Bozen-Bolzano will usually take place once a year. More information is available in the Study Guide: <https://guide.unibz.it/en/graduation/design-art/degree-ceremony/>. To receive the Diploma or Diploma Supplement students must have returned any type of loan (from workshops or library) and have paid their debts.

## **Alumni of the Faculty of Design and Art**

The Faculty will keep in touch with the Alumni in order to update those regarding events, competitions, tenders, position calls or contracts.