

# Master programme Digital Humanities

## Q & A for Master Thesis

### ***What is the DH steering group?***

The DH steering group takes care of coordinating DH activities at the University of Vienna. This includes, in particular, the coordination of the MA and EC Digital Humanities as well as teaching in these programmes. Currently, the steering group's members are:

- Tara Andrews
- Andreas Baumann
- Hannes Fellner
- Benjamin Roth
- Maria Vargha
- Gabriel Viehhauser
- Thomas Wallnig (coordinator at the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies)
- Michael Wiegand (coordinator at the Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies)

All members of the DH steering group will gladly help if you have questions!

### ***Who can supervise a MA thesis?***

Every formally eligible scientific staff member of the University of Vienna (a) who is or has been teaching as part of the MA Digital Humanities and/or (b) who is member of the Data Science Board (<https://datascience.univie.ac.at/about-us/>) can supervise an MA thesis. Staff members are formally eligible if they are habilitated and/or employed as Ass./Assoz./Univ.-Prof. In case a staff member does not fulfil these formal criteria they can be authorized by the study programme coordinator in accordance with the DH steering group as long as that staff member holds a doctoral degree.

### ***Who can be examiner and chair in a MA defensio?***

Everyone who can supervise an MA thesis can function as an examiner. Every member of the DH steering group can function as chair. There are always exactly two examiners and one chair.

### ***What format does the MA defensio have?***

The MA defensio consists of a presentation of the MA thesis (no more than 15 minutes) and a subsequent Q&A session (15 minutes per examiner).

### ***How do I find a topic for my MA thesis? Is there a list of potential topics?***

To explore potential topics for your MA thesis within the MA in Digital Humanities, we encourage you to consult with instructors from the various departments involved in the program. Some instructors may also list available thesis topics on their respective departmental websites.

Discussing thesis topics with potential instructors does not commit you to a specific topic. You are not required to pursue the first thesis topic you explore. It is normal for students preparing to start their MA thesis to contact multiple instructors across different departments to find a topic that aligns with their interests. Since your thesis will require several months of dedication, it is important to select a topic that you find engaging.

To get a better idea of how MA theses should be formatted and scoped, you can find completed MA theses here:

<https://datascience.univie.ac.at/research/phds-masters-projects/#c1057815>

### ***What regulations are there for the MA thesis? Are there deadlines you need to know?***

Once you have officially registered your specific thesis topic, you should plan to submit your thesis within 6 months. There are no explicit deadlines associated with the MA thesis. However, please note that in order to obtain your degree, you must also pass the defensio. It consists of the defense of the MA thesis and an examination on its scientific context. It can only occur after the successful completion of all prescribed modules and examinations, as well as a positive assessment of the MA thesis.

### ***Can I have two supervisors?***

Technically you can have a co-supervisor along with your regular supervisor, but there need to be good arguments for it, and it needs to go through a bureaucratic process. Please contact the coordinators of the degree program.

***Is it possible to do a joint thesis (with a cultural heritage-/research-institution or (tech) company)?***

Yes, it is possible to undertake a joint thesis with a research institution or tech company. However, the thesis must be supervised by a staff member from the University of Vienna. Given that such supervision requires formal approval, we strongly recommend contacting the coordinators of the degree program so they can initiate the clearance process.

***What about seeking supervision by a professor or habilitated researcher at University of Vienna who does not teach within the MA in Digital Humanities and/or who is not a board member of the Research Network Data Science?***

As with co-supervision, this may be possible, however there need to be arguments, and it needs formal approval. Therefore, we ask you to contact the coordinators of the degree program so they can initiate the clearance process.

***What are the research interests of the professors?***

The research interests of instructors are typically detailed on their personal or departmental websites. For the most current information, it is advisable to review their recent publications, which often indicate their ongoing research projects and areas of particular interest. Additionally, you are encouraged to contact instructors directly to inquire about their research interests. They will be pleased to provide you with more detailed information.

***How do I know who to ask to be supervisor since the interdisciplinary teaching staff does not necessarily reflect my unique background?***

Instructors involved in the MA in Digital Humanities are accustomed to the program's interdisciplinary nature and the diverse backgrounds of its students. While it may be challenging for both students and potential supervisors to initially determine if a thesis topic perfectly aligns with a student's specific skills, open discussions are key. We strongly encourage you to engage with potential supervisors early in the process to explore suitable thesis topics together.

***Can lecturers from the Clusters be supervisors?***

Yes, as long as they fulfil the formal requirements for supervising MA theses.

***What is the MA Thesis Seminar? How far into topic searching/creating do I need to be to attend the seminar?***

The objective of the MA Thesis Seminar is to assist students in identifying and refining their thesis topics. The content structure of the course varies, depending on the instructors leading it each semester. At the start of this course, students are not required to have a chosen thesis topic or a designated supervisor (although having these before the seminar begins is advantageous). However, they are expected to secure both during the seminar. We strongly recommend that students begin considering potential thesis topics and ideally contact potential supervisors prior to the start of the seminar. The seminar is designed to guide students through the initial stages of their thesis work, and they are not expected to have completed their thesis by the seminar's conclusion.

***I've heard that some teaching staff are proposing thesis topics whilst others want students to come with a topic prepared?***

There is no single approach to guiding students in finding a suitable thesis topic. Some students may independently identify a thesis topic and then seek a supervisor whose expertise aligns with their chosen topic. Conversely, many thesis topics are proposed by potential supervisors. Both methods are valid and neither is inherently better or worse, nor do they have irreversible implications for the final grade of the thesis.

Typically, if a thesis topic is suggested by the supervisor, the supervisor may have a stronger interest in that topic, often resulting in closer supervision. However, this is not always the case. It does not mean that topics suggested by students receive less attention from the supervisor. Both approaches can lead to successful and well-supervised theses.

***Do I have to take the seminar multiple times if I don't finish my thesis in one semester?***

No.

***How many times do I have to meet with my supervisor?***

There is no fixed regulation that dictates the number of meetings between a supervisor and a student. The frequency of these meetings should be mutually agreed upon by both parties. It often varies depending on the nature of the thesis topic and the student's prior knowledge. We recommend discussing and establishing a meeting schedule early in the thesis process to ensure consistent guidance and feedback.

***What happens with the code after the thesis is done?***

There are no strict regulations regarding the code after the thesis is completed. Ideally, the code should be made available in a repository, such as GitHub, but students are free to choose the repository they prefer. They should ensure the code remains accessible in the future. We recommend using public repositories.

***Is there any other place where I can find support regarding my thesis?***

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) provides a range of support services to help students with academic writing, including for Master's theses. You find more information here:

<https://ctl.univie.ac.at/en/services-for-students/towards-graduation/>