

## **EXAMINATION REGULATIONS 3RD SEMESTER (DIPLOMA)**

*(Guidelines for students and examiners)*

### **1. Preliminary Remark**

These regulations describe the general framework and specific requirements on the part of the Master's program for successful completion of the diploma semester. These regulations may be supplemented by further requirements of the specializations.

### **2. Diploma Semester**

The third semester usually marks the completion of the three-semester Master's program. The semester is focused on the completion of the diploma project. Students develop and present an individual master's project with relevant research and design aspects. Students are admitted to the diploma semester if they have previously earned at least 60 ECTS points and have fulfilled the other qualifying criteria of the specialization. After the beginning of the semester, the diploma semester can only be interrupted with a grade of FX or F. The student will then be given a deadline for improvement or will repeat the diploma semester.

### **3. Parts of the thesis**

The requirement for obtaining the title "Master of Arts in Design" is the submission and successful evaluation of the final thesis, which consists of the following elements:

- Thesis Theory (for details see point 11): a research-oriented written work in which the chosen topic area, the methodological procedure as well as the achieved production of knowledge are described in detail and critically reflected.
- Thesis practice (details see point 12): a project work consisting of one or more designed artifacts (e.g. object, product, software, service, publication, poster, book, visualization, illustration, intervention, documentation of an event, etc.), which were created in the development process and/or realized as a final product.
- Mediation (for details see point 13): presentation of the final project in the diploma exhibition, argumentation, discussion and defense in front of the examination jury of the specialization.

### **4. General Regulations**

- The final thesis can be part of a larger research and/or design project or it can deal with a self-defined research and/or design question.
- As a rule, the thesis is submitted alone, but at most in a team of two; in the latter case, the contribution of the two persons involved must be clearly evident and individually evaluable.
- The thesis must be thematically related to the respective specialization and the relevance for the design discipline must be convincingly demonstrated.
- The thesis can be positioned, argued and reflected in relation to the chosen minor profile (A "applied-entrepreneurial"; B "critical-speculative"; C "mediative-reflective")
- With the final thesis, students demonstrate their acquired knowledge, skills and abilities as well as their individual design expertise
- The final paper is mentored by a member of the specialization and evaluated by a corresponding examination jury
- The specialization is responsible for checking the progress of the project and the achievement of the objectives within the given deadlines
- The three required components of the thesis (thesis theory, thesis practice, mediation) must relate directly to each other in terms of content and yet be able to be communicated independently of each other

- All formal and content criteria must be met (see details on pages 4-5)
- All parts of the thesis must be submitted on time
- A declaration of originality must be submitted for the theory thesis

## 5. Examination

The examination of the final thesis is organized by the specializations. Students are required to defend their thesis before an examination jury. The examination jury is formed as follows:

- at least 1-2 lecturers of the specialization
- at least 1-2 external experts

The procedure and the exact date of the examination will be communicated in time by the specialization. The examination jury appointed by the specialization evaluates all parts of the thesis (thesis theory, thesis practice, mediation) taking into account the given evaluation criteria of the study program and the specialization.

## 6. Evaluation Criteria

The following general criteria apply to the evaluation of the thesis, in addition to complying with all formal requirements and the supplementary regulations of the specialization:

### **Thesis Theory:**

- Clarity, originality, and discipline-specific relevance of the addressed research question.
- Independence, appropriateness and stringency of the methodological process
- Scientific quality of the knowledge gained

### **Thesis Practice:**

- Relevance and orientation of the initial situation within a problem formulation
- Independence, appropriateness and stringency in the selection and application of the design and practical working methods and processes.
- Ability to appropriately reflect on the design work on the level of its content
- Quality, innovation and originality of the work as well as its preparation in terms of media and mediation.

### **Mediation:**

- Clarity and stringency in the medial mediation in the context of the exhibition.
- Convincing presentation and argumentation on the occasion of the defense in front of the examination jury.

## 7. Grading

The evaluation of the content of the thesis is done according to the Bologna guidelines (A-F). The grade of the mediation part (exhibition, defense) is included in the grade of the work. Students thus receive two grades; for their written thesis and their design work. For a successful completion master's program, the written thesis and the creative work must be evaluated with at least the grade E. If one of the parts of the thesis is graded FX, it must be improved along the specifications of the specialization by the end of the following semester at the latest. In case of grade F, the corresponding part must be repeated within the following two semesters. The final grade is communicated directly by the specializations. They document the individual performance of the students in the 'MDE Evaluation Sheet' for the head of MA in Design program.

## **8. Diploma Handover**

The Master's diploma is usually handed over to the students on the occasion of the diploma ceremony if the final thesis has been evaluated successfully. In exceptional cases, it will be sent to them by mail a few weeks later.

## **9. Publication & Documentation**

The written thesis is submitted in three copies (see below). Two copies go to the specialization and one copy to the ZHdK archives. The copies are used for the examination and the archive and are not accessible to the students. If the student wishes to have a copy for his or her own further use, he or she must make an additional copy.

All theses will be adequately displayed and documented in abstract form on the Master's program website. In addition, graduates are required to submit their extended project material (relevant sketches, films, visualizations, photos, etc.) to the Master's file server in a systematically organized and timely manner for further use by the specialization, the Master's program, and/or the university communication.

## **10. Rights**

As a rule, the rights to a thesis remain entirely with the ZHdK. However, the Master's program transfers the rights to the graduates free of charge and for an unlimited period of time after the end of the program. A corresponding agreement is signed by the students and the ZHdK before the end of the studies. In any case, the ZHdK reserves the right to publish the theses, to submit them to competitions and exhibitions, to make them available to the press and to use them for its own purposes. In the case of Master's theses with companies or in research contexts, these regulations are to be considered separately.

## **11. Details THESIS THEORY**

For the written thesis, the generally applicable requirements of the Master's program as well as the specific requirements of the specialization apply.

### **Scope**

The scope of the written thesis is between 75,000-150,000 characters (including spaces; excluding text in the appendix). The written work can be freely designed, taking into account the general guidelines. It also includes pictures and illustrations.

### **Content**

The written thesis is closely related to the design work. The written thesis draws critical-reflective conclusions on methods, processes and results of the overall work. It essentially represents an independent, comprehensible and verifiable thesis. The findings obtained are reflected upon and discussed. The written thesis is not a purely chronological documentation of the practical work.

## **Requirements**

The following requirements apply to the production of the written thesis:

- Comprehensibility of content and consistency of writing style.
- Citations, source references and bibliography according to APA guidelines
- Cover page naming the title, author, mentors, and area of specialization
- Abstract and keywords

## **Submission**

The written thesis together with the declaration of originality must be submitted in triplicate to the office of the specialization by the due date. In addition, a digital version as PDF must be deposited on the Master's file server.

## **12. Details THESIS PRACTICE**

The general requirements of the Master's program as well as the specific requirements of the specialization apply to the design work.

### **Content**

The design work involves the concrete realization of a product (among others a design object, publication, concept), a system (among others software, services), or an event (among others a public event). These artefacts may represent the end result and/or be an integral part of an epistemic design process. The accompanying processes, investigations, experiments, illustrations, usage scenarios, and evaluations are to be directly related and presented as well. If the result is worthy of copyright protection, the students must take care of a protection application in consultation with the head of the Master's program prior to the exhibition.

### **Requirements**

The further requirements for the parts of the design work as well as the submission formalities are determined directly by the specializations.

## **13. Details MEDIATION**

The presentation of the final thesis takes place on the occasion of the diploma exhibition, in the context of a defense before the examination jury specific to the specialization.

### **Diploma exhibition**

The final work is exhibited on the occasion of the diploma exhibition in the specialization or subject area. Information on the exhibition concept, the additional deliverables (including material for publication), as well as the detailed procedure will be communicated by the specializations. The mediation of the master project in the diploma exhibition is an integral part of the overall final thesis and is included in the evaluation (see section 'Grading').

### **Submissions**

In summary, the following delivery results, among others, are required by the Master's program for the exhibition or documentation of the thesis (detailed delivery dates will be communicated at the beginning of the semester):

- Three copies of the written thesis (see section 'Publication & Documentation').
- Digital version of the written thesis on the Master's file server
- Abstracts in German and English (750 characters each including spaces; tolerance +/- 10%)
- 3-5 meaningful images (300dpi)

## Defense

The defense of the thesis will take place in front of a specialization specific examination jury (see section 'Examination'). Further details on the requirements and the procedure will be communicated directly by the specializations in compliance with the general examination regulations.

## Appendix

The length of the written thesis is 75,000-150,000 characters (see section 'Scope'). The thesis structure should be based on the following content and outline suggestions.

- **Cover page** with title of thesis, subtitle, author, specialization, year
- **Abstract and keywords**
- **Indexes** (including page references)
  - Contents
  - Figures
  - Tables
  - Appendices
- **Introduction**
  - Introduction into the topic
  - Positioning of the topic/question(s) in design/the design discipline
  - Statement of the relevance of the topic, context and initial situation
  - Statement of the central gaps in knowledge and the definition of the problem, delimitation
  - Formulation of the research question and, derived from it, of the thesis
  - Objectives
- **Research (State of the Art)**
  - State of knowledge on the topic and its position in the discipline
  - Research and analysis of theory and practice (publications, examples, references, products, materials, visualizations, etc.)
  - Overview, organization and qualification of the research derivation/deepening of the findings Summary of the research
- **Methodical procedure**
  - Explanation of the research objective
  - Presentation and argumentation of the methodical approach to the inquiry
  - Presentation with the inclusion of creative processes, methods, experiments
  - Preparation of the results and explanation of the central findings
  - Use of methods and critique of methods
  - Summary of the inquiry
- **Inquiry findings and transfer**
- Description/explanation of the resulting **design or conceptual work**
- Summary of the **findings**
- **Discussion and reflection**
- **Summary and outlook**
- **Appendix:** list of supplements (e.g., evaluation tables, link lists, interview documentation, further materials)
- **Bibliography** (including online sources)