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A protocol for the timely completion of a BA or MA thesis

You have asked me to supervise your thesis. I will do my best to guide you--as necessary--in your tasks of thinking, researching, writing, revising, and submitting your thesis. You will be responsible for complying with all requirements issued by the department or the Dean's office. To make our cooperation as effective and successful as possible, I'd like to explain my preferred methods of working with students, backwards in chronological order from the anticipated moment of submission.

- The **final step** in the writing process is the submission of your printed and bound thesis either to the departmental secretary (BA) or the Dean's office (MA). **I must pre-approve this submission.**
- I will approve your submission after I have seen and corrected your **final draft** and **we have met** to discuss the last adjustments and corrections that may be necessary.
- The **final draft** should normally constitute **the second time** that I see your work. The version you show to me at that time should be final **according to your judgment**. It should incorporate all the suggestions I have offered on your **first draft** and any corrections and improvements you have decided on your own.
- If you turn in a thesis without giving me the opportunity to perform this final check, you run the risk that the thesis will not be accepted and that your first attempt will be designated a failure. If you turn in a thesis that I have **never** seen before or that fails to respond to my suggestions, you are virtually guaranteed to fail.
- Thinking backwards from this point, our most important point of interaction will be **the first draft**. Ideally, I will see **portions** of the draft as you complete them – these can be "chapters" or other segments in progress. A draft, whether first or final, is never a "rough draft." It is a fully realized document, in complete sentences (not outlines), grammatically and stylistically polished and effective (though amenable to improvement), and fully documented (with in-text citations, works cited, etc.). Please submit such segments **in electronic form** (as WORD attachments to an email) and give me sufficient time (at least two weeks) to read segments of approx. 15 to 30 pages (i.e., a partial or complete BA thesis, or a half or a third of an MA thesis). I will make stylistic and grammatical

corrections, offer commentary on the argument, and make suggestions (in some cases, demands) for improvement. As soon as you have received and absorbed my comments, come to my office hour for a conversation. Ideally, our conversation about the first draft should be the **only major necessary point of intense consultation. Additional conversations may be required or optional.**

The BA thesis should normally be completed over the course of one semester (it is designed as a class and you register for it in myunifr.ch as if it were a class); however, the BA thesis regulations allow you to extend the writing period beyond one semester without penalty, the only consequence being that the validation is moved to the next date.

An MA thesis may be completed at any time throughout the academic year. **There is an additional step involved:** Once it is submitted to the Dean's office (see above), I am required to evaluate it within six weeks and we must have a soutenance (oral defense) within two additional weeks. Note, however, that the six-to-eight week "soutenance"-clock **does not run during the summer holidays as announced by the Dean's office.**

<https://www.unifr.ch/lettres/fr/etudes/cours-et-examens/travail-de-master/>

We can mutually agree to shorten the evaluation period that elapses between submission and defense. In order to maintain clear expectations, please **inform me about your calendar plans, graduation goals, etc.** When you start the thesis, discuss your anticipated submission date with me. Counting backwards from there, we will establish appropriate deadlines for first drafts, final drafts, and – for MA theses – time that needs to elapse before the "soutenance" as well as time for obtaining the additional jury member(s). **The Dean's office will not allow an MA defense to go forward unless all your programs of study have been validated.**

My preferred channels of communication are (1) email and (2) office hour consultations.

The Rector's office has established policies governing the submission of written work in **both** paper and electronic versions. Please observe these rules for the **final** submission of your work