

Master's Thesis Process: COMBINED

Ohio-Leipzig Double Degree, Information for All Students

Last updated: 15 January 2019 by Kate Hiller

This document is to be used as a reference point, and is not comprehensive.

General remarks:

You are seeking master's degrees from two different universities in two different countries, who have different requirements and regulations when it comes to the final master's thesis (*Masterarbeit*). Please always bear in mind that while this program offers you extraordinary chances and benefits, your participation also comes along with the responsibility to stay on top of your work, be familiar with the regulations and processes of each institution, and to be in regular communication with your advisors and the Program Coordinator.

This document seeks to lay out a combined chronology of many of the requirements and final thesis processes for the two institutions from which you are seeking your degrees. Making sure you meet the correct deadlines, fill out the proper forms, contact the necessary departments, etc. is solely your responsibility. Please also note that while Ohio University offers both a "readings" and "professional project" option for the thesis, neither of these applies to you as Universität Leipzig only accepts an academic thesis.

Please keep in mind that this document contains only information regarding the master's thesis process, not the graduation process as a whole. Please see specifically Ohio University's requirements for the graduation application, etc. on the [Registrar's website](#). All students are required to follow these deadlines and processes for graduation from Ohio University, as OU's deadlines and time constraints (and subsequent fees) are stricter than those at Leipzig University. You will also need to make sure that your course credits are transferred to the partner institution following your exchange semester.

General procedures:

1. *Develop a Topic*

One of the first steps in the master's thesis process is coming up with a topic. By

the end of your second semester (prior to your exchange), you should have a pretty good idea of the direction you want your research to take, and an idea for 1-2 potential committee members. Though you won't know the professors at the partner institution yet, it is important to get a head start on the idea process as your exchange semester will be rather busy.

2. *Form a Committee*

The formation of a thesis committee is important and can be challenging, as you will need members from both Universität Leipzig and Ohio University.

Committees typically consist of three members: a chair plus two additional members. At least one of the committee members must come from the partner institution, and one from your home university (so, one from Ohio and one from Leipzig). The committee chair (Erstbetreuer) must be a professor in either the journalism department at OU or the Institut für Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft at LU. It is recommended that you first select a committee chair, then build the committee from there. Make sure to get in touch with potential committee members, explain your project idea and the process, and get confirmation from them if they are willing to serve on your committee. Since the thesis defense is different from the typical master's thesis process at LU but is required for this program, providing some information on this process will be beneficial for your Leipzig committee member(s), especially if s/he/they haven't served on this type of committee before.

3. *Proposal Defense*

Once you have selected a topic, asked professors to be part of your committee and written a proposal (usually a 12-15 page exposé, detailing your choice of topic, the literature you have already found, your proposed methodology, and why this project is relevant), you will need to defend the proposal per Ohio University requirements. Please consult with your Ohio University committee member(s), and especially your committee chair, for questions regarding the proposal itself and the OU process. The proposal defense will also give you some insight as to what the final master's thesis defense may be like. The proposal defense, like the final master's thesis defense, must be scheduled in advance and the document turned in two weeks prior to the defense. A Skype call should be arranged in order to include all committee members from both institutions. Ohio University's Thesis and Dissertation (TAD) Services have a [video explainer](#) that you can watch about this process. Paperwork for both institutions will need to be signed at this time. Only after a successful proposal

defense can you begin your thesis; work completed prior to this time may be rejected.

4. *After the Proposal Defense*

A form for **Ohio University** (ideally signed at the defense or just after if you need to email PDFs back and forth) says that you have passed the proposal defense and that you may begin writing your master's thesis. This paper must be signed by you and all committee members and given to the Graduate Director of the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism (Dr. Aimee Edmondson, edmondso@ohio.edu) to be placed in your file.

A form for **Universität Leipzig**, called an *Antrag Masterarbeit*, will allow you to register your master's thesis with the *Prüfungsamt* at the Institut für Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft (KMW). This must be signed by you and your committee members then sent to Ms. Saskia Bille (saskia.bille@uni-leipzig.de) at the Prüfungsamt. You have 23 weeks from the time you send this document to Ms. Bille to complete your thesis, final defense, all edits, and formatting changes as required by Ohio University TAD Services.

5. *Write Your Thesis*

It is recommended to maintain regular contact with your advisor and committee members as you work to complete the work you proposed and the ideas you defended. Make sure to stay on top of deadlines and be very conscious of your time and the different requirements from the two institutions:

Be advised that while Ohio University requires a minimum of 60 days between the proposal defense and when the final thesis is turned in (two weeks prior to defense), Universität Leipzig allows you a maximum of 23 weeks (about 5 months) between registering the thesis with the Prüfungsamt and turning in the final version (with all changes and formatting fixes). This may seem like a long but reasonable amount of time, but it goes by quickly.

Finalizing your thesis in this limited time frame is part of the fundamental performance criteria in the German higher education system and failure to do so will be problematic. The Ohio University TAD deadlines for formatting and completion of your master's thesis are inflexible, and it is important to stay on top of all deadlines and understand that some of these processes will take longer than you expect, especially when working with professors from institutes in different time zones.

If timely completion (within 23 weeks, including all finalization processes at OU) appears doubtful or uncertain to you, you have the possibility to register your thesis with Universität Leipzig later after your proposal defense. In this case, please keep close contact with Program Coordinator Rosanna Planer and inform her as soon as possible if this seems to be your case.

6. *The Thesis Defense*

When you turn in your master's thesis to your committee after receiving approval from your chair, you should plan the date and time of your defense. This is an oral defense, and by Ohio University rules it is open to the public. As you cannot be in two places at the same time and cannot ask professors to fly across the Atlantic for a defense, it is possible to have part of your committee join via video conference. *The defense must be scheduled for at least two weeks from the time of giving this iteration of the thesis to your committee.*

According to the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism's website, "During the oral defense, which typically lasts between 60 and 90 minutes, the student will be asked to defend the thesis, project, or readings critiques by answering questions. If one member other than the chair cannot attend, s/he must present comments in writing or, better yet, through a teleconferencing call at the time of the defense. Then, the student will be asked to leave the room, and the committee will vote to take one of three actions: accept, accept with major or minor changes, or reject and require another oral after major revisions or additions have been made. The student will be recalled and told of the committee's decision."

Most theses pass with changes, meaning you will need to make a few non-formatting changes and receive approval from (at least) your chair prior to submitting the document for formatting approval with Ohio University's TAD Services. There is another form that must be signed by all of your committee members at this defense as well. Your Ohio University committee member should be familiar with the forms and this side of the process, but it is up to you to provide the necessary paperwork. Again, this process must be completed within the 23 weeks allotted by Universität Leipzig for writing the thesis.

7. *TAD Services – Formatting*

When you've reached this step, you're almost done! After the content, structure, etc. of your master's thesis has been approved by your committee, you will be

allowed to send your document to TAD Services, who will review it for formatting inconsistencies (more in terms of margins, proper use of footnotes, etc. than actually checking your citations – that’s your job). In order to make this process go smoother, *before you start writing*, [download the correct TAD template](#) (called “Scripps College of Communication - Ohio/Leipzig”) in which to write your document. Ohio University provides the latest version of Microsoft Word to students for free, so you should have no problem minimizing the formatting changes you’ll have to make at the end. (This link also has some of the Ohio University forms you will need throughout the process.)

8. *The Final Step*

Once your thesis has been approved by TAD Services and you follow all of their instructions for uploading the document to OhioLink, etc., you will receive confirmation of completion. **Only then can you turn in your thesis with Universität Leipzig, hence the previous statements regarding the time frame in which this process should be completed.** It is very important that these all of these deadlines are met accordingly.

Once your final thesis has been successfully defended, your committee must sign the template [Gutachten GMC Vorlage Deutsch und Englisch](#). This form will also need to be signed and sent to Ms. Bille at the Prüfungsamt. This is in addition to the paperwork from Ohio University outlined on the TAD Services website, linked above.

After all of the necessary changes from your committee (content-wise) and those from TAD Services (style- and format-wise) have been completed, one version of your thesis needs to be **printed, bound, and handed in at the Prüfungsamt in hard copy**. The final document can be given in person or can be mailed to:

*Prüfungsamt Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft
Frau Saskia Bille
Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum (GWZ)
Beethovenstraße 15
Haus 5, Erdgeschoss, Zimmer 0501
04107 Leipzig
Germany*

As soon as the Prüfungsamt has received both the Gutachten document as well as the hard copy of your thesis, and all courses of the degree are completed,

your final certificate will be printed. Once all of the paperwork is completed, you can pick up your diploma (*Zeugnis*) personally or have it sent to an address of your choice via post.

Again, please note that the finalization process must be complete within this 23-week period, including meeting all of Ohio's TAD deadlines, etc. as your committee will not sign off on the final thesis and the necessary documents until the OU process is complete. Five months may sound like a long time right now, but it goes by very quickly when you're working to complete your thesis, and especially when dealing with the final formatting specifications from TAD Services at Ohio University.

Once both master's degrees have officially been conferred, an additional certificate indicating that both degrees have been completed within the binational double-degree program Global Mass Communication/Journalism at Leipzig University and Ohio University will be produced and distributed via mail as well.

Useful links:

- Ohio University TAD Services: <https://www.ohio.edu/graduate/etd>
- Ohio University Scripps E.W. Scripps School of Journalism's Thesis Information (scroll down): <http://scrippsjschool.org/masters/>
- Ohio University graduation information: <https://www.ohio.edu/registrar/grd.cfm>
- Universität Leipzig Prüfungsamt IfKMW: <http://www.kmw.uni-leipzig.de/studium/service/pruefungsamt.html>