

Guidelines for B.Sc. and M.Sc. Theses

Schuck Lab · Cognitive Neuroscience · Universität Hamburg

We are excited to have you write your thesis with us. This document covers the key steps, requirements, and expectations. Read it before you start and keep it handy. Everything here supplements — but does not replace — the official regulations of the Prüfungsbüro. When in doubt, ask your supervisor.

1. Before You Start

Before any official steps, contact a potential supervisor in the lab — ideally at least one semester before you plan to begin. We will discuss potential topics and match you with a primary supervisor. Topics are usually tied to ongoing research projects, so feasibility depends on what is running at the time.

Exposé and timeline (both B.Sc. and M.Sc.)

Once you have agreed on a topic with your supervisor, write a short exposé. This is an internal lab tool, not a university requirement. Keep it brief: 2–4 pages. It should cover:

- Research question and motivation
- Key theoretical background and hypotheses
- Study design and planned analysis
- A rough timeline from start to submission

Your supervisor will read it and give brief feedback. The goal is to catch problems early and give both sides a shared reference point — not to create extra work. After the exposé you move to formal registration.

2. Key Steps and Timeline

Doing a thesis with us involves a few steps that have to be done before and in parallel to your actual work. Below is an overview / checklist. Work on your thesis happens between steps 3 and 7.

Before you start:

- ① **Contact supervisor and agree on topic** (one semester before you plan to start)
- ② **Write exposé and agree on a timeline** (2–4 pages; get brief feedback from supervisor)

Once you have started

- ③ **Register Abschlusskolloquium in STiNE** (deadline mid March for summer term)
- ④ **Book your presentation slot in Abschlusskolloquium** (early in the semester; slots fill up)
- ⑤ **Register thesis with Prüfungsbüro** (anytime during the Abschlussemester, officially starts your 3- or 6-month work period, see below)
- ⑥ **Present in Abschlusskolloquium** (typically: B.Sc.: 20 min + 10 min Q&A / M.Sc.: 30+ 15 min)
- ⑦ **Submit thesis** (3/6 months after registering the thesis [step 5] for B.Sc./ M.Sc.)

Maximum allowed timeframes

Registering for the Kolloquium in STiNE and registering the thesis with the Prüfungsbüro are two separate steps. You first must register in Stine for the Abschlusskolloquium, and once done, you must register your thesis within that same semester (so there is a corridor of about 6 months to do it). After you have registered the thesis, you must hand it in within 3 months if you are doing a Bsc, and 6 months if you are doing a Msc. This means students who register the Kolloquium at the start of the semester and then wait until the last day to register the thesis can stretch the overall period to roughly 9 months (B.Sc.) or 12 months (M.Sc.):

	STiNE → thesis registration	Thesis registration → submission	Max total
B.Sc.	Up to ~6 months (rest of semester)	3 months	~9 months
M.Sc.	Up to ~6 months (rest of semester)	6 months	~12 months

Do not plan to use this maximum. The extended window exists for students who need time to set up studies or wait for data. Build your timeline from the exposé outward, and register the thesis as soon as the project is ready to start.

Presentation in the Abschlusskolloquium

As part of the Abschlusskolloquium, you are required to give a talk presenting your thesis work. Talk times are:

- B.Sc.: 20 minutes presentation + 10 minutes Q&A
- M.Sc.: 30 minutes presentation + 15 minutes Q&A

We schedule multiple presentations across the semester. Contact your supervisor at the very start of the semester to book your slot — do not wait until the work is finished. The talk can be given before or after submission, but should reflect completed or near-completed work.

3. Doing the Work

Communication and time management

You are responsible for your own timeline. Set a target submission date and communicate it early; check in regularly; flag problems as soon as they arise. If data collection takes longer than expected, say so and we will aim to adjust the scope. Plan in feedback loops: do not assume you can submit a section and get same-day comments.

Agree on a regular meeting cadence with your supervisor at the start. Come prepared and share written progress when you ask for feedback.

Data and research integrity

All data collected in the context of the thesis belongs to the lab. You must:

- Not store research data on personal cloud services (Dropbox, Google Drive, iCloud, etc.)
- Back up data regularly to a lab-managed server or drive
- Delete all research data from personal devices upon completion of the project

- Hand over the complete dataset, code, and materials to your supervisor in a clean and well-documented form
- Not share or publish data without explicit written agreement from your supervisor

Long-term data retention (minimum 10 years) is the lab's responsibility — but a thorough handover is essential for us to meet that obligation.

If your study involves human participants, check early whether an ethics application is needed. We will help with this.

4. Writing and Formatting

General

Theses in this lab are written as scientific journal articles, not as coursework essays. Think tight, precise, and structured. Prioritize clarity over length. In most cases the thesis will involve empirical research or simulations. Literature reviews are possible but only in exceptional cases and if explicitly agreed upon with your supervisor.

- Language: English strongly preferred
- Length: typically 15–20 pages for B.Sc., ~30 pages for M.Sc. (main text); hard maximum 50 pages main text, excluding cover page, declaration, references, and appendices
- Font: 12 pt, double-spaced
- Citation and formatting style: APA 7th edition throughout
- Structure: follow standard journal article sections (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion)
- Figures and tables inline in the text, not at the end

Scientific quality

Key criteria when your thesis is assessed:

- Quality of the research question and hypotheses
- Appropriateness of study design and materials
- Execution of data collection or simulation
- Correctness and clarity of statistical analysis and reporting
- Quality of figures: clear, publication-ready, labeled correctly
- Interpretation and discussion of results
- Adherence to APA formatting standards

Statistical reporting

Report all statistics as you would in a journal submission: include test statistics, degrees of freedom, p-values, and effect sizes. Figures should convey the key result clearly, meaning you should use informative axes, minimize clutter, and always show variability (error bars, distributions). Prefer violin or box plots over bar charts where the distribution matters. Label axes and legends fully.

Tools and AI use

We recommend Zotero for reference management. For language polishing in English, DeepL and Grammarly are fine to use. Use of AI writing tools must be disclosed explicitly in the methods section, following the lab's [AI usage policy](#). The university also has its own regulations: [UHH AI guidelines \(PDF\)](#). A signed declaration on AI use (Erklärung zur Verwendung von KI) is required as part of your submission.

5. Submission

Submit your thesis as a single PDF via the Prüfungsbüro contact form (digital only). At the same time, send the following to your supervisor:

- The thesis PDF
- All data files: raw data, processed data, and analysis code (well-commented scripts)
- Any study materials (questionnaires, stimuli, task code, etc.) as agreed

Also include a signed declaration of academic integrity (eidesstattliche Erklärung) and the signed AI use declaration. Templates are on the Prüfungsbüro website.

Do not submit data to any external platform or repository without prior written agreement.

6. Useful Links

- Prüfungsbüro thesis page: [abschlusspruefungen.html](https://www.schucklab.de/abschlusspruefungen.html)
- Prüfungsbüro FAQ: [faq.html](https://www.schucklab.de/faq.html)
- Lab AI policy: schucklab.gitlab.io/ai-policy.html
- UHH AI regulations: [regelungen-zum-umgang-mit-generativer-ki-pb.pdf](https://www.uhh.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Regelungen_zum_Umgang_mit_generativer_KI.pdf)