



Directive of the Rectorate of
Graz University of Technology on the
Supervision of Academic Papers and Theses
Written in University-Business Cooperation

RL 94000 ABAU 140-01

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	Created	Audited	Approved
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to define the supervision of (academic) papers or theses written by students at Graz University of Technology in cooperation with and on behalf of businesses as well as the associated supervision process.

2. Scope of Application

This directive applies to Graz University of Technology as a whole.
The validity period of this directive is indefinite.

3. Addressees

All academic and non-academic staff members of Graz University of Technology.

4. Mutual Relationships

If a TU Graz organisational unit (OU) fails to comply with the stated regulations, this OU will be internally liable to the Rectorate for all damages caused thereby.

5. Other Applicable Documents

- Federal Act on the Organisation of Universities and their Studies (Universities Act 2002, UG), Federal Law Gazette (BGBl.) I no. 120/2002 as amended.
- Statutes of Graz University of Technology as amended.

6. Process Responsibility

Member of the Rectorate for Academic Affairs (VRRL)

7. Directive

7.1. Preamble

First and foremost, academic and scientific papers and papers written as part of courses are supervised that can be assigned to a research area at an institute of TU Graz as part of research-led teaching. However, sometimes the question or problem at the heart of an (academic) paper is not only of concern to an institute and its research interests and academic pursuits, but also to a business. In such cases, the business can directly benefit from the (academic) answer to the question or solution to the problem. The business benefits from the knowledge generated by the (academic) paper, and the institute should be compensated accordingly for the additional effort or benefit generated by this knowledge transfer. Regardless of this, the cooperation between university and business with regard to (academic) papers or theses generates a valuable link between academia and industry, resulting in application-oriented research and solutions to current practical problems.

7.2. Scope of Application

This directive applies to the supervision of bachelor's theses and other papers written as part of courses, as well as to the supervision of master's theses written in university-business cooperation.

7.3. Legal Basis and Definitions

7.3.1. Conducting scientific work in accordance with § 27 (1) 3 of the Universities Act 2002 (UG)

In accordance with § 27 (1) 3 UG, every head of an organisational unit (i.e. an institute) is authorised to raise funds for conducting scientific work and for investigations and findings on behalf of third parties in the name of the university and in connection with its tasks, and to conclude related contracts, insofar as they are in the service of academia and scientific research.

7.3.2. Bachelor's theses and other papers written as part of courses

- Bachelor's theses:
Bachelor's theses are independently prepared papers forming part of bachelor's degree programmes which must be written or fulfilled in connection with courses (§ 51 (2) 7 UG).
- Other papers written as part of courses:
Smaller-scale research is conducted as part of projects or seminar projects. These courses are concluded with a written paper (§ 4 (1) 5 and (8) of the Excerpt of Statutes: Legal Regulations for Academic Affairs of TU Graz).

7.3.3. Master's theses

Master's theses are academic theses forming part of master's degree programmes that serve to demonstrate a student's ability to achieve adequate standards of content and methodology when independently addressing scientific topics (§ 51 (2) 8 UG).

The scope of a master's thesis must be determined in such a way that its completion can be reasonably and feasibly accomplished by a student within a period of six months (§ 81 (2) UG).

7.3.4. Duty of publication

Academic papers and theses are subject to a duty of publication in accordance with § 86 (1) UG. Any blocking (restriction or exclusion of use) of the work must be explicitly requested by the student. The student must credibly demonstrate that publication of the paper or thesis would put important legal or economic interests of the **student** at risk. The responsible Dean of Studies must then decide on the student's application for restriction of use.

Restricted work according to § 86 (4) UG is not published for the duration of the exclusion of use. The maximum duration of exclusion of use of academic papers or theses is five years (§ 86 (4) UG). The restriction of use is initially imposed for two years and can be extended once for a maximum of three years if an application in this regard is submitted in due time before expiry of the first exclusion period and the conditions pursuant to § 86 (4) UG still exist (§ 29 (6) of the Excerpt of Statutes: Legal Regulations for Academic Affairs of TU Graz).¹

7.4. Framework Conditions

When writing (academic) papers or theses in university-business cooperation, the following general framework conditions must be observed:

The implementation of (academic) work in university-business cooperation must be agreed **in advance** with the responsible supervisor at TU Graz. To do this, the business turns to either an institute at TU Graz with a business-relevant research project or directly to a scientist at TU Graz who is authorised to supervise academic papers or theses in order to discuss whether the desired subject area can be addressed and a suitable candidate can be found. The process can also be such that students first look for a potential supervisor at TU Graz in the desired subject area in order to determine the possibility of academic work in university-business cooperation.

It should be noted that the topic of the (academic) paper must not be exclusively specified by the business, but rather must be agreed upon in mutual discussion with the institute. The university supervisor and the student must agree on the specifics of the work to be carried out and supervision of the academic paper or thesis.

A completed paper or project may not be submitted for assessment only after completion and without any input from the institute. This is the only way to ensure that the requirements for academic papers or theses are met and for TU Graz to ensure compliance with good scientific and academic practice. This means that businesses cannot simply approach students independently with offers for (paid) bachelor's or master's theses or give the impression that businesses can assign topics for an academic paper or thesis themselves. Supervision of an academic paper or thesis exclusively by a contact person in the business is also not sufficient.

The subject of the master's thesis must be reported to the Dean's Office **before** work on the academic paper or thesis begins. The supervisor of the thesis must be named and approved by the responsible Dean of Studies.

¹ However, it is considered in the best interest and to the benefit of both academia and society that academic papers or theses are freely accessible.

As soon as a student suitable for working on the task has been found or the subject of the academic paper or thesis has been approved, the head of the supervising institute concludes a contract on behalf of TU Graz with the business for the performance of academic work in accordance with § 27 (1) 3 of the Universities Act 2002 (UG), unless such a contract has already been concluded in advance as part of a research project (Austrian Research Promotion Agency or EU project, etc.). In this context, it must also be clarified how the supervising institute will be financially compensated (contract fee). Contract templates are provided by TU Graz on the TU4U and should be used for this purpose.

7.5. Financial Compensation of the Supervising Institute

As part of a degree programme, the supervision of an academic paper or thesis in purely academic terms or supervision within the framework of a course in the sense of an examination is free of charge.

The resources of TU Graz can be used as part of an academic paper or thesis as far as possible.

When writing an (academic) paper in collaboration with a business, additional services must be contractually agreed in advance. The supervising institute is entitled to obtain remuneration from the participating business for supervision of the (academic) paper. The contract must define the subject area and type of supervision, as well as in particular the rights to the work, confidentiality and monetary compensation. If financial compensation is provided, it must be specified what services the supervising institute is to provide. These additional services must go beyond the usual level of supervision.

Typically, the following services are provided when supervising (academic) papers or theses in university-business cooperation:

- Knowledge transfer and consulting services from the institute to the business.
- Publication of the subject of the (academic) paper, selection and placement of suitable candidates (recruiting).
- Initial meeting(s) at the business, possibly meetings until project goals and task are defined.
- Project planning in agreement with the business and the student.
- Meetings and acceptance of interim reports with presentations at the business.
- Consideration of aspects regarding practical, business-relevant implementation.
- Final presentation usually at the business together with the contact person and the TU Graz supervisor and in front of a larger audience, with discussion and argumentation of the approach and results.
- Additionally, the business may be asked to bear the costs for laboratory or testing equipment on a case-by-case basis, as well as costs for additional software licenses and travel. Such reimbursement must in any case be considered separately.

For this additional effort, a flat-rate fee is provided for the institute, the amount of which is to be contractually agreed in advance.

The payment of the student is to be agreed and detailed separately.²

² TU Graz prefers the student to be employed at the institute. If this is not possible, the business must ensure that the student is adequately remunerated for their work. In such a case, the business itself must ensure that the student grants the business the appropriate rights and permissions to use works, inventions and patents.