

# **Guideline**

# **Transfer Project**

As of: 2025, May 6



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## List of abbreviations

MT	Master Thesis
PSW	Project Study Work
SW	Study Work

# 1 The Transfer Project

This guideline is intended to serve as a guide for students on their way to successfully completing their studies at Steinbeis University – Schools of Next Practices (hereinafter: S-Next). Studying at S-Next is designed for students to continuously and systematically apply the knowledge they have acquired from seminars and INSIDERS to their companies and their industries in order to ensure the highest possible practical transfer. The aim of the Transfer Project is to use a multi-stage process to identify concrete problems or challenges in one's own real corporate world and to develop solutions for them using scientific methods. In this way, in addition to consolidating knowledge, a variety of skills such as analytical and critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills and self-organization are acquired, which offer added value for one's own career. The Transfer Project thus forms the core of the studies at S-Next and is concluded with the successful defense of the Thesis. It usually consists of three papers (two papers for MBA programs and one-year programs):

- Projekt Study Work (PSW)
- Study Work (SW) (not in the MBA and one-year study programs)
- Master Thesis (MT)

The three independent steps (two in certain degree programs) document the course of the Transfer Project at S-Next. Each project paper encourages the students to take steps that build on each other in the Transfer Project. In the course of the work, students document that they are able to apply and implement the content of their studies within the Transfer Project (in the company, in the industry, etc.). Applied research is created by combining specific problems from the corporate world with the scientific world. Therefore, the individual project papers are based on the basic principles of scientific work, so that an objective and systematic approach using recognized research methods is required. Furthermore, all sources of information used must be listed both in the text and in the list of sources in order to avoid plagiarism. Students can find the "Guideline Scientific Work" in the OnlineCampus. In order to meet the scientific requirements, we recommend that all students – unless there is an obligation to do so anyway – participate in the seminars offered for scientific work or use the associated INSIDER.

In the following chapters, the elements of a Transfer Project are first discussed, i.e. the Project Study Work (Chapter 2), the Study Work (Chapter 3), the Thesis (Chapter 4) and

its defense (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 contains recommendations for the timing of the Transfer Project from the beginning of the studies. Subsequently, the processes of project coaching for Transfer Projects are discussed (Chapter 7). The concluding chapter 8 explains the confidentiality of all scientific papers submitted to S-Next.

## 2 Project Study Work (PSW)

The PSW marks the entry into the Transfer Project and is intended to provide all participants (student, university, supervisor, project sponsor, if applicable) with orientation and initial planning for the Transfer Project and its course. The students focus on the following aspects:

- The challenge/problem/research interest as the starting point of the Transfer Project
- The leading research question and any sub-questions to be answered in the final Thesis. These questions can also be changed in the further course of the Transfer Project, e.g. after feedback from the project coach or if initial research results make this seem useful.
- Overview of theoretical approaches that can be used in the course of the Transfer Project.
- First discussion of possible scientific methods that could be used in the Transfer Project.

A mandatory component of the PSW is an ungraded presentation of the research project in an online Group Project Session (GPS) even before the PSW is submitted. During the GPS, S-Next employees and other students will be present to give the presenters constructive feedback on the ideas of the Transfer Project so far. In addition to the mandatory presentation, students are therefore recommended to participate in a GPS at least once as a listener or discussant in order to learn from other students, to question their own approach and to be able to incorporate information into the PSW. A PowerPoint template for the Group Project Session is stored in the OnlineCampus. The use of the template is not mandatory, but the bullet points of the template should be dealt with in the presentation in any case.

Further information on the written elaboration of the PSW can be found in the Word template for the PSW in the OnlineCampus. The chapters in this template provide an insight into the Transfer Project and its planning. The following is the content structure of a PSW:

1. The problem / the Challenge
2. The research question of the Thesis
3. The scientific theories
4. The scientific methods

Table 1 describes the formal requirements for PSW.

	<b>Project Study Work (PSW)</b>
<b>Size</b>	15 Pages (for chapter 1 to 4) + Presentation
<b>Tolerance for size</b>	Deviation up to +/- 33 % without point deductions Deviation from +/- 33 % failed
<b>Format</b>	Word template for the PSW and PowerPoint template for the PSW presentation in the OnlineCampus
<b>ECTS-Points</b>	5 CP
<b>Registration</b>	To start the Transfer Project, it must be registered via the OnlineCampus. Students are then assigned a project coach. The PSW itself then does not have to be registered separately again.
<b>Processing time</b>	No deadline; Recommendation: Submit the PSW approx. six months after the start of the studies
<b>Form of submission</b>	As PDF, File name: Last Name-First Name_PSW
<b>Method of submission</b>	Digital submission management in the OnlineCampus

Source: Own work.

**Tab 1: Formal requirements for the PSW**

In order to be able to start the project Study Work and to be able to present its interim results in a Group Project Session before its finalization, contact must be made with a project coach. The first formal step to start a Transfer Project is therefore to register a Transfer Project via the OnlineCampus. This is because this is a prerequisite for obtaining a project coach with whom the Transfer Project is coordinated.

### 3 Study Work (SW)

A Study Work is part of the Transfer Project in MSC Business Management and MA Business and Organizational Psychology.<sup>1</sup> Here it serves to clarify the theoretical foundations of the Thesis or the Transfer Project. Questions regarding the research methods of the Thesis will only be addressed in exceptional cases in the Study Work. The central task of the Study Work is literature research in preparation for the Thesis. A research question must also be formulated for the Study Work and named in the introduction. Since a theoretical orientation is given for the Study Work, the formulation of the research question is also more predetermined than in the Thesis. The research question of a Study Work is typically formulated as follows:

- Which theories and models from the field of ABC. can help to answer the research question of the Thesis?

Only in exceptional cases can this research question be supplemented (not replaced) by a second research question to be answered in the Study Work

- Which empirical methods can help to answer the research question of the Thesis?

Since the Thesis must also contain a theoretical part, a division of the theories and models considered can be made between the Study Work and the Thesis. Alternatively, theories and models that were discussed in the Study Work also be further deepened in the Thesis where this is useful and helpful.

If appropriate, the Study Work may also include a scientific methodological part in addition to a theoretical consideration. For example, the literature research can lead to the development of an interview guide or a questionnaire – but not already in the conduct of interviews or the collection of data with questionnaires.

For the Study Work, no structure is specified by S-Next. Depending on the research question (or research questions), a suitable structure must therefore be created that serves to answer the research question(s).

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<sup>1</sup> It is not part of the Transfer Project in the MBA program and the 1-year Master's programs.

The Study Work is therefore to be understood as a work that contributes to answering the leading research question of the following Thesis with the help of a literature search and, if necessary, methodological considerations. The insights gained in the Study Work should and must be summarized at the end of individual main chapters or at the end of the Study Work. This summary is to be included in the Thesis as a separate chapter. Since this achievement has already been assessed in the Study Work, it is not included in the evaluation of the Thesis and is not counted towards the required scope of the Thesis. More detailed information on how to integrate the findings of your Study Work into your Thesis can be found in Chapter 6 of this manual.

Table 2 contains the formal requirements for the Study Work.

	<b>Study Work (SW)</b>
<b>Size</b>	30 pages (from introduction to beginning bibliography)
<b>Tolerance for size</b>	Deviation up to +/- 10% without point deductions Deviation from +/- 20% failed
<b>Format</b>	Word template in the OnlineCampus
<b>ECTS-Points</b>	5 CP
<b>Registration</b>	Via the OnlineCampus
<b>Processing time</b>	3 months
<b>Form of submission</b>	As PDF, File name: Last Name-First Name_Study Work
<b>Method of submission</b>	Digital submission management in the OnlineCampus

Source: Own work.

**Tab 2: Formal requirements for the Study Work**

In the OnlineCampus you will find a Word template for the Study Work with various tips on the typical elements of a literature review. We recommend that you read these instructions for the first time at the beginning of the Transfer Project, i.e. before the PSW is created.

## 4 Master Thesis (MT)

The Thesis is an application-oriented scientific research paper in which the knowledge and skills acquired during the course of study are applied to a project from the student's professional environment.

Table 3 contains the most important formal requirements for the Master Thesis.

	<b>Master Thesis in</b>	
	<b>MBA und MA 60 CP</b>	<b>MSC und MA 90 CP</b>
<b>Size</b>	60 Pages (from introduction to beginning bibliography) + Defense	80 Pages (from introduction to beginning bibliography) + Defense
<b>Tolerance for size</b>	Deviation up to +/- 10% without point deductions Deviation from +/- 20% failed	
<b>Summary</b>	5 pages summary as a separate PDF document	
<b>Format</b>	Word template in the OnlineCampus	
<b>ECTS-Points</b>	15 CP	20 CP
<b>Registration</b>	Via the OnlineCampus	
<b>Processing time</b>	4 month	6 month
<b>Form of submission</b>	As PDF, File name: Last Name-First Name_Master-Thesis	
<b>Method of submission</b>	Digital submission management in the OnlineCampus If an upload is not possible for larger attachments, the Thesis including the attachments can be sent to <a href="mailto:examination@steinbeis-next.de">examination@steinbeis-next.de</a> by email	

Source: Own work.

**Tab 3: Formal requirements for the Master Thesis**

There are no strict guidelines for the structure of the Master Thesis. However, the current scientific conventions should be observed. As a rule, the following chapters can be found in a Thesis:

- Introduction
- Results of the Study Work (if available)
- Additional theoretical background<sup>2</sup>
- Methodology
- Collection of data
- Analysis of the data incl. discussion
- Results: answer to th research question / guide for the addressee of the Thesis
- Limitations
- Potential for generalization
- Conclusion

Together with the Master Thesis, a 3 to 5-page summary of the Thesis in the language of the Thesis must be submitted in electronic form by the deadline. This separate summary is mandatory but is not included in the evaluation. It can be created without citation from the elements of the introduction and the conclusion of the Thesis. The separate summary does not require any indexes or references.

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<sup>2</sup> Students sometimes ask whether the literature research is not completed with the Study Work, so that a further examination of literature and theory in the Thesis is not possible at all. This is not the case. The literature and theory work begins with the Study Work. It can and should be deepened or supplemented by new topics in the Thesis.

## 5 Defense

The defense is the final oral examination of the Thesis. It takes place when all other proofs of performance of the study program have been completed and passed and if the written Thesis has also been evaluated as passed.

If the written Master Thesis is considered "failed" by the evaluators, a deadline will be set by the examination committee after consultation with the student, within which the Thesis can be revised and submitted for further correction. If the initially planned defense date is no longer tenable as a result, a new defense date must be agreed. If this is not possible within the current enrolment period, the program must be extended accordingly.

The defenses take place exclusively online and last 1 hour. At the beginning, the student presents his/her Thesis. The 20-minute presentation at the beginning can be individually designed and must be visually supported (e.g. PowerPoint, Miro, Prezi, etc.). This part of the defense offers the opportunity to present the course of the Thesis and the results. The following elements should therefore be examined in compliance with the time limit:

- Problem / Initial Situation
- Research question
- Definitions and core results of literature review
- Methodology and core results of data collection and analysis
- Results: answer to the research question / guide for the addressee of the Thesis
- Limitations
- Potential for generalization

This is followed by an approx. 20-minute discussion of the Thesis with the members of the examination board. The examination board asks questions that are related to the Thesis (e.g. about the methodology, the theoretical background, the results).

Following the presentation and discussion, the examination board awards the grade for the defense. If the defense has been passed, the student will receive the final grade of the Thesis at this point, which results from the grade of the written Thesis and the grade of the defense.

The examination board is made up of two people: a professor from Steinbeis University is chaired, while assessors are lecturers appointed by Steinbeis University. Since the examination board for the whole defense day meets in this constellation, the defense will take place without the presence of the project coach for many students. The examination board has the evaluation reports and the Thesis in order to have the necessary insights for the evaluation of the defense.

Registration for the defense takes place during the registration of the Thesis. Students therefore inform themselves about the fixed defense dates in the OnlineCampus and then indicate a desired date when registering for the Thesis. When registering, it should be noted that the defense must take place within the enrolment period and that an admission period of six weeks applies to the defense. This means that the latest possible submission of the Thesis (and all other proofs of performance) is six weeks before the chosen defense date, which in turn must be before the end of the enrollment period. The six-week period is intended as the admission period for the evaluation of the Thesis by the evaluators. These admission deadlines are therefore listed in the list of defense appointments offered. It should also be noted that the admission deadline follows the processing time of the Thesis (four or six months) and must be completely within the enrollment period (i.e.: (1) the admission deadline does not extend the processing time of the Thesis; (2) the submission of the Thesis and the defense must take place within the enrolment period). If the desired date for the defense is already fully occupied at the time of Thesis registration, a later date must be chosen. If this is outside the enrolment period, the degree program must be extended accordingly.

If the written Master Thesis has been graded as passed, but the defense of the Thesis is classified as failed by the examination board, the student will receive another attempt to defend the Thesis. In this case, the written Thesis will not be revised. The study and examination regulations of Steinbeis University stipulate that a written Thesis that has not been passed may be repeated once before the examination entitlement expires. In the event of failure, the defense of the Thesis may also be repeated once before the examination entitlement expires.

## 6 Scheduling of the Transfer Project

The following periods should be planned for the implementation of the Transfer Project when planning your studies:

	<b>Time required MBA und MA 60 CP</b>	<b>Time required MA 90 CP</b>	<b>Time required MSC</b>
Registration Transfer Project and contact with the project coach	1 Month	1 Month	1 Month
Preparation of <b>PSW</b> and realization of PSW presentation	2 Months	2 Months	2 Months
Finalization and submission <b>PSW</b>	2 Month	1 Month	1 Month
Evaluation <b>PSW</b>	1 Months	1 Month	1 Month
Preparation <b>Study Work</b> (3 months processing time after registration)		3 Months	3 Months
Evaluation <b>Study Work</b>		2 Months	2 Months
Preparation of <b>Master Thesis</b> (4 or 6 months processing time after registration)	4 Months	6 Months	6 Months
Evaluation of <b>Master Thesis</b> and Defense	2 Months	2 Months	2 Months
<b>Sum</b>	<b>12 Months</b>	<b>18 Months</b>	<b>18 Months</b>
<b>Recommended start of the Transfer Projects</b>	<b>Directly after Start of study</b>	<b>Directly after Start of study</b>	<b>Within the first 6 months of study</b>

Source: Own work.

**Tab 4: Time required for the implementation of a Transfer Project**

## 7 Project coaching

During the entire process of the Transfer Project, students are professionally advised and accompanied by a project coach. The project coach is also the first evaluator of the submitted PSW, Study Work and Thesis. The project coaches are usually lecturers at S-Next. With their professional background, it is ensured that the project coaches are familiar with both scientific work and current developments in practice in order to competently supervise the application-oriented Transfer Projects of the students. During the Transfer Project, the internal Academic Management Team of S-Next also serves as a point of contact for questions and comments. The following section describes the core aspects of the project coaching process.

The search for a suitable project coach begins with registering for the Transfer Project via the OnlineCampus. Students can choose up to two research fields (e.g. entrepreneurship and change management) based on their interests to narrow down their own project. In addition, further information on the planned Transfer Project can be provided if information is already available. Regardless of the study program, S-Next recommends starting to find a topic for the Transfer Project shortly after the start of your studies. The INSIDER on "Research Philosophy" is also intended to serve this purpose, providing important knowledge on scientific work and scientific methods.

To select the project coach, the Academic Management Team reviews the specified research fields and the brief transcription of the initial project idea(s) and compares them with the skills, knowledge and capacities of the project coaches. Students are then given the contact details of the project coach. After the project coach has been put in place, students first arrange an initial meeting to present the project idea(s) and to make an initial thematic and, if necessary, methodological coordination. If both the project coach and the student agree with the supervision situation, the next steps should be recorded.

For the following supervision of the Transfer Project, a total of six project coaching units of 30 minutes each are available. This illustrates the character of personal responsibility and requires the careful preparation of the individual agreements on the part of the students.

For the **division** of the six project coaching units, S-Next has the following **recommendations**<sup>3</sup>, which are based on the three works of the Transfer Project:

PSW: 1-2 sessions are recommended. After the initial meeting, sessions before and/or after the Group Project Session are conceivable.

- SW: 2 Sessions
- Thesis: 2-3 Sessions

Project coaching can include the following areas:

- Support in problem selection and problem formulation
- Support in Theo formulation of research questions
- Clarification of questions about literature and research methodology
- Assistance in structuring the Thesis
- Continuous feedback on the content of the Transfer Project

Project coaching explicitly **does not** include:

- Create papers or sections of it
- Literature research for students
- Editing or approval of individual chapters or even the entire work before submitting the work
- Student Advisory Service and Curriculum Advice

If the quota of six units is used up, further project coaching units can be booked for an additional charge (100 euros per hour) if required.

After submission of the PSW and subsequently the SW, further feedback will be provided by the project coach in the form of the evaluation reports. The reports are prepared by the project coach for all three parts of the Transfer Project (correction deadline: 6 weeks) and contain feedback in the two areas "Scientific Content" and "Scientific Form". In the OnlineCampus you will find samples of the appraisal forms. In addition, a second evaluation report will be prepared for the Thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> This recommendation is geared towards the three-stage Transfer Project (PSW, SW, BT/MT). In degree programs that result in less than 120 ECTS credits, the six coaching units must be divided independently and as required into the two-stage Transfer Project.

## 8 Transfer Projekts in teams

Transfer Projects can also be carried out by teams of two students. The papers to be written (PSW, SW, MT) must then each have twice the scope of the scope intended for the paper (in the case of the Study Work and Thesis minus 10%, because the introduction and conclusion do not have to be doubled). In the Study Work and the Thesis, the students must indicate in all main chapters after the introduction (in the Study Work only after chapter 2, if this serves to refer to results from previous work) and before the closing remarks, which of the students is responsible for this chapter. It is not permissible for both students to be responsible for a main chapter at the same time. If necessary, main chapters must be divided so that this individual responsibility can be mapped. On this basis, it must be possible to give both students different grades for their respective contributions to the Transfer Project. This is a requirement under higher education law, as the ability to write a scientific paper must be proven individually – even in a team project. This separate assessment is only waived in the Project Study Work, as the Project Study Work has a fixed structure. Nevertheless, the Project Study Work for a team project must also have twice the length (i.e. 30 pages).

For the evaluation of team projects, separate reports are produced for both students for the Study Work and the Thesis. The reports indicate the existence of a team project. The reports evaluate only the main chapters of the papers for which the respective student is responsible. A defense of the Thesis is only possible if both evaluation reports have been passed. The defense of a team project is done with both students at the same time. The duration of the presentation and discussion is doubled in the defense. In the presentation of the Thesis, both students must present their own parts. They can take turns on different elements of the presentation. The distribution of the elements of the presentation does not have to match the distribution of the main chapters of the Thesis, as the presentation may have a different structure. After the presentation, both students will be interviewed together by the examiners, whereby individual questions may be explicitly addressed to individual students.

If one of the two students does not pass the defense, the other student can still pass the defense. If both students have to repeat the defense, then the procedure described above applies to the repetition. If only one student has to repeat the defense, then only the elements that were introduced into the thesis by this student will be presented and discussed in the new defense.

## **9 Confidentiality**

All scientific papers that are prepared as proof of performance at S-Next are treated in the strictest confidence. The papers are available exclusively to the evaluators and other examiners (such as the examination board for the defense) and the staff of the Examination Office at S-Next. All these persons have confirmed that they will treat the documents made available to them confidentially. Therefore, there is no need for a specific request from the students that the submitted work is to be treated confidentially. This is automatically guaranteed for all work equally.

If papers are created in which certain contents or names of companies or persons are not to be known even to the evaluators, then this information must be anonymized or alienated by the students within the respective work. This should be discussed with the project coach so that they are generally informed about any anonymization or alienation that has been carried out and, if necessary, can also make very specific and individual arrangements with the students.

## **10 Regulations from previous courses of study**

Both degree programs and the “Guidelines Transfer Project” continue to develop. Changes are not always valid for all students from now on. Anyone who is still studying in an earlier course of study may of course complete their studies in accordance with the regulations applicable there. And with regard to the regulations for the Transfer Project, we grant transitional periods so that students who have started the preparation of a part of the Transfer Project with an earlier set of rules can also complete this work in application of these regulations. In the following, we point out one such change.

### *Videos as part of the Master Thesis*

Since September 2024, we have discontinued an option for writing a Master Thesis that had been introduced only a year earlier but had not proved itself. It was the option to reduce a Master Thesis from 80 pages to 60 pages and to submit a video as part of the Master Thesis instead of the reduced pages. This option will no longer be available. Since September 2024, we do no longer accept videos as part of a Master Thesis.