# Rules of Engagement

## Before starting

### Communication Channel

You can choose the way you like to communicate with me:
- personal scheduled meetings
- instant messaging (Telegram, Slack or Signal)
- emails

I respond quickly (typically within a day) therefore, I expect you to also answer quickly enough (within a couple of days at most).

### Thesis Proposal

Before you can start working on your thesis you need to get the green light from your supervisor, PD Dr. Stürmer. To get it, you need to write a proposal document where you summarize your project and submit it to us for review. When I am satisfied with the quality of this document, I will forward it to him and if he accepts it (which he typically does after my quality check) you can officially start your thesis journey!

This proposal (written in LaTeX) should be up to two pages (not counting the title page and the references) and has to contain an abstract, a more detailed introduction where you explain the intuition behind your project and a related work section where you contextualize your idea with respect to state-of-the-art research/tech.

Moreover, this document will include a description of the tools you will use and/or develop and finally a timetable (like a Gantt chart) where you will specify when you plan to do which part and especially when you plan to finish.

On request I can provide you with examples of previous thesis proposals of current/former students.

## Administration

### Bachelor University of Bern

Please consult the information written on https://www.philnat.unibe.ch/studium/abschluss/index_ger.html.

### Master BeNeFri

Assuming you are in the BeNeFri program, you need to provide an administrative form to your home university (see https://mcs.unibnf.ch/program/master-thesis/). This form must be filled only AFTER the proposal has been accepted by PD Dr. Stürmer and has to be sent by email to the JMCS secretariat.

### Seminar

You do not need to participate in any seminar, but we expect you to actively participate (ask questions, make comments, etc.) in the presentations held by other students currently doing their bachelor's or master's thesis at the RCDS. This is also a great opportunity for you to meet other students who are in the same place as you. Additionally, you may use other presentations as inspiration for your own.

# Initial Phase

## Getting a Starting Presentation Date

After a couple of weeks into your thesis, you will have to deliver a "starting presentation". This may or may not be coincidental with your actual beginning of the thesis, but it doesn't matter. The purpose of this 10-minute presentation is to introduce yourself and your topic to the RCDS as well as to other fellow students. This gives you the chance to get early feedback from many experts in the field and it allows you to practice your presentations skills. Moreover, it will serve as a reality-check where you will see if you have clear ideas on the project or if it is still fuzzy here and there.

To schedule a presentation, write an email to joel.niklaus@inf.unibe.ch with matthias.stuermer@inf.unibe.ch in CC asking to be scheduled for a starting presentation. This must happen within the first 2 months of your thesis (otherwise it is no longer a starting presentation).

For both your starting presentation as well as your final presentation the audience will consist of the following people:

- Joel Niklaus
- PD Dr. Matthias Stürmer
- Your fellow students currently writing a thesis at the RCDS
- Potentially other members of the RCDS interested in your topic

# Doing-It Phase

## Reporting

Experience showed us that students who just work by themselves are typically the ones who get stuck (unnecessarily) on something and eventually start to struggle or even fail. In order to prevent this, you are REQUIRED to provide me with a status update at least every two weeks.

Try to keep it short and to the point stating:

- What did you work on the last two weeks?
- What new things are working?
- What are you currently working on?
- What are your current struggles/problems?
- What could we do to help you overcome them?

It does not have to be formal.

## Working at the RCDS

We do have a couple of spots available for students to work in our offices. If you would like to work a day or two per week here, please get in touch with us and we will see what we can organize for you.

## Getting an Intermediate Presentation Date

You will get also an intermediate presentation. This will be private, so it will be only you and me. The goal of this is to set a milestone and potentially make the last changes to the trajectory of your thesis. To schedule an intermediate presentation, contact me.

# Final Phase

## Getting a Defense Date

This is the big day when you finally unveil your finished work.

To schedule a presentation, write an email to joel.niklaus@inf.unibe.ch with matthias.stuermer@inf.unibe.ch in CC asking to be scheduled for a final presentation.

## Documentation

Writing your thesis is one of the more difficult things you do. Doing the experiments and coding is the fun part, buckling down and putting it down on paper is a much more difficult task. Here is some information that should help you:

1. Your thesis must be written in de-facto language of Computer Science – LaTeX.
2. There is a default template used by the RCDS. We recommend you use Overleaf for the thesis. In addition to easy LaTeX editing, it offers great collaborative features similar to Google Docs.
3. There isn't a minimum page limit, but as a rule-of-thumb it should be between 25 and 75 pages for bachelor's theses and between 50 and 150 pages for master's theses.
4. Write it as you go along. If you want to write it all at the end, you'll find that it takes much more time than you imagine and you won't remember half of what you've done.
5. Ask for guidance often, don't spring it all on me at the very end.
6. Submit your final PDF version to me at least three weeks before your final presentation. I will give you a feedback and once it has passed all of my quality checks, the document will be forwarded to reviews by your supervisor.
7. The very last submission date is the day of the presentation and not any later.

On request I can provide you with examples of previous theses of current/former students.

## Presentation

At the end of your thesis, you will be required to perform a final presentation where you defend your thesis. Do not underestimate the work necessary to make good slides, and especially their importance.

You MUST submit to me the final version of the slides (camera ready) latest two weeks before the presentation. I will then give you a feedback and you will re-submit the corrected version latest one week before the final presentation. If necessary, we will make another round of feedback/corrections.

## Grading

In the end you will receive a grade for your thesis. Here we do not only grade the final document you produce, but also the other components of the thesis (namely how you worked, your presentations, your code and experiments). See below how the individual parts are weighed.

| Weight | Component | Factors |
|--------|-----------|---------|
| 40% | Code and Experiments | Code quality, scientific rigor, methodology, etc. |
| 30% | Presentations | Slides, clarity, appearance, etc. |
| 20% | Thesis Document | Related work, analysis and interpretation of results, etc. |
| 10% | Work Process | Conscientiousness, reliability, commitment, improvement, independence, etc. |