



MSc CIS Master's program Circular Innovation and Sustainability

FAQ – individual projects

1 Idea of the individual project

Individual practical projects allow students to work on topics that are personally relevant and interesting to them during their studies. On the one hand, this is intended to ensure a direct link to *practice*; depending on the time available, students also work directly with practice partners (organizations and companies) on the projects. On the other hand, the individual implementation of these projects and thus entrepreneurship should also be promoted. Ideally, this work will culminate in the individual master's thesis. Individual sustainability projects are to be contributed by students themselves. A project pool offers an additional opportunity to network companies and students for individual practical projects.

Independent of the individual projects, the practical relevance is ensured in all modules by working on real examples, by involving practitioners in the lectures and by excursions. However, the focus of the master's program is on the individual projects. The curriculum provides students with suitable framework conditions and capacities to work on the individual projects and thereby learn in a practice-oriented manner.

2 Where is the individual project used?

2.1 During the aptitude assessment in the assessment phase

At the enrolment of the MSc CIS, the prospective student goes through an aptitude assessment. Part of this assessment is outlining an individual project with relevance to sustainability in business. This outline serves as an indication of the state of knowledge and insight of the student on the topics of sustainable business and innovation and provides a basis for discussion during the actual assessment. The motivation for the study, the individual level of prior knowledge, as well as the student's insight into the topics of sustainable business and innovation are assessed. As MSc CIS is an interdisciplinary course of study, to which students from different disciplines are admitted, motivation and personal commitment are of particular importance for admission before specialist knowledge. The *bridging modules* at the beginning of the study program serve to equalize the level of knowledge among the students.

2.2 At the beginning of the master's program

Right at the beginning of the study, in [Module 0.1](#) "Introduction to Circular Economy", the individual project is sharpened so that it can be used for work.

The final assessment encompasses a 4-page report containing a) a brief project outline including research questions, linking it to existing theory (1 page; weight: 30%), b) an individual literature review (2 pages; weight: 30%) and c) an embedding in the concept of circular economy (1 page; weight: 40%). With relevance to the individual project, this first module serves to reflect on the meaning of a circular economy for the project. Including a short research on "what is already there and what is new?", followed by outlining further steps.

2.3 During the study in the regular modules

After the introductory module, students should be able to work with these projects and examine them from different perspectives. Several modules assess the learning outcomes by requiring a report



reflecting the gained knowledge on the individual project and thus sharpening the original outline. In some cases, at the end of the module, the students are required to complete a pitch (a short presentation) or other practical examination related to the individual project.

Throughout the course, students can work individually or in groups on their individual projects and discuss the differences and similarities between the current learning content and the individual projects.

Detailed information as well as a complete presentation of the application possibilities of individual project work in all modules are listed in the individual module descriptions under "Assessment of learning outcomes" and "Project-based learning" ([link](#)).

2.4 Master's thesis

The focus and the structure of the final master thesis are mainly scientific. However, the individual project should rather have a high practical relevance. Ideally, the high practical relevance and the scientific quality can be combined within the same individual project. In this case, the individual project forms ideal conditions for the master thesis. With 3 times 6 ECTS (a total of 540 learning hours), the case studies in the 3rd semester (full-time students, or 5th-6th semester for part-time students) provide suitable frameworks and resources for developing research questions and assessing the suitability of the individual project for the master's thesis.

3 Can I change the topic of my individual project?

Yes, after enrollment, students can adapt the topic or change it completely if the new project is clearly outlined again when using it as the basis for a module exam or for the master's thesis. However, changing topics always means that they must acquire new knowledge. Therefore, to optimize resources, we recommend students to follow one topic throughout the entire master's program.

4 Can I align my individual project to the project pool?

Yes, you can either ask the project pool coordinator if there is a project that matches your individual project (with or without adaptations), or to inquire if there is a more appropriate new individual project you can work on, or even for short track projects used for one or two modules. The more different projects you work on the broader your experience will be. However, it should be noted that with each new project there is also an additional effort to learn the new topic. Group work and the practice cases in the modules also provide opportunities for students to broaden their experience. Ideally, students work on the same individual project in the modules and in the master's thesis.

5 Do I always have to bring forward business cases from companies? Or can I also choose topics related to governmental institutes or NGO's?

The cases presented and discussed may vary and come from all areas of interest. Circular innovation and sustainability are topics that cut across all walks of life. However, if students want to work primarily on a project, it's probably easier to choose a project from the private sector, as business models and supply chains are not equally relevant to other organizations such as NGOs.

6 How is the individual project related to the master thesis?

The individual project outlined in the aptitude assessment may or may not become the topic of the master's thesis. The following scenarios are possible:

- a) The individual project is defined in the aptitude assessment and is worked on during the course of study in the various modules. The master thesis is based on a different topic.
- b) In the course of the studies, the opportunity for a sustainability project in a company opens up, which is suitable for the individual project work in different modules. The master thesis is based on this or another topic. The project pool provides possible practical projects.
- c) Ideally, the topic of the individual project work and the master's thesis is the same.

The variety of possible scenarios illustrates the flexibility in the choice of individual projects and topics to be worked on. However, it is advisable to keep the amount of preparation and reading in mind if a variety of shorter projects are used and the individual project and the master's thesis are not coordinated. Each scenario has advantages and disadvantages. The choice may also depend on whether the program is full- or part-time.

The focus and requirements of the individual project and the master thesis are different. The focus and structure of the final master thesis are mainly scientific. The individual project should rather have a high practical relevance.

7 Schedule and dates during the semester

Organizations and companies can submit practical projects on circular economy and sustainability at any time. To do so, they use the registration tool on the BFH website ([link](#)). In case of doubt, the project pool coordinator will help ([email](#)). Do not hesitate to contact him for advice before submission. To ensure further procedures, the registration of the practical projects is required in any case via the BFH website ([link](#)).

| Activity | Period |
|---|---|
| Companies submit practical projects | Anytime via BFH website (link) |
| Students inform themselves | Anytime in Moodle (link) |
| Project pool coordinator establishes contact | At the beginning of the semester (email) |
| Students apply | usually in the 2nd week of the semester. The next application deadlines are indicated on the website (link) |
| Organizations and companies select students | usually in the 4th week of the semester |
| Organizations and companies and students conclude practice agreement | usually in the 5th week of the semester |
| Validity of the practice agreement | In each case for 1 semester |
| Presentation of practical projects at pitching and networking event | At the beginning of the fall semester |
| New conclusion or extension of the practice agreement | After the personal feedback interview |

Table 1 : Schedule for practical projects in the semester

Students inform themselves about the projects in the project pool at any time via the Moodle learning platform ([link](#)). In case of doubt, the project pool coordinator will help ([email](#)). He puts students in contact with the organizations and companies and informs students about the form of application and the deadlines for the selected practical project.

Students usually apply during the second week of the semester. Their application includes their motivation and a tabular CV. From most organizations and companies, the form of the application is left up to the students (text message, voice message, letter of motivation, video pitch, personal



website, social media, etc.). To minimize the effort for practice partners in selecting students, the project pool coordinator ensures timing in the application process.

Organizations and companies select the students. They conclude a practice agreement with them. In addition to the topic of the practical project, the practice agreement also includes the scope of the practical work, the place of work and the meetings. The project pool coordinator advises organizations and companies and students about the practice agreement. He also provides a suitable template. Practical projects are part of the studies and is not compensated. Apart from the time commitment, they are free of charge for practice partners.

The practice agreement is concluded for only one semester at a time. After a feedback meeting, organizations and companies and students can cancel or extend the practice agreement. Ideally, the cooperation between organizations and companies and students is renewed or extended for each semester up to the master's thesis. The project pool coordinator advises organizations and companies and students on the renewal process.

To promote networking between practice partners and students, the program director organizes a pitching and networking event at the beginning of the fall semester. At this event, organizations and companies and students are given the opportunity to present their practical projects. The event is open to enrolled students as well as interested practice partners. Interested organizations and companies should contact the project pool coordinator.

Biel, December 5, 2023