

MAN 710: Research Seminar in Public & Nonprofit Management

Spring Term 2026: Digital Transformation in Action

Chair of Business Administration, Public & Nonprofit Management

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Last updated: January 2026

1 Course Description

1.1 General outline

This course will introduce students to different approaches relevant to planning and implementing research in the fields of public and nonprofit management. Students will be familiarized with the process of conducting qualitative empirical research as well as reading and writing scientific papers. They must apply this knowledge in an empirical research project that is structured around this year's seminar topic.

At the end of this course, students will have acquired the skills for doing academic work on their own and, thus, to write a qualitative- or quantitative-empirical master thesis at the Chair of Public and Nonprofit Management. Additionally, they will learn how to review paper drafts and provide constructive feedback.

1.2 Seminar Topic Spring Term 2026

In the spring semester of 2026, students will work on research projects that aim to understand the mechanisms and dynamics of digital transformation within public and non-profit organizations.

For their data collection, students must engage with organizations in the public or non-profit sector that are currently undergoing or have recently implemented digital change initiatives. To capture the complexity of organizational change and address diverse research gaps, ranging from structural shifts to changes in actor roles, exploratory qualitative research will be conducted. Students will work on an individual research topic following the overarching research question:

RQ: How do public and nonprofit organizations navigate the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation?

A selection of broad research avenues, inspired by the multidimensional framework of Hanelt et al. (2021) and the conceptual boundaries of Mergel et al. (2019), will be provided at the beginning of the seminar. These topics must be sharpened by the students to fit a specific organizational context. Own topics in line with the overarching theme must be developed. Literature suggestions that mark a starting point on the topic are provided under Chapter 5.

Students will collect data for their qualitative empirical seminar papers by conducting two semi-structured interviews within a single organization (e.g., one with a strategic decision-maker and one with an operational staff member). Students must identify and acquire relevant interview partners themselves. Additional contextual information may be manually extracted from online sources, such as websites, reports, digital strategy papers, or media coverage.

2 Learning and Qualification Outcome

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- describe research gaps, especially those related to their research projects,
- define research goals and research questions,
- search, interpret, evaluate, and select academic literature,
- select appropriate research methods (qualitative and/or quantitative) for various research questions,
- write a qualitative and/or quantitative research paper,
- evaluate research proposals and provide feedback.

In this seminar, the key competence of academic research shall be acquired.

3 Organizational Information

The time frame of the seminar: **18 February 2026 until 20 May 2026**

Registration: Students must formally apply for this seminar by handing in an application consisting of

- (1) a motivation letter (max. 1 page),
- (2) a CV (1-2 pages),
- (3) a Bachelor certificate, and
- (4) a current transcript of records.

Please combine all documents into **one** PDF file.

Students studying in the master's program Culture and Business must personally hand in the form "Antrag auf Übertragung (Export) der Masterarbeitsbetreuung". Without this form, the registration cannot be processed.

Applications (including [UNI-ID](#)) must be submitted to Jan Vogt (jan.vogt@uni-mannheim.de) **by 05 February 2026** via email.

Information about being accepted for the research seminar will be sent out **by 12 February 2026**. You need to send your binding module participation confirmation or cancellation **by 13 February 2026** to Jan Vogt.

Please note:

- This timeline applies to all research seminars in the Area Management, and exceptions from it will not be granted (Link: <https://www.bwl.uni-mannheim.de/en/programs/master/mmm/information-for-students/#c324891>).
- Higher-semester students are prioritized when allocating seats in the research seminar. Accepted seats are legally binding, and attendance at the in-class sessions is compulsory.

Prerequisite: At least one of the following courses must be completed before you can complete MAN 710 (parallel attendance possible):

- Strategic Management between Profit and Purpose (MAN 609)
- Understanding and Tackling Societal Challenges through Management Research (MAN 659)
- Selected Challenges in Nonprofit Management (MAN 675)
- Digital Era Government (MAN 676)
- Public & Nonprofit Management (MAN 679)
- Challenges of Public & Nonprofit Management (MAN 680)

Examination: Seminar paper – part 1 (25%, **due 19th of March 2026, noon**, via ILIAS)
Seminar paper – part 2 (75%, **due 20th of May 2026, noon**, hard-copy and via ILIAS)

Course materials: ILIAS

Credits: 6 ECTS 180 hours
In-class attendance and individual feedback: ~20 hours
- 2 days block seminar: 14 hours
- 1 day mini conference: 7 hours
- 1 mandatory office hour: ~0,75 hour

Review: ~20 hours
- Evaluating seminar papers of peers: ~10 hours
- Preparation of discussion role: ~10 hours

Own seminar paper: ~140 hours
- Data collection and data analysis (including preparation) = 60 hours
- Writing of seminar paper (parts 1 and 2; including literature search) = 80 hours

Contact Details

Lecturer: Jan Vogt
E-Mail: jan.vogt@uni-mannheim.de
Office hours: Upon appointment

4 Course Requirements

4.1 General Requirements

This course is highly interactive and thus based on critical conversations among students. Discussions will be based on conceptual and empirical academic papers and methods literature. We will critically reflect on research designs and methods and have workshops in which the theoretical knowledge will be applied. Apart from being interested in the course subject per se, participants should be highly motivated to conduct empirical research. A strong commitment to active participation in discussions in the onsite sessions is expected. Even though existing knowledge of empirical research methods will help to accomplish this seminar, it is not required.

To successfully pass the seminar, students must attend the sessions as scheduled in the syllabus and Portal². Students are allowed to miss two blocks of 90 minutes each. Please indicate your absence via email. Students must not miss the sessions in which the results of their work will be presented and discussed within the mini conference.

4.2 Examination Requirements

Students will conduct their research endeavor consisting of a qualitative empirical seminar paper. Students will collect the data for the qualitative empirical seminar papers through on-site observations and/or interviews. Students are required to provide a transcript of the conducted interviews as a digital appendix to the seminar paper. Each student will conduct his or her own data analysis.

Interview guideline: Based on the methodological course content and their individual research topic, students will create an interview guideline for their data collection. This guideline must be submitted together with seminar paper (part 1), and students will receive feedback on the guideline before using it in the field. The interview guideline will not be graded, but submission is mandatory

Seminar paper (part 1): Students will write a short proposal consisting of an introduction, theoretical background, and methods to be applied (parts 1–3 of an academic paper). Students must follow the guidelines for academic work, as published on the website of the *Chair of Public and Nonprofit Management*. Evaluation criteria are (1) formal aspects, (2) content, (3) scientific language, and (4) reasoning. The proposal grade is 25% of the final grade. The length of the proposal should be about 1.800 words (+/-10%, including figures and tables, excluding the title page and references, in PDF or Word format). Students will get feedback on their proposal from the lecturer during individual mandatory consultation hours and within and after the mini conference. They are expected to use this feedback to improve their final seminar paper (part 2).

Mini conference: We will organize a mini conference in which each student presents their paper and receives feedback from their peers. In addition, students will be asked, as an exercise in peer reviewing, to discuss a designated paper. The workshop is specifically designed to facilitate horizontal learning; therefore, sufficient time is allocated for feedback and discussion.

Each paper is allocated a total of 30 minutes: 10 minutes for the presentation, 10 minutes for the discussant's comments, and the remaining time for open discussion with the group. To prepare for this session, all students are expected to read the seminar paper (Part 1) of their fellow students and to read in greater depth the paper they are assigned to discuss. For each paper they read, students should respond to designated guiding questions and document their answers in Miro. The discussant may draw on these peer comments when preparing their discussion. All students should use the feedback from their peers to revise and improve their seminar paper and use the feedback to conduct their interviews and complete their seminar paper (part 2).

Seminar paper (part 2): Based on the written proposal, students must write up the results of their empirical work in a comprehensive seminar paper (5.700 words (+/-10%), including figures and tables, excluding title page, references, and appendices). For this purpose, they must include the feedback provided on the proposal, refine the methodology section, and add sections on their data analysis, findings, discussion, and conclusion. Evaluation criteria are the same as those for seminar paper part 1. Guidelines for scientific work, as published on the website of the *Chair for Public and Nonprofit Management*, must be followed. The final paper must be submitted as one hard copy and one digital copy via ILIAS (in PDF format).

Table 1 gives you an overview of the examination portfolio.

Submission Type	% of final grade	Deadline (for all)
Seminar paper (inclusive interview guideline) (part 1)	25%	Wed, 19.03.2026, noon
Mini conference (presentation and discussion)	Mandatory, not graded	Wed, 25.03.2026, noon
Seminar paper (part 2)	75%	Wed, 20.05.2026, noon
Total		100 %

Table 1: Examination Portfolio MAN 710

5 Literature

5.1 Seminar Topic

- Hanelt, A., Bohnsack, R., Marz, D., & Antunes Marante, C. (2021). A Systematic Review of the Literature on Digital Transformation: Insights and Implications for Strategy and Organizational Change. *Journal of Management Studies*, 58(5), 1159–1197. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12639>
- Hinings, B., Gegenhuber, T., & Greenwood, R. (2018). Digital innovation and transformation: An institutional perspective. *Information and Organization*, 28(1), 52–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infoandorg.2018.02.004>

- Mergel, I., Edelmann, N., & Haug, N. (2019). Defining digital transformation: Results from expert interviews. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(4), 101385.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2019.06.002>
- Nielsen, J. A., Elmholdt, K. T., & Noesgaard, M. S. (2024). Leading digital transformation: A narrative perspective. *Public Administration Review*, 84(4), 589–603.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13721>

5.2 Qualitative Research Methods

- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15–31.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151>
- Howard-Grenville, J., Nelson, A., Vough, H., & Zilber, T. B. (2021). From the Editors—Achieving Fit and Avoiding Misfit in Qualitative Research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 64(5), 1313–1323.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2021.4005>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (Third edition). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (Hrsg.). (2014). Qualitative research practice: a guide for social science students and researchers. London: Sage.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Fourth Edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Fifth edition). Los Angeles: Sage.

5.3 [Quantitative Research Methods]

- Hair, J. F. (Hrsg.). (2014). *Multivariate data analysis*. Harlow: Pearson.
- Huntington-Klein, N. (2021). *The effect: An introduction to research design and causality*. Chapman and Hall/CRC.
- Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2001). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

6 Timetable

Last update: February 2026, changes may occur throughout the semester

Date	Time	Format & Room	Session type	Content
Ongoing – Wed, 17.02.2026			Self-study	Reading list (see required readings)
Wed & Thu, 18.-19.02.2026	9:00 – 17:00 (incl. lunch break)	On campus Room EO 256	In-class session	Research question and conceptual framework (including development of seminar paper themes), data collection, data analysis, and “Writing up”; provid- ing feedback, reviewing, and discussing paper
Wed, 05.03.2026	noon	Examination Portfolio (not graded)	Submission via mail	Work-in-progress seminar paper part 1 (inclusive interview guideline) and open questions with suggested own solutions
Tue, 10.03.2026	Individual time slots	On campus and online possible	Individual feedback	Answering open questions and receiving feedback on work in progress seminar paper part 1 (inclusive interview guide- line)
Tue, 10.03.2026 - Wed, 19.03.2026			Self-study	Incorporating feedback and refinement of seminar paper part 1
Wed, 19.03.2026	noon	Examination Portfolio (graded)	Submission via ILIAS	Seminar paper part 1 (inclusive inter- view guideline)
Thu, 19.03.2026 - Wed, 24.03.2026			Self-study	Preparation of presentation on status quo of research project (~10 minutes) and open questions
				Preparation of detailed discussion for status quo of research project for one selected fellow student (matches will be communicated on Wed, 19.04.2026)
				Provision of feedback on seminar pa- pers part 1 for all fellow students an- swering the lead questions in Miro
Wed, 25.03.2026	9:00 – 17:00 (incl. lunch break)	On campus Room EO 256	In-class session	Mini conference
Ongoing – Wed, 20.05.2026			Self-study	Individual data collection, data analysis, synthesis and writing up of seminar pa- per part 2
Fr, 05.05.2026	Individual time slots		Individual feedback	Individual data collection, analysis, syn- thesis and writing up of seminar paper part 2
Wed, 20.05.2026	noon	Examination port- folio, ILIAS, hard copy (graded)	Submission via ILIAS	Seminar paper part 2