

Chair of Personnel Economics

Research Project Master

Start: summer term 2026

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Topic: Working from Home

In recent years, working from home has developed into a central element of modern work organization. Technological progress, changing preferences of employees, as well as exogenous shocks (in particular the COVID-19 pandemic) have massively accelerated the spread of location-independent work. This development raises fundamental questions that are of high relevance both for economics and for companies, employees, and political decision-makers:

- Which factors determine who works from home and to what extent?
- How does working from home affect productivity, remuneration, and job satisfaction?

The research project addresses these questions and combines theoretical concepts with empirical analyses of current data.

Objective of the research project

The objective of the research project is to enable students to conduct independent empirical analyses of research questions in personnel economics using the example of working from home. Students are expected to learn how to examine current societal developments using scientific methods, critically question causal relationships, and draw evidence-based conclusions.

Learning objectives and competencies to be acquired

After completing the research project, students will have acquired the following competencies:

- formulation of clear and empirically testable research questions,
- confident application of quantitative research methods,
- critical interpretation of empirical results,
- structured scientific argumentation in written and oral form,
- independent project organization over an extended period of time.

Possible research fields

1. Determinants of working from home

Analysis of the factors that influence the use of working from home, e.g.:

- individual characteristics (qualification, gender, family situation),
- occupational characteristics (task content, autonomy, digitalization),
- firm-level and institutional framework conditions.

2. Impact of working from home on productivity

Investigation of the question of whether working from home affects productivity:

- individual work performance and efficiency,
- heterogeneity of effects across tasks and work environments.

3. Effects of working from home on wages

Analysis of possible wage effects of working from home, e.g.:

- compensation mechanisms (wages vs. flexibility),
- differences by qualification and family status.

4. Impact of working from home on well-being and satisfaction outcomes

Investigation of the effects of working from home on non-monetary labor market outcomes:

- job satisfaction and life satisfaction,
- stress, mental health, and exhaustion,
- work-life balance.

5. Working from home and commuting

(suitable for students of the *Sustainability Management & Economics Master*)

Investigation of the relationship between working from home and commuting behaviors:

- commuting distance and time,
- sustainability: travel and emissions.

Schedule of the research project

Duration: 2 semesters

Form of work: Individual or group work

Outcome: Presentation + research report in the style of a scientific paper

First semester: Conceptualization, theory, and research design

Phase 1: Introduction and topic selection

- Introduction to the overarching topic of working from home
- Presentation of possible subtopics and data sources
- Discussion of the research questions
- Formation of working groups
- Mini module: What is empirical research?
 - Correlation vs. causality
 - Overview of typical empirical designs
 - Example studies on the topic of working from home

Task 1 (ungraded): Short proposal (1-2 pages)

- Motivation and relevance
- Research question(s)
- Rough empirical strategy
- Expected contribution

Phase 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

- Systematic literature review
- Development of the theoretical framework
- Identification of relevant hypotheses

Task 2 (graded): Presentation of an academic article

Phase 3: Research design and data concept

- Selection of suitable data (secondary data or own data collection)
- Definition of variables
- Identification strategy
- Discussion of possible limitations

Task 3 (graded): Presentation of research design and data

Second semester: Empirical analysis, interpretation, and dissemination

Phase 4: Data preparation and descriptive analysis

- Data cleaning and preparation
- Descriptive statistics
- First exploratory analyses

Task 4 (ungraded): Presentation of the first analysis

Phase 5: Empirical analysis

- Estimation of the main models
- Interpretation of the results
- Robustness and sensitivity analyses
- Discussion of alternative specifications

Task 5 (graded): Presentation of the results

Phase 6: Research report

- Written paper
- Revision based on feedback

Task 6 (graded): Research report

- Abstract
- Introduction & motivation
- Literature
- Theory & hypotheses
- Data & methodology
- Results
- Discussion & conclusion