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Guidelines for Thematic Groups

NTNU Civil Security



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About this document

NTNU Civil Security's Guidelines for Thematic Groups is part of the governing documents of the thematic research area. The document describes the use of thematic groups as an instrument to address the mandate of NTNU Civil Security. Furthermore, the document describes how thematic groups are established, operated, report on their activities and eventually terminate.

Staff participation to the guideline has been assured through a dedicated session in the workshop 24.04.2024 and updated after a review by the NTNU Civil Security leader group 05.05.2025. The updated guideline was endorsed in the meeting of the strategic advisory board of NTNU Civil Security on 14.05.2025.

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1 Background

To foster productive and robust cross disciplinary research environments in NTNU Strategic Research Area Civil Security and Emergency Preparedness (NTNU Civil Security) we organize our activities in thematic groups. These research area driven communities are application domain oriented by nature. A group is constituted around a set of permanent, adjunct, and temporary academic staff members from at least two faculties in NTNU. Thematic groups can also include individuals external to NTNU who commit time and/or resources to the group.

The purpose and benefits for the individual member of a thematic group include:

- Increased visibility and impact of activities,
- Mutual sharing of experience, information, and new ideas,
- Synchronization of efforts on proposals and projects,
- Joint preparation of dissemination activities such as websites and workshops,
- Common maintenance of relations with external stakeholders.

NTNU Civil Security's motivation for facilitating the organization of thematic group include:

- Strengthen cross disciplinary collaboration inside and outside NTNU,
- Position NTNU towards external funding opportunities with thematical foci,
- Concentration of efforts to establish NTNU as a national R&D hub for civil security and emergency preparedness,
- Foster attractive research environments for NTNU staff.

Thematic groups in NTNU Civil Security operate in the context of other NTNU internal and external collaboration efforts. The groups can also constitute or coordinate NTNU's contribution to initiatives such as research project applications and externally funded centre mechanisms such as FMEs, SFIs or SFFs. However, all activities related to acquisitioning and executing sponsored and commission-based activities must follow the organizational guidelines of the involved staff members.

The creation, operation, and disestablishment of thematic groups do not influence NTNU's regulations of delegation, in particular no line management or budgetary authority are delegated to thematic groups. Furthermore, groups are fully integrated in the NTNU line structure, finding their support in the regular structure of NTNU.

All academic staff members who engage themselves in NTNU Civil Security are expected to join or work towards the creation of a thematic group.

2 Thematic Group Establishment

Applications for the establishment of thematic groups can be sent to NTNU Civil Security at any time. Evaluation of an application should happen in a timely manner, typically within a period of less than three months. All applications should be discussed in a forum with representatives from all existing thematic groups. Based on this discussion applications can be nominated for approval by the strategic advisory board. The application should address the elements listed in this section.

2.1 Name

The thematic groups should have a proposed descriptive name and a short name/acronym.

2.2 Programme

Rationale for the establishment of the thematic group, the strategy and goals for the group and a description of how this support the mandate (Appendix 1) of NTNU thematic research areas.

2.3 Leadership

Each group must have a leader and a deputy leader. The leadership has both an internal function (coordination of activity) and external (representation and point of contact) function. The content and complexity affiliated to this role will depend on the size of the group.

2.4 Resources

An overview of available resources in the proposed group should be provided. This includes:

- Personnel
 - All groups must include at least three or more academic staff members from two or more faculties in NTNU,
 - Permanent staff: Permanent staff clarifies their time allocation with their line manager,
 - Temporary staff: Ph.D. students and postdoctoral researchers clarifies their time allocation with their line manager and supervisor,
 - Externals: Employees from other organizations can be members of thematic groups.
- Funding: An overview of internal and external project funding connected to the activities of the group, including funding sought from NTNU Civil Security.
- Research infrastructure: Overview of research infrastructure utilized by the group.
- Educational activities: Overview of educational offerings the group is involved in.
- External stakeholders: Overview of key external stakeholders and their support or commitments to the group.

2.5 SWOT analysis

A classic overview of the group's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, including some reflexions around these and how they are to be addressed.

3 Thematic group operation

3.1 Internal coordination meetings

Groups should have regular (ranging from weekly to monthly) meetings. Facilitating communication and creation of results in a manner that best suits the groups size and mode of operation.

3.2 Internal seminar

Groups should have internal seminar series (can be in conjunction with the internal coordination meetings) and contribute to relevant events inside or outside NTNU.

3.3 Open workshops

Groups should host at least one open workshop/conference with national and international participation on an annual basis; this may be co-located or organised as a regular conference or symposium with peer-reviewed contributions.

3.4 Creation and maintenance of promotional material

Groups should host a web page under NTNU Civil Security. In addition, groups should consider social media appearance, flyers, roll-ups, posters, and handouts. All this in coordination with the thematical research area.

3.5 Cooperation

Thematic groups should have a plan for internal and external collaboration which is aligned with the strategy of the group. Groups should maintain a list of collaborators and potential collaborators, even if these do not satisfy the criteria for formal stakeholders.

3.6 Research Output Channels

Thematic groups should maintain an overview of publication channels pertinent to the group, and where appropriate should seek to maintain or establish publication channels at level 2 in the Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series, and Publications (DBH).

3.7 Involvement of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers

Thematic groups are strongly encouraged to engage PhD students and postdoctoral researchers working on topics related to the research area of a group and supervised by members of the group in the group activities. The groups are expected to be attractive thematic area focused academic environments for their PhD students and postdoctoral researchers.

Members of the group are usually expected to participate in the midterm evaluations and doctoral defence of students affiliated with the group.

3.8 Topics for B.Sc. and MSc theses

Thematic groups should facilitate the processes of establishing relevant and sufficiently large and attractive pools of thesis topics that should be made available for students in relevant study programs.

3.9 Research visitors and exchange students

Groups should actively promote the possibility of hosting research visitors. Group members should see their own research visits as part of strengthening institutional collaboration and remain as active in their group also when on international visits.

Groups are also encouraged to contribute to the integration of incoming and outgoing exchange students, particularly those who are writing a BSc or MSc as part of their internationalization.

3.10 Physical and virtual laboratories

Thematic groups with physical and virtual infrastructure would have the responsibility to maintain and develop these in collaboration with NTNU line organization.

3.11 Roadmap for funding

Thematic groups should have an up-to date roadmap for how to attract funding and maintain a plan of relevant funding sources.

3.12 Representation in NTNU Civil Security

All groups should actively seek participation in events organized by NTNU Civil Security. Furthermore, groups should appoint a representative to participate in regular coordination meetings (weekly or bi-weekly) in NTNU Civil Security.

3.13 Periodised work plan and budget

Each thematic group should develop and maintain a periodised work plan and budget covering the calendar year. The plan should outline major activities, budget allocations and responsibilities within the group.

The work plan and budget should be reviewed regularly in coordination meetings and adjusted as needed to reflect changes in funding, staffing, or strategic priorities.

4 Annual reporting

Thematic groups must submit an annual report to the NTNU Civil Security administration by January 15th each year. The report should serve as a structured reflection and documentation of how the group has operated in alignment with the goals and expectations set out in Section 3. The report must include the following elements:

4.1 Activities and results

A description of key activities carried out during the reporting year, including coordination meetings, seminars, workshops, outreach efforts, and dissemination activities. The report should explain how these activities have contributed to fulfilling the NTNU Civil Security mandate (Appendix A). Contributions to education and supervision should also be included.

4.2 Leadership and group organization

A brief overview of the leadership structure, how group activities were organized and coordinated internally, and how responsibilities were distributed among members.

4.3 Resources allocated to the group

An updated overview of personnel (including PhD students, postdocs, and external members), funding sources, and research infrastructure. This should align with the original resource plan (Section 2.4) and highlight any significant changes.

4.4 Cooperation

An updated list of internal and external collaboration partners, including information on joint activities, project applications, or shared infrastructure. Cooperation efforts should reflect the strategic goals of the group and NTNU Civil Security.

4.5 Periodised budget and work plan

The annual report must include a summary of the group's periodised budget and work plan. This should provide a timeline of key activities and milestones, an overview of allocated and used financial resources, and reflections on any deviations from the original plan.

The section should also address how the budget and work plan have supported the group's strategic development and operations, and how lessons learned will inform planning in the following year.

5 Disestablishment of thematic groups

A thematic group can be disestablished if the members of the academic staff forming it notify the NTNU Civil Security administration of a consensus to this effect, or if the charter under which it is operation is deemed to be inoperative by the strategic advisory board.

If the strategic research area Civil Security and Emergency Preparedness ceases to exist, all thematic groups will be terminated. The activities must then find another supporting structure if operations are to be continued.

Appendix 1: Mandat NTNUs tverrfaglige satsingsområder 2024-31

NTNUs tverrfaglige strategiske satsinger skal:

Være et redskap for å realisere NTNUs strategi «Kunnskap for en bedre verden»

- bidra til å oppfylle våre mål i utviklingsavtalen med KD

Være et redskap for å styrke tverrfaglig samarbeid i tråd med NTNUs strategi

- Utvikle tverrfaglige nettverk og møteplasser internt ved NTNU
- Stimulere til tverrfaglig samarbeid ved NTNU

Svare på tematiske prioriteringer i LTP/Horisont Europa

- Være en forskningspolitisk aktør i samarbeid med linjeledelsen
- Utvikle faglige og politiske budskap på vegne av institusjonen

Posisjonere NTNU inn mot eksterne finansieringskilder som krever tverrfaglig samarbeid

- Utvikle tverrfaglige nettverk eksternt
- Utvikle tverrfaglige samarbeid eksternt med hovedfokus på samarbeid med arbeidslivet og internasjonalt samarbeid

Profilere/synliggjøre NTNU eksternt innenfor eget ansvarsområde

- Delta i en kunnskapsbasert offentlig debatt
- Synliggjøre/formidle faglig aktivitet og forskningens betydning
- Representere NTNU på eksterne arenaer innenfor eget ansvarsområde