

Identification of Student's Difficulties in Implementing Final Assignments: A Case Study at a University in Jakarta

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ABSTRACT (9 pt)

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A final assignment is a requirement for students to complete their studies at university, but it often presents challenges. This study aims to identify the challenges students encounter when completing their final assignments. The study involved students from a university in Jakarta. The research method was descriptive qualitative, with a case study approach. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and interviews. Findings indicate that during the final assignment preparation stage, students faced challenges related to the requirements, which sometimes differed between study programs, even within the same faculty. Students also struggled to choose a thesis topic because unclear information from the study program. Another challenge was the lack of clarity and completeness in the final assignment guidebook. During the guidance process, students found it hard to match schedules with their supervisors. In the final exam stage, students had trouble meeting requirements due to limited information about the format and requirements for exam filing. The study concludes that the final assignment poses unique challenges for students at a university. Thus, it is recommended that a draft guideline for the final assignment be prepared based on agreements between study programs within a faculty.

INTRODUCTION

During higher education, the final project is a crucial and mandatory part of completing a course, especially for students in the final year. It is a requirement for graduation. Upon graduation, students receive an academic degree corresponding to their level of education, such as a Diploma (D), Bachelor's (S1), Master's (S2), and Doctorate (S3) (Risपालina Ritonga & Romauli Siallagan, 2022). The format of the final project determined by universities, in accordance with Ministerial Regulation No. 53 of 2023, is a Thesis or Prototype or Project for Applied Bachelor's (D4) and Bachelor's (S1) students, a Thesis or Prototype or Project for Master's (S2) students, and a Dissertation or Prototype or Project for Doctoral (S3) students. This regulation grants study programs the authority and freedom to determine the format of the final project according to their respective areas of expertise (Rizqiyah, 2023).

Furthermore, to complete the final project, students must meet the requirements and follow the stages of the process determined by each study program. Requirements for completing a final project at university generally include academic requirements, namely, students must complete all required courses. Furthermore, the final project implementation process generally involves several stages: taking the final project course, planning the title, proposal, guidance, research, writing the final project, and the thesis defense (Suwita, 2020). Furthermore, another crucial aspect of completing a final project that students must master is compiling the final project in accordance with the

principles and ethics characteristic of each study program. This aims to train students in identifying research problems and objectives, designing and analyzing data, interpreting, preparing reports, and being accountable for the results academically (Arizal et al., 2022).

However, difficulties often hinder students from completing their final project. As stated by Wijaya, I.K. (2016), students face difficulties in completing their final assignments, ranging from finding a title, compiling a proposal, conducting observations, writing a report, receiving guidance from their supervisor, and completing the thesis exam (Untari et al., 2022). Furthermore, other factors hindering students from completing their final assignments are both internal and external. Internal factors originate from the students themselves, such as low motivation and lack of thesis writing skills. External factors originate from outside the student, including the environment, the faculty's final assignment management system, and the supervisor (Asmawan, 2016). Such conditions undoubtedly hinder students from completing their studies on time and meeting established deadlines.

Therefore, study programs need to take more serious steps to identify the difficulties students face during the final assignment process. This identification of difficulties students face in their final assignments begins with finding a title, developing a proposal, conducting research, writing a report, receiving guidance, and completing the thesis exam. Furthermore, identifying internal and external factors contributing to students' difficulties in writing their final assignments is crucial for gaining deeper information. This is beneficial for improving the quality of graduates in a study program. Ensuring the quality of graduates in a program is crucial for producing graduates who meet the criteria set by the faculty or study program.

Student graduation criteria in study programs are usually formulated in the form of graduate competency standards (Bendriyanti, 2022). Important indicators of graduate competency achievement in a higher education institution, according to Law No. 29 of 2009, are: 1) Percentage of students graduating on time; 2) Students completing their studies with an average maximum duration of 2.5 years for master's (S2) and 4.5 years for doctoral (S3) programs; 3) The ratio of alumni responding to tracer studies; 4) Graduates adapting to the work environment wherever they are and demonstrating a professional attitude (Ilmi et al., 2025).

Based on this background description, the researcher then identified the difficulties faced by students in completing their final assignments. This research focused on final-year students who were or had completed their final assignments at a university in Jakarta. Therefore, this research is expected to provide insight and input for study programs to implement improvements in the implementation of final assignments, thereby enhancing the quality of graduates.

The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method with problem analysis using a case study type. The qualitative method was chosen because the research will be carried out naturally or carried out in natural object conditions where the researcher acts as the main instrument, collects data triangulated (combined), analyzes data inductively, and emphasizes the meaning of the research results (Sugiyono, 2017). The most important thing about the qualitative research method is the

procedure in the research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people whose behavior is observed (Moleong, 2007).

The data collection procedure for this study utilized observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations in this study were conducted by directly observing the facts and phenomena being studied. The object of observation by the researcher was the difficulties faced by students in completing their final assignments at a university in Jakarta. Interviews were conducted with informants or sources who had accurate information about the issues being studied, specifically regarding the implementation of final assignments at a university in Jakarta. In this regard, the informants interviewed were final-year students and the Study Program Coordinator. Documentation in this study aimed to supplement the research data. The documentation used was audio-visual documentation.

Data analysis used in this study involved three steps: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions. Data reduction was carried out by analyzing the data obtained, then summarizing it, selecting the main points and focusing on the important aspects of the study. After data analysis, the data were presented. Before entering decision making, the researcher conducted coding according to the sub-topics of the research conducted in the field, namely the difficulties students faced in carrying out their final assignments at a university in Jakarta.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, we can identify the areas that cause difficulties for students in completing their final assignments at a university in Jakarta. These difficulties began during the initial preparation of the final assignment, thesis writing, guidance, and the final exam. The results of the identification of student difficulties in completing their final assignments are described qualitatively in the following sub-discussions:

Identification of Student Difficulties During Final Project Preparation

The preparation stage is the initial stage before students undertake their final assignments. This stage typically includes the requirements that students must fulfill for their final assignments, then students have also determined the topic, and then students begin to compile a proposal. Good preparation is essential at this stage, to ensure the effectiveness of the preparation which can then influence the implementation of the final assignment. However, in this study, difficulties were still found that hindered students in preparing their final assignments. In interviews with students who were carrying out their final assignments at a university in Jakarta, there was an interesting problem that the researchers found, namely differences between study programs in determining the requirements for taking final assignments for students even though they were still under the auspices of the same faculty. As information conveyed by Ms. NR and SR, who are both Study Program Coordinators in the same faculty at a university in Jakarta. Ms. SR said that in the study program she manages, the requirements that must be met by students in carrying out their final assignments are that students must complete a minimum of 138 credits of compulsory courses and must

complete the Final Proposal Seminar (SAP) in semester 6 when taking the Proposal Seminar course. Meanwhile, Mrs. NR, from other study program, but in the same faculty as Mrs. SR, reported that in addition to having to pass the 138 credits of compulsory courses, students must also pass the research courses, educational research methodology, and historical research methodology, and are required to carry out PKM. The existence of different policies for determining final assignments between study programs, even within the same faculty, was also reported by researchers from several students. Student AJ reported that to complete the final assignment in his Social Studies Education study program, students must complete mandatory courses and undertake a training program. Meanwhile, student SY from the History Education study program reported that the requirements for completing the final assignment include completing credits, microteaching, fieldwork, and student community service (PKM). Although the Social Studies Education and History Education study programs are within the same faculty, differences still exist between the study programs in determining the requirements for taking the final assignment.

This is certainly problematic for the faculty, due to the lack of uniformity and disagreement among study programs within the same faculty regarding the requirements for conducting the final assignment or thesis examination. According to the researchers, study programs under the same faculty should adhere to the same rules, regulations, and formats. This ultimately can affect the heterogeneity of graduates produced across study programs within the same faculty, as students must meet the requirements set by their respective study programs.

Further difficulties encountered in preparing final assignments relate to thesis topics. Several students at a university in Jakarta reported that their final assignment or thesis topics were indeed tailored to the areas of expertise of their respective study programs. However, some students acknowledged the difficulty of finding an appropriate title for their final assignments and the lengthy process of generating ideas. This is because their study programs do not clearly provide guidance and regulations, either verbally or in writing, regarding the provision of information regarding thesis topics. For example, an AD student stated that there were changes to the thesis topic requirements in his study program for this year (2025). However, the information regarding these changes was not explained directly by the study program; they only received information from colleagues who were also completing their final assignments, who also received information from their supervisors.

Regarding the unclear information from study programs, both verbally and in writing, regarding the stipulations for student thesis topics, Ms. NR, a Study Program Coordinator, acknowledged that study programs have not yet established written regulations. Instead, they delegate the role of lecturers in research courses to guide students in finding topics for their final projects. Ms. SR, also a Study Program Coordinator, also acknowledged that study programs do not determine the title for students' final projects. Instead, students are typically guided to develop title ideas during proposal seminars. These lecturers direct program, students must complete mandatory courses and undertake a training program. Meanwhile, student SY from the History Education study program reported that the requirements for completing the

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In addition to the lack of information on thesis topics, the study also found that study programs do not provide comprehensive guidance and regulations for the proposal implementation process. Although information was obtained that study programs schedule proposal seminars in semester 6 so that students can work on them in the following semester or semester 7, implementation has not gone as planned, as students are still found to be late in completing their theses after the proposal seminars. For example, a student enrolled in 2018 and began writing their thesis in 2023, graduating in 2025. If calculated from their 2018 enrollment date, the proposal submission schedule set by the study program for the sixth semester for IL students is 2021, and they should have completed their thesis in 2022. The same situation applies to RZ students who enrolled in 2018 and graduated in 2025. This delay is likely due to the difficulty

students face in finding clear information from their study program regarding the deadline for revisions after the proposal seminar.

Therefore, according to the researcher, the study program needs to improve the delivery of information and input regarding thesis topic requirements. This information can be provided verbally, for example through the study program's socialization program for students before completing their final assignment. Furthermore, the study program can also provide written information, for example, through a final assignment guidebook.

Identification of Student Difficulties in Compiling Final Assignments

The preparation of a final project report is a crucial component of the final project process. In this stage, students present their research findings in a written document, organized systematically and structured. The information presented in the research report includes the research problem, methods, results, conclusions, and recommendations. To prepare this final project report, students must adhere to the standard formatting rules and regulations established by their study program. This ensures quality and compliance with established academic standards.

However, according to information gathered by researchers, students acknowledged that the reference or guidebook for final project preparation within their study program is unclear and incomplete and is not even updated to the latest version. This was confirmed by an interview with student AJ, who stated that a guidebook for students preparing their theses is available within their study program, but it has many shortcomings. AJ reported these shortcomings, for example, regarding formatting issues, including paper size guidelines for final project reports, which are not explained in the guidebook. Students from IL also reported that the formatting requirements for theses are unclear in the guidebook, including the lack of explanations regarding paper size and spacing for abstracts.

In addition to the limitations regarding the formatting rules in the guidebook, the format for document attachments for final assignments is also not fully explained in the guidebook, according to information from student RZ. More specifically, RZ said that students have difficulty creating approval pages for the signature sheets of supervisors and examiners. Meanwhile, when referring to existing theses in study programs, the format of the approval page varies between theses, even within the same study program. RZ's argument was also added by student AD, who reported that the format guidelines for thesis approval pages are not clearly stated by the study program, especially in the guidebook. As a result, according to student AD, students often repeat requests for signatures, because they do not comply with the format. This, according to AD, is certainly time-consuming to correct. Student AN also acknowledged the same thing, that because the lack of clear instructions in the guidebook regarding the format for writing final assignments, information provided by the study program often changes, for example, instructions for the approval page for signatures for final assignments or theses. As a result, students must repeat the signature sheets.

This also forces students to seek alternative solutions due to the limited information in thesis writing guidebooks. Some students admitted to relying on existing theses according to their respective study programs. As expressed by IL students, who

said that in writing their theses, they mostly relied on existing theses in their study programs. Similarly, AD students acknowledged that for writing their theses or final assignments, they referred to existing theses in their study programs. In fact, according to AD reports, their supervisors recommended using existing theses as a guide.

However, while students rely on existing theses, they sometimes report difficulties in adhering to proper formatting standards. Thesis formats often differ and vary from one thesis to another, even within the same faculty or study program. As noted by an AD student, relying on existing theses can lead to problems during the filing process due to missing information. For example, on the approval page, the guidelines for the thesis do not include a signature; only the word "Approval Sheet" is written on the final assignment sheet. However, when submitting the documents, the examiners and supervisors must sign the approval sheet. After revisions and signatures are completed, other missing information, such as the signature of the Study Program Coordinator, is missing.

Another issue that hinders students in compiling theses is data collection. Several students reported difficulty finding and processing data for their research reports. As expressed by student YB, finding data is a challenge when writing a thesis or final project. Student VK also acknowledged difficulties finding data, especially regarding sources.

Finally, other factors contributing to students' difficulties in writing their final projects are internal factors within the students themselves, which hinder their progress. Several students reported experiencing personal issues such as a lack of enthusiasm and motivation to work on their thesis. As revealed by student VK, one of the difficulties in completing their thesis stems from themselves and their families. Furthermore, students also acknowledged their extremely busy schedules, as student YB acknowledged, as her busy organizational schedule made it difficult to find time to write her thesis or final project.

Therefore, the results of the above information can be concluded that thesis writing presents a unique challenge for study programs at the university. Although faculties and study programs have provided facilities, such as providing guidebooks to facilitate student thesis writing, the available guidebooks still have many shortcomings, including not being updated annually and the incompleteness of the content for final project writing instructions. So, this shows that the policies set by the Study Program and faculty regarding the guidelines for the provisions for compiling final assignments are not yet optimal.

Identification of Student Difficulties in Carrying Out Final Project Guidance

Guidance with a supervisor is part of the lecturer's mentoring program to help students complete their final assignments. This aims to ensure the quality of the final assignment meets academic standards. However, according to students, one of the challenges students face in undertaking the guidance is the difficulty of meeting the lecturer's requirements for compiling the final assignment report. According to student VK, during the guidance session, one of the supervisor's instructions was that the thesis must comply with the format and instructions in the guidebook, including spacing

requirements. Student AJ also expressed this sentiment, stating that the supervisor advised the thesis to be written in accordance with the study program's rules and guidelines. As previously explained, the main problem with preparing the final assignment report is the incomplete and incomplete guidebook to assist students in writing their thesis.

Furthermore, another challenge facing students undertaking the guidance session is the difficulty of adjusting the lecturer's schedule for the guidance. According to the AD student, the lecturer's heavy workload, such as teaching and other tasks, sometimes makes it difficult to find a suitable schedule for guidance. On the other hand, students sometimes have other commitments outside of campus. As RZ explained, having to juggle work and helping his parents makes it difficult for him to schedule appointments with his lecturers for guidance. AD and IL students also experience the same issue, as their busy work schedules make it difficult to schedule time with their supervisors

Identifying Student Difficulties for Final Assignment Exams

The final project exam is the final part of the final project. Students will take the exam before an examiner and supervisor to defend their final project or thesis. This is to determine how the final project exam process works at a university and whether any difficulties arise. Researchers found that, according to students, the most challenging part of the final project exam was the submission of required documents. Information from the study program was sometimes unclear, hindering students' ability to register.

Student AD acknowledged that the study program's guidelines for the formatting of the template for the final project were unclear. For example, regarding the signature template, the study program sometimes did not provide a sample signature template. While students followed the template in the existing thesis, their registration was rejected due to missing information. According to AD, this resulted in students having to repeat the requirements. A similar situation was reported by student RZ, who cited a lack of clear information from the study program regarding the formatting of the documents, such as the signature format for the approval page. Student AN also agreed, noting that sometimes changes are made to the format of the approval page for the thesis submission, even though students have already requested signatures. Therefore, when changes are made, students are forced to resubmit the submissions.

Furthermore, the lack of clarity in information from study programs regarding exam registration requirements was further strengthened by the results of comparative interviews conducted between the Study Program Coordinator and students from one study program. For example, when the researcher asked several students what the requirements were for the exam, Student SY stated that for the thesis or final project exam, the supervisor requested the creation of an article. Students RZ and VK from the same study program stated that one of the requirements for the thesis exam was registering IPR (Intellectual Property Rights). However, the opinions of students within the same study program differed from those expressed by the Study Program Coordinator, who stated that journals and IPR certificates were not actually requirements for the thesis exam. Students are only required to submit the thesis

approval page, signed by their first and second advisors. These findings clearly indicate a discrepancy between the study program's requirements for the thesis examination and the information students receive and understand. This problem, in conclusion, stems from unclear information from the study program regarding the requirements for the thesis examination. Furthermore, researchers also found that students struggled to meet exam registration requirements, which sometimes differed between study programs, even within the same faculty. For example, when researchers asked students within the same faculty whether journals were a requirement for exams, several students stated that journals were indeed mandatory. However, each study program's requirements for journals were inconsistent. According to AD and IL students from different study programs, journal submission was limited to the requirement for thesis registration. Meanwhile, according to AJ students from yet another study program, but within the same faculty, their study program required students to have published articles in journals as a requirement for exam registration. When researchers questioned one of the study program coordinators at the same faculty, they reported that articles in their study program were only drafts, as a requirement for exam registration.

Other requirements, such as certificates for exam registration, also varied. For example, AD students stated that a public relations certificate was required for the exam. Student SY, from the same faculty but in a different study program, stated that their program requires a microteaching certificate as a graduation requirement. Similarly, AJ reported that their study program requires an English language certificate. However, researchers observed that several other study programs within the same faculty do not require certificates as exam requirements, as students YB, VK, and RZ noted that no certificate requirement was required for exam registration.

Thus, the differences between study programs within the same faculty in determining final project requirements poses a problem and challenges for students, as they must meet the requirements set by their respective study programs. This, in turn, leads to inconsistent graduate outcomes across study programs within a single faculty at a university.

CONCLUSION

Based on the identification of student difficulties in completing their final assignments, the primary factor inhibiting them was the management of the final assignment by the study program and faculty at a university. This management was related to the lack of clear policies from study programs providing information and guidance for students completing their final assignments. In the initial phase, or preparation phase, there was a lack of uniformity and agreement among study programs within faculty regarding the requirements for completing the final assignment. Consequently, students found it difficult to meet the requirements set by their respective study programs. This impacted the heterogeneity of graduates produced across study programs within a faculty. Furthermore, during the preparation phase, study programs were found to provide limited information and guidance regarding planned topics for students' final assignments, making it difficult for students to find compelling thesis topics.

During the final assignment preparation phase, students found it difficult to adapt to the formatting rules for writing their final assignments. This was due to the limited information in the guidebooks and references available within the study program for guidance on writing their final assignments. Furthermore, during the final assignment preparation phase, factors inhibiting students from writing their theses were also self-inflicted, such as a lack of enthusiasm and motivation. During the guidance sessions, students encountered difficulties in completing the guidance sessions. They struggled to meet lecturers' requests to compile their final assignments according to existing regulations and guidelines, while the final assignment guidebook was still lacking. Furthermore, students struggled to adjust their guidance schedules due to busy schedules.

Finally, during the final assignment exam, students struggled to complete the required documents. This was due to the lack of information on filing requirements from their study programs. Furthermore, the requirements for final assignments across study programs within the same university also varied. This made it difficult for students to meet the requirements for the assignment exams according to their respective study programs.

Therefore, based on these issues, study program policies are needed to manage final assignments, such as preparing comprehensive and up-to-date guidebooks to assist students in completing their final assignments. Furthermore, collaboration between study programs within a faculty is needed to manage final assignments. This will increase the uniformity of graduates within a faculty, thereby improving the quality of graduates.

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