



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2026

12,801: Digital Therapeutics Project

ECTS credits: 3

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

decentral - Presentation, Analog, Group work group grade (15%)

Examination time: Term time

decentral - Written work, Digital, Group work group grade (85%)

Examination time: Term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[12,801,1.00 Digital Therapeutics Project](#) -- English -- [Kowatsch Tobias](#)

Course information

Prerequisites

Students should be interested in the **multi-disciplinary** field of **Digital Health** at the intersection of **health economics, management, behavioral medicine, information systems research, and computer science**. Programming skills may be **helpful** but are **not required**. That is, students will design and implement a mobile health intervention with the help of easy-to-follow **video tutorials**.

Learning objectives

Generative AI Chatbot for Mental Health Treatment (NEJM AI 2025), **Performance of mental health chatbot agents in detecting and managing suicidal ideation** (Scientific Reports, 2025), **To do no harm — and the most good — with AI in health care** (Nature Medicine 2024), **Digital Therapeutics from Bench to Bedside** (npj Digital Medicine, 2023), **Digital Therapeutics for Mental Health and Addiction** (Elsevier 2023), **Large Language Models in Medicine** (Nature Medicine, 2023), **How to e-mental health** (Nature Mental Health, 2023), **Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Medicine** (New England Journal of Medicine, 2023), **LLM-based AI Chatbots in Medicine** (Nature Medicine, 2023)

What are the **implications** and **rationale** behind the recent developments in **digital health**?

Digital Health is the use of **information and communication technology** for the **prevention** and **treatment** of diseases in the **everyday life** of individuals. It is thus linked to topics such as digital health interventions, digital biomarkers, digital coaches and healthcare chatbots, telemedicine, mobile and wearable computing, self-tracking, personalized medicine, connected health, smart homes, or smart cars.

In the 20th century, healthcare systems specialized in acute care. In the 21st century, we now face the challenge of dealing with the specific characteristics of **non-communicable diseases**. These are now responsible for around 70% of all deaths worldwide and 85% of all deaths in Europe and are associated with an estimated **economic loss of \$7 trillion between 2011 and 2025**. Chronic and mental diseases are characterized in particular by the fact that they require an intervention paradigm that focuses on prevention and lifestyle change. Lifestyle (e.g., diet, physical activity, tobacco, or alcohol consumption) can reduce the risk of suffering from a chronic condition or, if already present, can reduce its burden. A corresponding change in lifestyle is, however, only implemented by a fraction of those affected, partly because of missing or inadequate interventions or health literacy, partly due to sociocultural influences. Individual personal coaching of these individuals is neither scalable nor financially sustainable.



To this end, the question arises of how to develop evidence-based **digital therapeutics (DTx)** that allow **medical doctors** and other **caregivers to scale and tailor long-term treatments to individuals** in need at **sustainable costs**. At the intersection of **health economics, behavioral medicine, information systems research, and computer science**, this lecture aims to help students and upcoming healthcare executives interested in the multi-disciplinary field of digital health better understand the **need, design, implementation, and assessment** of DTx.

After the course, students will be able to...

1. understand the importance of DTx for the management of chronic and mental conditions
2. discuss the opportunities and challenges related to DTx
3. better understand the design, implementation and evaluation of **smartphone-based** and **chatbot-delivered** DTx

Content

To reach the learning objectives, students will work on the following topics:

1. Motivation for Digital Health

- The rise of chronic diseases in developed countries
- Prevention, management and treatment of disease

2. Design of a Digital Therapeutics (DTx)

- Overview of design frameworks for health interventions
- Development of a conceptual model for a DTx
- Implementation of a smartphone-based and chatbot-delivered DTx

3. Evaluation of DTx

- Overview of evaluation methods and evaluation criteria for DTx
- Evaluation of a smartphone-based and chatbot-delivered DTx

Structure and indications of the learning and teaching design

The course is structured in **two parts** and follows the concept of a blended treatment consisting of **on-site live sessions** and **complementary online self-service lessons**. In on-site live sessions, students will **learn** and **discuss** the topics of the three learning modules. Complementary **learning material** (e.g., video clips), **multiple-choice questions**, and **exercises** are provided online via Canvas.

In the second part, **students work in teams** and will use their knowledge from the first part of the lecture to **develop a smartphone-based and chatbot-delivered** health intervention with **MobileCoach** (www.mobile-coach.eu), a **software platform** for the development of digital biomarker and digital health interventions. Each team will then **present and discuss** the resulting **digital health intervention and evaluation results** with their fellow students who will provide **peer reviews**. Additional **live coaching sessions** are offered to support the teams with the **design and evaluation of their digital health intervention**, and with the **preparation** of their **presentations**.

Literature

1. Castro, O., Mair, J. L., Salamanca-Sanabria, A. et al (2023). Development of "LvL UP 1.0": a smartphone-based, conversational agent-delivered holistic lifestyle intervention for the prevention of non-communicable diseases and common mental disorders [Original Research]. *Frontiers in Digital Health*, 5. [10.3389/fdgh.2023.1039171](https://doi.org/10.3389/fdgh.2023.1039171)
2. Goldberg, C. B., Adams, L., Blumenthal, D. et al (2024). To do no harm — and the most good — with AI in health care. *Nature Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-024-02853-7>
3. Jacobson, N., Kowatsch, T., & Marsch, L. (Eds.). (2023). *Digital Therapeutics for Mental Health and Addiction: The State of the Science and Vision for the Future* (1st ed.). Elsevier, Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/C2020-0-02801-X>. Kowatsch, T., L. Otto, S. Harperink, A. Cotti and H. Schlieter (2019) A Design and Evaluation Framework for Digital Health Interventions *it - Information Technology* 61(5-6), 253-263.



4. Kowatsch, T., Otto, L., Harperink, S., Cotti, A., & Schlieter, H. (2019). A design and evaluation framework for digital health interventions. *it - Information Technology*, 61(5-6), 253-263. [10.1515/itit-2019-0019](https://doi.org/10.1515/itit-2019-0019)
5. Lee, P., Bubeck, S., & Petro, J. (2023). Benefits, Limits, and Risks of GPT-4 as an AI Chatbot for Medicine. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 388(13), 1233-1239. [10.1056/NEJMsr2214184](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMsr2214184)
6. Seiferth, C., Vogel, L. et al (2023). How to e-mental health: a guideline for researchers and practitioners using digital technology in the context of mental health. *Nature Mental Health*, 1(8), 542-554. [10.1038/s44220-023-00085-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s44220-023-00085-1)
7. Thirunavukarasu, A. J., Ting, D. S. J., Elangovan, K., Gutierrez, L., Tan, T. F., & Ting, D. S. W. (2023). Large language models in medicine. *Nature Medicine*, 29(8), 1930-1940. [10.1038/s41591-023-02448-8](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-023-02448-8)
8. Wang, C., Lee, C., & Shin, H. (2023). Digital therapeutics from bench to bedside. *npj Digital Medicine*, 6(1), 38. [10.1038/s41746-023-00777-z](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41746-023-00777-z)

Mandatory material

The mandatory material will be provided via the online learning platform Canvas.

Additional information

If you have any **further questions** regarding this lecture, please contact **Davinny Sou** (davinny.sou@unisg.ch).

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Presentation
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Oral examination
Examination mode	Analog
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	On Campus
Grading type	Group work group grade
Weighting	15%
Duration	--

Languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

Group presentation

Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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2. Examination sub part (2/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Written work
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Written work
Examination mode	Digital
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	Off Campus
Grading type	Group work group grade
Weighting	85%
Duration	--

Languages

Question language: English
Answer language: English

Remark

Group presentation document

Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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Content

The examination content will cover the three building blocks of the lecture:

1. Motivation for Digital Health
2. Design of Digital Health Interventions
3. Evaluation of Digital Health Interventions

Literature

Mandatory material

The mandatory material will be provided via the online learning platform Canvas.



Please note

Please note that only this fact sheet and the examination schedule published at the time of bidding are binding and takes precedence over other information, such as information on StudyNet (Canvas), on lecturers' websites and information in lectures etc.

Any references and links to third-party content within the fact sheet are only of a supplementary, informative nature and lie outside the area of responsibility of the University of St.Gallen.

Documents and materials are only relevant for central examinations if they are available by the end of the lecture period (CW21) at the latest. In the case of centrally organised mid-term examinations, the documents and materials up to CW 13 (Monday, 23rd March 2026) are relevant for testing.

Binding nature of the fact sheets:

- Course information as well as examination date (organised centrally/decentrally) and form of examination: from bidding start in CW 04 (Thursday, 22nd January 2026);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 16 March 2026);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 14 (Monday, 30 March 2026);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before ending with de-registration period in CW 15 (Monday, 06 April 2026).