

Guideline for the preparation of Seminar, Bachelor, and Master theses

This guideline is intended to help students for the preparation of their thesis at our chair.

Requirements for the preparation of a thesis

If you are interested in writing a Bachelor's or Master's thesis at the Chair of Economics, esp. Behavioral and Digital Economics, you should contact us early. Possible topics include behavioral economics, digital economics, industrial economics, and media economics. A prerequisite for writing a thesis is that you have attended a lecture at the chair (esp. on behavioral economics or digital economics).

Instructions for preparing a seminar paper

All formal information in this document (especially the way of citation) also applies to seminar papers that are written at our chair; for everything else about seminar papers, please refer to the description of the respective seminar.

Registration and topic assignment

If you would like to write your thesis at our institute, please get in touch with us early and inform yourself about the registration and issue periods on the pages of the Examinations Office. If you meet the above requirements, contact us by e-mail at digec@wiwi.uni-muenster.de. The e-mail should include the following information:

- Name, first name
- Which of our lectures did you attend?
- When do you want to pick up the topic?
- What are your fields of interest for a thesis?
- A brief description of the proposed topic, including the research question to be addressed and the methodology with which this should be answered. Importantly, hypotheses to be tested empirically/experimentally need to be derived from formal economic theory.¹

To come up with an idea for a topic, you can

- follow the news and thus come across interesting topics.
- get inspiration from your student job or internships.
- read academic (review) articles (e.g., in the *Journal of Economic Literature* or the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*).
- follow your courses attentively and come across interesting, open questions here.
- Read recent research papers, possibly those cited in your courses; often the underlying data can be found on the homepage of the relevant journal and may be appropriate to answer other questions.

Writing a Master's thesis is usually combined with participation in the Project Study; in the Project Study, you will review the state of the literature on a topic, elicit available data sets, etc., and present concrete Master's thesis ideas. You will present the Project Study to your supervisor for 30 minutes before you hand in the written work. The presentation is ungraded, but you will receive feedback that will be helpful for your subsequent Master's thesis.

¹Proposals of experiments testing for the effect of (ad hoc) nudges are, therefore, not acceptable, as the corresponding hypotheses are not derived from economic theory. Also purely reproductive work such as pure literature summaries is no longer permissible in the age of AI language models.

Processing time

The processing time for Bachelor theses is eight or twelve weeks (depending on whether you complete other subjects simultaneously), and five months for Master theses.

Notes on formal requirements and structure

The quality of a scientific work depends not only on the content presented but also on its structural, linguistic, and orthographic design. Caution: The regulations of the Examinations Office for the preparation of theses have priority in principle.

A basic recommendation: ideally, your paper should take the form of a scientific publication, although theses are usually characterized by a more comprehensive literature survey and a more detailed analysis compared to scientific publications.

Language

You can choose to write your thesis in German or English.

Scope

The main text of the thesis should have a length of 30 pages for Bachelor theses and 40-50 pages for Master theses. However, this specification is only a general recommendation, not an obligation.

Formatting

The following formatting rules apply to theses supervised by our chair:

Paper size:	DIN A4
Margins:	left: 3.5 cm; right: 2.5 cm; top: 2.5 cm; bottom: 2.5 cm
Line spacing:	1.5 lines
Font type:	e.g., Times New Roman or Arial
Font size:	12 for standard text blocks in the paragraph
Paragraph:	Optionally left-justified or justified; if you use justified, please activate hyphenation

You can print the paper on one or both sides; headings shall be emphasized in the text by size according to their importance.

The completed thesis has to be submitted in a bounded version. You must submit it in 2 copies. In addition, electronic submission of your thesis is mandatory.

You can write your paper with Word or LaTeX; you can find tips and templates for LaTeX at my colleague [Prof. Dr. Christoph Schottmüller](#) in Cologne (but keep in mind that you have to exchange the university logos, for example).

Arrangement of pages

1. Title page
2. Table of contents
3. Poss. List of tables and figures

4. Poss. List of abbreviations
5. Main text
6. Bibliography (in alphabetical order of authors)
7. Poss. List of aids used
8. Poss. Appendix

Title page

The title page should contain the following information:

- Thesis title, name of the supervisor
- Thesis type (Bachelor's / Master's thesis)
- Name, matriculation number, degree program, semester, submission date

Table of contents

The table of contents should provide the reader with an overview of the structure of the topic. All bullet points should be included within the main text.

A numerical or an alphanumerical order is possible, whereby a numerical structure according to the gradation principle is usual. Note that there must be a period after each number, but the final period is omitted. Subdivisions may never stand alone; they must each comprise at least two units; where there is no need (or ability) to subdivide, there is no need for a separate subdivision point. I.e., for a section 1.1, there must also be a section 1.2; for a section 1.1.1, there must also be a section 1.1.2.

Generally, there should be no heading without the following text to avoid many headings being strung together. A short text can, for example, clarify the structure of the following sections.

It is usually advisable to precede the main section with an introduction, whose task is to motivate the topic, explain the specific question and outline the methodological approach. The purpose of the concluding section is to summarize the considerations made and to come to a final conclusion.

If a subdivision does not appear in the text, it must be unambiguously apparent from the line of thought. If the author has creative leeway in the structure, the following must be noted:

Although the structure is only an external aid for the writer and the reader, the writer uses it simultaneously to show the extent to which she can mentally systematize a task and master it factually correctly.

In the structure, the author also indicates the line of thought and reveals the weight he attaches to individual problems.

The structure must be logical, going from general to specific. The individual parts must stand in proper relation with each other. Too many sub-points often indicate wrong or clumsily chosen upper points.

Do not structure the text too deeply; try to use blocks of text that are approximately the same length and not subdivided further. A rule of thumb for the correct structure depth can be: Text blocks of less than one page are too short; text blocks of more than five pages are too long.

List of tables and figures

Tables and figures must, in any case, be labeled so that their content can be seen (factual, spatial, and

temporal classification, possibly naming the dimension). In the case of geographical depiction, coordinates, curves, points, etc., must be precisely labeled. The numbering of tables or graphics should be in consecutive order throughout the text. If there are many tables and graphical representations, it is advisable to group them in an appendix. If the author refers to a table or figure in his paper, its number should be listed. The source should be indicated below the table or graph, if possible. If the author compiles his own table from several tables by other authors, all documents used must be listed. The list of figures and tables should precede the text.

List of abbreviations

The list of abbreviations should not include common abbreviations such as "e.g."

Main text

You should avoid the use of inappropriate expressions and non-binding formulations as well as undifferentiated value judgments ("should", "must", "just"). Own value judgments have to be clearly separated from factual statements. You should avoid formulations from the first-person perspective.

Citation method

The citation is in the text, not in the footnotes. Here, the following format should be followed (Smith 2003) or (Smith 2003; Bonini 1963) or (Chenhall and Romano 1989) or (Broadbent et al. 1996).

- If the citation refers only to a specific page or is a literal citation, the page must be included. Example: (Jones et al. 1995, p. 17).
- If the citation refers to two consecutive pages, this must be indicated with "f.". Example : (Jones et al. 1995, p. 17f.)
- If the citation refers to several consecutive pages, these must be explicitly stated. The use of "ff." is not permitted. Example: (Jones et al. 1995, p. 17-20).

The listing in the bibliography must be complete. All references listed in the text must appear in the bibliography and vice versa. When formatting the bibliography, you can use the following examples as a guide.

Examples:

Azoulay, Pierre, Joshua S. Graff Zivin and Jialan Wang (2010). „Superstar extinction“, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 125, Issue 2, pp. 549-589.

Bonini, Charles P. (1963). *Simulation of Information and Decision Systems in the Firm*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Cohen, Patricia (2017). „‘Superstar Firms’ May Have Shrunk Workers’ Share of Income“, *The New York Times*. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/business/economy/labor-share-economic-output.html> [Retrieved on July 5, 2022].

Scott, Chaunda L. (2018). „Historical perspectives for studying diversity in the workforce“, in Byrd, Marilyn Y. und Chaunda L. Scott (eds.), *Diversity in the Workforce*, New York: Routledge, pp. 3-27.

In the case of English-language works, the abbreviation Hrsg. is replaced by eds. as well as the abbreviation S. through pp. replaced.

Declarations

In addition to the thesis, you must submit a declaration on oath and a declaration of consent for the plagiarism software. Please use the forms provided for this purpose on the homepage of the examination office. Hand in the forms, signed and with location and date, bound in at the end of the thesis.

General remarks

When working on the task of a thesis, the first principle is:

For all statements, the comprehensibility must be secured; only then a scientific work is present in the strict sense!

Furthermore, it must be clear at every point in the paper whether the author is reproducing their own work results, their own opinion, or that of another author. The reproduction of another's statement can be done literally (in quotation marks) or by choosing the subjunctive.

If the work refers to sources that are not generally accessible, they must be made available for inspection upon request.

Every scientific paper must have a summary in the sense of a result. If possible, summaries in individual chapter sections should highlight partial results of the exploration. At the end, it should, in any case, be clearly highlighted as an overall result (concluding remark).

Notes on literature research

There are a variety of possibilities for literature research: Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster, Web of Science (only from the university network or using the VPN client), Google Scholar, etc.

Principles of evaluation

Theses with different topics are difficult to compare because each topic requires a different structure and approach to the material. Accordingly, there can be no universal evaluation scheme for such scientific work.

Nevertheless, a reviewer has standards that apply equally to each piece of work. The criteria listed below are generally used for evaluation:

1. Topic of the thesis

Objective difficulty of the topic

Required amount of work

Importance and formulation of the problem dealt with

Independence of the work

2. Content of the thesis

Conception of the investigation approach
Systematic problem solving
Weighting of the work
steps Result of the
thesis

3. Formal Design

Structure and
outline Scientific
expression
Accuracy of illustrations and indexes
Citation, orthography