

Guidelines for written assignments

Institute of International Economics

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1 Aim of written assignments

The aim of writing an academic paper is the independent development of economic content. Formal standards must be observed.

In a term paper, a research question is expected to be analysed economically and answered theoretically or empirically. The categorisation in a specific field of research as well as the in-depth examination of the topic in the context of an comprehensive literature review is an essential part of the work.

A Bachelor thesis is designed to demonstrate your ability to understand and independently analyse economic problems. You will be expected to understand academic texts. Compared to a term paper, the expectations regarding your own contribution to analysing the research question are significantly higher.

In a Master's thesis, the candidate is required to make an own contribution. You are therefore expected to be able to work independently within a limited scientific framework. This includes reading and evaluating more complex publications. Approaches discussed in the literature may be developed further, with model-based or empirical approaches taking centre stage alongside purely theoretical argumentation.

2 Registration, supervision and submission

Information on registration and the further procedure for writing an academic thesis can be found on the institute's homepage under Studies/Final theses/Guidelines for final theses.¹ Please contact the institute for potential supervision before you register with the examination office of the Faculty of Business and Economics. Information regarding the responsible person(s) are available on the website of the institute. Registration with the examination office is necessary for the final marking of the term paper or thesis. Once both steps have been completed, the next step is to make an appointment with the chair.

Step 1: Contact the institute

The first step is to contact the institute about the possibility of supervising your term paper or final thesis. The person responsible for initial contact can be found on the homepage.

¹ <https://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/iioe/de/studium/abschlussarbeiten>

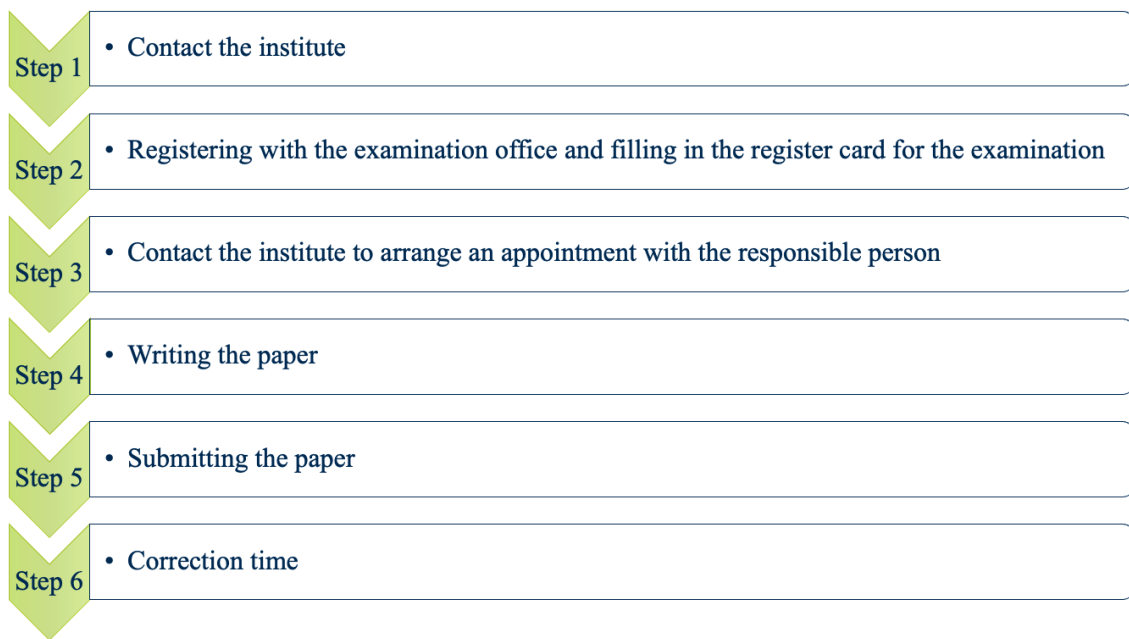


Figure 1: The process for writing scientific papers

Step 2: Registering with the examination office and filling in the register card for the examination

After registering with the institute, you must also register with the examination office. For Business Administration, Economics, Business Informatics and Public Policy, this is done on Flexnow; students on an interdisciplinary or double major programme register their work on QISPOS.

You will then need to complete the register card if you are writing a final thesis. The relevant PDF file can be found on the website of the examination office for Bachelor² and Master theses³ under Downloads/Forms/Final Thesis, along with instructions⁴ on how to complete it.

Step 3: Contact the institute to arrange an appointment with the responsible person

In an initial meeting with your supervisor you will discuss possible topics for your thesis. Choosing a topic is the first step in the process and depends largely on your previous knowledge.

² https://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/pam/sites/pam/files/downloads/Abschlussarbeiten/leitkarte_bachelor_form.pdf

³ https://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/pam/sites/pam/files/downloads/Abschlussarbeiten/leitkarte_master_form.pdf

⁴ https://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/pam/sites/pam/files/downloads/Abschlussarbeiten/hinweise_zur_leitkarte.pdf

Both previous courses and the individual interests of the students are taken into account.

In principle, the topics are published by the chair. Suggestions from the student or from the literature are also welcome, but must be discussed with the supervisor in advance. In this case, you should contact us a few weeks before the desired start date, as corrections usually have to be made or the proposed topics cannot be offered. You will receive feedback from your supervisor.

After a period of two weeks, you must make a binding decision on the topic. You should use this time for comprehensive literature research. If you decide on a topic, you must fill in the register card and bring it with you. The procedure and structure of the final thesis will then be discussed in detail with your supervisor in a separate meeting. It is advisable to discuss the structure at least halfway through the thesis.

Step 4: Writing the paper

Once the topic has been chosen and the outline discussed, the actual work of writing the final thesis begins. At this point, the research question to be answered is clearly formulated, but may be slightly adjusted during the course of the thesis if necessary.

The time taken to complete a thesis varies according to the type of thesis. For an extension of the processing time to 12 weeks due to a bachelor thesis accompanying your studies, the corresponding application must also be submitted. You will then work independently. However, in consultation with the supervisor, there will be further meetings that can be organised individually. The supervisor can be contacted at any time, especially if you have questions about the form or content of your work. However, in order to ensure a level playing field for all students, points may be deducted from your grade if you have frequent meetings. It is therefore strongly recommended that you attend the outline meeting so that mutual expectations can be harmonised.

Step 5: Submitting the paper

Theses must be submitted digitally using the thesis uploader⁵. There is no analogue submission or submission by e-mail. The submission deadline for the thesis is stored in the thesis uploader and must be respected. Uploading the thesis via the thesis uploader requires a connection to the university network via VPN.

Note: In principle, all registration and submission deadlines are subject to the current examination regulations, which can be viewed on the homepage of the examination office of the respective degree programme. This also applies to students on interdisciplinary or dual degree programmes.

⁵ <https://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/pam/de/thesis-uploader>

Step 6: Correction time

The correction period is usually six to eight weeks. Grades are announced by the examination office on Flexnow for students of Business Administration, Economics, Business Informatics or Public Policy, and on QISPOS for students of interdisciplinary or double major programmes.

3 Literature review

The aim of a literature review is to gain an in-depth insight into the subject area and to find analytical tools to answer the research question. A first step can be a broad research using keywords and related terms.

Specialist literature can be found locally in the University and State Library (ULB) and in the library of economics Forum Oeconomicum (sometimes also in branch libraries). The following sources are available for online research:

- Google Scholar
- ScienceDirect
- EBSCO
- JSTOR
- DISCO

A look at the lecture slides on the subject can be useful as a reference point, especially for term papers and bachelor theses.

Note: When using sources, always consider their relevance, citation and timeliness.

4 Formal design criteria

The following guidelines apply to the scope of the work:

- Term paper: 15 pages
- Bachelor thesis: 30 pages
- Master thesis: 60 pages

The page numbers refer to the text only part of the assignment, i.e. without figures and tables. Any deviation from these specifications must be agreed with the supervisor. The thesis can be written in a programme of your choice, e.g. Word or Latex.

The following are additional requirements:

- Font type: Times New Roman (12pt)
Arial (11pt)
- Side margins: 2.5 cm left, 2.5 cm right
2.0 cm top, 2.0 cm bottom
- Alignment: Justification with hyphenation enabled
- Line spacing: 1.5 times line spacing

5 Language and style

The term paper or final thesis can be written in either German or English. The choice of English is a good opportunity to deepen subject-related foreign language skills and to adapt the work to international standards.

The writing style should be formal, objective and technical, avoiding evaluative language. To ensure the readability of the thesis, use a comprehensible sentence structure without repetition or filler words. Avoid overly long nested sentences and be as precise as possible.

Overall, the aim is to ensure that the lines of argument are comprehensible and that the common thread is always recognisable.

6 Structure of the thesis

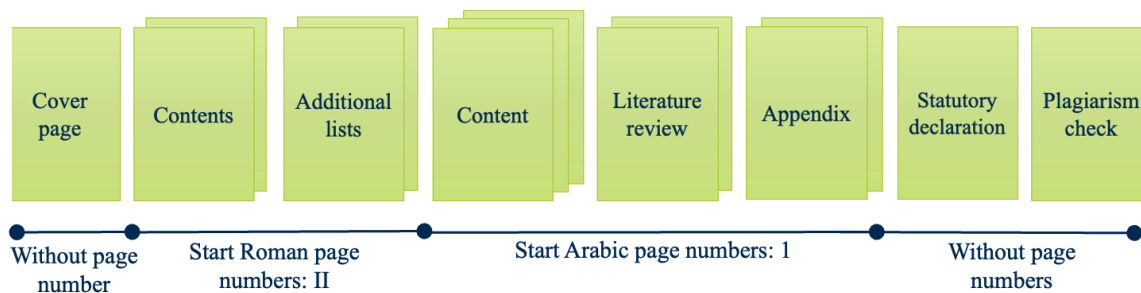


Figure 2: Formal structure of a scientific paper with page numbers

6.1 Cover page

The cover page includes:

- Title of the thesis
- Institute

- University
- Aimed title
- Professor and supervisor
- Processing time (issue and submission date, for term papers only the submission date)
- Author (name, address, matriculation number, degree programme, number of semesters)

Note: Personal details such as name, matriculation number, etc. are only permitted on the title page and on the statutory declaration and plagiarism check.

6.2 Contents

The table of contents should show the logical structure of the work. Pay particular attention to the main thread, which is maintained by good organisation into sections and subsections. If major changes are made to the content of an already agreed structure, a brief discussion for information and coordination with the supervisor is desirable.

To create a table of contents, the automatic table of contents can be selected, which automatically updates page numbers and headings as they are changed in the text. This prevents errors, especially in page numbering, and saves time when finalising the work.

6.3 Additional lists

This section contains the list of figures, tables, symbols and abbreviations. It is important that these are relevant to you and are listed on individual pages following the table of contents.

The list of abbreviations should only include abbreviations that cannot be found in the dictionary. When using abbreviations, pay particular attention to the readability of the text. Too many abbreviations can hinder the flow of the text.

6.4 Content

The text section is divided into **introduction**, **main section** and **conclusion**.

In the **introduction** you introduce the reader to the topic and describe the motivation and relevance of the topic. The aim of the thesis is outlined and initial results are presented, stating the research question. The introduction ends with an outlook on the chapters to come.

The **main section** analyses the research question. For this purpose, a separate analytical framework is first established, which is used to analyse the topic. If the thesis has a theoretical and an empirical part, it is advisable to further divide the main section into

a theoretical and an empirical chapter. Depending on the topic assigned, the proportions may vary and should be agreed with the supervisor in the outline discussion. For more detailed information on the structure of your thesis, it is worth having a look at journal articles, which frequently are represented in a thesis-like structure.

Note: Make sure that you always emphasise your understanding, especially in the analysis, with economic justifications.

The **conclusion** summarises the results of your work and provides an opportunity to look ahead to open questions and new problems. When writing the conclusion, make sure that it is not a complete repetition of all the content, but only a precise summary of the central statements of the analysis.

As a general rule, the common thread must always be clear. It describes the research question explained at the beginning of the thesis that is analysed using the arguments listed in the main section and answered in a comprehensible conclusion. In order to maintain the common thread, the argumentation must be coherent and continuous. A first check can be made by looking at the table of contents, which should show the logical sequence of chapters that build on each other.

The use of introductory sentences at the beginning of a new chapter is helpful in giving the thesis a clear structure and leading the reader from the previous chapter to the next. Focus on the specific research question and avoid explaining irrelevant aspects. Repetition of content should also be avoided, as it does not contribute significantly to a better understanding.

6.5 List of references

Every source cited in the text must be listed in the list of references. There is no additional reference to literature read.

Examples

Monograph:

Kempa, B. (2012), Internationale Ökonomie.

Short version: Kempa (2012).

Journal:

Kempa, B. (2018), "Taylor rule reaction coefficients and real exchange rate persistence", Bulletin of Economic Research, 70 (1), 64-73.

Short version: Kempa (2018).

Internet source:

The New York Times (2023): Inflation Cools Sharply in June, Good News for Consumers and the Fed. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/12/business/economy/inflation-economy-fed-rates.html>.

Short version: The New York Times (2023).

Sources should be listed alphabetically by author. If you are using several sources by the same author, add an 'a', 'b', etc. after the year. The names of all authors should be spelled out in full, while in the footnote in the text section, if there are more than three authors, only the first author should be named and the others abbreviated as et al.

The full reference is given in the list of references, while the short version of the citation is given in the footnotes or in the text, depending on the choice of German or American citation style.

6.6 Appendix

In the appendix, you can present any documents, graphs and tables that are not part of the text, that are explicitly referred to in the text and that are not relevant to the understanding of the text. These could be, for example:

- Interviews
- Derivation for formulas
- Data sets analysed in the work

Important: The appendix is not intended to save space in the text section.

6.7 Statutory declaration and plagiarism check

The signed statutory declaration and plagiarism check must be attached as the last pages of the thesis. The declaration document⁶ and the plagiarism check document⁷ are also available on the examination office website under Downloads/Forms/Final Theses.

7 Figures and tables

Figures and tables may be included in the text to clarify and illustrate the subject matter. An appropriate reference in the text is required, as well as the numbering and labelling of all figures and tables.

8 Citation

Writing an academic paper requires proper citation. The use of other people's ideas in your own work must be clearly and consistently identified by direct and indirect quotation to prevent plagiarism.

⁶ https://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/pam/sites/pam/files/downloads/Abschlussarbeiten/eidesstattliche_erklaerung_form.pdf

⁷ https://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/pam/sites/pam/files/downloads/Abschlussarbeiten/plagiatspruefung_form.pdf

8.1 Direct quotations

Direct quotations are verbatim quotations of specific phrases, a sentence or an entire passage of text. They are used to emphasise individual points made by an author and should not exceed three sentences. They are indicated by quotation marks. In principle, it is possible to omit individual words or parts of sentences from the original quotation. This should be indicated by an ellipsis [...]. In some cases, the original quotation must be adapted by the author by adding words so that the flow of the text is not disturbed. Again, the added words are placed in square brackets to clearly distinguish them from the original quotation. Note: It is recommended that direct quotations be used very sparingly.

Regardless of whether the quotation is direct or indirect, two citation styles can be distinguished:

American citation style (Harvard Style):

References are given directly in the text, in parentheses after the quotation. This usually includes the author's surname(s), the year of publication and the page number.

German citation style:

The source is cited in the footnote at the bottom of the page. The short version from chapter 6.5 applies to the citation.

8.2 Indirect quotations

An indirect quotation is the analogous reproduction of someone else's ideas. They are much more commonly used in academic papers, as it is often more useful to work out the key points that can be used to support your own argument.

In principle, at least one reference should be given after each paragraph. However, if it is a longer text, such as the adoption of a more complex model that takes up several pages, it is not necessary to cite the source after every paragraph. In this case, it is advisable to cite the source at the beginning of the chapter to make it clear that the ideas are not your own. A citation must be included at least at the end of the paragraph.

Note: Any form of citation can be chosen as long as it is used consistently.

8.3 Citation of figures

The complete reference of a figure includes:

- A source reference directly below the image
- The complete list of sources in the list of references

In addition, a corresponding reference in the text is necessary as well as the inclusion of the figure in the list of figures.

9 Notes on literature

This guide is intended to help students at the Institute of International Economics with their term papers or final thesis. You are welcome to consult further literature. If anything is unclear, you can discuss the details with your supervisor. In principle, however, all relevant aspects are covered in these guidelines.

Template for a cover page of a thesis:



Institute of International Economics

Prof. Dr. Bernd Kempa

Term paper/Bachelor thesis/Master thesis

Title

Winter term 2023

Supervisor: xxx

Name: xxx

E-mail: xxx

Address: xxx

Bachelor Economics, Semester xxx

Registration number: xxx

Date of Submission: xxx