



Guidelines for writing a Bachelor or Master thesis

1. Requirements, application procedure, supervision

Prerequisite for writing a thesis with me is that you have successfully passed at least one of my courses or seminars. Possible topics of your thesis need to be related to the topics covered there.

If you want to apply, please send an informal inquiry via e-mail. Usually after choosing an advisor there is a meeting where possible topic, the essential literature, and further steps are discussed. Be aware of the fact, that writing a thesis is an examination that must be accomplished single-handedly by the student. Therefore, supervision during the process of writing the thesis is limited to general clarifications.

2. General remarks

The central task in writing a thesis is to demonstrate your ability to work independently on a scientific topic. Show that you are able to understand and reduce complex, potentially model-theoretical arguments, and describe their essence clearly and concisely in your own words. Aim to frame the results of the paper in a bigger picture. Interpret them self-reliantly, evaluate the modelling assumptions and show connections to relevant economic policy problems.

Use your own words when you summarize other authors' lines of thought. Avoid copying the texts of others word-by-word. The more you rely on the structure of the original paper, the more difficult it is to document the originality of your work.

Reduce arguments to their essence. Show that you understand complex theoretical or empirical results by shortening their presentation adequately. What is negligible and can be left aside? What are the central arguments of the paper?

Try to write the thesis in a comprehensive and consistent way. Be particularly careful with orthography and punctuation. It can be very helpful to let somebody proof-read your work before handing it in. In many situations also a non-economist can help to improve parts that are not yet well-written or formally wrong.

3. Structure and length of the thesis

A thesis consists of the following parts, ordered as follows:

(i) Title page

The title page contains: Title of the thesis (if you decide to write your thesis in German, an English version of the title must also be provided); name and degree of your study program; name and chair of the supervisor; the author's name, address, matriculation number.

(ii) Table of contents

After the title page follows the table of contents (ideally not more than one page, include the page numbers of all sections). It should be structured and the section titles formulated in a way such that the structure of the arguments in the main text can be recognized. The section titles in the table of contents must be identical to the headings in the main text. The table of contents may be followed by indices for the abbreviations, tables, and figures used in your thesis.

(iii) Main text

The main text of a Bachelor thesis should contain a maximum of 35 pages (expectation: 25-35 pages). For a Master thesis, the maximum is 60 pages (expectation: 40-60 pages). If you exceed the space limit this will have a negative impact on your grade. You can find general tips for writing the main text below.

Please stick to the following **layout**:

Font: Times New Roman 12pt; Line spacing: 1.5 lines; Grouped Style (“Blocksatz”); Left margin 4cm, right margin 2cm, top margin 2.5cm, bottom margin 2cm; Footnotes must appear at the end of the respective page (font size 10pt).

(iv) Appendix

Central calculations, tables, and figures *must be included in the main text*. Elements that are not directly necessary for understanding the main text can be moved to an appendix. However, the appendix must not be used for extending the main text.

(v) References

The reference section contains a list of all sources and materials that your paper uses or refers to. Conversely, all the listed references must also be used in the thesis. The references should all be formatted in the same style and ordered by the names of the authors (if there is more than one author, by the name of the first author).

Examples for a possible citation style:

Book:

Mas-Colell, A., Whinston, M. D., & Green, J. R. (1995). *Microeconomic Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press

Journal article:

Abreu, D. (1988). On the Theory of Infinitely Repeated Games with Discounting. *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society*, 56(2), 383-96.

Article in collected volume:

Melitz, M. J., & Redding, S. J. (2014). Heterogeneous Firms and Trade. In: Gopinath, G., Helpman, E. & Rogoff, K. (Eds.), *Handbook of International Economics*, 4. Elsevier: Amsterdam.

(vi) Statement under oath

Declaration that the thesis was authored independently and without used of other than the declared sources. It should also include a statement that the thesis was not previously submitted to another examination board in the same or similar form and has not been published elsewhere.

4. Tips for writing the thesis: Content

- Attach importance to the **introduction**. It should **motivate** the topic (why is it interesting, what is the relation to current events, frame the topic in a bigger picture) and **define** the question(s) that you elaborate on (what is exactly covered in your paper, what is not).
- At the beginning of every chapter briefly **explain** its purpose. Show its connection to the other chapters. Explain to the reader why you proceed in the way you do. At the end of a chapter a summary of the main findings is often helpful.
- You should provide an **intuition** for all results that you present.
- A **critical** evaluation of the discussed content is very important. This can only be done convincingly if you are informed about the related literature (you can find some tips for the literature search below).
- All **statements and evaluations** that you make in your paper must be **justified by arguments**. It is not enough to only give reference to a certain literature source instead of presenting the argument properly. This also holds for introduction and conclusion: Do not only cite the results of different papers but explain the most important arguments for the respective position.

5. Tips for writing the thesis: Formalities

- Basic knowledge from textbooks or scripts does not need to be cited. However, more elaborate ideas that you take over from other authors must be cited using a **precise reference** in the text or a footnote. You should try to assign a new idea to the authors that first stated it. Also, it should become clear from your writing how the respective idea can be understood in the context of your argument. For this, additional explanations may be necessary.
- You are free to choose your preferred **citation style**. However, make sure that you use it consistently throughout the paper. The so-called Harvard style is recommendable and used by many sources.
- If you want to give an additional explanation or comment of a source beyond its use in the main text you can use a **footnote** for it. This could for example be a different opinion that seems important to mention but has no direct use in the main text, or an example for a general statement. Please note that the main text has to be understandable without the footnotes.
- **Direct quotations** are inadequate in most situations and must not be used as a substitute for your own motivation, reasoning or summary. Use your own words.
- **Figures and tables** are not self-explanatory. Be careful to provide an explanation of them in the text such that they can be easily understood by the reader. You have to include a reference for all figures and tables that are not based on your own work.

- Be careful to define all **symbols, variables and abbreviations** in your term paper. Your paper must be readable and understandable by itself, and without the original paper.

6. Tips for writing the thesis: Literature search

One or a small set of research articles is sufficient to find a plenitude of related work. The list of references of your assigned article is a good starting point for your search since it will usually contain references that are thematically connected.

For finding these and other related books or articles in print you can make use of one of the following sources:

(i) The university library catalogue

Library catalogues contain all works that are available in a library. You can search systematically by author, key words, title or year of publication. You can find the catalogue of the University of Bayreuth [here](#).

(ii) Online search services

A very convenient way to search for articles or authors beyond the university library are online search services. Over the following websites you can find almost all published academic (in our case economics-related) work. These sophisticated search engines refer you to other websites (like JSTOR) that are licenced to make the research available to you. Outside the university network you might not be able to access them directly. However, you might still be able to access them from home by using the VPN service of the university (check the university website).

[Google Scholar](#)

Google Scholar not only allows you to find articles that you are actually looking for, but also enables you to see the citations of an article. This feature is very helpful because it makes it possible to find articles that build on the article you work with.

Other websites that offer similar services:

[RePEc](#) (Research Papers in Economics, good working paper database)

[ScienceDirect](#) (Offers direct access to many economics journals)