Guide to Academic Writing at the Professorship for Business Administration, in particular Entrepreneurship
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April 4th 2024 – Subject to updates and revisions

1 Objectives and Deadlines

A **Bachelor's thesis** comprises about 30 pages and 9.000 words or 60.000 characters (including references).
A **Master's thesis** comprises about 60 pages and 18.000 words or 120.000 characters (including references).

Objectives Bachelor's thesis

Undertaking the Bachelor's thesis requires you to apply a level of analysis and develop an understanding of the theory and processes of organizations and the business environment through the completion of a piece of individual research.

The objectives of the thesis are:
- To make a study in depth of a topic which you are particularly interested in within the field of business studies
- To gain experience in planning, designing, executing and reporting a piece of individual research
- To gain experience in the processes involved in research, such as obtaining information from people and/or archives, securing their co-operation, analyzing and evaluating data, framing recommendations, and other methods of field study and data collection
- To learn how to communicate, via a report, complex ideas and information in a coherent and structured manner

Usually, your bachelor's thesis is written in the 6th semester. Further information (in German) can be found here:

https://www.leuphana.de/fileadmin/user_upload/services/studierendenservice/formulare/pruefungen_college/20-09-10_Info_Bachelor-Arbeit_C.pdf

Objectives Master's thesis

Undertaking the Master's thesis requires you to develop a deep level of analysis and understanding of the theory and processes of organizations and the business environment through the completion of a piece of individual research.

The objectives of the thesis are:
- To make a study in depth of a topic which you are particularly interested in within the field of business studies
- To gain experience in planning, designing, executing and reporting a significant piece of individual research
- To gain experience in the processes involved in research, such as obtaining information from people and/or archives, securing their co-operation, analyzing and evaluating data, framing recommendations, and other methods of field study and data collection
- To learn how to communicate, via a report, complex ideas and information in a coherent and structured manner

Here you can find further information about the master's thesis process:
https://www.leuphana.de/en/graduate-school/organise-your-studies/masters-thesis.html

Deadlines Summer Term

In February	**Sign up in mystudy for module "Abschlussarbeiten schreiben"**
	You will receive information about when this is possible through the study service (newsletter or email)! The course will be listed under the previous winter term. Talk to your desired supervisors first, ideally in December/January! Then sign up with the course of the respective supervisor.
In March	**Reach out to your supervisor with first ideas**
During April	**Develop an exposé**
Until the end of April	**Formally submit your intent to write your thesis**
	After submission, you have five months for completion.
Until the end of September	**Submit your thesis**
In October	**Receive your mark and make your dissertation available in Leuphana Library**

In the **winter term**, the months change, with the desired submission date being **end of March** and the formal registration, accordingly, taking place at the **end of October**.

Further information on the formal requirements can be found here:
https://www.leuphana.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Aktuell/files/Gazetten/Gazette_2023_64_2023-07-07.pdf
and the „Fachspezifische Anlage" for the specific programme (e.g. Management & Entrepreneurship: https://www.leuphana.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Aktuell/files/Gazetten/Gazette_2020_85_13-07-2020.pdf).

2 Planning and Writing the Thesis

The specifics should be discussed with the supervisor so that there is an understanding of what roles are expected at each stage. The time available for the thesis is from the completion of the taught elements of the programme until the **submission date of September or March, respectively**. There is no set way to plan a thesis: different projects and formats (see thesis formats section) require different approaches and the ways people work will vary. However, the outline below is an indication of the critical points.

Reading and Planning Stage
- Select broad topic and identify possible objectives
- Initial reading (plus note-taking and reflection) to focus the project
- Develop exposé – indicating firm title, objectives, outline, agreed methodology and provisional bibliography (see structure of an expose below)

An **exposé** (2 -3 A4 pages) contains:
- Introduction and problem description
  - Motivates the research (what's the problem/puzzle?)
  - States the (overarching) research question
- Theoretical background
  - Which theories and concepts are used to address this question and why?
  - What is the state of the field in theoretical and empirical research (theories, empirical results and research gap/issue)
  - Which specific sub-questions result from this framework?
  - Is there a preliminary conceptual model?

- Intended method (literature review, qualitative study, quantitative study)
  - o Research design
  - o Data collection
  - o Data analysis
- Preliminary structure of thesis
- Expected timeline
- Core references

Main Research and Writing Stages

Note that this process is not linear, but iterative! I.e. it involves frequent writing and re-writing, iterating between drafting and editing. Do not underestimate the importance of good style (grammar, spelling) and proper formatting. Therefore, make sure to have the paper proofread. Ask your friends and acquaintances or contact professional service providers to set a time frame for proofreading. You should also proofread the pre-final version paper again. Please note that even scientific papers can be written in a stimulating way and should arouse interest in reading.

- Complete reading (there is always a point to stop)
- Conduct any fieldwork (ensuring the appropriate research ethics approval has already been sought for any surveys or interviews etc.)
- Produce detailed chapter outlines with a bibliography
- Write
- Presentation (formatting) and conclusions
- Reflect, revise and redraft (check spelling and bibliography)
- Submit the final version for examination

Students often rush their conclusions, so it is advisable for your supervisor to see one draft chapter earlier on so that you can incorporate any feedback into subsequent writing. When writing, always ensure that your argumentation is as tight as possible and clearly presented. Each chapter and paragraph should logically follow the previous ones, and there needs to be a clear rationale for the structure. Feedback will mainly be given on a) the topic choice, structure and exposé and b) a draft chapter. Do not expect your supervisor to comment on your whole written thesis.

3   Structure and Organization of the Thesis

A typical traditional research thesis is usually broken into four to six chapters, including a short introduction and conclusion. The chapter structure helps break the thesis into manageable parts and ensures progression from one theme to another. The introduction spells out the focus of the study and its objectives or research questions, explaining why these were interesting to the author and 'locating' them in the field. It should also include an outline of the subsequent chapters. The introduction is then followed by a theory section, outlining the theoretical framework and specifying the status quo of knowledge and research gaps regarding the topic.

Whether your methodology is empirical or literature-based, there is usually a separate chapter providing an account and justification of the research design and methodology adopted. After the findings are presented, the discussion should reflect on the implications of your 'findings' for wider theory and where relevant, for practice, picking up themes about the rationale of the study in your introduction. How the substantive chapters are organized will depend on personal preference and the nature of the research. However, you must ensure that your treatment is sufficiently analytical, integrating conceptual and empirical material. The IMO guidelines provide more detail on this (see website).

Thesis Structure

Specifically, a thesis contains the following elements in the order in which they are mentioned:

The **cover sheet** should contain the following information: Title and subtitle of the paper, name of the supervising professor, name of the author, name and location of the university, institute, course of study, aspired academic degree, and month and year of thesis submission. The relevant examination must be considered. The **IMO guidelines** provide you with the cover sheet layout.

Formally, the **table of contents** represents the structure of the thesis. It should thus have already a numeration. However, the first text page is numbered 1.

- The structure of the thesis should ensure a logical flow of thoughts from the introduction to the end. Incoherent individual paragraphs and/or sections should be avoided. The individual outline points should be in a logical relationship to the sub-points; i.e. the sub-points assigned to an outline level must also belong to the same content level (e.g. 2.2. Organization design - 2.2.1. The origins of organization design would fit; whereas 2.2.1 History of open innovation would be logically incoherent).
- For logical reasons, each outline level for which subitems are created must contain at least two subitems ("Who says A, must also say B").
- The form of the outline is not prescribed; any form of outline can be chosen which brings the items in a logical relationship to form a structure. As an example, two forms are mentioned here:

Example 1: Mixed Classification   Page
A. ....
   I. ....…   …
      1) ....
         a) ....   …
         b) ....   …
      2) ....
      3) ....
   II. ....
B. ....

Example 2: Decimal Classification Page
1 ....
1.1 ....
1.1.1 ....
1.1.2 ....
1.1.3 ....
1.2 ....
2 ....

The structure is followed by a **list of figures and tables** and a **list of abbreviations**. These are only recommended if the number of figures/tables or abbreviations used is high and you consider it useful for the sake of clarity. In general, abbreviations should be avoided because they disturb the flow of reading in the paper.

In the **body of the thesis,** care must be taken to ensure that all points in the outline also appear as headings. In general, the text begins with an introduction, in which the question and the relevance of the topic are explained, and the structure of the paper is introduced. In the second part, the theoretical or conceptual framework is elaborated, necessary definitions of terms are made, and theoretical models and concepts are introduced. The main part of the thesis consists of an independent theoretical or empirical treatment of the research question. In the case of an empirical paper, this also preludes with a chapter on methods. In the final part, the most important results are summarized, the limits of the findings are discussed, and suggestions for further research are made. The main text is typically structured by using the first-level chapters indicated. In order to construct a meaningful structure, we recommend adhering to the "MECE principle" (Minto, 2010 – see

recommended reading). It requires that chapters are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. It helps you to secure a comprehensive discussion of your research question and at the same time helps you focus and avoid redundant content.

A typical structure for **empirical** work is as follows:

1. Introduction
1.1. Phenomenon/problem and relevance
1.2. Research aim and question(s)
1.3. Structure of the work

2. Conceptual and theoretical foundations
2.1. Concept A
2.2. Concept B
2.3. Theoretical perspective
2.4. (Preliminary) Conceptual framework

3. Methodology
3.1. Research design
3.3. Data collection
3.4. Data analysis

4. Results/Analysis

5. Discussion
5.1. Summary
5.2. Main discussion points related to core results
5.3. Future research
5.4. Practical implications
5.5. Limitations

6. Conclusion

A typical structure for **conceptual** work is:

1. Introduction
1.1. Phenomenon/problem and relevance
1.2. Research aim and question(s)
1.3. Structure of the work

2. Theoretical and conceptual foundations

3. "Main part"
3.1. X
3.2. Y
3.3. Z

4. Discussion
4.1. Summary
4.2. Main discussion points related to core results
4.3. Future research
4.4. Practical implications

4.5. Limitations

5. Conclusion

The **bibliography** must include the name (surname and full or abbreviated first name) of the author or editor, the title of the papers and the place of publication (title of the journal with issue number and page number or book title with geographical place of publication and, if applicable, page numbers) as well as the respective year of publication. Internet sources must be marked with the date of the page call. There are different options for formatting the bibliography (see examples from academic journals such as *Academy of Management Journal*). The important thing is uniformity. Some examples can be found below under 3.

Additional information or large tables/illustrations may be included in the **appendix**. Typically, content units in the appendix are numbered A.1 or A.I, A.2 or A.II etc.

These must include a declaration on oath (after the cover page) that the author has prepared the thesis independently and exclusively with the help of the sources indicated (including the use of AI tools for any purpose – see section 6 on AI below=. Furthermore, the thesis must not have been submitted to any other examination authority.

Citations

The most important rules are complete and uniform citation: There are many different styles of quoting, but within a paper, only one and the same style should be followed consistently! Any use of external information must be indicated by a precise reference in a footnote (or in brackets in the text)!

If possible, only a few direct quotations should be given; in particular, the adoption of longer literal quotations should be avoided. In the case of these direct quotations, no changes of any kind may be made to the text; minor omissions within the cited passage are to be indicated by three dots; attention is to be drawn to subsequently inserted or omitted emphasis in the footnote (e.g.: emphasis by the author). Texts taken over literally are to be enclosed in quotation marks and marked as quotation ...to be identified ("...").

If a thought is not quoted directly but in terms of content, this is also be indicated by a reference in the text or in a footnote. In the text, the reference is made by a reference to the source (e.g.: see Heinen 1991, p. 7) or by a superscript (...[1]) at the end of the adopted thought. If a longer paragraph or even an entire bullet point is based on a reference, this is to be noted at the beginning of the adoption of the idea (in the Text... [1]; in the footnote: 1. the following after ...).

In case of second-hand citations, the reference or footnote must be given next to the original source with the words "quoted after". As a general rule, these kinds of citations should be avoided.

Footnotes do not always contain references to literature; they can also, for example, refer to differing opinions or "secondary thoughts".

It is recommended to quote within the text. The author and the year of publication of the publication paper as well as the number of pages, enclosed in brackets, should be cited in the text (Harvard citation style; example: "The temporal uniformity obviously relieves the burden, while the similarity of the tasks probably favors monotony" (Rüssel 1999, p. 191). In this case, all further information is found in the references. In the case that several publications of an author from the same year are cited, these are to be marked accordingly by additional letters. ... (Kirsch 1970a, p. 88 ff.) ... In the Harvard citation style, remarks going beyond the source reference are added to the footnote.

A common format is the APA reference style, which can be found here: https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/apa_reference_style_0.pdf

But different journals use different styles. You can use any one of them, as long as you stick to one style consistently.

Formatting
- DIN A4 pages proceed with standard text processing software (e.g. Microsoft Word)
- Margin: left 4 cm, right 2 cm and bottom and top 2.5 cm
- Write on one site of the paper
- Text formatting: 1 1/2-line normal font (e.g. Times New Roman, 12 point), justified text
- Page numbers: The title page is not numbered. The table of contents and, where applicable, the list of figures, tables and abbreviations are numbered in Roman numbers. The following text and the appendix and the bibliography, if required, are numbered with page numbers in Arabic numerals. Page numbers are inserted in the bottom right-hand footer in Times New Roman, 10 point, single-line.
- Footnotes: must always be placed on the page to whose text they belong; within the footnote, they must be written on one line (normal font, 10 points, justified text, single line)
- Figures and tables: Always label; indicate from which source the figure/table was taken or whether it is a self-created figure/table. Figures and tables that take up one page or more should be placed in the appendix.

Literature

Please do not only use textbooks or anthologies as a basis for your literature research but work mainly with articles from scientific journals. You can refer to rankings to identify journal quality – anything lower than "C" should be avoided. The updated version (from 2024) of the ratings published by the German Business Administration Scholars' Association (VHB) can be found here: https://www.vhbonline.org/service/vhb-rating-2024 . Please refer primarily to the ratings published by the "Org", "Pers", "Strat" and "TIE" subgroups.

4 Literature on Academic Writing
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2017). Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research. Sage. [for those interested in a "critical"/interpretivist research approach]
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. R. (2015). Management and Business Research. Sage. [a current handbook on various aspects of the research process; if you just take a look at one book, then this one]
- Harvard Business School (HBS). (2017). Citation Guide: 2017-18 Academic Year. Retrieved from https://www.library.hbs.edu/Find/Guides/Citation-Management-Guides-Tools
- Minto, B. (2010). The Minto Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing, Thinking, and Problem Solving (new and expanded ed.). Minto International.
- Müller-Seitz, G., & Braun, T. (2013). Erfolgreich Abschlussarbeiten verfassen: Im Studium der BWL und VWL. Pearson Deutschland GmbH.
- Müller-Seitz, G., & Danner-Schröder, A. (2017). Qualitative Methoden in der Organisations-und Managementforschung: Ein anwendungsorientierter Leitfaden für Datensammlung und-analyse. Vahlen.
- Skern, T. (2009). Writing Scientific English: A Workbook. facultas wuv.
- Thietart, R. A. (2001). Doing Management Research: A Comprehensive Guide. Sage. [an older, yet very comprehensive textbook]
- Van de Ven, A. H. (2007). Engaged Scholarship: A Guide for Organizational and Social Research. Oxford University Press on Demand. [a guide for participative forms of research for complex social problems]

5 Evaluation Criteria

What makes a good thesis?

- **Topic**: relevance, clarity, and derivation of the research question, formulation of a concrete research question, classification and delimitation of the topic, justification of the research approach/theory, precision and depth of the topic (focus)
- **Structure**: clarity, structure logic, thematic reference, meaningfulness of headings, own structure, balanced weighting of the topics, red thread
- **Content**: clear introduction and introduction, presentation and transparency of the argumentation, use of clearly and appropriately defined terms, consistent use of chosen terms, embedding of the terms in concepts/theories, topic coverage, correctness of content, consistency of argumentation, and justification of the argumentation in the literature
- **Connection** and mutual reference of the sections
- **Novelty**: originality and own thoughts, statements; critical approach to theory, methodology and, if applicable, empirical material; transfer from theory to empirics
- **Formal aspects**: consistent citation style, correct punctuation/ spelling, style and expression, completeness and uniformity of bibliography, overall form (e.g. margins and visual support by illustrations)
- **Literature**: scope and relevance of sources, independence in literature review, skill in processing literature

Zero tolerance for plagiarism and AI-generated content!
When handing in an assignment, students agree that their assignment will be checked for plagiarism. If plagiarism is detected (either regarding third-party sources or across students), you will fail the respective assignment type. If you use AI-generated content, this must be referenced and clearly declared (see section 6 on AI software).

6 AI Software

In the realm of Bachelor's and Master's theses, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) software (for example Chat GPT) has become increasingly prevalent. While these AI tools can offer support for data analysis, grammar checks and content creation, their usage for any of these purposes needs to be transparently declared in your thesis, including the specific prompts or algorithms employed. This transparency not only ensures academic integrity but also allows for the reproducibility and scrutiny of findings. Moreover, students must diligently guard against plagiarism by properly citing the sources of AI-generated content and rigorously verifying the originality of their work. Since it is relatively easy for experienced readers to detect AI-generated text (including text that you may have written yourself, but then asked the AI to rewrite), and confirm such detections via available tools, your case will be forwarded to the examination board if such usage remains undeclared.

Furthermore, is crucial to exercise caution when inputting data into AI systems, particularly sensitive or confidential information, to safeguard against breaches of privacy and confidentiality. For example, you cannot upload interview transcripts into AI software, as this violates an agreement of informed consent (see section 7 on ethics).

The following website provides additional information:
https://www.leuphana.de/lehre/weiterbildung/details/das-ist-chatgpt-studierende-informiert-zu-reflektiertem-gebrauch-anregen.html

7 Ethics

As you embark on your Bachelor's or Master's theses, it's important to prioritize ethical considerations throughout your research journey. Ethical guidelines serve as your guiding compass, steering you to conduct your research responsibly and with integrity. Firstly, ensure that your research design and methodology adhere to ethical standards set forth by the Institute for Management and Organization. Obtain informed consent from participants, with the agreement clearly outlining the purpose of your study, their rights, and how their data will be handled. We have prepared a consent form and an information sheet for this purpose (see website).

Respect participants' autonomy by allowing them to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions. Safeguard confidentiality and anonymity, taking measures to protect participants' privacy and identities. Additionally, critically evaluate the potential impact of your research on individuals and communities, striving to minimize harm and maximize benefits. By upholding ethical principles in your thesis, you not only maintain the integrity of your research but also demonstrate your commitment to ethical scholarship and contribute positively to your field of study.

You can find further information here: https://www.leuphana.de/forschung/forschungskultur/ethikbeirat.html and contact your supervisor.

8 Making Research Open Access

Bachelor's and master's theses can be published via PubData if they have received a grade better than 2.5 and have a recommendation for publication from the respective reviewer. Further information can be found on the MIZ website at: www.leuphana.de/en/services/miz/research-publish/student-thesis-co.html.

You can initiate the submission of your dissertation or student thesis independently using the following link by logging in with your Leuphana account and following the instructions: https://pubdata.leuphana.de/submit?collection=ffc82e3b-ddde-4b6f-957c-e8f7b3ac69d4. After the final submission, your documents and information will be reviewed by the PubData team and, if necessary, enhanced with metadata before they are published.

PubData not only offers space for research data as well as dissertations and student theses, but also for various other literature publications such as books, journal articles, reports, working papers and term papers. In addition, alternative formats such as videos, podcasts, posters and much more can be published, as long as they were created in the context of Leuphana. The submission of these alternative materials can be started via the following link: https://pubdata.leuphana.de/submit?collection=f3fed124-7088-4264-ab5c-12d6a168dd25.

PubData is hosted and continuously improved by the Media and Information Centre (MIZ). We are very excited to make adjustments to the graphical user interface and to introduce new functions later this year. If you have any questions about using PubData, please do not hesitate to contact us at pubdata@leuphana.de.