

Fachbereich Wirtschaftswissenschaften  
Arbeitsgruppe Mikroökonomie  
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## Guidelines for writing a Master's Thesis

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### 1 Preparation for the Master's thesis

#### 1.1 Topic selection

Students of the Economics and Business Administration faculties are allowed to write their Master thesis at the Microeconomics Department. If you are interested in being supervised by the Microeconomics working group, please contact us with your own topic suggestions. For this purpose, please prepare a short abstract (approx. 1 A4 page) that addresses your research question and motivation as well as relevant literature that you have already researched. Please note that the research focus of the working group is currently on topics of environmental economics, behavioral economics, donations, empirical and experimental economics.

#### 1.2 Principles of scientific work

We attach great importance to compliance with the principles of scientific work, which includes in particular the *careful* handling of scientific literature. In addition to the careful use of cited literature (see section 2), students are expected to deal in depth with the relevant specialist literature on their topic as part of their work, cite it appropriately and place their own work and its results in a scientific context. Information on how to obtain such literature can be found in section 3 of this document.

#### 1.3 Duration

The processing time is specified in the examination regulations applicable to your degree program.

#### 1.4 Submission

In general, the Master's thesis must be submitted by the deadline in two bound versions (paperback) and, additionally, as an electronic copy to the Examination Office. It is expressly

pointed out that the delayed delivery of the Master's thesis will cause a grading of the work as "not sufficient" according to the §16 *General Regulations for Bachelor and Master Theses*.

## **2 Basic Style and Formatting Rules**

### **2.1 Title page**

The title page of the Master's thesis should contain the following information:

- Name of the examiner
- Thesis topic
- Name, address, email, and matriculation number of the author
- Name of the program and number of semesters at the time of submission

### **2.2 Format of the Master Thesis**

#### **2.2.1 Line Spacing**

Line spacing in the main text is 1.5; in footnotes and in figure and table sources single spaced 1.0.

#### **2.2.2 Font Type**

A proportional font type (e.g. Arial, Calibri or Times New Roman) should be used. Font size should be 12pt in the main text, and 10pt in footnotes. Paragraphs must be justified.

#### **2.2.3 Length**

The number of pages of your thesis is specified in the examination regulations. We recommend that including the bibliography as well as figures and tables, the Master's thesis should not be longer than 50 pages. The title page, the table of contents, and, if applicable, the lists of abbreviations, tables, figures, and symbols do not count.

#### **2.2.4 Page Format**

The margin is formatted as follows:

- Left margin: 2.5 cm
- Right margin: 3 cm
- Top margin: 2.5 cm
- Bottom margin: 2 cm

Pages have to be numbered consecutively.

### 2.2.5 Structure: Chapters and Subchapters

The main text must have a decadal structure (e.g. 1, 1.1, etc.). Single subchapters, for example using 1.1 without 1.2, are not appropriate.

### 2.2.6 Lists and Appendices

The thesis must be accompanied by a table of contents outlining the text, illustrations, abbreviations (abbreviations used in the text and bibliography), tables (with page references) and, if necessary, should include a list of symbols. Pages containing indexes and lists must be numbered with roman numbers (I,II,III). A mathematical annex is numbered with Arabian numbers (1, 2, 3). The bibliography is the concluding part of the Master thesis.

### 2.2.7 Equations

Equations are to be numbered consecutively, e.g.:

$$P_N N + P_B B = I \quad (1)$$

### 2.2.8 Figures and Tables

Figures and tables have to be numbered consecutively and must be assigned a title and a source e.g.:

- *Above the figure:* Figure 3: Budget restriction for 2 goods.
- *Below the figure:* Source: German Economic Review, February 2009, Vol. 1, p.11.

### 2.2.9 Footnotes

As a general rule, footnotes should be placed on the same page as the respective text they belong to. They have to be numbered consecutively. Quotations are to be presented in the running text, not in the footnotes.

### 2.2.10 Quotations in the Main Text

Whenever you directly or indirectly quote sources from literature, the references must be indicated directly following the quote in short form by using the following scheme: (last name of author and year of publication, exact page(s)).

Example for an indirect quote:

In the basic model of principal-agent problem the wage function takes into account both tasks of sharing the risks between the contacting parties and of paying the productive work (Holmstrom and Milgrom 1991, 24).

Indication of the exact source must be restated each time (within reasonable limits) the respective source is used. Additionally, direct quotes must be marked with quotation marks (inverted commas).

Example for a direct quote:

“In the standard economic treatment of the principal-agent problem, compensation systems serve the dual function of allocating risks and rewarding productive work” (Holmstrom und Milgrom 1991, p. 24).

### 2.2.11 Bibliography

In the bibliography, all references used in the regular text must be listed in alphabetical order according to the authors' last name. This includes books and related publications, contributions to collective volumes, articles in scientific and non-scientific journals, newspapers, and dissertations and Master's theses.

There are different possible citation formats. You are free to choose your preferred style. The chosen citation style must be consistent throughout the entire document. The following example can be used as a reference for one possible citation format.

#### Books and independent publications:

- Copeland, L. (2008). *Exchange Rates and International Finance*, 5. ed., Harlow: Pearson.
- Pindyck, Robert and Daniel Rubinfeld (2004): *Microeconomics*, 6. Vol., Pearson.
- Gintis, Herbert (2009): *Game Theory Evolving*, 2. Vol., Princeton University Press.

#### Articles/contributions to collective volumes:

- Roth, Alvin E. (1995): Bargaining Experiments, in John H. Kagel and Alvin E. Roth, *Handbook of Experimental Economics*, Princeton University Press.

#### Papers and Essays:

- Stigler, George J. and Gary S. Becker (1987): „De Gustibus Non Est Disputandum“, *The American Economic Review*, 76, 76-90.

#### Unpublished work:

- Mustermann, Max (2012): Utility maximization with time-dependent preferences, *mimeo*, Philipps-Universität: Marburg.

#### Additional Suggestions:

- If there are more than three authors, in the main text just list the first author and add "et al.", e.g. Jones et al. (1999). The bibliography must contain the full names of all authors.
- If there is no apparent author, the reference starts with naming the organisation that published the document or with naming the source.

- If more than one source of the same author is cited, all cited sources are to be sorted according to their year of publication. The oldest work will be listed first. If two or more sources are by the same author and of the same year, add small letters to the publication year to distinguish between the sources, e.g., Frey, B. (1990a), Frey, B. (1990b), etc.

### 2.2.12 Guidebooks

More useful hints can be found in:

- Booth, W.C., Williams, J.M., and Colomb, G.G. (1995): *The Craft of Research (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, & Publishing)*, 1st ed., University of Chicago Press.  
Oder
- Bailey, Stephen (2006): *Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students*, 2nd ed., Taylor & Francis.

## 3 Some Advice for Literature Research and Data Collection

In the preparation of a Master's thesis, it is helpful to make use of the 'Journal of Economic Literature' to search for relevant sources. JEL is a journal that systematically catalogues articles from relevant international economics journals. This data base is available under the name 'ECONLIT' in the online sources of the faculty library (see its webpage). In addition, there are other online data bases with respect to economic and socio-economic literature (WISO, SSCI).

Another source for literature research is ECONIS the online data base of the Central Library for Business and Economics of the Kiel Institute for World Economy. The following databases and platforms are also available for literature research:

- Online library catalogs of universities and libraries (OPAC)
- Google Scholar (scientific documents)
- JSTOR (scientific journals, books and primary sources)
- EconLit (economic sciences)
- EconPapers
- SSRN
- Elicit (AI Research Assistant – Note: Literature search via Elicit is currently not yet sufficient to identify enough relevant literature!)

## 4 Writing a thesis in cooperation with a company

Students interested in making their Master's Thesis in cooperation with a company need to follow the usual protocol when making their application. In addition to the following criteria, it is preferred that the student and a company representative agree to an introductory meeting in Marburg with the professor who will be supervising the thesis. A thesis written in cooperation with a company will be subject to the standard criteria. The topic of the thesis must fit the research profile of the chair that will be supervising the thesis. The topic of the thesis needs to demonstrate sufficient research potential. In cases where the thesis will be written during the performance of an internship, it must be shown that the student will have sufficient working time to perform the research required for the thesis. Specifically, a student should not be expected to work full-time while writing his/her thesis. The company must designate a representative who is to ensure that the student is provided with access to the necessary information and is provided with reasonable working conditions. The student is required to make him or herself personally available in Marburg for supervisory meetings. Assessment of the thesis is the exclusive responsibility of academic supervisors. Furthermore, the criterion for assessment is purely scientific quality, i.e. the results within the context of the company do not have bearing on the final assessment of the Master's Thesis. It follows that the company's final report and the thesis are not expected to be identical as each will have different addressees and serve different purposes. Finally, supervision of the thesis will not include any consulting by the academic supervisors for the company.

## 5 Declaration in Lieu of Oath

A fundamental principle of scientific research is thorough and honest recognition of other people's work. Due to the easy availability of information through the library and in particular the internet, there is a temptation to use ideas of other authors and present them as one's own. It is therefore important to consistently cite your sources. Otherwise, we have to assume a deliberate attempt of deception and will fail your thesis. Moreover, the submission of a Master's thesis written by a third person or institution under your name is also considered to be an attempt at deception and will be assigned the corresponding grade.

Together with the Master's thesis, a declaration of authorship has to be put at the end of your paper and signed by you. Stick exactly to the following example (Word-by-Word).

„By signing this declaration I confirm that I have completed the present thesis/essay independently, without help from others and without using resources other than indicated and named. All phrases that are taken directly or indirectly from other sources (incl. electronic resources), quoted verbatim or paraphrased are indicated accordingly. I am aware that any violation of this declaration will result in the work being graded as 'failed' (1 grade point according to § 16 (2) and 28 respectively of 'Allgemeine Bestimmungen').“

Marburg, Date

Signature