

Guide to the preparation of theses

This guide is intended to serve as an orientation aid for the preparation of your Bachelor's or Master's thesis. We recommend that you additionally consult your supervisor.

I. Basics

It needs to become clear which core questions you want to answer in the context of your thesis and which auxiliary questions will support you in doing so.

Every scientific paper basically consists of an introduction section, a main section and a conclusion section. Use the introduction to motivate and emphasize your core and auxiliary questions (*knowledge objectives*) and give an outlook on the content and structure of the work. In this part, you also refer to the basic literature. The main part builds up the argumentation of the thesis. The conclusion summarizes the results of the paper.

In your paper, make sure that the common thread of your argumentation is always recognizable to the reader. For example, it must be clear for each section to what extent it contributes to answering your core questions. Concentrate on what is essential for your topic and avoid rambling on about "what else might be of interest".

Be sure to elaborate on the economic intuition. The basic idea of your paper must be clear even without complicated wording. "If you can't say it simply and clearly, keep silent and keep working until you can say it clearly." (Karl Popper)

So please write only about things you really understand.

To deepen and derive your arguments, you can (and in some cases must) resort to a formal model. Make sure that all calculation steps are comprehensible. More extensive derivations can be explained in more detail in an appendix. Keep in mind: Mathematics is not an end in itself, but serves as an instrument to clarify the economic thought processes.

Graphs and tables can support your argumentation in a meaningful way. However, they do not explain themselves. Be sure to adequately explain all elements of graphs and tables in the text or in a legend. Only the information relevant to your work should appear in graphs. Tables should present only the relevant figures. Graphs and tables copied from books and articles rarely meet this requirement. It is always advisable to develop the graphs yourself using Excel or a graphics program such as Corel Draw. Embed the graphics and tables in your text and refer to them accordingly.

Support your theoretically based argumentation with empirical facts as much as possible.

Be sure to point out the economic policy implications of your arguments.

Please refer to the FEM Examination Office requirements for your thesis.



II. Literature Review

In most cases, you will be given introductory literature to give you an overview of the topic. This does not always have to be the basic article or the very first paper on the subject. It is a good idea to use what is called a forward search as well as a backward search. So, check who cited the article and who the authors of the article cited. Both will help you "dig in" and dig deep into the topic. In addition, the introductory literature will give you sub-aspects for your topic that will serve as keywords for a literature search in library databases (e.g. OPAC, UBfind) and special article search engines on the internet (e.g. econlit, JSTOR).

Be sure to cite only scientifically usable literature. This includes:

- Journals that are subject to a scientific peer review process (professional journals)
- Monographs by scientists who are identified as experts in the literature
- Textbooks
- Expert opinions of scientific institutes
- Official statistics (e.g. published by Statista)

Noncitable items include:

- Statements from political parties and associations
- Articles in general newspapers and magazines
- Internet articles that do not originate from scientifically verified sources (see above)
- Entries in encyclopedias
- Wikipedia articles
- Data that cannot be clearly traced back to official statistics or scientifically collected data sources

III. Style

Make sure to word your text carefully and to use correct spelling and punctuation. Also, your paper should be clearly understandable and factually written. The reader of your work must be able to follow your line of thought without having to read the relevant sources themselves. To paraphrase Wolf Schneider:

„Universally, there is a lack of insight that someone always has to struggle when a complicated process is to be described in a comprehensible way: the writer or the reader.“

This is where the ball is in your court.

Use as few direct quotations as possible. For one thing, they often don't fit the style of the paper, and for another, some sources are written in a different language than your thesis, so a direct quote is confusing.

Part of a factually formulated paper is that you refrain from using certain linguistic figures (especially euphemisms, hyperboles, and neologisms). The same applies to the use of synonyms. Stick to technical terms. For example, if you are talking about a person's strategy, stick to that word rather than using synonyms such as tactics, calculation, or course of action. Also, be sure to avoid colloquialisms and platitudes.

Terms such as "possibly," "perhaps," and "somehow" suggest uncertainty and should therefore be used as rarely as possible. Equally unsuitable are presumptuous phrases.

IV. Citation in the text

The use of other people's intellectual property must be identified by a precise reference in the text. Cite in a consistent manner.

In economics papers, it is common to cite in the text as far as possible and to indicate there only the name, year of publication and, if applicable, the page of the source used. If a longer paragraph or even an entire bullet point is based on a literature source, make this clear at the beginning of the adoption of the idea in the text. Example: "The following model is based on Bester and Konrad (2005) ..."

If you wish to use a direct quotation, it must be enclosed in quotation marks. Minor omissions within the quoted passage should be indicated by two periods (one word) or three periods (two or more words). Terms inserted in quotations are to be enclosed in square brackets. Any emphasis subsequently added or omitted should be noted in a footnote (e.g., emphasis by author). When quoting English texts verbatim, there is no need for a translation.

One main part of your work is based on insights gained in the course of your literature review. If you take over an idea not verbatim but in terms of content (indirect quotation), this should also be noted. The short citation in the current text is then "(cf. Collier and Siebert 1991, p. 199)" or "(cf. Collier and Siebert 1991, p. 199)". It makes the origin of the thought recognizable.

Not all sources will always come to the same conclusions regarding a topic. In this case, it may be useful to explain this in a footnote. Footnotes are suitable for including supplementary content that you do not necessarily need in your argumentation.

¹XYZ (YYYY) disagree, making the following arguments.

If quotations are made from second hand sources (this should be the exception!), the actual source should be cited with the addition of "Quoted from ..." as the reference.

If an author has published more than one publication in a year and these are cited, the clear source reference should be made by adding small Latin letters to the year (e.g. "Corneo (2006a)", "Corneo (2006b)").

Be careful to use accurate citations when presenting data. If multiple data from different sources are processed in a table or graph, each data series must be attributed to the appropriate source. If own calculations are made, it must be clearly recognizable from which raw data the own calculations were made.

V. Bibliography and sources

All authors cited in the text must be listed in alphabetical order in the bibliography. We recommend **APA7** for your bibliography.

When citing internet sites, please include the full URL and the date you visited that internet site in the bibliography.



VI. Formal requirements for the thesis

On average, a Bachelor's thesis is about 30 pages long and a Master's thesis is 60 pages long. These are guideline values that serve as orientation for you. If possible, try to adhere to them with a deviation of $\pm 10\%$. Please note that these are text pages, i.e. from the first page of the introduction to the last page of the conclusion.

The title page, table of contents and bibliography are not counted.

The printed versions of your thesis are to be printed on **one side** (not duplex) and submitted to the examination office in bound form.

Tables and figures should be numbered consecutively and each should have its own heading. Again, make sure to cite a source here!

Example:

Table 1: average volume of scientific work

Type of work	Extent of work
Seminar paper	15 – 20 pages
Bachelor thesis	30 pages
Master thesis	60 pages

Source: own representation

A **list of tables or figures** is only necessary if the number of tables and figures is greater than six.

A **list of abbreviations** is usually helpful if a particularly large number of abbreviations are used.

A **list of symbols** of the variables used is indispensable if more than six variables are used. The variables should also be introduced once in the text. Example: "In the following model, the quantity of products demanded G is a function of investment in advertising W . The function is denoted $G(W)$."



Structure of the thesis:

Table of Contents.....	I
List of Figures	II
List of symbols	III
List of tables	IV
List of abbreviations	IV
Abstract	V
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Main section	3
2.1 Subsection 1.....	7
2.2 Subsection 2.....	15
3. Conclusion.....	28
Bibliography	31
Appendix	34

The text of the declaration of originality is as follows:

Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that I have prepared this Bachelor's / Master's thesis independently and without unauthorized assistance, that I have not used any sources or aids other than those indicated, and that I have marked as such any passages taken verbatim or in terms of content from the sources used.

The thesis has not been submitted to any other examination authority in the same or similar form and has not been published.

.....

(signature)

Magdeburg, DD.MM.YYYY