



Universität Hamburg
DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

FAKULTÄT
FÜR WIRTSCHAFTS- UND
SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN

Academic Writing

Guidelines and Requirements

For

Bachelor's and Master's Theses

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Table of contents

Table of contents.....	Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.
1. Preliminary remarks.....	3
2. Contacting us.....	5
3. Advance talks.....	5
4. Preparing an exposé.....	5
4.1 Information on the structure and composition of the thesis.....	5
4.2 Suggestions for literature search.....	6
5. Searching a second reviewer (only for master’s theses).....	7
6. Discussion, approval and registration.....	7
7. Writing your thesis.....	8
7.1 Formal requirements for writing a thesis.....	8
7.2 Structure of the thesis and information on the drafting of preliminary indices.....	12
7.3 References and reference management with Citavi or Mendeley.....	14
7.4 Drafting the list of appendices.....	14
7.5 Declaration of academic integrity.....	15
8. Guidance.....	15
9. Submission.....	15

1. Preliminary remarks

Writing academic papers is an essential part of academic studies. The requirements as to form and content of academic papers are high. The present document summarizes the procedure and essential formal requirements for writing and submitting bachelor's and master's theses at our Chair. It is our aim to provide students with a uniform basic concept in order to render their first steps easier. Furthermore, we aim to ensure all students have solid methodical skills and profound knowledge enabling them to successfully complete their academic paper. We are convinced that acquiring basic methodical skills is not only helpful for writing academic papers but will also prove beneficial to our students in their future professional life.

If students fail to fulfill the formal requirements contained in these guidelines or violate rules for citation, points will be deducted from their final grade. In the worst case, the thesis will be graded "unsatisfactory".

The guidelines hereafter set out are based on the following standard references for academic writing, which we also recommend for further reading:

- Kornmeier, Martin (2007): *Wissenschaftstheorie und wissenschaftliches Arbeiten – Eine Einführung für Wirtschaftswissenschaftler*, Heidelberg.
- Sachs, Sybille/Hauser, Andrea (2002): *Das ABC der betriebswirtschaftlichen Forschung – Anleitung zum wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten*, Zurich.
- Theisen, Manuel Rene (2017): *Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten*, 17th ed., Munich.

We always try to keep the provided links in this document updated and functional. In case a link does not work, the provided details will help you to find the required information by searching on the internet.



The present guidelines and provisions of the relevant examination regulations and academic offices ("Studienbüros") apply. Students themselves are responsible for observing these guidelines and provisions. Literature references are indicated for further reading; any rules deviating from these guidelines are to be ignored when preparing an academic paper at our Chair.

Table 1: General procedure for writing a bachelor's or master's thesis

- 1. Choosing a topic**
In line with our research focus we provide guidance to students writing their thesis in the areas of Strategic Management and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In our overview of topics you can find a list including the relevant mentor.
- 2. Contacting us**
Please send an email to the mentor at our Chair who is in charge of the topic you are interested in. Contact details are included in the overview of topics. Please send us: your curriculum vitae, your term paper (incl. grade, if available) and the exact period in which you intend to write your final thesis. We will thus get a first impression of your interests and may check our internal mentoring capacities.
- 3. Advance talks**
We will get to know each other personally, discuss the topics you have in mind and together will try to specify these.
- 4. Preparing an exposé**
You will have to undertake a detailed literature search first and prepare an exposé (cf. Section 4).
- 5. Searching a second reviewer (“Zweitgutachter”) (only in case of master’s theses)**
In case of a master’s thesis you will have to name a second reviewer for your thesis after consultation with your supervising tutor.
- 6. Discussion, approval and registration**
You will discuss the exposé with your supervisor and have to modify the same, if necessary. Prof. Gilbert will then approve your exposé so that you may register your thesis at the student office and start writing your thesis.
- 7. Writing your thesis**
Please note the information provided in Section 7. Any further details regarding guidance will be discussed directly with your supervisor.
- 8. Guidance**
While you are writing your thesis your supervisor will assist you with any questions or problems.
- 9. Submission**
Once students have completed their thesis they have to submit a paper as well as a digital version to the academic office in due time.

2. Contacting us

If your interests are in line with our research focus and you already have topics in mind please contact the relevant research assistant at our Chair. For this purpose, please send us an email in which you briefly present your topic and include a short résumé (without final records) as well as the title of your extended term paper (including the grade). This helps us to better evaluate your interests and core areas and also facilitates the assignment of topics to the individual supervising tutors. A member of the research staff of our Chair will then contact you to fix a date for advance talks.

3. Advance talks

In advance talks we will find out whether the topic you have in mind is basically in line with the Chair's core research areas. Furthermore, the topic will be discussed in more detail. Since we aim to offer all candidates best possible guidance it has to be taken into account that the capacities of our team are limited to a certain degree. Therefore, not all students interested in writing their bachelor's or master's thesis at our Chair will have the possibility to do so.

4. Preparing an exposé

Following the advance talks you may start preparing your exposé. The exposé serves to structure and systematize the proceeding and constitutes the basis for a successful thesis. In principle, the following applies: The more carefully the exposé is prepared the easier it will be for students to write their thesis. In the following you can find information on the structure and composition of the thesis and on literature search.

4.1. Information on the structure and composition of the thesis

The exposé includes the basic fundamentals of the planned thesis and already presents the formal structure of the actual bachelor's or master's thesis. The exposé should not exceed 5 to 6 pages (not including title page, table of contents and reference list) and should include the following elements:

- title page
- table of contents of the exposé

- preliminary table of contents of the thesis
- research question / topic and its relevance in theory and/or practice
- research objective(s) / research question(s)
- current state of research
- methodology
- time schedule
- preliminary reference list of the thesis

The exposé should first of all include title page, table of contents of the exposé and preliminary table of contents of the thesis that clearly reflects the structure of the thesis. This will give the supervising tutor a first comprehensive overview of the thesis to be prepared. The research question should be described in as much detail as possible so that the supervising tutor can identify the facts on which the thesis will be based and its focuses.

Having thus defined the actual research question students should describe the objectives of their thesis. This will in most cases be achieved by answering open-ended research questions. Furthermore, the exposé should include a first overview of the current state of research (i.e. a brief presentation of authors who have already dealt with this topic including their findings). The section on methodology should include initial ideas as to the basic procedure the student deems appropriate to achieve the defined objectives. In addition, the exposé should include a time schedule that determines the most important cornerstones of the work project. A preliminary reference list stating the most important sources (treatises, articles from scientific journals, etc.) will complete the exposé.

The exposé should already be structured in accordance with formal requirements. Apart from general formatting students should particularly see to it that sources are cited properly in the text and that the reference list is complete.

At this point students should bear in mind that empirical theses are often marked by a higher degree of coordination which students often cannot control all by themselves. This should be taken into account when determining the time schedule and defining the topic of the thesis.

4.2. Suggestions for literature search

Since the literature basis is very important for preparing an academic paper in this section you can find further information on literature search.

In general, libraries are the first source to consult in this regard. For the area of strategic management/business ethics the following libraries are to be pointed out:

- Fachbibliothek für Wirtschaftswissenschaften,
- Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg,
- [Zentralbibliothek für Wirtschaftswissenschaften](#) (ZBW)
- [Bibliothek der Helmut-Schmidt-Universität](#)

Students should thoroughly explore articles from national and international journals in order to ensure a high level of data currentness. They can find on the Internet databases (**EBSCO, PROQUEST, ECONIS, SSCI, JSTOR, Web of Science**) where one may search current publications. All relevant databases are accessible free of charge [via the network of Universität Hamburg](#).

Thorough literature search means to substantially determine the current state of research for the topic, penetrate the corresponding literature as regards content and narrow it down to the sources that are particularly relevant for the research question. To this end, all sources should be read in the original version. Furthermore, students should make sure they use the latest and particularly high-quality publications when working on the current state of research. It is rather difficult to indicate general criteria for the significance of a certain publication. Regarding publications in scientific journals rankings have been increasingly established over the past few years that can be used for guidance. A current overview can be found on the Chair's website.

5. Searching a second reviewer (only for master's theses)

In the case of a master's thesis students must name a second reviewer. All candidates are responsible for consulting with their supervising tutor and suggesting a second reviewer. Students should not start searching for a second reviewer until their exposé has reached an advanced stage, so that they can provide their potential second reviewer with a basis for decision-making that is as clear as possible.

6. Discussion, approval and registration

The exposé will be discussed with the respective supervisor in person. As experience has shown, there will be one or two further conversations until all issues regarding the structure of the thesis have been clarified. Prof. Gilbert will then give final approval of the exposé. The period between submitting the first draft of the exposé and having the final exposé approved will not

exceed six weeks. As soon as the exposé has been accepted your thesis has to be registered at the student office and the official time limit for preparing the thesis will start. As of this point in time, the time limit for writing a **master's thesis** will be **6 months (MIBAS)** and for writing a **bachelor's thesis 6 (B.A. Sozialökonomie until enrollment SS 13) or 12 weeks (B.A. Sozialökonomie after enrollment WS 13/14)**.



Students planning to carry out an empirical study (questionnaires, interviews, etc.) in connection with their thesis should manage their time effectively. If the empirical study involves considerable extra time, students writing their master's thesis may apply for a one-month extension of the time limit with the respective department.

7. Writing your thesis

The following section presents the basic formal and methodical guidelines that are important for writing academic papers.

7.1. Formal requirements for writing a thesis

Academic papers must be prepared and submitted in due form. The following aspects are to be taken into account in this regard:

Language:

The thesis can be written in either German or English.

Gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory language:

With this section, we would like to encourage you to give thought to gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory language during your writing, and to find a writing style which you consider appropriate. Since the Universität Hamburg does not have binding guidelines, it is up to you to decide about adjustments to your style of writing.

Students writing in English can, for example, find alternatives for words and formulations making women invisible in language (e.g. simultaneous use of female and masculine pronouns, alternatives to the use of 'man' as a noun, verb or adjective in words such as 'mankind', or 'man made'). In addition to misogyny, language also reflects and reconstitutes racism and the discrimination of people with disabilities. Non-discriminatory writing avoids prejudiced or patronizing terms and expressions. [The Inclusive Language Guidelines of the University of Newcastle](#) (last access July 2020) give an overview of how discrimination is reproduced in English and

which strategies can be implemented in order to avoid it. Additionally, [the British Sociological Association gives further information on their website](#) (last access July 2020).

Students writing in German can refer to the following links for information regarding gender-sensitive and discrimination-free German language:

- [Guideline for gender-sensitive language usage](#) from the University of Applied Science in Ostwestfalen-Lippe (last access July 2020)
- Publication focusing on [gender diversity sensible language usage – discrimination-free writing, speaking and images](#) at the Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt (last access July 2020)
- [Glossary and checklist regarding the guidelines for a racism-critical language usage](#) of the AntiDiskriminierungsBüro (ADB) Köln (last access July 2020)

Font:

To achieve better readability and comparability students are asked to prepare their thesis choosing the font “Times New Roman” that is equivalent in scale 12 pt. (normal spacing) plus 1.5 line spacing and justified margins with hyphenation.

Margins:

Margins must be formatted as follows in case of term papers (“Hausarbeit“), bachelor’s and master’s theses:

- Top: 2.5 cm (including header, if applicable)
- Bottom: 2.5 cm (including footer, if applicable)
- Left: 3 cm
- Right: 2.5 cm

Length:

- Bachelor’s thesis: 30 - max. 50 pages (60.000-100.000 characters)
- Master’s thesis: 60-80 pages (120.000-160.000 characters)

If the number of pages of the bachelor’s or master’s thesis submitted falls below, or exceeds, the number of pages as indicated above, this will have a negative impact on grading (the number of pages includes figures/tables whereas it does not include title page, abstract (if applicable), table of contents, reference or other lists or appendices).

Page numbering:

Page numbering with Arabic numerals begins with the first page of the body of the document. The table of contents, list of tables, list of figures, list of symbols and reference list as well as the list of appendices must be numbered with Roman numerals. Numbering begins with the table of contents. Title page and abstract do not have page numbers.

Formatting:

- for (section) headings: font size 14 pt., bold, line spacing: 1.5 lines, paragraph: spacing after 18 pt., pagination (i.e. a new section always begins on the next page)
- for subheadings: font size 13 pt., bold, line spacing: 1.5 lines, paragraph: spacing before 18 pt., spacing after 12 pt. (pagination only if the subheading would be otherwise located at the bottom of the page)
- for continuous texts: font size 12 pt., line spacing: 1.5 lines, paragraph: spacing after 10 pt.
- for figure and table captions and for footnotes: font size 10 pt., single spaced
- for tables: font size 10 pt., line spacing: 1 line. Often landscape format is advisable for the sake of clarity.
- for references: font size 10 pt., line spacing: 1 line, paragraph: spacing 12 pt.

Inserting figures and tables in the text:

Figures and tables must be inserted in the text whenever they are directly referred to in the text (otherwise they should be listed in the appendix). Often figures or tables are useful to explain complicated facts in an easily comprehensible manner. All figures and tables must be consistently formatted throughout the thesis (left-aligned/with frame or centered/without frame, etc.) and consecutively numbered. As a rule, figures or tables contained in the body of the document are not self-explanatory: this means that each figure and/or table contained in the text must be explained. References for tables and figures are indicated directly below the respective table or figure; the wording of the reference always begins as follows: "Source: ..." (cf. figure 1). The short citation format is to be used (cf. Section 5.4). The title of the figure or table must be of font size 12 pt. and references of font size 10 pt., left-aligned with hanging indent (exactly aligned with the title of the figure/table).

7.2. Structure of the thesis and information on the drafting of preliminary indices

Academic papers must present the following structure:

- title page
- abstract
- table of contents
- list of figures (if necessary)
- list of tables (if necessary)
- list of abbreviations (if necessary)
- list of symbols (if necessary)
- list of appendices (if necessary)
- body of the document
- appendix (if necessary)
- reference list
- declaration of academic integrity

Title page:

The title page should contain the following elements:

- title of the thesis
- type of thesis
- name and chair of the supervising professor
- the student's name and address
- deadline for submission

Abstract:

The abstract is a summary of the whole thesis and serves to offer readers a comprehensive overview of the research question, the method used and the findings of the thesis. It is written in the same language as the thesis and should not exceed three-fourths of a page.

Table of contents:

The table of contents comprises the entire content of the thesis and should therefore be clearly structured. In general, one can differentiate between three basic elements: introduction, main part and conclusion.

For the table of contents in the main part universal decimal classification is to be used. In order to ensure a clear structure of the thesis students should use, in general, three structural levels at the most. Each section must be divided into at least two subsections (i.e. item 2.1 must always be followed by item 2.2). The subheadings must be formatted using a hanging indent. Numbering of subsections must line up precisely with the heading of the main section.

All parts of the table of contents should show a clear reference to the topic of the thesis. This means that headings should ideally be related to the research question. Furthermore, the structure of the table of contents should be clearly laid out and free from redundancies. The headings of the individual sections should be precise, short and informative in order to reflect the logical structure of the thesis. In addition, headings must be self-explanatory. Full sentences, particularly relative clauses and passive clauses, should be avoided.

List of figures and list of tables:

The list of figures and list of tables comprise all figures and tables of the thesis including their respective title and page number.

List of abbreviations:

The list of abbreviations only contains technical abbreviations in alphabetical order and their explanation. This also comprises abbreviations used in the reference list. Students are advised not to use too many abbreviations which impede readability. Common abbreviations (for example, those listed in "Duden") will not be included in the list of abbreviations. All abbreviations included in the list of abbreviations must be introduced in the main part of the thesis, i.e. the relevant term is written out when mentioned in the text for the first time and followed by the abbreviation (in round brackets). Subsequently, only the abbreviation will be used in the text.

List of symbols:

The list of symbols contains all symbols used in the text (e.g. @, €, &, \$, §§, %) in alphabetical order including their explanation.

List of appendices:

The list of appendices contains all appendices including their respective title and page number. Appendices include, for example, the questionnaire used, transliterated wording of interviews, or statistical evaluation of surveys.

7.3. References and reference management with Citavi or Mendeley

At first, we would like to mention two very useful web-based citation guides regarding the recommended citation-style for term papers – the so called “Harvard style”:

- [Dublin City University Library Guide to Harvard Style of Citing & Referencing](#) (last access July 2020)
- [Harvard College Writing Program \(Harvard Guide to Using Sources\)](#) (last access July 2020)

Over the past few years, a number of software solutions have established themselves in the academic disciplines as an alternative to manual reference management and formatting of the reference list. **Windows-users** are recommended to use *Citavi Pro*, as the Regional Computing Center (RRZ) has acquired a license to use this software free of charge. Further information can be found at the website of [Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg](#) (last access July 2020)

Students using *Citavi* must make the following adjustments with regard to citation:

- For term papers written in English: citation style “*American Psychological Association 6th edition (APA)*”

For **Mac-users**, we recommend the cloud-based citation manager „Mendeley“ available for free at <https://www.mendeley.com/>

Students using *Mendeley* must make the following adjustments with regard to citation:

American Psychological Association 6th edition (APA)

More detailed information about the APA citation style are available in:

American Psychological Association (Ed.). (2010). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

7.4. Drafting the list of appendices

The appendices include all documents that are necessary for understanding the content of the thesis but do not necessarily have to be incorporated in the text itself. These are often interviews, additional evaluations, supplementary material, etc. Appendices are listed consecutively. They may include tables, figures, samples, etc. that have no place in the body of the document.

The sources underlying the appendices are to be stated in the reference list as well. All information contained in the appendices must be referred to in the text accordingly. Contrary to tables and figures, in appendices titles must be located above and sources below the illustration.

7.5. Declaration of academic integrity

The last page of a bachelor's or master's thesis must include a declaration signed by the student's own hand in which the student affirms that he or she has only used the sources or other resources as referred to in the thesis (according to Section 14 para. 5 of the examination regulations (*Prüfungsordnung*)):

"I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that I did not use any resources - in particular Internet sources that are not included in the reference list - other than those referred to in this thesis. Furthermore, I certify that I did not submit this thesis in a previous examination procedure and that the version submitted in written form corresponds to the version stored on the data storage device. Any quotations taken from other works either literally or according to their meaning have been indicated as such including the relevant source."

8. Guidance

While you are writing your thesis your supervisor will assist you with any questions or issues. However, in general students should bear in mind that the thesis in its entirety must be their own achievement at any time. Therefore, the intensity of guidance has its limitations.

9. Submission

Students must submit a paper as well as a digital version of their bachelor's or master's thesis to the academic office in due time. Please, use an USB stick as storage device. The specific requirements can be retrieved at the [website of the academic office](#) (last access July 2020). Furthermore, all digital sources that are not publicly accessible should be contained in a separate folder on the data storage device. If SPSS data sets, transcription files or the like have been used (particularly in case of empirical theses) these must be contained on the data storage submitted, too. The responsible supervisor will hand out the USB stick after the grading is done. The thesis must be bound, a simple tacked copy (loose-leaf binder, filing strip) is **not** sufficient.