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# **BACHELOR THESIS GUIDE**

## **for Specialization *Strategy and Managerial Accounting***

**Department of Strategy and Innovation**  
**Vienna University of Economics and Business**

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**DEPARTMENT OF  
STRATEGY AND  
INNOVATION**

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This document gives students who are interested in writing their bachelor thesis at the Institute for Strategy and Managerial Accounting or at the Institute for Corporate Governance a first overview of requirement, guidelines and the supervision process at the Institutes. Interested students are strongly advised to read this guide carefully before applying to the Institutes. However, it does not supersede the individual exchange between students and institutes staff.

# 1 Requirements for writing a bachelor thesis

Students of SBWL and BBE programs "Strategy and Managerial Accounting" have the opportunity to write their bachelor's thesis at the Institute for Strategy and Managerial Accounting (IfU) or at the Institute for Corporate Governance (ICG). Information on the procedure for writing a thesis can be found at [DE/ENG](#). Writing a bachelor thesis requires a positive completion of the subject "Academic Research Techniques" ("Grundlagen wissenschaftlichen Arbeitens").

The course "Academic Research Techniques" is intended to introduce students to the most important techniques of scientific work and writing. According to the curriculum, a positive assessment of the course is a prerequisite for the assessment of the bachelor thesis. In order to write the bachelor thesis at IfU or ICG, it is recommended to complete the course "Academic Research Techniques" (if offered) at IfU or ICG. The course is an exam-based course with 1 credit point and 3 ECTS credits.

The earliest time period that an application is possible is after the completion of the basic course "Introduction to Strategy and Managerial Accounting" ("Course 1"). A prerequisite for writing a bachelor thesis at IfU and ICG is a good knowledge of corporate management and controlling. Therefore, all students of the SBWL and BBE programs "Strategy and Managerial Accounting" should generally have the opportunity to write their bachelor's thesis at IfU or ICG.

## 2 Writing the bachelor thesis

### 2.1 Assigning topics

Students can either suggest a topic themselves that fits the institutes' research focus or choose from a number of suggestions made by their supervisor. It is advisable to contact assistants at an early stage, as supervision also depends on free capacities. As a first orientation students can find assignments of topic blocks to assistants on the homepage of the institutes (see <https://www.wu.ac.at/ifu/forschung/> and <https://www.wu.ac.at/icg/lehre/themen/>)

If current bachelor thesis topics are advertised, they will be announced on the institutes' homepages.

### 2.2 Proposal

A proposal is a preliminary work plan for the bachelor thesis to be written, and should serve as a guideline and orientation for students, as the author of the thesis, as well as for supervisors. It consists of about 3 pages and contains the following points:

- **Title of the thesis:** This is usually a provisional working title, which can be adapted accordingly during the course of writing the bachelor thesis.
- **Problem/research question:** It is briefly explained which topic the bachelor thesis deals with or which question(s) is/are to be answered by the writing of the thesis.
- **Objectives:** It should be clearly explained what the student, as the author of the thesis, wants to achieve and why this bachelor thesis is being written.
- **Procedure/methodology:** This point describes how the student wants to work on the problem. This can be done either in the form of a pure literature analysis or by supplementing it with an empirical part such as conducting a survey, interviews or a case study.
- **Rough disposition:** The rough disposition provides an overview of the planned structure and chapter structure of the thesis.



- **Timetable:** A preliminary schedule for the writing of the bachelor thesis and the supervision meetings provides both the student and their supervisor with an indication of the individual time allocation and planning.
- **Preliminary bibliography:** The preliminary bibliography contains the sources that the student would like to use or has already used for the preparation of the proposal.

In particular, the proposal should provide an overview of the work ("the red thread") and clarify which goal is pursued in the work and how this goal is to be achieved with the work. Usually this proposal is revised several times in consultation with the respective supervisor. The final approval of the supervisor will be given after acceptance of the revised proposal.

## 2.3 Writing the bachelor thesis

The student should work to stay on schedule once the bachelor thesis topic is agreed. Further aspects of the supervision process (e.g. feedback after jointly defined project phases) will be agreed with the supervisor. During the writing of the bachelor thesis, the student should contact their supervisor periodically (a guideline is at least 4 supervision meetings) to discuss the progress of the thesis and to clarify any questions/problems.

In the case of BBE students, 2 to 4 personal meetings, held in English, are required. BBE students must prepare a short presentation of their proposal for their supervisor. In addition, students must agree on the Bachelor's Thesis Agreement with their Supervisor and students are responsible for subsequently uploading it onto LEARN.

It is possible for several students to work on the same topic, provided that the individual parts of the work can be identified and evaluated separately. The standard time for writing a bachelor thesis at our department is 3 months.

## 2.4 Submission of the bachelor thesis

The bachelor thesis is to be submitted electronically to the assessor. Only use the official WU Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration cover sheet for bachelor theses. This can be downloaded from the WU website at <https://www.wu.ac.at/studierende/mein-studium/bachelor-guide/bachelorarbeit/>. The paper must also include the entire appendix (tables, questionnaires, survey aids, bibliography, etc.). In the case of empirical work, the appendix should also document the programs used for complex analyses (e.g. SPSS).

The final submission of the bachelor thesis is done electronically on Learn@WU. All information regarding this can be found at <https://learn.wu.ac.at/guide/>. All papers submitted for evaluation are subject to a plagiarism check.

## 3 Requirements

Writing a bachelor thesis at the end of their studies should demonstrate student's ability to independently work on an economic problem. At the beginning of each bachelor thesis the following central questions must be clarified: (i) What is the problem? (Identification of the problem, delimitation of the problem as precisely as possible), (ii) What is the goal of the thesis? (formulation of the research questions), (iii) Why is the pursuit of the goal of general importance? (motivation of the research question). Subsequently, the concrete problem is stated, and the solution or answering of the research question is then carried out. In order to be able to argue soundly, it is necessary to refer to already existing scientific literature in the relevant field of research. This must be critically



reflected, meaningfully linked and applied to the concrete research question. This means in particular that existing opinions in the literature are not just strung together, but are independently linked to one another and also critically assessed in relation to a specific question (see literature research).

The central assessment criterion for the bachelor thesis is that of independence. This means that a problem should be worked on independently - with the help of relevant literature - and this work should be presented in a written form. By writing the bachelor thesis the student should prove that they are able to structure a topic and deal with it systematically.

Thus the following assessment criteria are relevant:

- **Independence:** An essential element is the visible separation of externally acquired knowledge and the student's own considerations, the latter being of particular importance with regard to the value of the work. In the course of the work, students should develop their own point of view and distinguish it transparently from the ideas they have adopted.
- **Formal correctness:** In addition to linguistic and orthographical correctness, this includes in particular the correct handling of the sources used for the work, adherence to the rules of citation customary in the respective subject and the indication of a complete bibliography.
- **Structure:** The bachelor thesis should not only provide an outline of different literature sources, but should also clearly outline a topic/problem (research question), deal with it systematically and with reasonable effort (main part) and emphasize the most important thoughts/conclusions once again (final part).
- **Consistency of argumentation and synthesis of results:** The bachelor thesis should deal with the problem defined at the beginning in a comprehensible and conclusive way, i.e. the self-defined goals must have been achieved by the end of the thesis. Thus, the synthesis (summary and conclusion) at the end of the thesis is the focus of the review.
- **Critical reflection:** The critical reflection of one's own work and the experiences gained in the context of it should round off the bachelor thesis. This reflection can refer to different aspects, e.g. the literature used, the current state of discussion, the decided methodology used etc.

## 4 Academic writing

As the previous remarks show, scientific writing - including the writing of a bachelor thesis - is more than "nice" formulations. Important information on the subject of "scientific writing" is provided by the following:

- Esselborn-Krumbiegel, Helga (2017): Von der Idee zum Text: Eine Anleitung zum wissenschaftlichen Schreiben. Paderborn: Schöningh, 5. Aufl.
- Rössl, Dietmar (2008) (Hrsg.): Die Diplomarbeit in der Betriebswirtschaftslehre: ein Leitfaden zur Erstellung einer Laureatsarbeit, Bachelorarbeit, Diplomarbeit, Masterarbeit, Dissertation. Wien: Facultas, 4. Aufl.
- Macgilchrist, Felicitas (2014): Academic writing. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Conable, James E. (2018): Research and academic writing for bachelor, master, and doctoral students. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.

Please also note the following link to WU and the literature on scientific writing suggested there: [https://learn.wu.ac.at/student-support/wissenschaft\\_schreiben](https://learn.wu.ac.at/student-support/wissenschaft_schreiben)

## 5 Literature research

A comprehensive literature search is - for any scientific work - indispensable. WU's library is excellently equipped, and almost all relevant economics journals are available online (see <https://www.wu.ac.at/bibliothek/>). In addition, the most important English and German databases such as ABI Inform/ProQuest, EconLit, EBSCO Business Source Premier or also Wirtschaftswissenschaften are available for literature searches (see <https://www.wu.ac.at/bibliothek/recherche/datenbanken/meistgenutzte-datenbanken/>).

Of course, particularly at the beginning of the work, the supervisors at IfU and ICG will also help with the selection of literature.

As a matter of principle, the bachelor thesis at IfU and ICG must make use of the most comprehensive, high-quality, up-to-date literature appropriate to the topic. Predominantly, i.e. in the majority of the sources used, students should use scientific articles from the relevant leading international journals (e.g. Academy of Management Journal; Academy of Management Review; Accounting, Organizations and Society; Strategic Management Journal; Organization Science; Management Accounting Research; Management Science, Journal of Business Economics; Management Review Quarterly, etc.). Articles in German-language journals may also be recommended (e.g. Schmalenbach Journal of Business Research (SBUR); Betriebswirtschaftliche Forschung und Praxis (BFuP), Zeitschrift für Unternehmens- und Gesellschaftsrecht (ZGR), etc.). Students can use the ranking of the VHB (Verein für Hochschullehrer der Betriebswirtschaft) or the WU ranking list as a guide:

- VHB: <https://vhbonline.org/vhb4you/vhb-jourqual>
- WU: [http://bach.wu-wien.ac.at/fides/res/WUJR\\_03062009.pdf](http://bach.wu-wien.ac.at/fides/res/WUJR_03062009.pdf)

In these rankings the journals are arranged according to their qualitative standards, with "A+" representing the best rating. In particular, articles should be used which originate from a journal rated at least "B".

Of course, scientific books/reference works/textbook literature can also be used. In addition, Internet sources can be used in individual cases, e.g. for company and industry information (e.g. company pages or association pages) in the context of an empirical study or for so-called working papers (unpublished works) by scientific authors.

Of course, the choice of literature always depends on the topic. For example, it may be that for certain very specific economic issues, the majority of the sources cannot fall back on the above-mentioned high-quality literature. However, since such topics can also be useful, it is generally possible to work on them, but mainly within the framework of empirical studies.

Non-scientific and unsuitable published sources (Wikipedia, lecture notes, other bachelor theses) can usually not be cited!

## 6 Formal Guidelines

Bachelor theses at IfU and ICG can be written in German or English (For BBE students, theses must be written in English). For German language theses the new spelling is to be used.

It should be noted that scientific writing by a student at the end of their university studies also requires that the work be linguistically, i.e. grammatically and orthographically correct. Gross deficiencies in this respect lead to the work not being accepted for assessment. This applies regardless of which of the two language options was chosen.



## 6.1 General Guidelines

In a bachelor thesis, one topic should be dealt with in a focused way. For this reason, a guideline to follow is a volume of approx. 40 pages (+/- 10 pages; only chapters with content, i.e. exclusive directories). In BaWiSo at least 30 pages, for BBE 40 pages. The thesis should not exceed 50 pages. "Double Bachelor Theses" are usually more extensive.

The font must be a common proportional font such as Arial or Times New Roman, font size 12, justified, line spacing 1.5 (footnote text same font as in text, font size 10, single line spacing).

The pages must be numbered consecutively (uniformly in the header or footer). The pages are numbered up to and including the indexes (see below) in Roman numerals (ii, iii, ...), and the introductory chapter restarts counting in Arabic numerals (1, 2, ...).

Right pages always have odd page numbers, left pages always have even numbers. Main chapters (e.g. theoretical background, research methodology, results, etc.) should always start on a right-hand page (insert blank page if necessary). If headlines are used, they should be "mirrored".

Margins: Left side: left: 2 cm, right: 3 cm; right side: left: 3 cm, right: 2 cm

It is important that the design of the work is consistent throughout. This applies to font type and size, paragraph or inlay design, layout and labelling of figures and tables, headings, footnotes and formulae, spelling of numbers, citation in footnotes and text, references in the bibliography, etc.

The title page should include the title of the paper, the name and matriculation number of the author as well as the names of the reviewing professor and the supervising assistant.

A modern word processing system should be used for writing the text of the bachelor thesis. The results of any study carried out should be documented in graphs and tables that are as descriptive as possible. A powerful graphics program such as POWER POINT, HARVARD GRAPHICS or EXCEL should be used to create such graphics. The following points should be taken into account when writing the text:

## 6.2 Design of tables and figures

The following points should be considered when writing a bachelor thesis:

Illustrations are graphics with bar, line, circle or other diagrams, i.e. representations that contain image information. Tables are representations containing only text and/or figures. All figures and tables must be numbered consecutively (Fig. 1 to Fig. n and Tab. 1 to Tab. n). Less important or extensive figures and tables which are not directly necessary for understanding the explanations in the text should be given in an appendix of figures or tables. Each figure or table should be designed in such a way that it can be understood and interpreted without reading the corresponding text. Figures and tables should therefore contain the following information:

- A clear headline that informs the reader unambiguously about the content.
- An indication of the units of measurement used (absolute frequencies, percentages, euros, averages, etc.)
- For figures and tables on the results of the student's own surveys or tests, an indication of the sample size (e.g. basis: 260 respondents), place and time of the study (e.g. written survey in Vienna, July 2020)



- In the case of results on rating scales, it is imperative to provide reading assistance on the scale (example: 1=does not apply at all up to 6=applies completely). If space permits, please also indicate the question wording in the figure/table.

### 6.3 Structure and outline

A clear, conclusive and logical thought process is shown in a flawless structure with corresponding outline points. In the subdivision, it is important to note that there are always at least two sub-sections at each level and that the respective sub-sections are as equally weighted as possible (sub-sections at the same level always start from a common superordinate problem, i.e. sub-sections 1.2.1 - 1.2.3 explain the superordinate problem 1.2). The structuring of the work should be in decimal classes, starting at one. A dot is placed between two digits to facilitate reading. Example:

1  
1.1  
1.2  
2  
2.1  
2.1.1  
2.1.2  
2.2  
...

At the beginning of the work, all relevant tables of contents, tables and figures must be included.

The first chapter is the introduction, which describes the motivation, problem definition and objectives of the work as well as its structure. The last chapter summarizes the most important results of the work and gives an outlook on further development possibilities. The thesis concludes with a bibliography containing all sources used. An example for the structure of the bachelor thesis would be:

- Bachelor's thesis Cover Page
- Cover pages, foreword if applicable
- Table of contents
- List of figures/list of tables, list of abbreviations and symbols if applicable
- Introductory chapter (Chapter 1): Problem and objective of the work or formulation of the research question, motivation, structure/process of the work
- Content work (Chapter 2-...: Basics, problem solving and discussion)
- Final review (summary/conclusions and outlook)
- Annex (e.g. a questionnaire used)
- Bibliography

It is helpful to use scientific articles or books as a guideline for the work.

### 6.4 Quotation guidelines

In general, academic work is characterized by the fact that all(!) thoughts that cannot be attributed to the author of the work must be cited (for formal guidelines of citations see below), i.e. it must be obvious to the reader who these thoughts originate from!

If this does not happen continuously, it is plagiarism, i.e. theft of intellectual property. IfU and ICG understand plagiarism as a serious offence in academic work. We are firmly convinced that students who spread plagiarism not only undermine the values of the scientific community and diminish the importance and appreciation of the academic degrees of the Institute for Strategy and Managerial Accounting, Institute for Corporate Governance and WU, but also behave unfairly towards students who do not adopt such practices. It is a violation of academic rules to pass off works and papers of other persons as one's own work. This includes not citing (meaningfully or literally) other authors in a bachelor's thesis and not writing the thesis independently. The submission of a work (or parts of it) by a student other than the student's own, regardless of whether the former has agreed to it, the use of "ghost writers", purchase of work, "copy and paste", etc., are also plagiarism.

We would like to point out that every written work by students will be examined accordingly. It is therefore necessary that each bachelor thesis submitted to IfU or ICG for grading is submitted in Word or pdf format. Without exception (!) plagiarism will result in a negative evaluation of the bachelor thesis. In case of any uncertainties, the supervising assistants will of course help students.

Helpful Links:

- IfU and ICG: <http://www.wu.ac.at/ifu/studium/code>, <http://www.wu.ac.at/icg/lehre/code>
- WU: <https://learn.wu.ac.at/open/student-support/plagiate>

A "clean" way of citing should and must ensure that a third party can recognise without doubt which thoughts of a scientific work have been taken over by other authors and what the author's own thoughts are.

In German-language bachelor theses it is common to quote by footnotes. If an author's idea is taken over in the bachelor thesis, the footnote is placed after the completion of the idea (e.g. after a sentence or a short paragraph). In the footnote text, cf. (for "compare"), then the author with year and exact page number. If a literal quotation is used (it must correspond exactly to the original quotation), it must be marked in the text by "...". In the footnote, the author appears with the year and exact page number (WITHOUT cf.) It is also possible to mention the name of the author directly in the text, e.g: Miller (2002) explains in this context that ... . Since the page number is not apparent here, it is nevertheless advisable to add a footnote with exact details at the end of the sentence, or the variant Miller (2002, p. 56).

We also recommend citing footnotes in English-language bachelor theses. However, it is also possible to quote directly in the text by using brackets in accordance with the English academic "tradition". The difference is that once an author's thought is finished, no footnote is added, but a bracket with the relevant information. Regardless of whether a footnote or parenthesis is used, the same applies as above: Author with year and exact page number; if quoted in the sense, marked by "see" instead of cf.

If the author emphasizes individual passages of the quotation, e.g. by italics, this must be indicated at the end of the quotation when the author is named. Further explanations of the author in the quotation are to be indicated by inserted square brackets and "d.V.". (the author), omissions in the quote are indicated by "[...]".

Examples:

- "The applicability of control mechanisms is contingent on the circumstances faced by the organization" (Fischer 1995, S. 24, Hervorhebung d. V.).
- "Der Grund hierfür [sinkende Gewinne, d. V.] wird [...] in der mangelnden Kommunikation gesehen" (Meyer 2007, S. 69).

## 6.5 Formal quoting rules

In general, a chosen style must be maintained throughout the entire bachelor thesis. The most important and most frequent ways of citation are summarized below and should be seen as a suggestions. In consultation with the supervisor, other citation methods can also be used.

### 6.5.1 Quoted text

For citation in the footnote text, only the author's last name followed by the year in parenthesis, then the page number is introduced by S. (in English p.), add a full stop at the end, a comma is recommended after the year, e.g.: Vgl. Amram (1999), S. 95.

If there are several authors, they must be named and can be connected by /, & or "and", e.g.

- Kulatilaka/Venkatraman (1999), S. 4.
- Vgl. Kulatilaka & Venkatraman (1999), S. 4.
- Baker, Gibbons & Murphy (2002), S. 23.
- Baker et al. (2002), S.23. (für Baker, Gibbons & Murphy (2002), S. 23.)

It is also possible (and desirable) to quote several authors for one thought, e.g: Vgl. Amram/Kulatilaka (1999), S. 95ff., Kulatilaka/Venkatraman (1999), S. 4.

If the quotation in the original literature extends over several pages, a distinction must be made:

- Over 2 pages: name the start page with an f. for the following: ..., S. 95f.
- Over more than 2 pages: name the first page with a ff: ..., S. 95ff.

In English only one variant is distinguished, generally with several pages pp. is written and the first page is mentioned, e.g. ..., pp.87.

It is also possible to use several works of one author/a pair of authors from one year in a bachelor thesis. In this case, they must be distinguished from each other by a, b, c and thus also appear in the bibliography, e.g.:

- Vgl. Baker/Gibbons/Murphy (2002a), S. 45.
- Baker/Gibbons/Murphy (2002b), S. 63f.

Internet sources are quoted in abbreviated form in the footnotes, e.g. the homepage of a company. In this case, shortened means that links that extend over several lines are not advisable in footnotes. Nevertheless, they must be clear.

If working papers are downloaded from the Internet, they are treated as "normal" literature in footnotes, i.e. surname, year and page number.

### 6.5.2 Illustrations/Tables

Figures and tables must also be cited. The source is indicated directly in the table caption, which must be given above or below the figure/table, e.g: Figure 1: Structure of the Balanced Scorecard (Quelle: Kaplan & Norton (1996), S. 9)

If it is a separate presentation, it must be marked as follows: Figure 7: Systematization of intangible assets from an institutional economics perspective (Source: Own representation)



If the content of an illustration is only slightly changed, the basic concept of another auditor remains visible, but must be referred to, e.g: Figure 8: Systematization of intangible assets (Source: Sveiby (1995))

If figures/tables are "merged" using several sources, this must be made clear, e.g: Figure 10: Classification of formal management control mechanisms (Source: Eigene Darstellung nach Ouchi (1979), p. 35f., Dekker (2004), p. 38)

### 6.5.3 List of References

The purpose of the bibliography is to ensure that the sources can be verified by a third party in an unambiguous and unmistakable manner. The literature sources are to be arranged in the bibliography alphabetically according to (first) authors in chronological order (first all publications by e.g. Adler as sole author, then those by Adler with C and D as co-authors, then those by Adler with Z as co-author etc.).

The author's last name and the first letters of the first names should be given, together with the year, the full title, the work in which the source in question appeared (e.g. journal or collective work, for journals the issue and number of the issue), for books the publisher and place. Furthermore, punctuation marks/formatting must be chosen sensibly.

Examples:

- Article in a Journal: Adler, P. (2001): Market, hierarchy, and trust: the knowledge economy and the future of capitalism. *Organization Science*, 12 (2): 214-234. (Note: also Volume 12, Issue 2, pages 214-234)
- Book: Hostettler, S. (2000): *Economic Value Added – Darstellung und Anwendung auf Schweizer Aktiengesellschaften*, Bern: Paul Haupt.
- Contribution in a collective work (no journal article): O´Byrne, S. F. (2000): Does Value Based Management Discourage Investment in Intangibles? In: Fabozzi, F J./Grant, J. L. (Hrsg.): *Value Based Metrics – Foundations and Practice*, Pennsylvania: John Wiley & Sons, S. 99-132.
- Working paper from the Internet: Kulatilaka, N./Venkatraman, N. (1999): Are You Preparing to Compete in the New Economy? Use a Real Options Navigator, Working Paper, <http://management.bu.edu/research/workingpapers/fe.html>, Datum des Herunterladens.
- Other Internet sources: complete (not shortened) link, date of download.

## 7 Further Literature

- Boeglin, M. (2012): *Wissenschaftlich arbeiten Schritt für Schritt*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2. Aufl.
- Döring, N./Bortz, J. (2016): *Forschungsmethoden und Evaluation für Sozial- und Humanwissenschaften*, 5. Auflage, Heidelberg: Springer.
- Conable, James E. (2018): *Research and academic writing for bachelor, master, and doctoral students*. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Creswell, John W. (2018): *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE
- Esselborn-Krumbiegel, Helga (2017): *Von der Idee zum Text: Eine Anleitung zum wissenschaftlichen Schreiben*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 5. Aufl.
- Macgilchrist, Felicitas (2014): *Academic writing*. Paderborn: Schöningh.



- Rössl, Dietmar (2008) (Hrsg.): Die Diplomarbeit in der Betriebswirtschaftslehre: ein Leitfaden zur Erstellung einer Laureatsarbeit, Bachelorarbeit, Diplomarbeit, Masterarbeit, Dissertation. Wien: Facultas, 4. Aufl.
- Wolf, J./ Stickel-Wolf, C. (2019): Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten und Lerntechniken: erfolgreich studieren – gewusst wie! Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler, 9. Aufl.
- Theisen, M. R. (2021): Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten – Erfolgreich bei Bachelor- und Masterarbeit. München: Vahlen, 18. Aufl.