

# Bachelor Theses Guideline

## Institute for Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship

These guidelines serve as an orientation basis for all Bachelor theses written at the Institute for SME Management unless otherwise specified by the supervisor. It is to be seen as an aid for checking the work concerning the compliance with important formal as well as content-related criteria. For general information on Bachelor theses for the programme “Business and Economics”, please have a look at this [website](#).

### How do I find my topic and research question?

Ideas for topics may be given in courses or found by browsing relevant literature. Once you have decided on a topic, research thoroughly before formulating the concrete research question.

Take your time to determine and formulate the research question. You will see whether a question is feasible when you try to come up with a research design! Nevertheless, even in this pre-feasibility phase, first general assessments are possible:

- Do not overburden yourself. Try to narrow the question down as much as possible; choose a manageable section of the problem area. For example, instead of “How important is CSR for SMEs”, better ask, “What are the motives of family-run hotel companies for implementing CSR strategies?”
- When developing questions, make sure that the question is an analytical one and does not require a descriptive approach only. Questions that result in a mere description are unsuitable. The question must generate new insights.

Bad questions usually are ...

... formulated as questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no”.

... incorrect assumptions (e.g. Why are public companies more successful than family businesses?).

... so unclear that there is no answer (e.g. Why do retailers not manage to bind other customers to their business?).

... contradictory in themselves (e.g. Why do younger people prefer to shop on the Internet, although older people like to order on the internet, too?).

... formulated as a pseudo-question (a disguised statement) (e.g. Is active customer retention an appropriate approach to customer relationship management in retail?).

... biased (tendentious) (e.g. Given its high importance for the environment, how can waste separation be integrated into the households?).

A suitable research question is clearly formulated, creates relevant added value and is formulated as “how” or “why” question.

Further reading: Turabian, K.L. (2007): A Manual for Writer of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. 7th Edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

### What do I have to consider in formal regards?

**Scope:** approximately 30 pages without technicalities (e.g. directories, Annex)

**Page numbering:** Be sure to provide page numbers.

**Orthography, grammar:** The linguistic quality of the thesis is part of its grade. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure high linguistic quality. Before submission, the work must be proofread as linguistically or formally incorrect papers will be rejected.

**Gender-inclusive language:** Please be careful not to use gender-indicating formulations such as “mankind” (better, “humankind”). This website gives useful tips for gender-neutral writing: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/gender-inclusive-language/>

**Citations:** Depending on the supervisor there are different preferences regarding the specific method of citation. Irrespectively, it is crucial that you always quote consistently, completely and - even in the case of indirect quotations - indicate the page number to ensure traceability.

a) Decide whether to cite in the text or as a footnote.

b) The in-text citations, the footnotes and the bibliography have to be consistent with uniform formal criteria, e.g. APA style (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>) or Chicago Manual of Style ([http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)).

## How to structure my thesis?

- Cover sheet with a statutory declaration (use the WU template, available for download here: [https://www.wu.ac.at/fileadmin/wu/h/students/Pruefungsorganisation/Formulare/Formulare\\_Bachelor/Deckblatt\\_Bachelor18\\_englisch\\_01.pdf](https://www.wu.ac.at/fileadmin/wu/h/students/Pruefungsorganisation/Formulare/Formulare_Bachelor/Deckblatt_Bachelor18_englisch_01.pdf))
- Table of contents (must contain all numbered levels of outline), a list of figures and tables if applicable
- Typical rough structuring of the paper:
  1. Introduction: problem definition, objectives, research question(s), relevance of the research question(s), explanation of the structure of the thesis
  2. Literature review: summarizes the findings of the state of research, reflects these findings critically in the context of the research topic.
  3. Method: describes the approach – qualitative, quantitative, literature-based work; describes the way to the research results in a comprehensible way (research design); justifies the choice of method.
  4. Presentation of results: not just a mere description but an explanation, i.e. not only describes a phenomenon but also explains its causes and implications.
  5. Discussion and Conclusion: should include a summary of the results and discusses them in relation to the existing literature, i.e. points out agreements with and deviations from the literature; suggests possible explanations (lessons learned). Shows the limitations of the work to (i.e. under what conditions are the results valid and among which not?). It explains the significance of the results for practice and/or science; makes clear which questions related to the research topic remained unanswered or what follow-up questions arose.
- Bibliography: is always required! It contains the detailed, consistent and complete information of all sources cited directly and indirectly in the work. Sources that have been read but were not used in the thesis are NOT to be included. Secondary sources that were cited in the Bachelor thesis have to be included in a (separate) bibliography.
- Appendix: contains the material referred to in the argumentation (e.g. supplementary statistical evaluations, brochures, advertising material) and the material that needs to be made available to the reader for reasons of traceability (must be provided! E.g. covering letter, questionnaire, transcripts).
- Make sure to use meaningful chapter names! Introducing a new outline level only makes sense if there are at least two subchapters.

## How do I argue convincingly?

The argumentation must be comprehensible and follows a common thread.

**Comprehensibility:** Every assertion requires a justification. It is not enough to refer to someone who shares the opinion; the opinion should be substantiated in the source cited! Comprehensible conduct requires systematic work. For example, the literature must be selected within the framework of previously defined and justified criteria and take into account all sources that meet these criteria.

**Scientific language:** Use objective and neutral (i.e. no value judgements) language. Ensure consistent use of common technical terms. Avoid writing “I” – a scientific paper is not an opinion essay!

**Research question – the linchpin:** The thesis must be devoted to answering the chosen research question(s) and to the comprehensibility of the arguments. Therefore, all content that is not relevant for answering the research question and/or for the comprehensibility of the thesis must be omitted, or, if unavoidable, limited to an absolute minimum (e.g. description of a company)!

**Structure and style:** On the one hand, a sentence is a grammatical unit, the paragraph, on the other hand, is a unit of meaning, i.e. a paragraph usually consists of several sentences! Your work should not consist of unconnected text modules of different quality. Each main chapter should be marked with a short introduction, which shows what to expect in this chapter, what function it has for the answering the research question and what findings can be expected.

## **Which sources shall/may I use?**

First and foremost, you should work with (up to date) articles from scientific journals and books. Sometimes the use of textbooks, online resources, magazines and newspapers can be useful and appropriate. Secondary sources are only permitted if the original sources are not accessible with reasonable effort. If secondary quotations are used, one should never pretend actually having read the original source, i.e. formulating a secondary citation as a primary citation. Secondary citations must be presented as such in any case!

## **What can I expect of my supervisor and what is expected of me?**

In the supervision agreement, the topic, research question, time schedule, rough outline, etc. are defined together with the further course of the supervision. It is not to be expected that your supervisor:

- takes over the literature research
- corrects spelling and/or writing style
- inquires the current development state of the thesis
- keeps active contact
- gives interim assessments (only complete papers can be assessed)
- actively aims at your bachelor thesis to achieve a certain grade
- makes decisions on content and provides solutions to problems (whereas you can expect the supervisor to point out shortcomings, raise questions and suggest alternative procedures)

## **Presenting your thesis**

For the Bachelor Programme “Business and Economics” you are expected to present your thesis (style of presentation of your own choice) to a small committee that includes your supervisor. After the presentation, a “Mini-Defensio” is held, i.e. your supervisor or other committee members will pose questions related to your research topic, choice of method (e.g. appropriateness of method, limitations) etc.

(This point is relevant to students of the Bachelor programme BBE only! This is because the Bachelor thesis makes up for 10 ECTS credits and not 8 as is the case for the programmes “Business, Economics and Social Sciences” and “Business Law”.)

## **How long does it take from submission of the thesis to the assessment?**

Please note that from the official submission via learn@wu, the legal assessment period for bachelor theses is four weeks and MUST be assessed even in the negative case. Therefore, you should talk to your supervisor about the possibility of an INFORMAL DELIVERY OF THE COMPLETE AND FINISHED WORK before submitting it via learn@wu. Under the following link, you will find the procedure for submission: <https://www.wu.ac.at/en/students/my-program/bachelors-student-guide/bachelors-thesis>