Master's Thesis Guidelines

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Welcome to the next stage of your academic journey – working on your master's thesis. This document is designed to guide you smoothly through the process, helping you from selecting an appropriate topic to finally submitting a thesis. Follow the step-by-step instructions herein to navigate the thesis requirements and procedures efficiently.

1. Before Reaching Out For Supervision

Step 1: Check Your Eligibility

Before reaching out, verify that you meet all general prerequisites for writing a master's thesis at the WU. You can find the details on: University Homepage, Master's Student Guide – available in DE/ENG.

Step 2: Read Information The Material

Carefully read our bachelor and master thesis information material on this website (including: Download and Guideline Quicklinks), to see whether our institute is a good fit for you.

2. Finding Your Thesis-Topic & Reaching Out For Supervision

Step 1: Choose A Topic

- **Option A:** Explore the list of available thesis topics on our institute's homepage.
- **Option B**: Create and propose a topic yourself if the existing ones do not suit your interests.

Step 2: Reach Out For Supervision

If you are keen to write your thesis with us, please send an email to juliane.sroba@wu.ac.at with the subject line: "Request for Master's Thesis Supervision".

Ensure your email contains:

1. Your chosen topic name & brief description

2. Your proposed timeline for the thesis.

3. The research approach you intend to use (such as a literature review, empirical study, or replication study).

4. Three potential dates for a first meeting.

After your first meeting, we will have decided on the topic and procedure of your thesis. After this meeting follow the next steps.

3. Next Meetings: Your Steps to Progress

Step 1: Work on a proposal that is 1-3 pages long, incorporating the following elements:

1. Working Title: The tentative title of your thesis

2. Thesis Statement

3. Approach/Methodology

4. Planned Analysis

5. Thesis Outline

6. Literature

Please follow the guidelines for the Thesis Proposal: **Thesis-Proposal Guidelines.docx**

Step 2: Create a **preliminary timeline** using our proposal to delineate the key milestones of your thesis project. Please use this template: **Timeline_Template.docx**

Share the proposal & planned timeline with your supervisor in a GoogleDoc format and schedule a meeting to discuss feasibility. The final approval will be through email or

during a subsequent meeting. You should refer to this timetable to check your progress during your thesis.

Step 3: Literature review and analysis /empirical study / replication study.
Depending on your thesis you will conduct a literature review, an empirical study, or a replication study. Please read the template for the thesis carefully, since it not only provides guidelines for formatting your thesis, but also information how to conduct a literature review / empirical study / replication study: <mark>**APA_Bachelor_and Master_ThesisTemplate.docx**</mark>

This is the most independent stage of your process. However, please seek out guidance from your supervisor when you feel lost.

Map out your line of argumentation in bullet points or short paragraphs to help structure your narrative. After you have written the first few pages of your thesis, choose the strongest two pages to share with your supervisor for feedback. This step is crucial as it enables you to receive guidance on various aspects including style, structure, and techniques for maintaining reader engagement. Utilize the feedback to refine and develop your thesis further, ensuring a well-articulated and compelling argument.

Step 4: First draft. When you feel like you have completed at least 75% of your thesis, share your draft with your supervisor in a GoogleDoc format.

- You should proofread your text to ensure that there are as few grammatical errors as possible.

- The first draft should have a clear description of your methodology and approach. It should have a clear outline, and the reader should be able to read the whole text without losing sight of your research question.

- Inform your supervisor what type of feedback would be helpful to you -- Are the sections in your draft mostly completed and you are missing a conclusion? Are all the sections ~75% done and you are looking to add more content?

- Continue to advance to work while you are awaiting feedback.

Step 5: Review + Revise. Incorporate feedback on your first draft and seek to schedule a meeting with your supervisor if necessary.

Step 6: Submit your thesis on myWU.

4. Structure of the Thesis

1.Introduction
    1.1 Empirical and replication thesis
        1.2 Supplementary notes for the theory section in replication papers
    1.2 Literature review thesis
2. Method
    2.1 Empirical and replication thesis
    2.2 Literature review thesis
3. Results
    3.1 Empirical and replication thesis
    3.2 Literature review thesis
4. Discussion
    4.1 Empirical and replication thesis
    4.2 Literature review thesis
5. References
    5.1 Paper
    5.2 Book
Appendix A. Short description of the content.

5. Assessment Criteria

The central assessment criterion for the master's thesis is that of independence: you should work independently on a problem – in consultation with relevant literature. Finally, this work should be presented in a written form. By writing the thesis you would prove that

they are able to structure a topic and deal with it systematically. The following assessment criteria are relevant:

1. **Scope**: The thesis should clearly identify the problem/topic of the thesis at the beginning in a way that allows for a feasible answer to be found. You should be able to view your research in the context of current academic and public discourse and demonstrate its relevance.

2. **Analysis:** You should be able to link your research design and findings to the existing theoretical framework. You should be able to synthesize findings from different studies in a coherent and engaging narrative, showing how the findings complement each other and extend the understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Moreover, you should be critical, and describe the merits and limitations of the research you review and conduct. An essential element is the visible separation of externally acquired knowledge and your own considerations, i.e., the original contribution to answering a specific research question.

3. **Academic Writing:** The thesis should not only provide an outline of different literature sources but should also clearly outline a topic/problem (research question), present the arguments and the line of reasoning in a clear structure (main part), and emphasize and contextualize the most important conclusions and implications (final part). The line of argumentation should be visible through the structure.
   - *Formal correctness:* This includes correct handling of all the sources used for the thesis, a consistent style for the reference list, a complete bibliography, and the absence of linguistic and orthographic errors. Aspects like mathematical notations or pseudocode should be properly represented if used.

4. **Computational Skills**: It should be possible to replicate the work that you performed using the documentation that you provided. This presumes clear documentation of the literature search process and/or a well-structured and annotated code/spreadsheet.

6. Academic Literature Search & Writing

A comprehensive literature search is - for any scientific work - indispensable. WU hosts a world-class scientific library, and almost all relevant business and psychology 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 wiso are available for literature searches (see https://www.wu.ac.at/bibliothek/service/). COBE supervisors expect that you will make use of comprehensive, high-quality, up-to-date literature appropriate to the topic.

Please note the following WU link and the literature on scientific writing suggested there: https://learn.wu.ac.at/student-support/wissenschaft_schreiben

7. Formal Guidelines

7.1. General Guidelines

Master's theses at COBE can be written in English or German (for BBE students, theses must be written in English). You have to make sure that their work is linguistically (i.e., grammatically, and orthographically) correct. Gross deficiencies in this respect can lead to the work not being accepted for assessment.

It is important that the design of the work is consistent throughout. This applies to the following aspects: font type and size, paragraph or inlay design, layout and labeling of figures and tables, headings, footnotes, and formulae, spelling of numbers, citation in footnotes and

text, references in the bibliography, etc.: Please carefully read the information in our template, for precise instructions: ==**APA_Bachelor_and_Master_ThesisTemplate.docx**==

The following aspects should be considered when formatting and writing the thesis:

1. The thesis should consist of approx. 15 000 words (approx. 40 pages). The thesis should not exceed 50 pages.

2. The font must be a common proportional font such as Arial or Times New Roman, font size 12, justified, line spacing double-space (footnote text same font as in text, font size 10, single line spacing). Align the text to the left and leave the right margin uneven („ragged"). Do not manually divide words at the end of a line, and do not use the hyphenation function to spread words at the end of the lines. Indent the first line of every paragraph by 1.27 cm. The remaining lines of the paragraph should be left-aligned.

3. Use 2.5 cm margins on all sides (top, bottom, left, and right) of the page.

4. Use headings and sub-headings to organize the sections in your document.

5. Please format your thesis according to APA style and also use APA citation style: https://apastyle.apa.org/

6. We suggest using our template. It is already formatted correctly and contains advice on the required content in each chapter: ==**APA_Bachelor_and Master_ThesisTemplate**==

7.2. Citation and Avoiding Plagiarism

It is imperative to maintain a clean and ethical citation practice throughout your thesis to distinctly delineate between your original ideas and the concepts borrowed from other

scholars. This ensures a transparent recognition of the diversity of thoughts presented in your work. You can refer to the formal guidelines mentioned below to understand this better.

Understanding Plagiarism

Plagiarism, an act of academic dishonesty, involves presenting someone else's work, ideas, or intellectual property as your own without proper attribution. It is treated seriously by COBE and the university, and engaging in plagiarism will result in a negative evaluation of the thesis. Submissions must be in Word or PDF format to facilitate scrutiny for originality. Helpful link: https://learn.wu.ac.at/student-support/plagiate

To avoid plagiarism, be wary of the following:

1. **Direct Quotations:** Always provide clear indications and acknowledge the source when quoting someone else's language, data, or illustrations verbatim.

2. **Paraphrasing:** When restating someone else's critical work in your own words, proper acknowledgment of the original source is necessary. Changing a few words or their order without citation still constitutes plagiarism.

3. **Ideas and Concepts:** Using ideas derived from someone else's work without referencing the originator is prohibited.

4. **Online Materials:** Avoid creating a 'pastiche' of various online sources through cutting and pasting from the internet.

5. **Collusion:** Collaboration with another individual, including another candidate, beyond the allowed extent for joint project work, is considered plagiarism.

6. **Submission of Someone Else's Work:** Presenting someone else's work as your own, without clearly identifying the actual author, is a serious offense.

The Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools for Your Thesis

When incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, Bard, or others into your thesis, it is essential to strike a balance. While we acknowledge that AI tools may find application in your research, please exercise caution. Utilize specialized AI tools for specific tasks rather than relying on a single tool for everything. Here are some notable suggestions:

- ChatGPT (www.chat.openai.com) - grammar checks and writing revisions

- Grammarly (www.grammarly.com) - grammar checks and writing revisions

- ASReviewTV (www.asreview.nl) - identifying relevant publications

- Semantic Scholar (www.semanticscholar.org) -identifying relevant publications

- Connected Papers (www.connectedpapers.com) - identifying relevant publications

Remember that AI-generated information should not be treated as fact; always verify it from credible sources and assume responsibility for any errors. Lastly, while AI can be a valuable resource for grammar checks and writing revisions, using AI to generate text instead of your original work constitutes academic misconduct. When using AI tools for your thesis, ensure comprehensive documentation in the appendix, including prompts and AI-generated responses, using the provided reporting text template provided in the thesis template (**APA_Bachelor_and Master_ThesisTemplate.docx**) to maintain academic integrity throughout your thesis process.

8. Submission of the Thesis

The thesis is to be submitted electronically to the assessor. The official WU Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration cover sheet for theses should be used. The cover sheet, as well as the assessment protocol, can be downloaded from the WU website:

https://www.wu.ac.at/en/students/my-program/bachelors-student-guide/bachelors-thesis

https://www.wu.ac.at/en/students/my-program/masters-student-guide/

The document must also include any appendix materials (tables, questionnaires, survey aids, etc.). In the case of empirical work (empirical study and replication), the appendix should also include the analysis script (not the output!) for the employed software (e.g., STATA, R).

The final submission of the thesis is done electronically on myWU. All information can be found at https://learn.wu.ac.at/guide/. All papers submitted for evaluation are subject to a plagiarism check.

From the moment you submit your thesis, both your thesis and the plagiarism detection check results will be available to your examiner. The assessment of your master's thesis must be completed within **two months** of submission. Your supervisor will give you feedback on your work and provide reasons for the grade assigned to the work in writing.