

Guidelines for theses and seminar papers

at the Accounting and Reporting group

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1 Process – From application to submission

1.1 Bachelor's thesis

1.1.1 Application and Topic Assignment

Information regarding the allocation and assignment of topics can be found on the website of the Institute for Accounting & Auditing, which is continuously updated: <https://www.wu.ac.at/accounting/lehre/sbwl-international-accounting-controlling/bachelorarbeiten>

1.1.2 Supervision

Following the assignment of students and topics, a kick-off meeting is scheduled in November or April. During this meeting, the requirements for the bachelor's thesis are outlined. The meeting includes detailed discussions on the process, structure of the thesis, and formal guidelines.

From this point onwards, the following deadlines apply:

- **1st milestone** after 2 months: Submission of a table of contents and a detailed research concept (research method section)
- **2nd milestone** after 4 months: Submission of preliminary results
- **3rd milestone** after 6 months: Submission of the complete bachelor's thesis

These dates are **deadlines that must be met**. Students must send all submissions to their supervisor. In case of questions or uncertainties, students can contact their supervisor at any time.

1.1.3 Submission

The bachelor's thesis must be completed within 6 months of the topic assignment and is submitted electronically as a PDF document via myWU. Further information on this can be found [here](#).

Students must send all data (Excel, Word, etc.) by e-mail to their supervisor.

1.2 Master's thesis

1.2.1 Application

Students from the Master of Finance and Accounting have the opportunity to write their Master thesis at the Accounting and Reporting group. The assignment is handled by the "Institute for Finance, Banking, and Insurance" through program coordinator Pia Laubis.

1.2.2 Supervision

During the master's thesis seminar, you will present the progress of your work and receive feedback. You can then incorporate the suggestions from this feedback into your master's thesis. In addition, students can contact their supervisor at any time if they have further questions.

1.2.3 Submission

The master's thesis must be completed within 6 months of the topic assignment and is submitted electronically as a PDF document via myWU. Further information on this can be found [here](#).

In addition to the submission of the PDF document via myWU, a USB flash drive must be submitted to the Accounting and Reporting group within five days.

The following documents must be saved on the USB flash drive: The master's thesis as a Word and PDF file, the literature used in the thesis (if available electronically), and all data and calculations used. All files and documents are to be stored in folders in a structured way. Name the master's thesis as follows:

"Last Name_First Name.docx" and "Last Name_First Name.pdf".

To hand in the USB flash drive, you can contact vincent.merrikh@wu.ac.at or use the post box in building AD, 1st floor (Accounting and Reporting Group).

2 Content requirements

2.1 Structure

The thesis contains the following parts in the order listed:

- Title page

[Click](#) here to access the title page for term papers and case studies.

[Click](#) here to access the title page for bachelor's theses.

[Click](#) here to access the title page for master's theses.

- Declaration of authorship

The declaration of authorship is included in the provided title page for term papers and case studies. Please insert the date and sign the declaration. When submitting the thesis in Thesis Management in myWU, the declaration of authorship must be confirmed directly upon submission. A cover sheet with a declaration is therefore not necessary for bachelor's and master's theses.

- Abstract

The abstract should capture the interest of the reader. It should summarize the contents of the thesis in a concise form and should present the importance and topicality of the subject. The length of the abstract should not exceed 250 words and should contain no footnotes and no abbreviations.

- Table of contents
- List of figures, tables and abbreviations (if necessary)
- Main text

The main text of a scientific work consists of three parts: Introduction, main part and conclusion. The **introduction** states the problem definition, objective, and structure of the thesis. Accordingly, the introduction should include references to the respective sections. It introduces the topic and comprises limitations of the thesis. The **main part** comprises the own theoretical and practical contribution. Besides theoretical principles it could also contain case studies, concepts, empirical investigations and analyses, critical reviews or comparisons. The **conclusion** summarizes the thesis. It should contain no references to individual sections and instead should comprise derived conclusions, limitations of the thesis and an outlook for future research.

- List of references

Further information regarding the list of references can be found under 4.3.

- List of reports (if necessary)

Reports, such as business reports, (non-)financial reports and sustainability reports, should be presented chronologically. The company name, year of publication and fiscal year are to be included in the list of reports. If the report is available online, the entire link and access date should be stated.

- Appendix (if necessary)

The appendix includes supplementary material and information, which supports the reader in understanding the thesis, but which may interfere with the reading flow. Easily accessible information is not presented in the appendix but is referred to using citations. For instance, mathematical evidence or questionnaires should be put in the appendix. The main text should then reference the materials available in the appendix.

2.2 Length of the thesis

The text length is not a criterion for the quality of the thesis. Instead, the content and the critical engagement with the topic are more decisive. A precise writing style improves the quality of scientific work. Regarding the scope, the following approximate lengths apply:

- Bachelor's theses text length: 30-40 pages
- Master's theses text length: 40-60 pages
- Term papers: scope is communicated individually

The length refers to the main text. Title page, table of contents, abstract, appendix, references and other tables are not included.

2.3 Further requirements

Adherence to the topic and limitations

The issues described in the assignment, as well as any topic announced in a title, must be addressed without digressions in the corresponding paragraph or section.

Completeness

The topic described must be treated comprehensively, i.e. in sufficient depth. Any limitations must be explained. Basic requirements for any academic work include the logical structure of the argument, the correct application of methods and the consistency and coherence of conclusions.

Declaration of statements

The origin of any statement made in the thesis must be clearly declared. Personal findings and conclusions must be logically justified. Statements from third parties must be cited with references. Overall, proficient and critical engagement with academic literature should be evident.

Language

The thesis must be objective, which means it should be written in a neutral, impersonal style with appropriate academic language. Colloquial language is to be avoided, and correct spelling and punctuation are essential prerequisites. The thesis must be written in a reasonable scientific writing style in German or English. BBE students must write their thesis in English.

Literature

There is a correlation between the quality of the thesis and the quality and extent of the literature used. In addition to standard works, new academic publications, scientific studies, and articles published in peer-reviewed journals are to be considered. Sources must be used for fundamental theoretical approaches.

Personal contribution

The student's contribution should be evident in the work, for example, through original elaborations, data collection, empirical investigation, or empirical analyses. The contribution is, among others, a decisive factor for grading.

3 Formal requirements

3.1 Formatting

Margins

Margins top	3.0 cm
Margins bottom	2.5 cm
Margins left side	2.5 cm
Margins right side	2.5 cm

Font

Font style	Times New Roman (Arial)
Font size Main text Footnotes	12pt (10pt)

Figure captions	10pt (8pt)
Table captions	10pt (8pt)
	10pt (8pt)
Alignment	Main text
	Footnotes
	Justified text with logical hyphenation
	Left-aligned

Line spacing

Main text	1.5
Footnotes	1

Headings font size

Level 1	16pt (bold)
Level 2	14pt (bold)
Subsequent levels	12pt (bold)

Section numbering and page numbers

When numbering chapters, these rules must be followed:

- Only the chapters from “Introduction” to “Conclusion” are to be numbered. Lists (such as the table of contents and bibliography) are not to be numbered.
- The table of contents must not be listed as an item within the table of contents.
- A maximum of three hierarchical levels is permitted (e.g. 1/1.1/1.1.1).

Layout and page numbering

- Paragraphs may be separated by a blank line or additional spacing. Attention should be paid to layout and overall length. A single sentence does not constitute a paragraph.
- The paper should be clearly structured so that the reader can follow the student’s train of thought (main narrative thread).

3.2 Reference style

3.2.1 Writing in German

The guidelines for theses submissions in German can be found on our homepage in the German guidelines.

3.2.2 Writing in English

Indirect quotes (Harvard Style)

If the thesis is written in English, references are inserted in the text by placing the name of the author(s), year of publication, and page number in parentheses at the appropriate place. In general, references are placed at the end of the sentence before the punctuation mark.

Example: In addition, particularly managers lobby for an exclusion of less controllable earnings components from net income, because they do not want to be held responsible for such performance items (Biddle/Choi, 2006).

Direct quotes (Harvard Style)

Direct citations must be placed in quotation marks. If the quotation is a full sentence, the original punctuation mark is to be included. If only a part of the sentence is cited, the punctuation mark is to be omitted. Question marks and exclamation marks are to be included as the meaning of the sentence might otherwise be changed.

Example: Both income components are often viewed similarly in nature as “transitory items with little ability to predict future cash flow and minimal implications for company value” (Jones/Smith, 2011, p. 2047).

Note: If a different citation style is used, it must be ensured that citations are **consistent** and **comprehensible**.

3.3 Reference list

The reference list includes all references cited in the text arranged alphabetically (name of authors). The reference list is not to be sorted by type of text; the sorting of the examples listed below is only done for clarity reasons. More than one reference from the same author(s), should be arranged chronologically. If one reference spans over more than one line, please ensure that subsequent lines are indented (hanging indent at 0,5cm). Line spacing should be inserted between references and every reference ends with a dot. If references include three or more authors, only the first author’s name followed by “et al.” is shown in the footnote. However, in the reference list, all authors must be fully listed, and the individual authors are separated by semicolon.

Example: Reference to a monography

Meyer, Conrad (2012). *Accounting – Ein Leitfaden für das Verständnis von Finanzberichten*. EXPERTsuisse.

Laine, M., Tregidga, H. & Unerman, J. (2021). *Sustainability Accounting and Accountability* (3. Aufl.). Routledge.

Examples: Reference to a journal publication

Biddle, G.; Choi, Jong-Hag (2006). Is Comprehensive Income Useful? *Journal of Contemporary Accounting & Economics* 2(1): 1-32.

Matten, D.; Moon, J. (2008). "Implicit" and "explicit" CSR: A conceptual framework for a comparative understanding of corporate social responsibility. *Academy of Management Review* 33(2): 404-424.

Example: Reference to a working paper:

Bauernhofer, K.; Hummel, K. (2025). Exploring the transition to normativity: An analysis of stakeholders' perspectives on sustainability reporting standard-setting. Working Paper. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=5212339>

Hummel, K.; Jobst, D. (2025). Sustainability disclosure regulation and loan costs: Insights from syndicated loans. Working Paper. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4641046>

Example: Reference to a collected volume:

Roszkowska-Menkes, M. (2020). Greenwashing. In S. Idowu, R. Schmidpeter, N. Capaldi, L. Zu, M. Del Baldo & R. Abreu (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Sustainable Management* (1–6). Springer International Publishing.

3.4 Aid list – use of artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude etc.) can be used to assist in the creation of academic papers. This includes

- Developing initial ideas and potential research approaches
- Structuring a paper or project
- Linguistic revision of self-authored texts
- Improving grammar, style and clarity
- Writing and reviewing program code
- Assistance with data processing, visualization or description

The declaration has to include the disclosure of the chat history, if possible. Further information can be found under the following links:

- ChatGPT: [ChatGPT Shared Links FAQ](#)

- Gemini: [Share your Gemini chats](#)

The students bear full responsibility for the content, argumentation, methodology, sources, data, conclusions, and linguistic quality of the submitted text. In particular, the requirements outlined in section 3.2 also apply in the case of the use of artificial intelligence.

The list of aids used is submitted simultaneously with the thesis, but as a separate document, via myWU. In contrast to the master's thesis, it is not made publicly available.

WU directives and information, forms:

- WU Policy List of aids used ([German](#) + [English](#))
- Template ([German](#) + [English](#))

3.5 Abbreviation list

Define all terms for which abbreviations are used in the abbreviation list. The first time a term is used in the text, it should be spelled out followed by the abbreviation mentioned within brackets. Then the abbreviation should be used subsequently throughout the text.

Example: International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) are leading worldwide.

3.6 Plagiarism

Each thesis is subject to a mandatory plagiarism test and AI detection software. A work is plagiarized if texts, contents, or ideas produced by someone else are passed off as own work. This is the case especially when parts of texts, theories, hypotheses, findings, or data are incorporated into a work literally or in paraphrased or translated form without identifying these elements as quotations and referencing the original sources and authors (§ 51 [2] item 31 of the Universities Act 2002 [Universitätsgesetz, UG]). Reusing material from previously submitted and graded or published texts without indicating it as a citation is also considered plagiarism (self-plagiarism).

Students are considered to have committed academic fraud if they use unauthorized aids, if they pass off texts written by a third party as their own in a written paper or in an exam (ghost-writing), or if they present fabricated or falsified data or findings (cf. § 51 [2] item 32 of the Universities Act 2002).

Consequences include among others failing grade of the thesis and revocation of the academic degree. In addition, civil claims and criminal consequences are possible.

You can find WU's Directive on Plagiarism [here](#) (available in German only).

4 Note on publication requests

Various parties have brought to our attention that external publishers have recently been contacting students with the offer to publish their theses. In this context, the decision to publish the thesis externally is reserved for the Accounting and Reporting group. If you have any questions, please contact Karina Bauernhofer (karina.bauernhofer@wu.ac.at) anytime.

We wish you good luck with writing your thesis!
