

Hints and formalities

For writing a thesis at the
Chair for Sustainability Management

Status 11/2020

1.	General notes on the preparation of a thesis	2
2.	Additional instructions for term papers and seminar papers	2
3.	Layout of the thesis.....	3
4.	Language of the thesis	3
5.	Scope of the thesis.....	3
6.	Structure of your scientific work.....	4
7.	Citation method in the text	6
8.	Literature research.....	7
9.	Overall quality criteria for your scientific work.....	8
10.	Final note.....	9

1. General notes on the preparation of a thesis

A thesis is proof that you are familiar with techniques of scientific work. Central to this is the processing of a topic based on existing theoretical approaches and with the help of suitable (empirical) research methods. This applies to final papers, such as bachelor and master theses, as well as seminar papers.

The focus is on a research question that you should formulate clearly. If you do not know what you want to find out, you will not be able to research effectively.

Study the relevant literature to understand and classify the topic and its scientific processing status.

First, work out results before you start creating the text. This applies to the literature review as well as to the actual research work.

The structure does not correspond to the chronology of your work.

- create your work "from the inside out", that means, for example, in the following order: content -> methods and literature -> conclusion -> introduction
- The structure of your work should be based on the standard structure of a scientific article (see point 6).

2. Additional instructions for term papers and seminar papers

For term papers and seminar papers the points 3 to 10 mentioned in the following apply equally, with the following exceptions:

The corresponding number of words as well as the desired language of the term paper/seminar paper will be determined in advance by the lecturer. Here, too, it is better to be precise and to the point rather than long-winded!

The final word count (excluding bibliography, appendix, table of contents and, if applicable, table of tables/abbreviations) must be noted on the title page.

Excessive length (more than 5% above the word limit) will be judged disadvantageously.

For the layout of the term paper, a 2.5 cm margin around the paper is sufficient. For all other aspects, please refer to the information in point 3.

Unless otherwise requested by the lecturer, a digital version of the paper is sufficient.

2.1. Papers created in the group

We would like to point out that a group seminar paper is a collaborative work. Individual work steps can be divided up accordingly, but care should be taken to ensure that the writing and analysis contributions of each group member are comparable. The result should nevertheless be a coherent work. The simple stringing together of independent partial/individual works is therefore not sufficient.

For group work, the following **‘Eidesstattliche Erklärung’** must be completed and signed **by all participants**.

„Wir erklären an Eides Statt durch unsere Unterschrift, dass wir die vorstehende Hausarbeit/Seminararbeit selbständig und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt und alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus veröffentlichten oder unveröffentlichten Schriften entnommen sind, als solche kenntlich gemacht haben. Die Arbeit hat noch nicht in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form oder auszugsweise im Rahmen einer anderen Prüfung dieser oder einer anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegen.“

English: **Statutory declaration**

“We declare that we entirely by ourselves have developed and written the enclosed seminar paper entitled “TITEL” and have not used sources or means without declaration in the text. Any thoughts or quotations, which were inferred from these sources, are clearly marked as such. This seminar paper was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to any other authority to achieve an academic grading and was not published elsewhere.”

3. Layout of the thesis

Please note the following guidelines for the layout of your thesis:

- a. Margins: Above and below 2.5 cm each, inside 5 cm, outside 2 cm.
- b. Font: "Times New Roman" or "Calibri", 12pt, line spacing: 1.5 lines
- c. Footnotes: Same font, but 10pt, line spacing single line.

The title page has no page number, all other pages before the main text are numbered with Roman numerals, the main text and all other pages are numbered with Arabic numerals. The individual sections of the work are to be preceded by the corresponding outline points (headings). The work is to be submitted both in digital form and in an identical bound copy. Any other provisions of the currently valid examination regulations regarding scope, form, etc. take precedence. Please let us know if this is applicable!

4. Language of the thesis

A master or bachelor thesis can be written in either German or English. We highly recommend and encourage writing the thesis in English. This is an advantage, as an integral part of any thesis is to review the state of research, especially on the basis of international English-language journals.

5. Scope of the thesis

A bachelor thesis should, if possible, comprise no more than 7,500 to 9,500 words, a master thesis no more than 12,500 to 14,500 words (plus title page, table of contents, list of figures, tables and

abbreviations, if applicable, as well as bibliography and, if applicable, appendix). In the case of qualitative work, deviations may be made by arrangement.

When writing, concentrate on the essentials and argue along a red thread. Concise and precise is better than long-winded! Write what is relevant, not everything you have read.

6. Structure of your scientific work

A master or bachelor thesis should contain the following components - in the order listed:

- Cover sheet
- Table of contents
- Picture, table, symbol, and abbreviation index
- Abstract in English (master thesis only)
- Text (with introduction and conclusion)
- Reference list
- Appendix
- Statutory declaration

6.1. Cover sheet

The cover sheet is based on the specifications of the examination office and should contain:

- Title of the thesis
- Type of thesis (bachelor thesis / master thesis)
- Degree
- Faculty and Chair of the department
- First and second examiner
- First and last name, matriculation number, address, and e-mail address of the student
- Submission date

6.2. Table of contents

The table of contents should be organized in numerical order according to the grading principle (for example 1., 1.1, 1.1.1, etc.). It should be noted that each subdivision consists of at least two parts (for example, there must be a point 1.2 if 1.1 occurs).

For each item, specify the page number within the work in which the section begins.

6.3. List of illustrations, tables, and abbreviations

In the list of figures, each figure must be given with its consecutive number, title and page. The illustrations themselves must be consecutively numbered ("Fig. 1", "Fig. 2") and given a distinctive title (for example "Fig. 1: Levels of Corporate Sustainability Management"). The table of figures is structured accordingly.

In principle, abbreviations should be explained in the text when first used and included in a list of abbreviations with this explanation. For common abbreviations ("etc.", "e.g.", ...) no separate

explanation in the text and no identification in the list of abbreviations is required.

6.4. Abstract (only master thesis)

The abstract in a master thesis should be max. 1 page long and written in English. The style and form of this abstract should be based on the structure of the structured abstracts of journals published by Emerald:

- Purpose (mandatory)
- Design / methodology / approach (mandatory)
- Findings (mandatory)
- Research limitations / implications (if applicable)
- Practical implications (if applicable)
- Social implications (if applicable)
- Originality / value (mandatory)

The abstract can be used as a template for the preparation of the presentation of the master thesis in the colloquium.

6.5. Text

The text part is based on the standard structure of a scientific treatise and basically contains the following aspects:

- **Introduction to the topic**, including the relevance of the topic and presentation of the research question under consideration
- **Theoretical Background**: Presentation of the necessary background information as well as the current scientific discourse, which is important for the consideration of the (above mentioned) research question
- **Methodology**: Which methodology was used to answer the research question? How did you proceed? Remember to mention how quality criteria (e.g. questions of validity and reliability) of the scientific work were met.
- **Results/Findings**: (results in the case of a quantitative approach / findings in the case of a qualitative approach): What did you find out? Presentation of the results derived from the analysis.
- **Discussion**: Here, individual aspects of the results are discussed, i.e. the own results are put into context with existing literature, e.g. to discuss differences and similarities between literature and own results. What is striking about the results? What is the gain in knowledge? (etc.)
- **Conclusion** rounds off the work and refers once again to the insights gained from the analysis. Furthermore, limitations of the work and future research proposals should be addressed in the discussion or conclusion.

For easy understanding, the inherent symmetry of this structure is pointed out:

- In the **introduction** the research question is explained and formulated, which is then answered

- The **theoretical background** explains the current scientific status. This also provides the context for the **discussion** of our own results. All sources used in the discussion should therefore be mentioned in the theoretical background.
- In the **methodology**, you describe your approach to answering the above-mentioned question and in the **results**, you describe what you have found out in the process.

6.6. Reference list

See chapter *Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.* on citation

6.7. Appendix

Longer statistics, supplementary figures, questionnaires, and other forms should be included in the appendix if they would disturb the clarity of the text. In any case, the text must refer to the relevant appendixes. In the case of qualitative work, more detailed materials such as transcripts etc. should be submitted digitally in a separate volume of material. The original data (e.g. audio recordings of interviews) should also be made available digitally to the examiners. The University of Kassel's data protection regulations apply (see <http://www.uni-kassel.de/intranet/organisation/beauftragte/datenschutz.html>). Please read the FAQs.

6.8. Statutory declaration

The following statutory declaration must be placed at the end of each thesis:

„Ich erkläre an Eides Statt durch meine Unterschrift, dass ich die vorstehende Bachelorarbeit/ Masterarbeit selbständig und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt und alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus veröffentlichten oder unveröffentlichten Schriften entnommen sind, als solche kenntlich gemacht habe. Die Arbeit hat noch nicht in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form oder auszugsweise im Rahmen einer anderen Prüfung dieser oder einer anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegen.“

For English texts the following version can be used:

“I hereby confirm to the best of my knowledge that this thesis is solely my original work and that I have only used the sources and materials indicated. All quotations from other works as well as paraphrases or summaries of other works have been identified as such and properly acknowledged in the thesis. This thesis or parts thereof have not been submitted to an educational institution in Germany or abroad as part of an examination or degree qualification.”

7. Citation method in the text

7.1. When should I quote?

Every thought, every illustration, every table, or everything else that you take directly from other sources is to be cited. As soon as a thought does not span just a few sentences, this fact should be highlighted. As a rule of thumb, if in doubt, provide your sources and citations rather too often than too little! Find

more information on direct and indirect citation here: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/citations/quotations>

7.2. What is to be cited?

In principle, all sources that have been used must be cited, including reprints, unpublished works or publications not published in the book trade.

But: There are a number of works that are not normally used as the basis of a scientific paper and therefore cannot be cited. These include in particular repetitions or scripts, lectures or lecture notes or papers (or protocols, etc.).

Foreign-related figures or tables must also be provided with the respective source information (for example, by the words "Taken from ..."). Self-created illustrations or tables always have to be provided with the indication "own illustration".

7.3. How to quote?

It is cited according to the internationally accepted guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA). Please use the seventh edition of the "Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association". This guide, available from the University Library, accurately explains the citation guidelines in force. In addition, the APA offers an online tutorial (www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx) that explains the basics of this citation method.

Please note that the citation method should strictly follow the APA guidelines. For the structure and the external form of the thesis, please refer to the instructions in chapter 3.

Important notes:

Internet sources in the true sense are to be found exclusively on the Internet. Scientific essays that are available for download on the Internet are not "Internet sources" and are hence not cited as such. They should be denominated and cited as journal articles.

If you use Citavi for citation, you can change the citation to APA version 7 within your project. You can find this option via "Citation → Citation Styles → Edit Citation Style → Search Citation Style → (In search field) APA → "APA American Psychological Association, 7th ed."

7.4. Structure of the reference list

Detailed instructions and rules for the structure of the bibliography are given in the above-mentioned APA manual.

We also recommend the use of literature databases such as Citavi. The University Library offers appropriate training on the use of Citavi, campus licences are available with the university login data.

8. Literature research

Reflection and references to existing scientific sources are absolutely necessary within a scientific thesis. The following search engines will help you in your search for relevant sources. You can access most of

the articles within the university internet network (eduroam) or via VPN client from home.

- KARLA – Catalogue portal of Kassel University Library: www.ub.uni-kassel.de
- Web of Science (www.webofscience.com) (License via the University of Kassel)
- GoogleScholar: www.google scholar.com
- SciVerse SCOPUS: www.scopus.com (Unfortunately, the University of Kassel does not have a license)

Please note that the majority of your sources should consist of high quality, peer-reviewed journal articles.

Journals have different qualities. A typical classification looks like this:

- World class journals / top journals / A+ or A journals
- High quality journals / (very) good journals / A or B journals
- Other academic journals / recognised journal / C journals
- Non-academic / practitioner journals

Indicators for the classification are:

- Is the journal peer reviewed?
- What is the ranking of the journal?
- How high is the impact factor?
- Who is the publisher? (e.g., Elsevier, Wiley, Sage, Taylor & Francis, Emerald)

→ Journal Rankings:

- Overview: <http://www.harzing.com/jql.htm>
- Often used in Germany:
 - VHB Jourqual3: <https://www.vhbonline.org/vhb4you/vhb-jourqual/vhb-jourqual-3/gesamtliste>
 - Handelsblatt BWL list:
<https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/journal-ranking/9665428.html>
- Other rankings: ABS list (UK), Financial Times List (North America), ABDC List (Australia) etc.

High quality and topicality of the sources of the submitted work not only ensure that the statements made have high scientific relevance, but also reflect an important evaluation criterion of the work.

9. Overall quality criteria for your scientific work

Your thesis has to meet various criteria with regard to content. The most important of these are:

- The problem definition of the work should be formulated in such a way that it can be understood by third parties who have not previously dealt with this topic. **Therefore, a detailed description and scientifically secured definition of the central terms is necessary in the context of the work.**
- Technical terms must be introduced and defined in a scientific thesis. Colloquial phrases or terms used in everyday life in an undifferentiated way may only be used if they are **precisely** defined.

Otherwise, they should not be used.

- There must be a question behind each topic. It is therefore often helpful to start by formulating a question which you want to answer with your work within the agreed time frame. This will protect you from writing "past the topic" later. **Based on this question, it is usually easier to formulate the topic of your dissertation and to "answer" it in a targeted manner within the framework of your work.**
- The argumentation pursued in the thesis must be structured, comprehensible and verifiable. The arguments should reflect an independent and critical analysis that deals with the research question posed in an analytical rather than merely descriptive manner.
- Every thesis should claim to contain something new. This can also be, for example, the treatment of an already investigated topic from a new perspective. **In principle, it is not enough to simply reproduce things already known.**

10. Final note

It is in the own interest of every author of a scientific paper to comply with these requirements as closely as possible, since the adherence to these formalities is also included in the respective performance assessment.