Guidelines for writing Bachelor and Master theses

at the Chair of Development Economics

Overview

1 Preconditions for the Allocation of Theses

1.1 Preconditions for Bachelor Theses

Generally speaking, students wishing to write a bachelor thesis at the Chair of Development Economics should have basic knowledge of empirical economic research, since analyzing empirical studies will be an essential part of most bachelor theses. This knowledge can best be obtained by hearing lectures on quantitative methods of analysis, such as Introductory Econometrics. In addition, students should have successfully completed at least one or two modules in the field of development economics and international economics, since the topics covered mostly center around questions in development economics. Students interested in focusing on Latin America in their thesis should have taken a course on the economy of Latin America. Moreover, it is a departmental requirement to have completed at least one seminar. It is also important to contact chair staff well in advance. In order to allow a careful choice of the subject in question, this should happen **at least 2-3 months** before the scheduled commencement of work.

1.2 Preconditions for Master Theses

For the allocation of a Master Thesis, it is indispensable to have completed at least one lecture on quantitative methods of analysis, such as Econometrics. Having attended more lectures with a quantitative focus is not only preferable, but will considerably facilitate the writing process. In general, we allocate theses containing an original empirical analysis of the subject.

In addition, students should have successfully completed 2 courses in the field of development economics, since the topics covered mostly center around questions in development economics. Students who have successfully participated in a seminar offered by the Chair of Development Economics will be favored. Students interested in focusing on Latin America in their thesis should have taken a course on the economy of Latin America.

Obtaining data, becoming familiar with statistics software and organizing data is very time-consuming. Students wishing to write a Master thesis should thus contact staff members well in advance, preferably about **6-12 months** before the scheduled commencement of work.

2 Choice of Subject and Preparatory Tasks

2.1 Finding a Subject and a Research Question

When looking for a subject, focus on

- Lectures and seminars
- Literature

The research question has to be original, i.e. a question that has never been covered in this form, it should be up-to-date and relevant. You should choose a subject that can be formulated as a question to be discussed and answered in the thesis. It should not be too extensive or general. The subject should be one of personal interest. Subject and the availability of data have to be agreed upon with your supervisor before you start.

Hal R. Varian has written an essay on, “How to build an economic model in your spare time”. This is a very nice resource with lots of insight on how to get a *good* research idea.

Bachelor theses usually summarize the existing literature and may contain some (descriptive) empirical analysis. The student answers the research question mostly based on previous findings in the literature. A Bachelor thesis should not be shorter than **30 pages** text (without table of content, references, appendix, etc.).

Master theses need to contain an original idea of the student. The novelty may be through a new theoretical approach, choice of research question, emprirical method applied, or data used. A Master thesis typically comprises about **60 pages** text (without table of content, references, appendix, etc.), its length can, however, differ depending on the research question and methodology.

2.2 Finding and Use of Literature

- JEL – Journal of Economic Literature is a quarterly journal; it contains a catalogue of relevant articles in specialized journals and books that is organized into different economic sub-disciplines → further research in libraries
- Literature databases in the oeconomicum and SUB libraries (e.g. EconLit)

- Specialized journals (find them in JEL or ask your supervisor), most of them are available in the libraries.
- When inspecting literature, you should concentrate on a few fundamental, works that are relevant content-wise first and then look at up-to-date studies. The empirical work should build on previous empirical or theoretical investigations and add a new aspect.
- There are a few websites summing up economic information, e.g.

  http://netec.mcc.ac.uk/NetEc.html ,
  http://www.inomics.com ,
  http://rfe.org/
  http://www.repec.org/

2.3 Supervision and Assessment

Bachelor and Master Theses will be supervised jointly by PhD students and a Professor or Post-Doc (Stephan Klasen, Inma Martinez, Felicitas Nowak-Lehman, or Sebastian Vollmer).

After consultation with your supervisors you will be asked to submit a concept (see below), which will – after approval – form the basis of your thesis. We expect you to start with your thesis work only after having obtained the relevant knowledge in the area (seminars or at least lectures).

After you submitted and discussed the concept, we will sign the form of approval for writing your Bachelor- / Master-Thesis (Antrag auf Zulassung zur Abschlussarbeit) required by the Prüfungsamt.

2.4 Concept / Research Proposal

After a first review of the existing literature and clarification of the research question, a concept will constitute the foundation for writing a thesis. The following should be summarized on 1-2 pages:

- Title – Date – Name – matriculation number (Phone number., address, email address)
- Motivation of the research question, notes on implementation/methods, description of the data to be used
- Outline of contents and explanations (if necessary)
- Basic literature (preliminary)

3 Setup and Formal Design

3.1 Setup and Outline

It is reasonable to structure the thesis as follows:

- Introduction (motivation, importance of the treated question, definition and delimitation of the topic, summary of central findings, overview of the thesis)
- Main part (content-related treatment of the topic) with further subdivisions
- Summary / Conclusion (work at a glance, central issues and findings, conclusion and outlook)

Your thesis should definitely contain:

- A table of contents with page numbers
- A list of references

Extensive material or explanations that are not necessary in your text, tables and further supporting documents should be attached as an annex. A potential list of abbreviations, tables or illustrations should be included after the table of contents.

3.2 Implementation in Terms of Content and Processed Literature

A fundamental criterion for scientific work is its verifiability; this also implies that (ideally) every sentence you write should be logically consistent and empirically verifiable (through arguments or supported by references). This should not imply any limitation to your creativity, but challenge you to write an independent analysis and criticism with regard to literature to this effect. Empirical papers should provide their Stata / R code and dataset separately (e.g. on a CD), so results are reproducible.

Please pay attention to the following issues as they are taken particular account of during the assessment of your thesis:

- Comprehensive development of central ideas
- Clear, simple phrasing and gradual (comprehensible) argumentation
- Statements are supported by arguments, facts and sources
- Independent presentation that also reveals your expertise
- (respectively concluding) independent judgment and criticism

- Generally, it is a good idea to read a work concerning the methods of academic writing, e.g.: McCloskey, Donald (1985), “Empirical Writing”, Economic Inquiry, 23(2), 187-222 (tips concerning the style of a scientific thesis)

3.3 Formal Design, Citations and References

It is self-evident that the thesis should be faultless and formally “decent” (typewritten); there is another instruction sheet for the arrangement of references “References in Scientific Papers”. Pay attention to a consistent formatting and readability.

4 Supervision, Review and Grading

4.1 Supervision of Thesis

After consultation with the supervisor the thesis will be screened during the time of writing and support will be given for content, data editing and econometric problems. Appointments can be made to answer upcoming questions. The supervisor will not correct syntax in programs, nor in econometric programs or in provided software. Please adhere to the office timings or arranged appointments.

Requirements for Seminar Thesis

- Clear questions, concrete problems
- No negotiation about the deadline etc.
- Prompt return of lent material

Requirements for BA/ MA Thesis

- Same as Seminar Thesis
- Consistent work
- Time for Thesis
- Contact when problems occur

4.2 Grading of Thesis

Form (but not the “Layout”) of the delivered thesis can also be part of the grade. Imagine your thesis would be published as handed in. Let colleagues and family members proof-read your thesis. Uninvolved people might be more likely to find mistakes than people familiar with the work; unclear phrases can maybe be revised together.

Extension to the Guidelines for writing Bachelor and Master theses at the Chair of Development Economics

Quotations – A couple of recommendations

In the formal structure of scientific texts (incl. Seminar Theses) accurate quotation is extremely important. It is not only in your personal interest and the interest of your reader but because of academic honesty that it is an absolute necessity to show all material used from other authors. Exact quotation has to become implicitness in scientific writing, only then the development process of scientific statements can be traced.

The following advices refer to the correct handling of "quotations" (that is the literal and analogous application of text passages of other authors) as well as to the "list of references" (that is the details of quoted text passages). To simplify matters we use "to quote" in both terms, for "to make a quote" and for "to make a reference".

Additional information on the referencing style used here can be found in Anglia Ruskin University Library, 2011. *Guide to the Harvard Style of Referencing.* [online] Cambridge and Chelmsford: Ruskin University Library. Available at: <http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm> [Accessed 05 January 2012]

Overview:

1. What do you have to quote?
2. Form and nature of quotations – basic remarks
    - What do I have to pay attention to basically?
    - What is the difference between a reference in the text and a reference in the bibliography?
3. References in the text
    - Where do I have to quote?
    - What kind of references in the text can be distinguished?
    - How do I make direct quotations?
    - How do you report content analogously?
    - How do I proceed using tables, illustrations, etc.?
    - How do I solve the problem of recurring identical references?

    - How do I deal with quotations that stretch across several pages?
    - How do I quote sources from the Internet, databases and the like?
4. References in the bibliography
    - Books
    - Articles in journals
    - Articles in edited volumes, in a festschrift and the like
    - Newspaper articles
    - Indirect sources
    - Diploma theses, dissertations
    - “grey literature”
    - Conversations and the like
    - Internet, data bases
    - Further remarks
5. Closing remark

1. What do you have to quote?

Generally speaking you should quote *all* thoughts, arguments, data and information you adopted from other people. The guiding principle is that a reader should be able to clearly distinguish between your statements and opinions (assessments, hypotheses, conclusions etc.) and those of other people at every point. General knowledge or economic ‘general knowledge’ is exempted from this requirement. E.g. if you use the concept of a utility curve in general, you do not need a reference. However, if you are using a specific utility curve of another author, you have to quote or reference her. This distinction can of course be problematic, but in case of doubt please provide a reference.

2. Form and nature of quotations – basic remarks

What do I have to pay attention to basically?

- The most essential principle of quotations is consistency. Once you have chosen a form of quoting retain it for the whole thesis.
- There is no internationally consistent form of quotations. There is however a consistent way of understanding which content should be included necessarily

in your references. Therefore the following guidelines are only a “guideline” with respect to the form of quotations, but they should be seen as mandatory with respect to the expected information content of references for our department. In case of doubt, please refer to your advisor.

What is the difference between a reference in the text and a reference in the bibliography?

- It proved to be appropriate to display all references within a text in a clear assignable short form (see more detailed remarks below) and to include the “long form” (see also below) only in the bibliography. This means that for every reference within the text there should be a corresponding long form within the bibliography.

3. References in the text

Where do I have to quote?

- In principle it is possible to include references in footnotes or directly at the end of the corresponding (part of a) sentence. We recommend the second approach (cf. all given examples below).
- References in footnotes are considered as a sentence. Hence, they should begin with a capital letter and end with a period. References within the text should impede the reading flow as little as possible.

What kind of references in the text can be distinguished?

- Distinguish between direct (literal) quotations (text parts that are adopted directly from the references, quotations in the narrower sense), analogous reporting of content and all other references (graphs etc.).

How do I make direct quotations?

- Direct quotations (also from mere text parts) have to be entered in quotation marks and they have to correspond fully to the original with regard to wording and form. The citation stands directly after the quotation mark. The method of citation is: (author, year of publication, page number(s))
  Citing example: “…” (Varian, 1992, p. 43)

- Referring to foreign-language works: languages other than English are allowed to be translated if citing directly and if you add “translation by the author” in the text and the original quotation in corresponding footnotes.
- Modifications (insertion of specific words, omissions etc.) with the purpose of improving the reading flow are only acceptable if they do not change the sense of the original text in any way. Omissions can be marked with brackets (best to use square brackets) including three dots, own explanations can be included in the literal quotation if they are also clearly marked with brackets. Always pay attention to potential parentheses in the original text for the purpose of unambiguousness. In principle: Modifications of direct quotations are only recommended in absolute “emergencies”.

  Citing example: “Many women run small business ventures, called microenterprises, which […] usually involve the marketing of homemade foodstuff and handicrafts.” (Todaro, 1996, p. 272)

- Changes in the form of accentuations, underlines etc. also have to be marked separately, e.g. using “[accentuations by the author]” or “[indicated in bold in the original version]” etc.

  Citing example: „Many women run small business ventures, called *microenterprises* [accentuations by the author], which […] usually involve the marketing of homemade foodstuff and handicrafts.” (Todaro, 1996, p. 272)

How do you report content analogously?

- Using analogous reporting references should be: (cf. author, year of publication, page numbers)

  Citing example: (cf. Todaro, 1996, p. 272)

- Quoting of literally cited text parts in secondary sources should be done with a reference to the original source: “cited in…”

  Citing example: (Keynes, 1912, p. 21: cited in Laidler, 1991, p. 169) Quoting of secondary sources should be an exception (only if the original source is not available).

- Explanatory notes for analogous reporting. Keep in mind that an indication of source only refers to the sentence it is attached to. Using only few sources you must therefore quote the same literature disproportionately often. You can reduce this problem with analogous clear statements if you relate your quotes to passages, enumerations or – in exceptional cases - to small (!) chapters.

  Citing example: Rothschild (1978) presents the following theses for this:

How do I proceed using tables, illustrations, etc.?

- If you adopt illustration, tables, etc. (not just copied into your thesis) display directly below the respective part the source in short form as shown above. If own modifications are done this is always to be noted. Source: author, year of publication, page numbers. If you are coping original material directly into your thesis, note: Taken from: author, year of publication, page numbers. It is absolutely necessary to take notice of copyright while adding tables, graphs etc.

How do I solve the problem of recurring identical references?

- Cite in parentheses in the running text. Repeat the source even if the same author is quoted consecutively.

How do I deal with quotations that stretch across several pages?

- Every quote has to contain the exact page number in order to make it traceable. If the quoted area stretches over two or more pages, the page numbers have to be preceded by "pp”.

  Citing example: (Varian, 1992, pp. 20-22)

How do I quote sources from the Internet, databases and the like?

- Sources that are also available in different (bibliographic) forms (e.g. working paper, documents and legislative text, statistical data etc.) and such that are only available in an electronic form (e.g. web pages, only electronically available databases etc.) don’t have to be explicitly separated from each other. For such sources the above listed rules are valid but in the bibliography the URL is to be listed.

Citing example: Hamermesh (1999) indicates explicitly pitfalls of treating economic problems econometrically.

4. References in the bibliography

In the bibliography all used literature should be listed in detail. The list of quotations should be in alphabetical order of the authors name and not depending on where the article was published (books, magazines, etc.). In the case of that more than one work from a single author is cited then these need to be listed in chronological order. If there are several works from the same year a small letter (in alphabetical order: a, b…) needs to be added to the year. This order is to be retained for references within the text. The citation in the bibliography has to be complete and should contain the following information:

- Books

Surname, First name, year of publication. *Book Title*: *Book Subtitle.* Edition. (Not necessary if it's the first edition) Place of Publishing: Publisher.

Citing example: Varian, Hal R., 1992. *Microeconomic Analysis.* Third Edition. New York: Norton.

First names or also only the second first name may be abbreviated. But always keep in mind to use a uniform procedure! (This and alternative usage of first names also apply for references that are dealt with in the text below.)

- Articles in journals

Surname, First name, year of publication. Title of the article. *Name of the journal*, Volume number (Sequential number), page numbers (beginning – end).

Citing example: Grün, Carola and Stephan Klasen, 2001. Growth, income and well-being in transition countries. *The Economics of Transition*, 9(2), pp. 359-394.

Comment: If the used references are in English, we recommend depicting volume numbers also in English (see above).

- Articles in edited volumes, in a festschrift and the like

Surname, First name, year of publication. Title of the article. In: Name of the editor, ed(s). year, *Title of the edited volume*. place of publication: publisher. page numbers.

Citing example: Weiss, Yoran,1997. The formation and dissolution of families: why marry? Who marries whom? And what happens upon divorce. In: M.R. Rosenzweig and O Stark, eds. 1997. *Handbook of Population and Family Economies*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

- Newspaper articles

Surname, First Name, year of publication. Title of the article. *Name of the Newspaper*; date. page number.

Citing example: Norton, Cherry, 1999. Official: money can buy you love. *Financial Times*, 3 March. 9.

- Indirect sources

If you have cited an original source out of an indirect source, you have to list both sources in your reference list as follows:

Citing example for indirect sources: Laidler, David, 1991. *The Golden Age of the Quantity Theory.*. New York et al: Philip Allan.

Citing example for the original source: Keynes, John Maynard, 1912. *Indian Currency and Finance.* London: Macmillan; as cited in Laidler, 1991.

- Diploma theses, dissertations

Surname, Name, year. *Title*, Dissertation or Diploma thesis. Indication of University

Citing examples: Klasen, Stephan, 1994. *Gender Bias in Mortality: Excess Female Mortality Past and Present.* Ph.D. Harvard University.

- “Grey literature”

Literature, which has not been published in any journal, book etc. – e.g. the contribution to a symposium which has not been published officially – is also called “grey literature”. In such a case, give all information you have according to the rules above and add the word “mimeo” to the reference. The basic idea is that the source should be traceable for a third person after doing some research with the help of the given information.

Citing example: Böheim, René, 2001. *Maternal labour supply and breastfeeding in Ghana*. *Mimeo*. LMU München.

- Conversations and the like

If your statements in a text refer to conversations with experts, they have to cite these like other sources. The respective entry in your reference list should be: Dialogue partner, year. Personal conversation with Name, Job title, Place, Date.

- Internet, data bases

Here you should also depict all necessary information for a clear identification of the source.

Citing example: Hamermesh, D.S., 1999. The art of labormetrics. *NBER working paper 6927,* [online] Cambridge (MA): National Bureau of Economic Research. Available at: <http://papers.nber.org/papers/W6927> [accessed 05 January2012].

- Further remarks
    - If the author of an article is not mentioned, this is indicated with “Anon” for “anonymous”. The placement within the reference list should be alphabetically with “a”.
    - If the place of publishing cannot be found, this is indicated with “s.l.” (Latin: sine loco = without place), which means unknown place of publishing.
    - Missing year specifications are noted with “n.d.” which means unknown year specification.
    - If there are more than 3 places of publishing you can shorten as follows:
      Citing example: (…), Wien et al.
    - If an article has multiple authors you link their names with “and”. If there are more than three authors you should shorten as follows:
      Citing example: (Judge, G. et al., …)

5. Closing remark

Accurate referencing necessitates accurate work. We recommend that you start referencing properly from the first draft on. It will save you and your supervisor a lot of extra work.

If you use LaTeX, please mind the options of the natbib packages.