

Guideline for writing Bachelor/Master theses at the Chair of Public Economics

1 Topic and Supervision

Please inform yourself on the formalities of the Faculty of Economic Sciences' Examination Office. All further information is available on the website of the Examination office.

Students in economic programmes can write theses at our chair about all topics in the sphere of public economics (including the economics of education & taxation), additional to topics in the realm of general microeconomics. Please consider the information on topic selection and starting date (ideally get in touch with the chair at least 3 weeks prior to your desired starting date).

If you have questions and/or encounter problems during your thesis please reach out to your supervisor. We recommend to schedule at least one appointment with your supervisor in person to discuss the scope, outline and formal structure of your topic.

2 Extent and Time Frame

The extent of pages concerns solely the written pages. Cover page, table of contents, list of figures, list of abbreviations, appendices and bibliography do not count toward the page limit. Large tables and figures are also excluded. In case of work with a special scope, such as own theoretical or empirical work, deviating agreements can be made with the respective supervisor.

- The extent of a Bachelor thesis should be about 40 pages (+/- 10%). The time frame after sign-up is 12 weeks.
- The extent of a Master thesis should be about 60 pages (+/- 10%). The time frame after sign-up is 20 weeks for all master programmes except Master in Internat. Economics (17 weeks).

3 Submission

Please respect the guidelines given by the Examination Office. Your thesis must be submitted digitally via an upload in FlexNow before the submission deadline. A printed version does not have to be submitted and not submitted subsequently. Please refrain from

signing the digital version (PDF, Word, etc.) as the upload will be too large. Attachments must be compressed to a .zip file. Information on the upload is available in FlexNow.

4 Formal Requirements

4.1 Structure

The contents and their structure are defined as:

- Cover
- Front page
- Table of contents
- List of figures, symbols and abbreviations (if necessary)
- Content
 - Introduction
 - Main part
 - Summary and conclusion
- Appendices (if necessary)
- Bibliography/List of references
- Statutory declaration in lieu of an oath (eidesstattliche Versicherung)

Cover

The cover must contain the following information

- Surname and name of the author
- Enrollment number
- Information on supervisor and chair

Front page

The front page should be structured the following way

- *Upper third of the page*: topic title (no abbreviations)
- *Middle third*: Final thesis as part of the examination of the [Bachelor/Master] programme [Name of programme] completed within [xxx] weeks at the University of Göttingen

- *Lower third:*
 - submitted: (date of submission)
 - by: (first name and surname)
 - place of birth: (place of birth)

Table of Contents

The table of contents must include all sections and subsections in a well-structured manner with their respective page numbers. Page numbers should be arabic numbers starting on the first page of the introduction and ending on the last page of the list of references. Front page, table of contents, other lists (e.g. of figures) and the statutory declaration are not to be numbered.

List of figures, symbols and abbreviations

These lists are only necessary if the thesis uses a large number of figures, symbols or abbreviations. Please do not include them if they would have only a few entries.

Generally, all figures and tables must be numbered and have a descriptive caption including a citation of their respective sources. If you copy figures and tables from other sources please make sure they are meaningful and their quality is sufficient. You can shorten tables to focus on the elements that are important for your argument. You may replicate figures using generally available data. In both cases you need to make this clear in your citation. Only include figures/tables if they are relevant to your thesis. Included figures/tables should add explanatory value to your thesis and need to be contextualised well.

Contents

see 4.2 Contents.

Bibliography/List of References

The list of references has to contain all references cited in the thesis; likewise, all sources listed need to be discussed in the thesis. The list of references' leading principles are uniformity and clarity. All references of the same type must be formatted the same way and every reference should be easy to find given the provided information. The list follows an alphabetical order defined by the first author's surname. You are free to choose the style of citation, but we recommend using the guideline of bigger journals (Journal of Public Economics) or an established citation style (Chicago Manual of Style). Generally, depending on the type of reference, the reference should include the following information.

- *Journal articles:* author, year, title, name of journal and issue, pages.
- *Book:* author, year, title of book, edition, publisher and printing place.

- *Essay in a collection volume*: author, year, title of essay, editor of collection, title of collection volume, publisher and printing place, pages.
- *Discussion Papers, Working Papers*: autor, title, name of series or editorial institution, number.
- *Internet references*: author, title, link and date of retrieval.

Statutory Declaration/Eidesstattliche Erklärung

The last page of your thesis has to contain the statutory declaration in the following form and must be signed manually. Digital and printed signatures are not valid.

„I hereby declare in lieu of an oath that I completed the present thesis independently and without illegitimate assistance. All parts including quotation or citation of other publishings and references are properly identifiable as such. The printed and digital version are identical. I agree to the use of a software to check for plagiarisms“

German version:

„Ich versichere, dass ich die Arbeit selbständig und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe. Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus Veröffentlichungen oder anderen Quellen entnommen sind, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Die schriftliche und elektronische Form der Arbeit stimmen überein. Ich stimme der Überprüfung der Arbeit durch eine Plagiatssoftware zu.“

4.2 Contents

Introduction

The introduction should highlight your topic’s relevance and importance in contemporary science and classify it in the wider economic context. You need to clearly present the extent and limitations of your topic and formulate your research question. The introduction sums up the main findings of your thesis very briefly. Further, it explains and justifies the structure of the remaining work.

Main part

The main part contains your own written elaboration on your topic. Consider carefully which remarks and lines of argumentation are useful to answer your research question. Make sure that your line of reasoning is relevant, coherent, clear and understandable. These are the core characteristics of quality in scientific work!

A clear logical progression should be visible in your structure. Structure your thesis in meaningful sections and subsections. Use paragraphs with optical separations (rather than simple line breaks) to show where thoughts end and begin within a section. Each page should have at least two paragraphs, each paragraph at least two sentences.

Use your own words when presenting ideas of other authors and only present those that you fully understand. Any use of thoughts that are not your own are to be properly cited. Do not copy ideas uncritically. Reflect on the contents and thoughts of other authors in a critical way providing relevant arguments. If possible, utilise empirical evidence to support your arguments. If your topic permits, it can be helpful to present theoretical (mathematical) modelling to give a theoretical background. When using equations, generate them yourself in a uniform manner. Tables and figures can be used to visualise concepts and ideas. They can be useful to present your results.

Summary and Conclusion

Summarize the results of your thesis briefly. Deduce economic and political implications from your result. Discuss the limitations of your thesis and present the state of research. If you found pressing gaps of knowledge in the literature you can present ideas for future research.

Appendices

Tables, figures and mathematical proofs essential for your argumentation should be part of the written thesis. Additional tables, figures and proofs (e.g. alternative modelling) can be part of the appendix. Consider whether those are really necessary to understand the thesis before integrating them. Reference appendices in your text.

4.3 Citation and Plagiarism

When progressing your thesis you will formulate your own insights and verdicts based on existing knowledge. It is of utmost importance that your own thoughts and those of other authors are clearly distinguishable at any given point in your thesis. When you implement thoughts other than your own – be it literally, alienated, or corresponding – without proper citation, this is plagiarism. Plagiarisms present someone else's work as your own and contradict ethical and professional standards of scientific work fundamentally. Theses containing plagiarism will be graded with a mark of 5,0.

A plagiarism is present when a thesis gives ideas of other texts literally or analogously without citing said texts. This also applies for tables and figures. Examples for plagiarisms include:

- Copying of entire sentences or stringing together fragments of sentences if not properly cited. This includes the literal translation of a sentence written in a foreign language.
- An analogously copied text without proper citation is also a plagiarism. This means a changed order of words is also a plagiarism, if the content of the sentence aligns with the content of the original sentence.
- Clearly labelled borrowings from other sources are valid. It is vital to use own formulations to demonstrate your own capacity and understanding of the passages.

If the majority of your thesis consists of copying other authors' texts literally, it is – even with proper citation – an insufficient performance.

- You also have to cite your own prior texts (self plagiarism)!¹

When citing sources it is strongly preferable to use indirect citation, direct citation is very rarely used. Do not use secondary citations; cite the original source of ideas if possible. Other sources discussing the original idea further can be included as additional citation. If there are several versions or editions of sources use the most recent one, unless the most recent version does not include the given phrase anymore. If you intend to cite discussion papers or working papers, check if you find a version that is published in a journal.

Please be mindful of a uniform citation style. Preferably use the American citation style in which the citation follows directly after the thoughts in the text in brackets. The brackets include the name of the author(s) and the year of release (Schmidt 2014; Schmidt & Johnson 2014). If there are more than two authors, use the name of the first author with "et al." (Schmidt et al. 2014). If the author has more than one publication in one year, add alphabetical letters (Schmidt 2014a). When citing directly or when citing only a very specific part of a paper, add the corresponding pages (Schmidt 2014, p.13). If the text includes the author's name, do not include it in brackets again ("Schmidt shows (2015, p. 13)...").

4.4 Language

The thesis should be written in clear, comprehensible English. Please put some effort into correct spelling, grammar, punctuation and syntax. Avoid colloquial expressions and very long sentences. Use indirect speech and try to avoid "I" and "you (can see...)". Make sure to have someone other than yourself proofread your thesis prior to submission. The linguistic quality has an effect on your grade.

¹For more detailed information on correct scientific work and correct citation, use the university's brochure "An Orientation Framework for good Research Practice"

4.5 Formatting

Use a uniform formatting for your thesis. Use the following directions:

- Page formatting A4 upright format
- Margins right and left combined 5 cm
- Uniform font
- Serif fonts (Times New Roman, Liberation Serif) in font size 12pt or non serif fonts (Arial) in size 11pt
- Headlines should have larger fonts
- 10pt for footnotes
- 1,5 line spacing
- Fully justified text for main text, footnotes and lists (check hyphenation)