Thesis guidelines Department Management in Agribusiness (07.03.22)

General information

Language

At our group, you can write your thesis in English or German. The language depends on your study program and you have to make sure that the chosen language is in accordance with the examination rules that apply to your study program. In general, we suggest to write your thesis in English even if this is not your first language. In this way you can effectively practice your English writing skills.

Length of the thesis

Term/Seminar papers and **project reports** should be between 10-15 pages. For **bachelor theses**, we ask you to write 25 to 30 pages. Since **master theses** usually deal with topics of higher complexity, their length should be within 35 to 45 pages. Note that those page limits might be subject to change depending on specific examination rules that hold for your study program. The pages are counted from the beginning of the introduction until the end of the discussion or conclusion and include tables and figures. Some students find it hard to stay below these thresholds. However, in academia as well as in private companies you will always have to condense information to the maximum extent possible. Therefore, starting to develop this skill in your thesis is important for us to prepare you for your professional career. Something that might be helpful is the following question: "Will the understanding of my thesis change, if I leave out this sentence?" In case the answer is yes, drop it. Otherwise, keep it. Tables and Figures that provide background information not essential for the main part of the thesis can be put in an appendix

Please consider that the thesis does not have to include an abstract. However, if you like to write an abstract feel free to do so.

Layout

We do not have specific guidelines for the layout and we will not ask you to stick to a certain layout (unless required by your study program). The only thing that is very important to us is

consistency. The whole thesis should be written in the same font, with the same font size, spacing etc. Moreover, there are certain things that the academic world has agreed upon which are listed below:

- Tables have a heading above the table while figures have the heading below the figure
- A line spacing of at least 1.5
- Page numbers are to be placed at the outer margin of the header line
- Set the text alignment to justified
- Using typical fonts such as Times New Roman or Arial with their typical font sizes of 12 and 11, respectively.

Besides, all tables and figures must be numbered and included in a list of tables and list of figures preceding the introduction. Equations are to be numbered but there is no list of equations necessary.

The outline should be structured through the decimal system: 1 Introduction, 2, 2.1, 2.1.1 etc. Put chapter headings in bold type. Please note: a 1 must be followed by a 2, e.g., 2.1 requires 2.2, otherwise 2.1 is not needed. Additionally, the pages before the introduction, like the table of content, should be counted with roman numbers (excluding the cover page).

The outline/table of content of your thesis should be in line with the length of your thesis and should in general not exceed one page (for a master thesis). Also try to avoid a too deep subchapter structure e.g. breaking down chapters to 2.1.1.3 Usually a one-level chapter structure like 2.1 is sufficient.

The first page should be the cover page from your study department, e.g. TUM School of Management. The last page should be the affidavit with your signature.

Citation of literature

In accordance with the academic code of conduct, every scientific work must cite all material that is taken from other sources. That is, as soon as you write something that is not your own idea or thought, you must give a reference to the source you obtained the information from. Proper citation is also seen as a skill in academic work. Moreover, one must distinguish between direct quotes and indirect ones. A good orientation is the five-words-rule: When you copy more than five words in a row from another source, indicate this with quotation marks, and include

the page number of the reference you obtained the quote from. When you take over less than five words or paraphrase a sentence, giving the author and year of publication is sufficient.

Our chair uses the APA (American Psychological Association) citation style (see e.g.: https://www.mendeley.com/guides/apa-citation-guide). All references must appear in parentheses behind the sentence and again in the list of references. Three examples of citation are given bellow: A scientific journal article (Hirsch, 2018), a book (Stanley and Doucouliagos, 2012) and an internet source (Eurostat, 2017). If a source has more than 2 authors use the abbreviation "et al." (Hirsch et al., 2019).

Violating the rules of good scientific practice can have severe consequences, e.g. failing the thesis. Additionally, every work must include a signed declaration of authorship. We advise you to use a reference management software such as Citavi or EndNote. It will save you a lot of work, and creates a consistent list of references. Note that all theses are subject to an electronic plagiarism check.

It is also important that you follow the DFG guidelines on Good Scientific Practice:

(https://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/principles_dfg_funding/good_scientific_practice/).

References

Eurostat (2017) Annual Detailed Enterprise Statistics on Manufacturing Subsections DA-DE and Total Manufacturing. Luxembourg: European Commission. Online on the internet: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu. *Accessed 30 January 2017.*

Hirsch, S. (2018). Successful in the long run: a meta-regression analysis of persistent firm profits. Journal of Economic Surveys, 32(1), 23-49.

Hirsch, S., Mishra, A., Möhring, N., & Finger, R. (2019). Revisiting firm flexibility and efficiency: evidence from the EU dairy processing industry. *European Review of Agricultural Economics*. In press

Stanley, T. D., & Doucouliagos, H. (2012). Meta-regression analysis in economics and business. Routledge.

Obtaining a good grade

One of the most frequently asked question concerning theses is: "How do I obtain a good grade?" There are no general rules how one can achieve a good grade since all theses are unique and, consequently, there is no one-fits-all guideline. However, there are some hints that are helpful to follow when writing your thesis:

1. Create a red line of argumentation: Your thesis should follow a red line from the beginning of the introduction to the end of the conclusion.

2. Stick to the point: In your introduction, you are supposed to come up with research questions and/or objectives that you will examine in the course of your research. Stick to answering the research questions and objectives throughout your whole thesis. There is no value in adding parts not related to your research objective.
   For your introduction it is advisable to follow the **introduction formula** by Keith Head.
   (http://blogs.ubc.ca/khead/research/research-advice/formula)

3. In his blog Professor Marc Bellemare provides some very helpful information on how to write a proper middle part of your thesis:
   (https://marcfbellemare.com/wordpress/12797)
   and a proper conclusion:
   (https://marcfbellemare.com/wordpress/12060)

4. Difficulty is not always beneficial: Many students aim to show the skills they acquired during their studies and present them in the thesis. Yet, some problems do not require advanced data analysis techniques or high-level econometrics. It is much more important that you find a good method and apply it properly to the problem. In case the method is appropriate and easy, go for it. Moreover, never use a method that you do not understand.

5. Let somebody read the thesis before handing it in: A thesis that is free of typos makes a much better impression than a jumble of words and letters.

6. Work independent: At our chair group, we also take into account the degree of independency that the student has shown during writing his/her thesis.

7. Do not fill your whole thesis with tables and figures: A figure or a table is thought to ease the understanding of a complex issue, giving an overview or to support statements from the text. There is no value in adding a table or a figure that contains something which you could explain with one sentence of text. You should always refer at least once to a table or a figure in the text. Everything that can rather be considered as additional material including raw data should go to the appendix.