Faculty of Economics and Management

Chair of Innovation Economics

Prof. Dr. Knut Blind

Guidelines

Theses & Term papers

1. General information

In general, theses should be written in English. German might be possible if the supervisor agrees in advance. Three printed copies, one electronic copy (as a pdf-file saved on a USB-stick), the database from the reference manager of your choice (Citavi licenses are provided by the University), and the raw and processed data should be delivered on time to the examination office. Additionally, a digital copy of your thesis should be sent to Brigitte Essoun (brigitte.essoun[at]tu-berlin.de).

Check your faculty's and program's study and exam regulations regarding specific formal requirements for theses (e.g. a German abstract). These requirements take precedence over this guide.

1.1 Length

Master theses should not exceed 13 000 words, Bachelor theses not 10 000 words (not counting cover sheet, table of contents, graphs, appendices, and bibliography – tables however do count!). Depending on the topic and method, some theses might be shorter or longer, respectively. Please check with your supervisor, which length is appropriate in your particular case.

The length of term papers will be set within the respective course.

1.2 Topic selection process

Students can apply for topics that are published on the chair's website or develop a topic by themselves. Students that decide on given topics should directly approach the responsible researcher by mail, indicating their chosen topic and providing a current CV and transcript of records. If you want to pursue your own topic, please contact Mr. Böhmecke-Schwafert (moritzbs[at]win.tu-berlin.de), indicating your chosen topic and providing a current CV and transcript of records.

2. Fundamentals of academic writing

We expect your thesis to contain a novel and relevant contribution to current research based on a well-developed understanding and reference of the existing literature. The thesis needs to be written in clear, comprehensible English. The development of your research question, your methodological approach, and your analysis and conclusions must be appropriate and transparent.

A ***comprehensive introduction to academic writing*** can be found here:

- Online guide to academic writing (Leeds University): https://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills-writing
- Academic writing guide - City University of Seattle: http://www.vsm.sk/Curriculum/academicsupport/academicwritingguide.pdf

In addition, we highly recommend the following academic writing course: "Writing in English" from the University of Lund. It takes approximately 24 hours, but it is modular and you can decide, which modules will help you the most. You can access it for free at coursera.org
https://www.coursera.org/learn/writing-english-university/home/welcome

3. Project planning and time management

3.1 First draft

- Get an overview of available literature
- Select promising articles/journals/books etc.
- Develop an understanding of the research topic and determine aims
- Write an exposé (2 pages) including an outline and schedule to be handed in to your advisor before registration at the examination office

3.2 Final version

- Make a schedule
- Perform a systematic search for literature according to specifications
- Work on the content of the research topic
- Write the paper; make appendices, illustrations, tables, etc.

- Review and correct
- Layout and print

4. Systematic literature search and selection

4.1 Documenting the literature search and selection process

The process of literature search and selection should be comprehensibly documented. Therefore, the search strategy has to be documented in your thesis, and the selection of any literature justified. The following information should be supplied: which database was used, search terms and other criteria used to narrow the search. Additionally, the quality of journals used should be considered. Several indicators and rankings exist, e.g., the VHB-Journal ranking or H-indices.

The results of the search must be processed (in addition to the above) by adequately selecting items according to the relevance to the research topic. The time consumed by the literature search should not be underestimated.

What to remember while examining literature: What is the current state of research? What is its basis? Where is the discussion leading? Which solutions already exist for your problem? Critically reflect on what you read (i.e., gaps, generalizations, contradictions, etc.) Does the text contain any solutions/ideas which could be helpful in your research?

4.2 Analyzing literature

- What does it contribute to the field?
- What can it contribute to your research?
- Which position does the author take? Which position does (s)he criticizes?
- Which sources are quoted? Are they relevant to your research?

5. Structure of the paper

5.1 Table of contents

The table of contents should reveal which topics are relevant to solving the research problem, which relevance each aspect of the problem has and how they relate to each other.

Each section must have at least two entries. Excessive sub-sectioning is not encouraged; three levels are sufficient in most cases.

Reviewing the table of contents: Are all the sections relevant to the research topic? Are the headings descriptive of the contents? Does each section contain roughly the same amount and depth of subsections? Do all subsections correspond to their section? Is the order of the sections logical?

5.2 Elements of academic papers/theses and their functions

Cover page
Assurance of academic integrity
Abstract (English and German, depending on your study program)
Table of contents
List of figures and tables (where applicable)
List of abbreviations (where applicable)
Introduction • Importance and relevance of the topic • Research topic, aims, and research gap/problem • Structure of the paper
Literature review/Conceptual framework • Definition of essential terms and concepts • Theoretical framework • The current state of research • Critical analysis of existing literature
Main section • Methodology/methods • Analyses • Results • Findings • Discussion
Conclusion • Concentrated description of the most important results • Limitations of the paper • Conclusions and ideas for future research
Bibliography
Appendix (where applicable) • Search strategy and its results • Summary of literature • Unwieldy figures/tables

6. Important things to remember

- Write for the target audience
- Raise interest (even academic papers can tell a good story!)
- Preserve clarity (formal structure, illustrations and models, clear goals, transitions)
- Precision and depth (do not incorporate too many ideas, focus on the most important and follow them consciously and accurately)
- Consistent use of terms (introduce new terms and only use them the way they were defined)
- Consistent and justifiable arguments (use literature to back up your arguments!)

7. Referencing

Only use the APA citation style. For all details with respect to the proper use of the **APA citation style**, please refer to the APA documentation.

The use of a citation software such as Citavi or Endnote is **mandatory**. A free license for Citavi can be obtained with your TU-Account. Introductory courses to Citavi and the proper use of referencing styles regularly take place in the university library. Use original sources when possible, i.e. do not cite a citation!

Important: All ideas adopted literally or contextually from others must be made visible in the text. Internet sources are acceptable, but the internet address (URL) and the date it was accessed must be provided. However, the main source of information must be articles published in peer-reviewed journals.

8. Figures and Tables

Figures from other sources may be inserted unchanged or modified. If the figure has been modified the caption must read "Based on…". Abbreviations that are defined in a dictionary should not be included in the list of abbreviations in the preface. A list of figures and tables is mandatory if the thesis contains figures or tables.

9. Proofreading

Gaining some distance from your work can be beneficial, so leave plenty of time for proofreading. Often a printed version is helpful when proofreading. Make sure to find someone in advance who will read the paper, correct mistakes, and check and discuss its content. Mistakes in spelling and grammar can profoundly inhibit readability. Therefore, we recommend examining your work repeatedly and carefully. Academic work should exhibit a high standard with regards to the content but also the language. Colloquial terms and phrases or subjective wording that show the writer's lack of distance to a given topic should be avoided. Adequate formulation, however, does not mean the text must be complicated or difficult to read and understand.

10. Assurance of academic integrity

Bachelors and Masters theses must contain an assurance of academic integrity that states the creator worked independently using only the sources named. Additionally, the paper must not be presented to any other examination panel. The assurance of academic integrity is to be signed and placed after the table of contents. It must have the following wording:

Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich Eides statt, dass ich dir vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig und ohne unerlaubte fremde Hilfe angefertigt, andere als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel nicht benutzt und die den benutzten Quellen wörtlich oder inhaltlich entnommenen Stellen als solche kenntlich gemacht habe.

_____ _____

Place, Date Signature

11. Formatting

- **Format:** DIN A4; pages should be printed one-sided using an established word processor
- **Text:** 11 point font size (min), 1.5 line spacing (single-spaced inside tables)
- **Page numbering:** The title page as well the table of contents, figures and abbreviations should not be numbered. The remainder of the text should be numbered with Arabic numerals.
- You may scarcely use bold or italic font in order to emphasize.

12. Examples for bibliography and cover pages

Bibliography

Blind, K., Petersen, S. S., & Riillo, C. A. (2017). The impact of standards and regulation on innovation in uncertain markets. Research Policy, 46(1), 249-264.

Blind, K., Pohlisch, J., & Zi, A. (2018). Publishing, patenting, and standardization: Motives and barriers of scientists. Research Policy, 47(7), 1185-1197.

Dosi, G., & Nelson, R. R. (1994). An introduction to evolutionary theories in economics. Journal of evolutionary economics, 4(3), 153-172.

Gauch, S., & Blind, K. (2015). Technological convergence and the absorptive capacity of standardisation. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 91, 236-249.

Grosse, M. (2018). How User-Innovators Pave the Way for a Sustainable Energy Future: A Study among German Energy Enthusiasts. Sustainability, 10, 4836.

Kayser, V., & Blind, K. (2017). Extending the knowledge base of foresight: The contribution of text mining. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 116, 208-215.

Rogers, E. M. (2010). Diffusion of innovations. Simon and Schuster.

Wiegmann, P. M., de Vries, H. J., & Blind, K. (2017). Multi-mode standardisation: A critical review and a research agenda. Research Policy, 46(8), 1370-1386.

TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN
Faculty of Economics and Management
Chair of Innovation Economics

Master/Bachelor Thesis

- insert title here -

Handed in to Prof. Dr. Knut Blind
Second supervisor: xxx
Faculty of Economics and Management
Chair of Innovation Economics

[Date]

By:
Last name, First name
Address
Phone: (XXX) XXX
E-Mail: XXX
Course of studies: XXX
Semester: X
Student ID: XXXXXX