

ACADEMIC PAPERS

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING MASTER'S THESES AT THE FACULTY FOR BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

These guidelines contain the internal procedures of the Faculty for Business, Economics and Statistics (hereinafter "Faculty") for students and supervisors regarding the process of development for Master's Theses as well as for the cooperation between students and supervisors.

These guidelines aim to standardize and achieve a common understanding of this academic accomplishment within the Faculty. They also serve as a legal basis for the study program management in case of possible disagreements.

The following information refers to legal regulations insofar as they are relevant for the implementation of these procedures. The legal regulations can be found in the corresponding sources (University Law, the Statutes of the University of Vienna and in the respective curriculum).

All information is also available online on the website of the Study Service Center (SSC) of the Faculty (last update: April 2021)

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BEFORE YOU START WITH YOUR THESIS

GENERAL RULES AND FORMAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

The Master's thesis serves as proof of the student's ability to work on scientific topics independently and in a way that is acceptable in terms of content and methodology. Students have the right to subject-specific supervision of the Master's or Magister thesis, but no right to a specific person or to a specific topic. There are no formal regulations on how long students may take for their thesis, but the chosen topic should allow for submission of the completed thesis after no more than 6 months. The topic of the thesis must correspond to the respective specifications of the curriculum and be dealt with using methods that have been acquired during the course of studies.

According to the statutes of the University of Vienna, students are entitled to request a university instructor to supervise their thesis. There is NO legal entitlement to supervision by a person WITHOUT teaching authorization or competence on a specific topic (please see the website of the officer responsible for the implementation of the study law "Studienpräses"). If a student cannot find a supervisor, the Studienpräses will assign a supervisor to the student. In this case, please contact the Director of Studies.

The correct procedure for writing Master's theses involves the following steps:

- Researching a topic
- Outlining preliminary ideas (exposé)
- Contacting a suitable supervisor
- Registration of the topic/supervision
- Attendance of the Master conservatory (can also be done while or after writing the thesis)
- Writing the thesis
- Uploading the thesis for plagiarism check
- Submission of the printed and bound version after the successful plagiarism check
- Assessment of the thesis
- Application for the defense and exam

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WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MASTER'S THESIS AND A SEMINAR PAPER?

In contrast to a seminar paper, a Master's thesis should include new well-defined elements, results or insights which do not yet exist in scientific literature. An innovation is established when it reflects this definition. The magnitude or importance of the innovation does not matter as long as the "added value" is not negligible. What this innovation entails and to what extent it can be described as such should clearly be outlined in the exposé. A (qualitative or quantitative) summary of literature is not sufficient for the work to be classified as innovative (except for theses on legal topics).

Examples for approaches that reach a satisfactory level of innovation are listed below:

- Researching a topic
- Outlining preliminary ideas (exposé)
- Contacting a suitable supervisor
- Registration of the topic/supervision
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- Writing the thesis
- Uploading the thesis for plagiarism check
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No innovation is given if, for example, material from different sources is merely collected or if data is simply procured and described. The methodological structure of the thesis should be defined in consultation with the supervisor.

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FINDING A TOPIC AND A SUPERVISOR

In principle, all habilitated professors may supervise Master's theses within the scope of their teaching capacity. In addition, associated professors (= tenure track with fulfilled qualification agreement) may also supervise Master's theses independently. At our faculty, requests should first be made to habilitated colleagues in the respective department. It is also possible for non-habilitated persons to be co-supervisor, but they must at least have completed a doctorate and be employed by the faculty. The application for co-supervision must be made by the supervisor.

Students are responsible for finding a supervisor. Ideally, the student should propose and briefly explain the topic of thesis in a short exposé. This outline should be 2 to 5 pages and must cover the topic as well as the methodology of the intended thesis. It should also include an introductory literature review. Moreover, it should clearly demonstrate that the student has the necessary competences to work on the chosen topic.

During the semester, the student can expect to receive a response regarding supervisory commitment, refusal or deferral within 2 weeks. A deferral may mean that the exposé needs to be adjusted or that the desired supervisor wishes that other potential supervisors be contacted first (due to, for example, a more suitable area of expertise or current workload). Supervision must not be made dependent on whether certain courses were attended, or certain grades were achieved.

A potential supervisor may refuse an application if a student has insufficient knowledge to work on the proposed topic, if there are severe deficiencies in the exposé, or if they are already actively supervising more than 10 Master's theses per year (provided there are other supervisors with the capacity and expertise for this or related topics). The SPL manages the statistics on which supervisors do not have the capacity to supervise more theses. If a supervisor is supervising fewer than 10 theses, the faculty assumes that this supervisor is available.

If a student receives rejections from all professors who could supervise their suggested topic, the student should firstly try to change the topic or focus. If, after adapting the topic, the student remains unsuccessful, the Director of Studies is required to assist the student with finding a suitable supervisor. This search is based upon the topic matrix, the main fields of the study, and the availability of possible supervisors.

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OVERVIEW OF POSSIBLE TOPICS AND SUPERVISORS

On the faculty website you'll find a list of all possible topics and supervisors (hereafter topic matrix) at the faculty. This list has been created in coordination with all habilitated faculty members and provides an overview of supervisors and the topics they cover. Please note that students are not entitled to supervision from a specific person!

- [List of possible topics](#)
- [List of possible supervisors](#)

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RULES FOR GOOD ACADEMIC PRACTICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

All researchers, lecturers and students of the University of Vienna are committed to scientifically correct behavior. This refers to the independent writing of papers, the correct handling of sources and the correct performance of analyses.

When registering their Master's or Magister thesis, students must confirm that they comply with the rules of good academic practice by completing and signing the corresponding form and submitting it with the registration of the thesis.

[Link: Basic rules for good scientific practices](#)

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REGISTERING THE MASTER'S THESIS

As soon as you have confirmation of supervision, the subject and supervisor must be registered at the SSC using the appropriate form. If you change the subject (e.g. language or specialisation) and/or supervisor, you must submit a change request. A signed copy of the rules of good academic practices (see above) must also be handed in.

[Link: Registering the MA thesis](#)

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DURING YOUR WORK ON YOUR THESIS

GENERAL FORMAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

All formal requirements to be observed can be found in the Download section under [Verordnung: Formvorschriften für wissenschaftliche Arbeiten](#).

Please also note that, due to pseudonymisation of data during plagiarism control, no personal data (matriculation number, name, CV, etc.) may be included in your thesis from page 7 onwards. Please **DO NOT include a CURRICULUM VITAE** in neither the electronic nor the print version.

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COLLABORATION WITH THE SUPERVISOR

There should be at least one meeting between the supervisor and the student during the work on the Master's thesis, at least before the first version of the thesis is completed. **Supervision does not take place during the master conservatory.**

Students may expect to receive written or oral feedback on questions and preliminary written statements within 4 weeks during the lecture period. Supervisors may also expect to receive written feedback on questions and comments within 4 weeks during the lecture period.

The supervisor may, in agreement with the SPL, withdraw the confirmation of supervision if, over a longer period of time and in spite of repeated reminders, there is obviously no progress in the completion of the Master's thesis.

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THE FORMAT OF THE MASTER'S THESIS

The Master's thesis should - taking into account the respective discipline - be structured along the lines of articles in leading scientific journals. Please discuss the specific contents and structure with your supervisor. The general formal requirements of the University of Vienna are binding. According to scientific models, the thesis should be of a scope appropriate to the topic.

The current formal requirements can be found in the corresponding [regulations of the University of Vienna](#).

- The work shall be printed in DIN A4 (210x297 mm), portrait and double-sided.
- An abstract (min. 100 words) must be included in the thesis. In any case, an abstract in the language of the work must be included. If the paper is not written in German, a German abstract must also be included. The placement of the abstract (before or after the paper) can be chosen freely. An abstract is not a summary, but contains the motivation for the research question and information about what will be dealt with in the master thesis.
- An affidavit is not necessary, it is automatically included in the upload confirmation of the plagiarism check (see submission and assessment).
- The bilingual title page must be designed according to the official template.
- The relevant rules of citation must be observed. Please note that illustrations (pictures, graphics, etc.) are also subject to correct quotation and the rules of citation. Details on copyright and use of images can be found on the website of the [Büro Studienpräses](#).

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COMMON MISTAKES

1. Title Page

Since 01 March 2016 new title page specifications apply! The specifications for the design of the title page must be strictly adhered to.

Please do not refer to scientific papers uploaded before March 2016, but use only the sample title pages on the faculty website as templates. All information on the title page must be in German and English. The only exception is the title of the scientific paper, which may only be given in the language of the approved topic (see Registration of the topic and supervisor). Please check the download center for title page samples.

2. Already acquired titles

If you have already acquired an academic title, it must also be recorded in u:space for you to be allowed to include it on the title page of your thesis. If it is not listed there, you have two options:

- You ask the Admissions Office to add the title in u:space. Then, the title may also be included on the title page.
- You create the title page without title, only with your name.

3. Academic titles of the supervisor(s)

You can find the correct and complete name and academic title of your supervisor(s) on [u:find](#).

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JOINTLY WRITTEN THESES

If two students would like to co-author their thesis, they should keep the following in mind:

- Both students must apply individually for approval of the topic with the director of studies (SPL) and submit the required form at the SSC.
- Both authors must submit three bound version of the completed thesis to the SSC.
- The students must adhere to the title page template for co-authored theses when creating the title page of their thesis.
- The table of contents must convey which author wrote which chapter. This is the only way to ensure individual and separate assessment of each student (UG § 81 (3)).
- The electronic version of the thesis must be uploaded to [HOPLA](#) by each author.

After successfully uploading the thesis to HOPLA, students will each receive an upload confirmation (3-page PDF). The students must sign and submit this confirmation as well as the bound printed versions of the thesis to the SSC.

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THE MASTER CONVERSATORIUM

The conversatorium is an obligatory course for all Master students in (International) Business Administration, Economics as well as Banking and Finance, in which academic writing is practiced and the current status or progress of the Master thesis is presented. The topics and contents that (should) be included in the own master's thesis are presented during the course and commented and discussed by other students. Special emphasis is to be placed on the introduction and implementation of acquired skills from studies in general and especially from the subject in which the conversation course is attended. If the master's thesis is not written in the subject of the

conversatorium attended, those aspects of the thesis that relate to the subject of the course attended may play a special role in the assessment.

The conversatorium is a separate course and the assessment of the work done there must be clearly separated from an assessment of the master's thesis. The assessment criteria for the course will be announced on u:find before the start of the registration phase and should not relate to the actual master's thesis.

Students may only remain registered for the conversatorium if they present a confirmation of supervision in the first unit or if they have already registered the topic and have been approved by SPL. Then they may not be deregistered after the official deregistration deadline. The conversatorium should be assigned to the curriculum, exceptions must be approved by the program director. There are no further specifications as to which of the offered conversatorium courses can or must be attended, but it may only be taken once.

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AFTER YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR THESIS

SUBMISSION AND ASSESSMENT

With the agreement of the supervisor, the student must upload the completed thesis in PDF format to the university server (<https://hopla.univie.ac.at>). In the case that certain attachments cannot be converted into PDF format, support is available through: e-theses.ub@univie.ac.at

The upload process records metadata and requests the abstract separately. During the upload process, metadata is collected and the abstract is requested separately. When you have successfully uploaded your work, you will receive an e-mail confirmation. This confirmation has to be printed out, signed and handed in when submitting the printed versions to the Study Service Center. This upload confirmation automatically includes the affidavit.

Furthermore, students can individually indicate whether their work should be accessible as full text online (via the library catalogue) or not. This is not the same as requesting a publication ban for the master's thesis (see [Publication ban for academic work](#)).

Students automatically receive the results of the plagiarism check via email. Within 10 days, students must submit the bound print versions (3 copies of the master's thesis or 5 copies of the dissertation) to the StudiesServiceCenter (SSC). Please make sure that your work meets the formal requirements of the University of Vienna (see downloadcenter for guidelines).

Please consider the following criteria for submission:

- **3 copies of the thesis (black, hard cover; printed double-sided)**
- Signed email **confirmation of the upload to HOPLA**
- Completed form **Assessment of Scientific Work** (see downloadcenter)

After submitting the print version, the supervisor has 2 months to evaluate the work and prepare a report. Students have the right to see the assessment documents of their scientific work. A copy of the report will be issued with the final documents.

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PLAGIARISM AND THE PLAGIARISM CHECK

There is a zero tolerance policy on plagiarism at the University of Vienna. If plagiarism is proven in a preliminary version of the paper, the supervisor can immediately terminate the supervisor relationship in consultation with the program director. Every quotation or wording that has been copied verbatim must be linked to a reference to the source. Literal quotations should generally be avoided; instead, own formulations should be used.

If, after submission, it is discovered in the course of the assessment that the master's thesis violates the rules of good academic practice, the thesis must be marked as plagiarism and the Büro Studienpräses as well as the supervisor are informed.

During the plagiarism check it is checked whether the submitted academic work or parts of it are plagiarisms. According to the Universities Act 2002, the definition of plagiarism is as follows:

"An act of plagiarism is unquestionably committed, when text, content, or ideas are used and presented as one's own. This encompasses in particular the appropriation and use of text, theories, hypotheses, findings or data by directly quoting, paraphrasing or translating them without appropriate acknowledgement and reference to the source and the original author."
(§ 51 Abs. 2 Ziffer 31 UG)

Before starting the plagiarism check, students should be aware of the following:

1. No test run

The plagiarism check is not a test run! Once the document and the sworn declaration have been uploaded, any plagiarism discovered can have legal consequences.

2. PDF conversion

The thesis must be uploaded as a PDF to the university server. Students should use the latest version of a PDF converter when converting the document to PDF .

3. File size

Files larger than 40 MB often cause problems and should be avoided. Therefore, please pay attention while formatting pictures, tables etc.

4. Annotated title page

When the thesis is uploaded to the university server, an annotated title page appears. This serves to explain how a proper title page should look. Click through the annotated title page and confirm at the bottom that the title page of your submitted thesis complies with the title page requirements of the University of Vienna.

Find more information on the plagiarism check [here](#).

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BLOCKING THESES FROM PUBLIC ACCESS

If the scientific work is not to be released for public availability due to sensitive company data, a block must be applied for. The SPL recommends that a blocking application be submitted when registering the work in the SSC and that copies of any contracts or agreements be enclosed. The justification for the ban must be written in a comprehensible manner and the duration of the ban must be kept as short as possible. The Büro Studienpräses decides whether a ban can be approved and for how long (maximum 5 years) upon recommendation by the Director of Studies.

[Link: Application for blocking thesis from public access](#)

You can find out more about the difference between publishing the full text on the university publication server and blocking academic papers in the info sheet on the website of the [Studienpräses](#).

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REGISTRATION FOR THE THESIS DEFENSE (FINAL ORAL EXAM)

All Master's students in (International) Business Administration, Economics and Banking and Finance must take an oral final examination to obtain their degree. As soon as the Master's thesis has been assessed and the grade has been entered, students can register for the final examination. The supervisor of the Master thesis is also the examiner for the defense part in (International) Business Administration or for the first examination subject in Economics and Banking & Finance. In this part, the student is examined on the Master's thesis and its thematic field (the subject area in which the thesis was written).

If the supervisor is not able to examine the specialisation subject of the Master thesis, they have to make sure together with the students that a suitable examiner is available for the specialisation subject when registering the Master thesis.

Detailed information on the final oral exam can be found on the website of the SSC.