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Guidelines for Writing a MSc or BSc Thesis

I am supervising Bachelor and Master theses on topics related to *International Trade, International Macroeconomics, and Firm Organization*, but also other topics. If you are interested in writing under my supervision, you should contact me well in advance (months) of your planned start date.

The number of supervision spots is limited, and I generally award these on a first-come, first-serve basis. Students typically have attended one of my seminars or lectures and if there is excess demand, I give preference to students that attended my courses.

Since I always supervise several students in parallel, I kindly ask you not to ask for information that you find in this document. If we arrange a meeting, please come prepared and have an agenda. This is to smoothen the process and to keep communication costs low for you and for me.

Choosing a Topic

There is no predefined topic list. First, you should decide whether you want to work more empirically or theoretically. If you are interested in an empirical thesis, one of the most important challenges is finding suitable data. A good starting point is to look at papers that have addressed your research question and that are published in a good economics journal. Another approach is to replicate an existing study using newer data or additional control variables. In either case, think about why your research question matters in a broader economic context.

Research Proposal

Once we have agreed on a broad topic (see Timeline below), the next step is to write a research proposal. The goal of the research proposal is to provide a clear outlook for the thesis. It should include:

- A clear research question and a brief explanation of why it is important in a broader economic context
- A list of literature you plan to study
- A detailed description of the method or model you plan to use
- A description of the dataset (if applicable)

I will review the research proposal and either approve it or suggest revisions. Please note that the bachelor / master thesis is an independent piece of work by you. After the research proposal is approved, you should have a clear and precise to-do list to work independently on your thesis.

Timeline

The typical process from first contact to submission follows these steps:

- **Initial contact:** Send me an e-mail expressing your interest in writing a thesis under my supervision. Please include your planned timeline (when you intend to start and submit). If you already have topic ideas, feel free to include them, but this is not required at this stage.
- **Confirmation:** I will respond with a confirmation of supervision (or a rejection if I see no fit or am fully booked). If confirmed, we will agree on a broad topic area, either by e-mail or in a short meeting.
- **Research proposal:** You write a research proposal (see above) and send it to me. I will either approve it or request revisions. There may be one additional iteration.
- **Registration:** You start the administrative registration procedure with the student office (see the official links under Registration Rules below). I will receive a notification and confirm the supervision as described in the procedure.
- **Writing phase:** You write the thesis independently.
- **Submission:** You submit the thesis (see Registration Rules and Thesis Submission below).

Communication

For short or specific questions that arise during the writing process, please send me an e-mail. Please make sure your questions are conceptual in nature (e.g., questions about the overall approach, interpretation of results, or scope of the thesis). I cannot address very narrowly technical questions (e.g., “What does equation (23) do?”) — working through such details independently is part of the thesis. If a meeting is needed, we can arrange one during office hours. Please come prepared with a clear agenda.

Formatting Rules

- **Length:** 25-40 pages for BSc theses; 35-65 pages for MSc theses
- **Formatting:** Use a serif 12 pt font, 1.5 line spacing, and 3 cm margins
 - Attach data, computer code, Appendices or detailed proofs if necessary
- **Bibliography:** References should follow the style of one of the top-5 economics journals (American Economic Review, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Journal of Political Economy, Econometrica, or Review of Economic Studies). Pick one and apply it consistently
- **Languages:** German or English. English is preferred
- **Additional Requirements:** Include a cover page and an affidavit (*Ehrenwörtliche Erklärung*)

Registration Rules and Thesis Submission

- **Important:**
Always check the current official administrative regulations and procedures for [BSc theses](#) and for [MSc theses](#)
- **Submission of the printed thesis:** the completed thesis must be submitted in the form of *two printed copies* no later than the specified submission deadline. The deadline for submission can be met by delivery to a post office, documented by certificate of posting. If you submit it personally and I am not in my office, there is a *mailbox in the L7 building, rear entrance, ground floor*.
- **Submission of the digital thesis:** the completed thesis must also be submitted in the form of *a single PDF* file no later than the specified submission deadline via e-mail. If you wish you can also hand in replication materials (after coordinating with me). Please also inform me about submission of your printed copies in that e-mail.

Helpful Resources

Library Resources:

For writing a Bachelor thesis, some knowledge of literature search techniques might be useful. The library team offers introductory courses. Information about courses, tutorials, and more can be found [here](#). For further assistance, please contact the [Economics library team](#).

Academic Writing Consultancy:

The [academic writing consultancy](#) for all Economics BSc students offers help regarding all questions in the academic writing and research process.

AI:

The use of various AI tools is increasingly becoming a matter for students. Please refer to the [AI guidelines](#) and the [FAQs on AI use at the University of Mannheim](#).

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