

Manual for the Preparation of a Master's Thesis

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Abstract

First this manual provides a list of the requirements that you must fulfill in order to apply for a master's thesis. Please study each point carefully, as this will help you to go through the application procedure more efficiently. The second section of the manual walks you through the most important steps in applying for a master's thesis. The third section discusses the writing process, makes a few important remarks on the formal requirements, the structure and the supervision process.

1 Requirements

1.1 Requirements of the Faculty

Before getting started and reading the requirements of the department of Economic Theory, ensure that you have already consulted the general rules and requirements of the faculty of Business and Economics (WWZ)
- See **Guidelines**.

1.2 Requirements of the Chair

In order to consider your application, we ask you to make sure that you fulfill the following requirements.

1. We only accept applications from students who have already acquired a minimum of 30 CPs and have passed the following lectures or equivalent lectures, respectively:
 - Advanced Economic Theory (31960-01)
 - Monetary Theory (10645-01)
2. Additionally, we strongly recommend that students attend the following lectures:
 - Monetary Economics and Financial Markets I (31905-01)
 - Entscheidung unter Unsicherheit (BA 18544-01)
 - Versicherungsökonomie (BA 21097-01)
3. Furthermore, you should be aware that all papers have to be written in English.

2 Preparing the Application

2.1 Researching Literature

Your research should not be limited to the basic literature, such as textbooks. Textbooks and reviews will help you to get an overview, but these books usually are nothing more than collections and summaries of primary sources, such as articles in economic journals. Hence, it is a good strategy to get started with a basic textbook and then work through the referenced papers.

When looking for papers online, make sure you are signed in to the University's network by either using an on-campus computer or the VPN

Client in case you are working on your personal computer. Whilst connected to the university's network, you will have access to most of the papers and journals free of charge. **Google Scholar** is usually a good way to search multiple online databases with a single search inquiry. It is recommended that you take careful notes during lectures, recording all sources and carefully noting all quoted references so that you can distinguish these from your own writing later. Information noted in this way will help you to draft your proposal and simplify dealing with sources.

2.2 Writing a Paper Proposal

Before applying, you should have a concrete idea of your research topic. You have to hand in a paper proposal with your application (no longer than three pages). This proposal consists of an abstract, a basic structure, as well as a description of the methods you are going to use. Furthermore, you have to provide a reference list of the books and papers you have already worked through. The proposal will be the most important document in the decision process and the foundation of your future work, so make sure you put in considerable effort.

2.3 Application

Candidates are requested to send their application (in English) to Professor Berentsen (aleksander.berentsen@unibas.ch). The application should contain the following documents and information:

- Curriculum Vitae
- Up-to-date academic record (Grade Sheet)
- A short proposal
- Earliest date of start

Incomplete applications and/or applications by students who do not fulfill the requirements, will not be processed. With the submission of your application you automatically approve a potential publication of your work on the WWZ webpage.

3 Writing Your Master's Thesis

3.1 Supervision Process

Once the contract is signed, the thesis must be completed within 15 weeks. You are expected to deal with your thesis in an autonomous fashion. Nonetheless, each student has a personal meeting for questions regarding the paper's structure or other questions.

3.2 Formal Requirements and Structure

Formal Requirements

The paper has to be typed in \LaTeX (see the section 'Using \LaTeX ' on page 6) and the electronic version must be handed in as a PDF document. Furthermore, your thesis must meet certain format requirements. You should write a **continuous text** and use a **flat hierarchy** structure (i.e., no subsections in the style of Art. 3.2.2.1.b). A **clear structure** that guides your discourse is essential and ensures that readers will be able to follow the logic of your argumentation. Please consider the following instructions:

- The paper must be no longer than **40 pages** (excluding title page, table of contents, references and the appendix).
- The **title page** of the paper carries the name, address and matriculation number of the author, as well as the lecturer's name and the submission date.

- Use **1.5 line spacing** and an adequate page margin. Do not force line breaks after each section and use section headings.
- A **table of contents** is only required when the paper is 50 or more pages in length, but can also be used for large seminar papers such as your master's thesis.
- A **bibliography** must be provided at the end of the paper. See the section 'Use of Sources/References' on page 6 for further details.
Key points:
 - Alphabetical order according to authors
 - Continuous list of sources; no subdivisions (books, articles)
 - Consistency, comprehensiveness and correctness are key
- The **appendix** (if necessary) should only contain what is referred to in the body of the text.

Please note, that there is a **style sheet** in the .tex format on the web page. It is strongly recommended that you use this .tex document as a foundation when writing your thesis.

Structure

A great deal of attention has to be given to the Introduction. It should clearly delineate the importance of the chosen topic and specify its boundaries. The main text of your paper should be divided into several well-structured sections. A proven structure is given below (of course, this structure can be extended for longer papers):

- Introduction
- Topic enquiry / Current state of the literature
- Model / Empirical evidence
- Results / Extensions / Application
- Discussion / Conclusion

Using L^AT_EX

As already mentioned above, you are required to use L^AT_EX for typing your master's thesis. This approach leads to a more efficient writing process and hence, is widely used in the academic world. L^AT_EX is, to some extent, a programming language for the creation of PDF files. It is unmatched when it comes to displaying mathematics and ensuring consistency in formatting and references. In order to use L^AT_EX, you will need a distribution package as well as an editor. You write your code in the editor and the distribution package is used to typeset the actual document (code interpretation and creation of your PDF file).

There are a great number of text editors, optimized for L^AT_EX. However, we recommend the distribution package 'MikTeX' and the editor 'Texpad: LaTeX editor' (CHF 20 App Store) for Mac OSX users. Of course, there are also free packages for Mac (e.g., 'TeXShop'). Windows users are recommended to use the free distribution package 'MikTeX' and the editor 'TeXworks'. Note that there is an introductory L^AT_EX course each fall term (Preliminary course: 'Working with Scientific Software') at the chair of Quantitative Methods. There are also some great introductory books available in the WWZ library and you should be able to find answers to specific questions online.

Use of Sources/References

Plagiarism (copying material without giving source references) is the worst academic crime! It can result in a student being barred from further studies. Carefully read the memorandum on Plagiarism and Fraud (Merkblatt zu Plagiat und Betrug, with examples given).

Furthermore, you are required to hand in the plagiarism declaration with your thesis. Both **documents** can be found on the WWZ homepage. Be extremely careful to reference everything you use from other literature (apart from what is common knowledge) and use a correct and consistent form of citation (e.g., the American Economic Review). Usually a

reference manager (e.g., **Citavi**, **JabRef**) is used for this process. We highly recommend the use of BibTeX. BibTeX is a file format which is designed to be used with L^AT_EX and basically carries all the information on the referenced literature. Most journals provide citation information in the BibTeX format on their web platforms. These files allow you to import the information into your BibTeX literature database and later reference it in your L^AT_EX file.