

Guidelines for completing bachelor's and master's theses

These guidelines provide information about the framework and deadlines for bachelor's and master's theses as part of Economics and Management study programmes, and provide advice about completing written work. A bachelor's or master's thesis is a piece of academic work that is completed independently. It is designed to demonstrate methodological and specialist skills in processing existing scientific findings and in handling and evaluating data.

1. Framework

1.1. Requirements

Bachelor's thesis

Admission to a bachelor's thesis in the single-subject degree course in Economics and Management is dependent on successful completion of the orientation stage plus at least 45 credits in the main study programme, a pass for the semester dissertation, and a weighted overall average grade of at least 5.0 or a grade of at least 5.5 in the semester dissertation (see Study and Examination Regulations of the Faculty of Economics and Management).

Admission to a bachelor's thesis in the major degree course in Economics and Management (with a minor) is dependent on successful completion of at least 87 credits in the major course, a passed semester dissertation, and a weighted overall grade average of at least 5.0 in the major course or a grade of at least 5.5 for the semester dissertation (see Study and Examination Regulations of the Faculty of Economics and Management).

Once the requirements for completing a bachelor's thesis have been met, the 'Bachelor's thesis' form may be downloaded via the UniPortal. The completed form must subsequently be submitted with the completed bachelor's thesis.

Master's thesis

According to the model curricula (full-time), the master's thesis is completed in the third semester. It can also be begun earlier, if necessary. However, it should be noted that individual supervisors may make writing the master's thesis subject to particular conditions, such as completing certain related classes alongside or in advance of the thesis. Any requirements for writing your master's thesis should therefore be clarified with potential supervisors as early as possible.

If you have selected a specialisation, then the master's thesis must be completed in this specialist area (see 'Guide on Study Structure at Master Level'). If the optional compulsory module (with no specialisation) is selected, then the master's thesis can cover any area of economics and management.

The 'Master's thesis' form must be downloaded via the UniPortal before starting the thesis. The completed form must subsequently be submitted with the completed master's thesis.

1.2. Deadlines

The Faculty does not specify a maximum amount of time you can spend on bachelor's or master's theses. In individual cases, e.g. cooperation with external practice partners, the supervisor may specify a binding completion period of at least 4 months (BA thesis) or at least 6 months (MA thesis). The deadlines are agreed with the students in writing.

In addition, the dean's office publishes deadlines by which the thesis must be submitted for you to be eligible to receive your degree in a particular semester. If these deadlines are met and provided that all study achievements have been completed in accordance with the applicable regulations, the degree will be awarded in March (for theses submitted by December) or in September (for theses submitted by May). The successful completion of studies is confirmed in advance when results are published.

Please see the exact deadlines published on the dean's office website under the 'Exams' section. If the thesis is not submitted before the deadline, it will not be considered for the awarding of degrees until the following semester. You can apply for a deadline extension of no more than two weeks if you have substantial grounds for doing so. Substantial grounds include illness or an accident, the birth of a child, or the death of a close relative. Applications for deadline extensions must be made in writing to the Director of Studies.

Bachelor's thesis

Students should plan around four months for completing their bachelor's thesis. The desired supervisor should therefore be contacted to discuss the topic no later than five months before the planned submission date.

Recommendation for students following the 'Start in fall semester' model curriculum:

- By December at the latest: discuss topic with supervisor
- May: submit thesis
- July: confirmation of bachelor's degree
- September: degree ceremony (diploma)

Recommendation for students following the 'Start in spring semester' model curriculum:

- By July at the latest: discuss topic with supervisor
- December: submit thesis
- February: confirmation of bachelor's degree
- March: degree ceremony (diploma)

Master's thesis

Students should plan around four to six months for completing their master's thesis. The desired supervisor should therefore be contacted to discuss the topic five to seven months before the planned submission date.

Recommendation for students following the 'Start in fall semester' model curriculum:

- By July at the latest: discuss topic with supervisor
- December: submit thesis
- February: confirmation of master's degree
- March: degree ceremony (diploma)

Recommendation for students following the 'Start in spring semester' model curriculum:

- By December at the latest: discuss topic with supervisor
- May: submit thesis
- July: confirmation of master's degree
- September: degree ceremony (diploma)

1.3. Supervisor

Bachelor's thesis

A confirmation must be obtained from the dean's office (wf@unilu.ch) by e-mail that the intended supervisor is allowed to supervise the work. When beginning the thesis, the topic is determined on the 'Bachelor's thesis' form and signed by the supervisor.

Lecturers, temporary lecturers and academic members of faculty staff holding a PhD are permitted to supervise a bachelor's thesis. A bachelor's thesis may be completed in the fields of economics, management or methods.

Master's thesis

A confirmation must be obtained from the dean's office (wf@unilu.ch) by e-mail that the intended supervisor is allowed to supervise the work. When beginning the thesis, the topic is determined on the 'Master's thesis' form and signed by the supervisor.

Lecturers, temporary lecturers and academic members of faculty staff holding a PhD are permitted to supervise a master's thesis. For supervising master's theses in a specialisation, the key group are lecturers offering classes in the relevant specialisation.

1.4. Cooperation with external practice partners

Cooperation with an external practice partner is possible for both the Bachelor's and the Master's thesis, provided the supervisor agrees. The topic, structure of the thesis and additional framework conditions that go beyond these guidelines are to be agreed upon with the company and the supervisor.

If the thesis contains confidential information, this must be noted on the cover sheet of the thesis (see template cover sheet). Bachelor's and Master's theses are generally not published by the faculty. An additional contractual non-disclosure agreement is therefore not required by the faculty. If the practice partner wishes a non-disclosure agreement, this can be drawn up by the practice partner.

1.5. Documents to submit

The following documents must be submitted to the dean's office and the supervisor before the deadline for bachelor's and master's theses:

- The thesis in electronic format (PDF, ideally PDF/A-1b format) including the signed declaration of independent work incorporated as part of the thesis
- The 'Bachelor's thesis' or 'Master's thesis' form electronically as scan

1.6. Assessment

The thesis is assessed against the standard six-point scale with whole and half marks (see § 24 of the Study and Examination Regulations of the Faculty of Economics and Management). The supervisor conducts an assessment of the thesis that makes any shortcomings clear to the author and provides a transparent mark. This may incorporate the following assessment criteria, among others:

Formal criteria

- **Presentation:** Attractive presentation, completeness, sensible structure, legibly and neatly arranged tables and graphics, complete and correct lists (contents, list of tables, list of figures, list of abbreviations, bibliography)

- **Style and language:** Comprehensible and concise writing style (scientific language), correct choice of terminology, correct spelling and punctuation, normative statements identified as such and reflected upon, external ideas fully labelled using a uniform citation method

Content criteria

- **Structure and composition:** Sensible and clear sequence of content (structuring), appropriate weighting of individual sections, introduction of suitable terminology and definitions, stringent reader guidance (common thread), summaries and transitions, title matches the content
- **Handling of the subject matter and presentation of results:** Difficulty and relevance of the topic, demarcation of other topics, current status of the research tackled and incorporated, adequate (justified) choice of theories and models (suitability of statistical methods), meaningful use of figures and tables (explained in the text), logical and consistent lines of argument, appropriate evidence for statements made, factual correctness of content and coherence of conclusions, results categorised in context, answering the question
- **Personal contribution:** Precise deduction of the question and hypotheses, developing new aspects and thoughts (creativity and originality), interpreting and comparing theoretical approaches, critical handling of sources, comprehensive methodological critique and appraisal of results, expressing further thoughts

The supervisor drafts an overall assessment in written form. This evaluates both content and formal aspects. It should be noted that form and content are not always easy to separate, and inadequate language in particular will regularly affect the content of the thesis.

The overall assessment may be made in text form or using an assessment framework. If desired, supervisors may obtain a template of a potential assessment framework from the academic student advisors (studienberatung-wf@unilu.ch). As well as a justification for the grade awarded, the written overall assessment also contains the following information: thesis title and submission date, name of author, name of supervisor, date and signature.

The supervisor sends the written overall assessment plus a completed and signed form to the dean's office of the Faculty of Economics and Management for performance recording purposes and to the author. A verbal discussion of the thesis is recommended, and obligatory if requested by the author.

1.7. Fail

If the bachelor's or master's thesis is deemed unsatisfactory, it may be repeated no more than once. The supervisor assesses whether the unsatisfactory thesis can be revised or if a new thesis should be completed on a different topic. The revised or new thesis should be submitted for the next standard deadline. The unsatisfactory thesis is listed on the performance record as a failed attempt, but the credits are not counted as failed credits. A unsatisfactory assessment of the repeat thesis shall result in a definitive failure to pass the bachelor's or master's thesis module (see Study and Examination Regulations of the Faculty of Economics and Management).

1.8. Publication

The thesis is not intended for publication. The author must consult the supervisor before any publication of the thesis.

The author retains the intellectual property rights to the thesis. The provisions of the University Statute and the terms of publishing contracts remain reserved.

2. Schedule

Completing a bachelor's or master's thesis essentially consists of the following steps:

- Obtain confirmation by email from the dean's office (wf@unilu.ch) for supervisor
- Download a 'Bachelor's thesis' or 'Master's thesis' form (including declaration of independent work template) via the UniPortal
- Discuss the topic with your supervisor, write it on the form and have it signed
- Gain an overview of the literature
- Draw up a concept:
 - Clearly formulate and delineate the area of enquiry
 - Illustrate the current state of research and your own contribution
 - State the theoretical framework
 - Describe your approach (including the data being used)
- Discuss the concept with your supervisor; make adjustments where necessary
- Thorough reading
- If applicable: collect and clean up data
- If applicable: perform analysis
- Write draft; then 'set aside' to gain some distance
- Final revision
- Submit thesis electronically including signed declaration of independent work (within the thesis) together with the form to the dean's office and the supervisor (see 1.2. Deadlines)
- See grade on UniPortal

3. Literature research

In the fields of economics and management, the most important research results are all published in English-language academic journals, virtually without exception. That means that these are also the most important basis for written work. Before publication, articles are generally available in the form of working papers or discussion papers. Some suggested ways for starting your literature research are listed below.

General suggestions:

- Internet search engines (in particular www.scholar.google.com) and websites will provide the relevant authors for initial searches
- Working papers can be accessed via resources such as SSRN: www.ssrn.com
- For definitions of terms and to clarify specific content, we recommend newer textbooks and concise dictionary articles on the field, e.g. New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics
- In addition, articles from daily newspapers (e.g. NZZ) or relevant weekly newspapers (e.g. The Economist) may be of use. For example, they can be used to substantiate the current political sensitivity of the topic, or to find examples

Literature research in the field of economics:

- Articles published in the Journal of Economic Literature or the Journal of Economic Perspectives often work well as survey articles
- Some good working paper series include NBER, IZA and CEPR

Literature research in the field of business administration:

- We recommend the Academy of Management Journal and the Journal of Management, as well as specialist journals such as the Journal of Marketing or the Human Resource Management Journal

- Articles published in the Harvard Business Review or Academy of Management Review work well as survey articles. There are also specialist journals specialising in survey articles, such as the Human Resource Management Review Journal
- You can also use the Business Source Premier search engine

4. Thesis structure and formatting

4.1. Structure

- Cover sheet: Please use the template provided: [Regulations - University of Lucerne \(unilu.ch\)](https://www.unilu.ch). A copy of the university logo may not be added
- Abstract: overview of the content of the thesis (100-200 words)
- Contents: all chapters and appendices with page numbers
- (list of figures, list of tables, list of abbreviations)
- Introduction
- Main section
- Conclusion
- Bibliography
- (Appendices)
- Declaration of independent work, signed and made part of the thesis

The content requirements and weighting of the thesis's components vary depending on the discipline and the thesis type. The potential structural template should be discussed in detail with your supervisor.

4.2. Formatting

- Scope: the text section of a bachelor's or master's thesis may be no more than 40 pages long. The cover sheet, lists, bibliography and any appendices are not included in the page count. Caution: quality is more important than quantity!
- Font: font size 12, line spacing 1.5
- Page layout: DIN A4 pages, justified
- Tables and figures:
 - Illustrations that prove key statements from the text form part of the text
 - Illustrations and materials (questionnaires, experiment descriptions etc.) that will disturb the flow of reading should be placed in the appendices
 - Tables and figures should be numbered separately, either continuously throughout the entire text or by chapter
 - The source and any explanations required for understanding must be stated beneath each table and figure
 - Tables and figures must be formatted as in economics and management journals. Do not simply copy the output of statistics software into the thesis

5. References

Correct citing of sources is extremely important, given the serious consequences of plagiarism. Any external arguments included must be documented. Even repeating a passage of external text in your own words (paraphrasing) without the relevant citation is deemed to be plagiarism, and can result in the submitted thesis being rejected. Correct citing of sources is considered extremely important.

- Corresponding citations demonstrate that an argument has already been developed by other authors and cannot be attributed to the author of the thesis.

- Verbatim citations must be identical to the original, and identified using quotation marks.

Unless stated otherwise by the chair, a citation and bibliography scheme that follows the [Harvard system](#) (author and year stated in the text itself, plus page numbers for verbatim citations; further information in the bibliography) must be used and applied consistently throughout.

Examples:

	Bibliography	In text
Journal articles	Persson, T. and Tabellini, G. (2004). Constitutions and economic policy. <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> , 18(1), pp. 75-98.	(Persson and Tabellini, 2004)
Books/anthologies	Besley, T. (2006). <i>Principled agents? The political economy of good government</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.	(Besley, 2006, p. 107)
Internet sources	SECO (2016). Labour Market and Unemployment Insurance. https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/en/home/seco/Staatssekretariat_fuer_Wirtschaft_SECO/direktion-fuer-arbeit/Arbeitsmarkt_Arbeitslosenversicherung.html [23/05/2017]	(SECO, 2016)

A reference program that allows you to automatically generate a bibliography can help you to organise the literature. We particularly recommend the free programs Mendeley and Zotero.

6. Further literature

Westerlund, J. (2010). *The Recipe for a Successful Thesis in Applied Economics*. Gothenburg, Sweden: University of Gothenburg.

McCloskey, D. (2000). *Economical Writing*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press.

Huff, A. S. (1999). *Writing for Scholarly Publication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.