

Master Thesis: requirements regarding style and content

Here you can find some basic guidelines and requirements for writing a Master thesis.

1 Format

- **Font:** 12 pt., Times New Roman (or equivalent)
- **Line spacing:** 1.5
- **Length:**
 - Your Master thesis should be approximately 35 pages long including figures and tables, references and footnotes
 - On top of that there is the title page and (possibly) an appendix
- **Equations:**
 - Mathematical equations appearing in the main text should be typed on separate lines and numbered consecutively using Arabic numbers in parenthesis at the right margin
 - Vectors and matrices should be indicated with bold letters, italics should be used for scalar variables
- **Figures and Tables:**
 - Figures and tables should be part of the main text and numbered consecutively with Arabic numbers. Additional figures or tables which are not essential for the argument may be included in the Appendix
 - Make sure to create your own tables, even if you present results from existing literature
- **References:**
 - Literature that you refer to in your thesis must fulfill scientific standards; you should mostly draw on work which has been subject to a referee/publishing process; you may also (occasionally) use other sources (blogs, commentary etc)
 - All sources used in the text must be listed in the reference list in alphabetical order

- When citing web references include the URL and the date when the website was last accessed; Additional information (such as DOI, author names, dates) may also be provided if available
- **Citation style:**
 - As it is common in the scientific literature, in-text citation should be used when quoting or referring to somebody else’s work (American citation)
 - When quoting three or more authors, cite the first author’s name followed by “et al.” and the publication year
 - Footnotes should only include remarks related to content

2 Structure of the Thesis

In general, a Master thesis should consist of

- a **title page** (name and student number; the title of the thesis; date of submission; supervisor)
- a **table of contents** with page numbering,
- an **introduction** (presenting the research question, general motivation, goal and contribution of your thesis, main findings)
- **main body** (detailed discussion of the topic/research question)
- a **conclusion** (summary of main findings, future research topics, possible extensions or modifications)
- a **list of references**
- (possibly) an **appendix** (featuring additional material such as mathematical derivations, figures and tables)
- **Eidesstattliche Erklärung/Affidavit** (upon registering the thesis at the examination office, you will obtain the Eidesstattliche Erklärung)

3 Grading criteria

The grading of the thesis involves a good deal of judgment and cannot be summarized by a simple formula. Still, there are number of criteria which are important in grading your work.

- **Research question.** A good thesis starts from a well-defined research question; the question should be
 - Stated clearly (What is the problem?)
 - Well motivated (Why do we care?). The easiest (but not the only) way to motivate your thesis is by relating it to an ongoing policy debate.
 - Answered in the thesis.
- **Originality.** In answering the question, the thesis
 - Has to take into account the recent literature on the topic (It is advisable to focus the exposition on a small number or even one research paper while dealing with the broader literature in a more cursory manner);
 - May also (but does not necessarily have to) provide new evidence based on a) descriptive statistics and/or b) an econometric analysis and/or new results based on c) model extensions and/or d) simulations
 - Please indicate diligently and consistently when you use ideas, models, concepts etc. from other work
 - Always distinguish clearly between your own work and ideas and those of the authors to which you refer in the thesis