



Tips for writing a Master-Seminar paper at the Department of HRM & Organization

1. Introduction:

- Start with a “grabber”, i.e. with something that attracts the **interest** of the reader.
- Following the grabber, you derive the research question and **convince the reader of its relevance**.
- **Formulate your research question explicitly and end it with a question mark!** Your research question should refer to a **link between two variables**. You think, there might be more than two relevant variables, such as mediators or moderators of a link? Please check this with **your supervisor**. Also, if you would like to ask more than one research question, please clarify this as well.
- The **last paragraph** in your introduction is devoted to describing how you will **proceed in your seminar paper**. By doing so, refer to the respective chapters (e.g., by writing „in chapter 2, I derive/argue/discuss...“). Comment on all the relevant steps you are going to take in order to answer your research question. Deciding on how to structure your argument is an essential task of your seminar paper. So, take all the efforts it needs to make clear how your argument is developed!

[2. Definitions]

- **Frankly, you don't need a definition-chapter**. It's a waste of space. Please define important terms whenever the respective term is mentioned the first time. If you really, really, want a chapter for definitions, this would be the right spot (and NOT in your theory chapter!).
- It goes without saying that a specific term is defined in different ways in the literature! So no need to mention this. Also, please do not render or even discuss different definitions. **Just go ahead and pick the, in your eyes, most fitting definition, cite the respective source and proceed!**
- By the way: **What needs to be defined?** Think of what an average fellow student who is not familiar with your topic knows. If you have good reason to doubt that an average fellow student does know the respective term, define it.

3. Theory: ...

- **Each Master Seminar paper does have a theory chapter. Yes, each Master Seminar paper!** It might be short or long. Do not write a Master Seminar paper at our chair without a theory chapter.
- **The theory you use does already exist.** A Master seminar paper is not the place to “invent” a new theory. This can be done in your PhD.
- **The main function of the theory chapter is to theoretically derive your hypothesis (or sometimes several hypotheses).** Your hypothesis/hypotheses give an answer to the research question from a theoretical perspective.
- **Derive your hypothesis/hypotheses in a straightforward and stringent manner based on your theory!** In general, you should not use empirical findings to derive your hypothesis/hypotheses, but rather solely base them on theory.
- **In most cases, you only need one theory.** Name the theory and refer to the seminal paper that first developed and presented the theory. State why you use this theory. Theories can be „old“; that’s not a problem! If you use more than one theory, you need to have good reasons that should be discussed with you supervisor.
- Only describe those parts of the theory that are **needed** in order to derive your hypothesis/hypotheses.

4. Empirics: ...

- **Each Master seminar paper does have an empirical part. Yes, each Master seminar paper!** It might be short or long. Do not write a Master seminar paper at our department without an empirical chapter.
- In your empirical part, you do not present own empirical results, but rather **results of the empirical literature.**
- **An empirical study is useful for your Master seminar paper, when it allows inferences on the validity of your hypothesis/hypotheses.** It is not of any relevance whether the empirical study uses a similar theory or derives similar hypotheses.
- **Motivate your choice.** Bring the chosen study into **context.** Are there other studies with similar results? Do the results of the chosen study differ from other studies? Why did you choose to present this study?
- When presenting a study, **do not simply follow its narrative**, but rather present it in a way that fits to your research question. Also, **only present those findings that refer to your hypothesis/hypotheses!** Be sure to present the relevant information on the **data set and variables** that were used in the study and how the findings were obtained (**methods**). In most of the cases the reader isn’t interested in the hypotheses and the theoretical concepts of the other study, so don’t mention these.
- **Any tables or graphs that you want to include in your Master seminar paper need to be created by yourself.** Do never ever copy & paste anything out of the respective study. If the paper written in English the tables and graphs also must be in English. **Also: Use this opportunity to edit the respective tables/graphs such that**

they fit your specific purpose! Obviously, still name the original source of your tables/graphs (write something like „Own compilation based on....“).

- Let's say you present three different studies and confront their results with your hypothesis/hypotheses. All three studies yield different results (ranging from positive relation to negative relation to insignificant). That is not bad at all! Explain and **discuss why the results might be different**. Give the reader an idea why the results differ! Maybe also state which results might be trusted more than others. By doing so, refer to the strengths and the weaknesses of the studies. Do this in the empirical chapter or in an own discussion chapter. **There must be a critical discussion**. This is an important contribution of a Master seminar paper.

5. Conclusion

- Sum up the **main results** of your paper in a way that is generally understandable.
- Do not describe how you proceeded when you wrote the paper (First, ... then ...). Rather concentrate on your **results** and its **implications**.

Literature

- **Stick to our binding** Formal Guidelines for Scientific Writing
- Make sure that **all** sources mentioned in the running text are listed in the reference list and vice versa!

Checklist

Introduction	Motivated research question?
	Defined and motivated all relevant variables?
	Formulated research question as a question?
	Described proceedings with chapter references?
Theory	Mentioned theory and quoted the originator of theory?
	Described all for research question relevant aspects of theory?
	Applied theory to research question?
	Derived hypotheses from theory in an understandable and stringent way?
	Hypotheses formulated in a testable manner?
Empirics	Mentioned motivation for choice of study?
	For every study: - Mentioned data source?
	- Explained operationalisation of the relevant variables?
	- Listed control variables (if applicable)?
	- Dropped irrelevant information (e.g., hypotheses of studies)?
	Understood and able to explain (in own words) used methods?
	Worked with relevant tables and graphs? Attention: No copy & paste!
Established reference to own hypotheses?	
Discussion	Findings of chosen study compared to literature?
	Compared findings of studies and tried to explain differences?
	In this context: Argued the strengths and weakness of studies?
Conclusion	Compactly summarised the findings?
	Answered research question?
	Concluded implications for further research and the praxis?
in general	Abided formal guidelines for writing scientific papers?
	Marked direct and indirect quotes?
	Used action titles?
	Paid attention to flow of text (appropriate transitions)?
	Used terms consistently?