



Writing a Master Seminar at the Department of HRM & Organization: Structure, Contents and Checklist

Make sure to define all relevant terms when these are mentioned the first time. 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. Do not “discuss” different definitions, but rather **pick a suitable definition from the literature, cite the respective source and proceed!**

1. Introduction

- Start with a “grabber”, i.e. with something that attracts the **interest** of the reader.
- Following the grabber, you motivate (and define) your variables of interest and based on that derive the research question and **convince the reader of its relevance**.
- **Formulate your research question explicitly and with a question mark!** Your research question should refer to a **link between an explanatory and a dependent variable**. In addition, you might want to focus on a potential **mediator** or **moderator** of the link, which should then also be explicitly reflected in the research question.
- The **last paragraph** in your introduction is devoted to describing how you will **proceed**. Refer to the respective chapters (e.g., by writing „in chapter 2, I derive/argue/discuss...“). Comment on all the relevant steps you will take to answer your research question. Deciding on how to structure your argument is an essential task of your Master seminar. So, take all the efforts it needs to make clear how your argument is developed!

2. Theory

- **Each Master Seminar at our Department does include a theory chapter.**
- **The theory you use already exists.** A Master seminar paper is not the place to “invent” a new theory.
- In a Master seminar paper, the main function of the theory chapter is **to derive your hypotheses**. Your hypotheses give an answer to your research question from a theory perspective.
- **Derive your hypotheses in a stringent manner based on your theory!** Do not use empirical findings to derive your hypotheses but 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 the theory. Theories might be „old“; that's not a problem! If you use more than one theory, you need to have good reasons to do so. Focus on **those parts** of the theory **that are needed** to derive your hypotheses. Being parsimonious is a virtue.

3. Empirics

- **Each Master seminar paper does have an empirical part.**
- In your empirical chapter, you **present** (not discuss) empirical results from existing empirical studies that allow to test your hypotheses.
- **An empirical study is useful for your Master seminar paper, when it allows inferences on the validity of your hypothesis/hypotheses.** Whether the empirical study uses a similar theory or derives similar hypotheses is irrelevant.
- 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**).
- **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. **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....“).

4. Discussion

- **Your Master Seminar Paper must include a discussion section.** This is an important **contribution** on your own.
- **Place the results of the studies you have presented within the context of the existing literature.** Are these consistent with many others that reach similar conclusions? Or do they differ from those of other studies?
- If the results you presented are qualitatively different (e.g., one study finds a positive relation and another one a negative relation), this is not bad at all! Explain and **discuss why the results might be different.** If applicable, state which results might be trusted more than others. By doing so, refer to the strengths and the weaknesses of the studies.
- Based on **your** results, derive implications for research and practice.
- Critically reflect on the **limitations** of the empirical studies you presented.
- Based on these limitations, derive a **future research agenda**.

5. Conclusion

- Sum up the **main results** of your Master Seminar 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 what can be learnt from them.

References

- **Stick to our binding Formal Guidelines**
- 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 seminal paper?
	Described all aspects of theory that are relevant for the research question?
	Applied theory to research question?
	Derived hypotheses from theory in an understandable and stringent way?
Empirics	Hypotheses formulated in a testable manner?
	Choice of empirical studies motivated?
	Studies chosen based on their ability to inform your hypotheses?
	Relevant information on dataset, variables, and methods of different studies presented?
	Irrelevant information (e.g., theory, original hypotheses) excluded?
	Studies presented in a way that fits research question?
Discussion	Informative Tables designed to compare and contextualize results?
	Contextualization of presented studies?
	Differences between results discussed and explained?
	Implications for research & practice derived?
	Limitations of presented studies discussed?
Conclusion	Future research agenda derived from these limitations?
	Compactly summarized the findings?
	Answered research question?
General	Abided formal guidelines for scientific writing? (see Formal Guidelines)
	Avoided plagiarism? (see Plagiarism guidelines)
	Marked direct and indirect quotes?
	Used action titles (where possible and appropriate)?
	Paid attention to flow of text (appropriate transitions)?
	Used terms consistently?
	Documented use of AI? (see Statutory Declaration)
	Statutory declaration signed and included?