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Hints and formal requirements for writing a Master thesis

Requirements

- Enrolment in the Master programme "International Economics and Business"

Find a topic!

- You are encouraged to search for a topic yourself. For this, we recommend you to review the literature thoroughly and consult with the chair. You should then work out a research proposal for your master thesis. In this, you should describe the lectures and methodological basics on which the work is based. E.g. "within the framework of an institutional economic analysis, the problems of moral hazard and adverse selection for an agricultural enterprise shall be presented". The proposal should also describe which literature you want to use (approx. 5 concrete references are desirable). Also describe why your topic is interesting from your point of view and why a reader (think of a fellow student) can profit from reading it!
- You should draw inspiration on topics in the economic literature. You can, however, also address current problems that you read about in the daily press. However, you should always bear in mind that you have to deal with a current problem on a scientific basis. So your task is to generalise a concrete problem. What is the appropriate model, the appropriate theory? How can this theory contribute to problem identification and generate solutions? You cannot do this alone; therefore, look for useful economic literature that will give you a guideline for answering a question. Typically, appropriate articles can be found in the Journal of Economic Perspectives. You are therefore encouraged to use this journal as a source of inspiration.
- If you do not find a topic for a master thesis, the chair offers you the opportunity to work on a given topic. For this purpose, you are asked to inform the chair whether the topic should refer to behavioural economics, economics of corruption or monetary economics. You sign the registration form at the chair. You will then receive the topic by post from the Examination Office, at which point the time for working on your thesis begins. The topic cannot be changed.

Who is the thesis aimed at?

- Your thesis should show that you are able to apply the methods and models studied during your Master programme, to understand relevant literature and integrate it into a comprehensive context and transfer it to economic questions.
- Your thesis should be written in way such that a fellow student who has attended similar lectures to you can profit from reading it. Your reader should not be expected to have to refer to further literature to understand your thesis. The thesis should be self-explanatory. Mathematical derivations and verbal explanations should be comprehensible and leave no gaps in the arguments.
- Expect basic economic analytical skills and comprehension of common economic terminology from your reader. You should define more specific terms that are central to your work.
- Write as an economist. Interdisciplinary connections are possible, but should ultimately remain understandable within the framework of an economic analysis.

Scope, structure and literature research

- Review the relevant literature. Use the university's library as well as online libraries and journals to work on a topic comprehensively.
- Depending on the topic, it may be necessary to compile, evaluate or collect data. To do this, use public sources and the university's databases.
- In the introduction, you should motivate your thesis. A short overview of the structure is optional. You may consider including an abstract in which you briefly summarise the results of your thesis (no more than ~150 words).
- In the conclusion, the results of your thesis should be summarised. Your conclusions should follow logically from the preceding sections. Avoid just repeating the results.
- You can structure and format your thesis according to your own taste, whereby a second level of detail is usually sufficient. With a third level of detail (e.g. "2.1.1 The incentive restriction"), you risk fragmenting your thesis too much.
- Please include a table of contents with page references of all subchapters at the beginning of the thesis. All appendices should also be listed. At the end of the paper you must include a complete bibliography (see also: citation). Consider whether other reference tables (tables, figures, symbols, ...) are useful for your readers.
- Paragraphs should never consist of only one sentence! Instead, try to connect your sentences and work out the contexts between the sentences. Bullet points, such as in this document, are not suitable in a thesis.

Paragraphs should be separated from each other without a blank line but by a new line with indentation, as shown here. Use justification (Blocksatz). If you deviate from such formatting, you risk confusing your readers. You should therefore only do this in exceptional cases.
- Complicated mathematical derivations can be placed in an appendix.

Style

- Avoid being judgemental. Provide arguments and facts to support your conclusions. If controversial positions arise, you should judge them neutrally. If you take your own stand, make it clear how you arrive at your judgement.
- Write as precisely as possible and avoid vague or unclear statements. Explain mathematical results verbally.
- Use illustrative graphs, diagrams and tables when appropriate for the topic of the paper. These must be adequately described and analysed in the context of the thesis. In addition, you must provide a title and source for the illustrations and number them consecutively. Make sure that labels are comprehensible and correct. Consider creating your own graphs, diagrams, and tables, rather than copying and citing them from original sources, as long as this is useful in the context of your thesis.
- Avoid keywords. Instead of writing "the investor is in a lock-in", for example, you should describe the concrete situation and problem.
- If you write your paper in German, English quotations should not be embedded in a German sentence. Sentences in which German and English are mixed together are not advisable. In a German paper, you can use a few technical terms in English, as long as this is useful in the context of your paper. Italics can help to highlight them.
- Do not exceed the given limit of characters. Graphics, appendices and the bibliography are not included in the given limit.

Citation

- Use footnotes sparingly. They serve to provide necessary cross-references and additional information without disturbing the flow of the text.
- Quote directly in the text according to Harvard style, e.g. (Schelling 1970: 12), or (Mankiw 2005a: 978). Always give an exact page number.
- If a text was written by two authors, you should name both authors. From three or more authors only name the first one and add the abbreviation "et al."
- Make sure that your bibliography is complete and consistent. All sources used must be listed alphabetically by authors' surnames and, for the same author, by year of publication. Sources not cited in the text must not be included in the bibliography. Here are a few examples of bibliographical references:

Abbink, K. (2006), "Laboratory experiments on corruption," *International Handbook on the Economics of Corruption*, ed. by S. Rose-Ackerman, Edward Elgar: 418-437.

Kaplow, L. and S. Shavell (1994), "Optimal Law Enforcement with Self Reporting of Behavior," *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 102 (3): 583-606.

Jacquemet, N. (2007). "Corruption as Betrayal: Experimental Evidence," mimeo. Online version at <http://team.univ-paris1.fr/teamerso/jacquemet/Corruption.pdf> (accessed January 14, 2010).

Rose-Ackerman, S. (1999), *Corruption and Government. Causes, Consequences and Reform*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- For Internet sources, provide a link to the source and the date you viewed it last.
- You may quote important opinions or key statements verbatim. However, this does not replace your own choice of words. You must always place a quote into the context of your paper. If you quote verbatim, put the quoted text in quotation marks.
- Secondary citations (unchecked adoption of source references from other authors) should be avoided and otherwise identified by the addition "cited in".
- If you copy graphics directly from the original source, you must also cite them directly with a page reference. If you adapt them, you must add "own representation".
- For empirical work or your own calculations, the relevant statistical files should also be submitted with the paper (electronically).

Consultation with the chair

- 2-3 weeks after you start to work on your paper, your supervisor at the chair will be available to discuss the scope and rough structure of the thesis.
- Please make sure to discuss the structure of your paper with your supervisor.
- In the middle of the writing period we recommend that you submit a reading sample (2 pages from the core area of the thesis) and consult with your supervisor.

Formal requirement for acceptance of the thesis at the chair

- Your thesis must contain the following declaration of authorship at the end. If you do not include this declaration or only include it incompletely, a correction may be refused:

"With this declaration I, NAME, assert that I have written this master thesis myself and that I have not used any sources or means other than those indicated. All statements that are direct or indirect citations are indicated as such. I have not submitted this work in the same or similar form to any other examining authority".