

Notes for Your Master's Thesis

Prof. Dr. Andreas Mueller, 08/2021

Goal of a Master's Thesis

The Exam Regulations for the Master's Studies in Global Business Development describe the goal of your studies as "to enable the students to recognize problems and opportunities in product and market development, to optimally design processes and to perform management functions in an increasingly international environment" (§2 SPO). Your Master's Thesis shall be a proof of your abilities "to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the course to complex tasks through independently produced, application-oriented scientific work." (§9 SPO)

Supervision

My supervision of a Master's Thesis in the areas of *HR Management*, *Digitalization*, *Sustainable Business Modeling* depends on the respective topic and our first interview. The supervision usually follows the following steps or phases:

- Submit your exposé
- Preliminary discussion about your plans
- Possibly agreed supervision with start date and title
- Literature Review, more detailed methodology
- Further one-on-one interviews until submission
- Colloquium

Exposé

The plan of your thesis should clearly emerge from your exposé. It should contain a description of the initial situation, a problem statement, hypotheses and some initial literature consulted or the available state of research. The exposé makes it clear which relevant questions you would like to work on, which methodology you intend to use, which hypotheses you have about your results, and how you want to divide your time. Based on the exposé, I can assess whether I can supervise your work, which leads to a preliminary talk to clarify open questions and to arrange on a start date.

Literature Review

Within the first four to six weeks of your thesis, you should write a Literature Review, which will become an integral section of your thesis. It is intended to help you at this early stage to familiarize yourself with the relevant literature and the state of the art in research, which form a solid basis for your own work. Ideally, you group the identified literature, present its structure and critically evaluate the sources. In a more detailed literature search you would

also present your review methodology, especially when you are writing a mainly theoretic paper.

Your Literature Review should not be a sequential listing of available sources, but a structured presentation of the identified literature, which supports the hypotheses already mentioned in the exposé.

After submitting the Literature Review, we will arrange a further appointment to adapt the possibly changed view of your topic to the original project, incl. possible changes in hypotheses, methodology etc. Your literature review will develop with further literature over the remaining time of your work, but on a more solid fundament.

Becker (2012), material of two universities in North Carolina (NC State 2006, Writing Center 2012), or more extensively Ridley (2012) provide further suggestions for writing a literature review.

Methodology

When choosing your methodology, quantitative and qualitative methods differ significantly: The *quantitative* approach is based on the view that knowledge can be generated in an objective manner, the phenomena only have to be observed and are seen in the same way by every observer. The truth can thus be found through a sufficiently large amount of data, it is hidden in it and can be worked out through clever analysis. This positivistic approach uses methods such as questionnaires, written observations, existing notebooks etc. and it focuses on a suitable (e.g. representative) selection of the participants to be interviewed.

The *qualitative* approach is based on the view that the world is perceived subjectively and that our experiences are constructed in each case, mostly also through communication. The researcher is actively involved in the construction of meaning, phenomena are viewed in their natural context in order to understand how other participants ascribe a meaning to them. This interpretive approach uses methods such as interviews, focus groups, image evaluations, case studies, etc.

Depending on the question, one or the other method may be more useful, or a “mixed-method” approach. The methodology should be determined in the first four weeks of the processing time, otherwise too little time remains for the study itself.

You will find numerous literature on research design and on the individual methods. The books by Bryman/Bell (2011), Creswell/Creswell (2018) or Saunders et al. (2016) in English, as well as the texts by Goldenstein et al. (2018), Heesen (2014) or Oehrich (2019) in German are just a selection. If you enjoy fine art, Eco (2015) is also recommended.

Colloquium

After submitting your thesis, we will make an appointment for the colloquium. There you present the topic of your thesis and thereby demonstrate your ability to work on complex topics and to present them in an understandable way. Please send me your presentation documents by email two days before the colloquium.

The colloquium lasts approx. 45-60 minutes and, in addition to your presentation, also includes questions about your work. The colloquium is awarded 4 ECTS credits, which reflects a workload of 120 hours.

Criteria

Your Master's Thesis will be evaluated according to the following criteria: problem, research question, literature review, methodology, results and presentation, analysis and discussion, applicability, writing quality, references, originality.

Formalities

Content should be at the center of your work, yet you should consider the following aspects which otherwise could jeopardize the success of your work.

Registration

After we agreed supervision, timeline and title, you will receive an email confirmation including the title of your work, which you should sign and return to the Examination Office.

Language

The Master's Thesis can be written in English or in German language, in consultation with the supervisor.

Front Page

The front page of your thesis should include: institution, title, supervisor, date of issuance, date of submission, word count, author information (name, coordinates, student ID etc)

Submission

In parallel to your submission of the compulsory 3 paper copies to the Examination Office, you agree to submit an electronic copy to me by email.

Length(s)

The time between issuance of the topic and submission of your thesis amounts to 4 months, which, in justified cases, could be extended by the Examination Board for two months.

The thesis should comprise some 20-25 thousand words, equivalent to 60-70 pages (excluding front page, table of content, abstract, references, index, appendix). Please, do not exceed 100 pages.

ECTS

The thesis is awarded 26 ECTS credits, which reflects a workload of 80-100 days.
The colloquium is awarded 4 ECTS credits, which reflects 120 hours.

Non-disclosure

Some students are bound to secrecy by their organizations. If your thesis contains content worth protecting, you might add a confidentiality clause to the front page, e.g. "This thesis includes confidential information, which is highlighted or marked in each case. The information may only be made available to the reviewers and to authorized examiners. The publication or distribution of this information within 3 years after submission requires the expressed admission of the author."

Information that is publicly known is not subject to any confidentiality clause.

Intellectual Property

Occasionally, students are required by organizations to surrender usage rights to the results of their work. It must be checked whether these rights can also be observed, especially if the work is based on the commercial or copyright-protected know-how of the university or the supervisor. The results and scientific knowledge contained in the thesis as well as theories and methods are not subject to copyright protection, but the origin must be indicated in other publications in the course of good scientific practice.

Declaration of Originality

Your thesis must contain a declaration, by which you assure to have produced the thesis independently, that you have not used any sources other than those specified, that you have marked literal and analogous quotations and that you have not submitted the thesis to any other means for examination purposes.

Deviations from this behavior are classified as plagiarism. If you should decide for an affidavit, you could face criminal penalties.

Referenced Literature

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