

Organisational Guidance for Bachelor and Master Theses

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1 Prerequisites and application

1.1 Prerequisites

The prerequisites for a bachelor thesis are the successful completion of a seminar and having passed the mandatory examinations of the introduction year. Work on a master thesis can commence after obtaining a bachelor degree, the completion of a seminar at master level and attendance at mandatory lectures. Therefore, once the application for a bachelor thesis or master thesis has been accepted, the up-to-date study profile sheet must be submitted to the relevant supervisor.

1.2 Application

Applications for writing theses take place by submitting a brief written research proposal (see chapter 4) to Lukas Hauck (lukas.hauck@vwi.unibe.ch). The proposal may be accepted or rejected by the supervisor. If more than one student is interested in the same subject or if the number of enquiries exceeds our capacity, then the quality of the proposal will be crucial before a decision can be taken as to which proposals will be accepted.

There are four deadlines per year for submitting a proposal: 15th January, 31st March, 30th June and 30th September. The process thereafter and the question of time management will be discussed in the following chapters. A maximum of two proposals with different topics may be submitted per student.

2 Selection of topic

Generally speaking, the student chooses his or her own topic. At the Department of Economics and Centre for Regional Economic Development the choice should centre on empirical subject matter. If the student selects a subject area of his or her own, the independent delimitation of the subject and the precise formulation of a question constitute central aspects of the process.

For any questions relating to the choice of topic or uncertainties regarding the process, a meeting may be arranged with Lukas Hauck (lukas.hauck@vwi.unibe.ch).

3 Time management

The maximum amount of time for preparing a master thesis is six months, four months in the case of bachelor theses. In principle, the only reasons accepted for extending a deadline are military service and long absences due to illness or accidents. Examinations, holidays or other interruptions (delays in field studies inter alia) cannot usually be invoked in order to extend the deadline. They should be taken into account when the student's timetable is prepared. Work submitted after the agreed deadline does not have to be accepted.

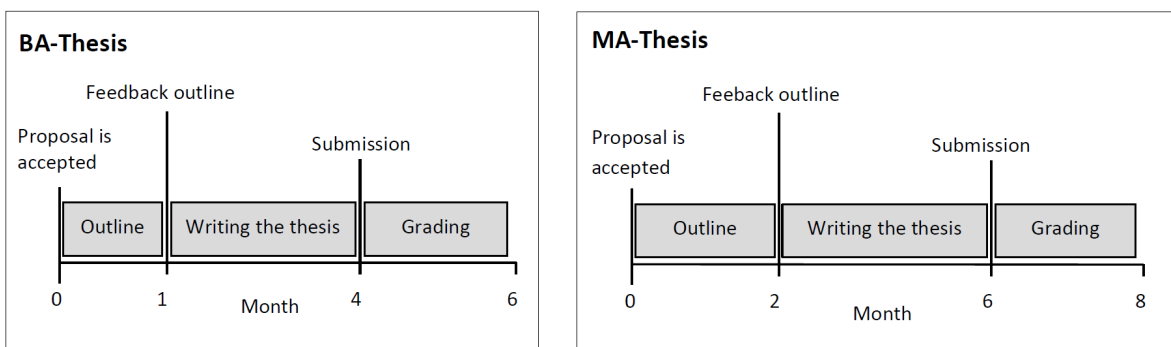


Figure 1: Schematic timetable for bachelor and master theses

A detailed outline must be submitted to the supervisor approx. one month after the selection of the thesis topic for bachelor theses, approx. two months in the case of master theses (see also chapter 4).

4 Proposal and outline

The methodological and content-related concepts should be clarified in the proposal and detailed outline of the thesis and coordinated with the supervisor. The proposal (extending to two or three pages) may be regarded as a short preliminary version of the outline (5-10 pages), i.e. the structure and the points addressed are the same in both these working instruments and are defined below:

- **Starting point, research question and title of work:** The starting point should be presented in such a way that a reader is able to readily understand the question without any prior information (including the current state of research) and assess whether further research work is purposeful. The title of the work should precisely describe the content of the work.

- **Objectives and questions researched in the work:** The research goals should be presented in a structured manner. They may be described in the form of research questions and hypotheses.
- **Annotated table of contents:** The table of contents renders the paper's structure transparent and allows the conceptual and work steps to be better understood. It ensures that possible errors, shortcomings and misunderstandings can be recognised and corrected.
- **Methodology:**For empirical papers the methodology should be chosen and the underlying data clarified.
- **Provisional bibliography:** A list of the most important literature used in the work.

The proposal can be submitted four times a year (for deadlines see chapter 2) and essentially provides a basis for the decision as to whether to supervise the thesis. If the decision is affirmative students who have applied to write bachelor and seminar theses are invited to discuss the proposal with the supervisor. Students who have applied to write a master thesis are invited to discuss the proposal with Prof Brunetti and their supervisor. Thereafter the proposal is fleshed out through more in-depth research and conceptual considerations to produce a complete outline. The outline should ideally enable both the student and the supervisor to precisely comprehend the content of the line of argument and the methodology adopted for the thesis. Based on the outline the remaining conceptual questions are addressed and the final recommendations for corrections are made by the supervisor. The outline should be submitted in writing by email approx. one month (BA) or two months (MA) after work has commenced. The outline must be discussed with the supervisor. An outline that has been rejected may be revised.

5 Supervision

A supervisor at the department is appointed when the topics are assigned. The appointed supervisor is available to answer any questions that arise while the thesis is being written. It is essentially the student's responsibility to arrange a meeting with the supervisor.

What supervision provides:

- It helps avoid serious errors that could arise when outlining the academic paper through a lack of experience. Supervision generally involves between one and two meetings including a discussion of the detailed outline.

What supervision does not provide:

- It does not constitute a general source of information for questions that should be resolved through the student's own efforts or analysis.
- • It is not available for feedback on text passages already formulated before submission of the final version.

An appointment for meetings with supervisors must be arranged in all cases. The most important questions should be sent to the supervisor in advance by email.

6 Submission, corrections and evaluation

Once the period allotted has expired the student must submit two bound and single-sided printed copies together with a PDF file of his or her thesis to the supervisor.

The student is generally informed about the thesis mark within two months of submitting the paper and receives detailed feedback. If an additional final discussion is required, the student can arrange a date with his or her supervisor. The thesis score is sent to the dean's office following the final discussion. The student alone is responsible for coordinating the planning of his or her work with any deadlines applicable at the dean's office. When evaluating the work, the following criteria are applied:

- layout (the systematic approach adopted, structure, weighting of sections);
- content (breadth, depth and consistency of the statements, independence of the statements and conclusions, review and use of literature);
- methodology (examination of the research questions and hypotheses, correct use of the method(s), description of methods, technical level of methods employed);
- formal criteria (form of expression, spelling, quality of figures and tables, bibliographical references);
- degree of difficulty (originality, methodological contribution, time and effort in compiling information, special knowledge) can also influence the mark.