

# Guidelines for BA and MA Theses

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The following aims to give students some guidance when thinking about writing a BA or MA thesis under my supervision. You can find general guidelines by the Department of Economics here.

## 1 Topic and process

I am happy to supervise (BA and MA) theses with a focus on microeconomic theory and behavioral economics. I expect you to write your thesis in English. In terms of methods, I generally supervise theoretical or experimental theses. If you have an applied question in mind, I'm probably not the right person to supervise your thesis. If you think there may be a fit and you would like to write your thesis under my supervision, please send me an email with your CV, current transcript of grades, and a brief outline of your idea. If you don't have an idea, please indicate what topic(s) would be of interest to you.

Typically, we will then try to agree broadly on the topic via email before we meet in person (or have a call) to agree on three key points. First, the specific research question and (more broadly) the method you want to employ to study the question. Second, the submission date. Third, a date for a half-way meeting, at which we discuss your progress and I give you feedback on some parts of the thesis you have already prepared.

## 2 Evaluation

I evaluate BA and MA theses along the same dimension while the grading takes into account whether it is a BA or a MA thesis. Essentially, I consider the following dimensions:

**Research Question:** A clear and well-articulated research question should be posed and answered.

**Literature Review:** A thorough literature review shows a good understanding of the literature and allows you the place your research in the context of the literature.

**Research method:** Theoretical work should feature (1) an economic motivation, (2) a model, (3) statements of the results (4) proofs (or numerical analysis) that establish the results, (5) an economic discussion of the results. Experimental work should feature (1) an economic motivation, (2) formulate the hypotheses, (3) describe potential mechanisms, (4) describe the design, (5) address practical issues such as sample size and what analysis will be necessary.

**Presentation of the thesis:** Clear and accessible structure and formatting, good writing and appropriate style, consistent citation style.

The more original work your thesis contains, the higher the chance of getting an excellent grade. You can also do a deep-dive into 1-2 particularly relevant papers by other authors, offer a careful discussion and thus show your understanding of the topic at hand. This may still allow for a good grade, but it lowers your chances of getting an excellent grade.

Try to keep your thesis as concise as possible. This is harder than writing a long and verbose thesis and thus allows you to showcase your skill. While no hard limit, I suggest you have a length of at most 30 pages in mind when planning and writing the thesis.

### 3 Further information

- There are different ways to structure your thesis. Typically, I would expect: title page, abstract, introduction, main text (potentially with subsections), conclusion, references, appendix, declaration of independent work (“Selbständigkeitserklärung”).
- There is a collection of FAQ on the department’s website which may be useful.
- I recommend using  $\text{\LaTeX}$  to write your thesis, especially if you write a theoretical thesis. There’s an upfront investment that is necessary to familiarize yourself with it, but then it’s typically a lot smoother than alternatives. See here for a guide how to set it up.
- Here’s a potentially useful document on economic writing style.