Guideline for theses
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1. General notes

The formulated guide for writing a thesis is merely a recommendation from the department and is intended to support students in developing their own approaches and working methods. The thesis should reflect the ability to work scientifically. The guide applies to seminar and thesis papers at the Chair of Economic Policy, hereafter referred to as the "thesis."

2. Didactic goals

The thesis reflects the ability to conduct scientific work. The focus is on independent literature research, identifying relevant issues, arguments, and concepts, and the critical economic discussion of these.

3. Roadmap to thesis

Phase 1: Literature review

At the beginning, it should be clarified which issues and arguments will be discussed and which technical terms and keywords are relevant. The cited sources can serve as a starting point for further literature research. For seminar papers, the foundational literature is provided by the supervising lecturer, while for theses, this must be researched independently.

Phase 2: Broader: literature research

The core topic has been identified and elaborated. During the extended literature research, the topic is specified and narrowed down. Literature databases are helpful for this purpose. Examples include the ThULB, Google Scholar, as well as national and international databases (IMF, World Bank, UNCTAD, DESATIS, etc.). Attention should be paid to the current validity of the data and literature. The search should be limited to papers with a peer-review process (evaluation by independent reviewers) or working papers (e.g., World Bank, IMF, etc.). Only primary sources should be used; textbooks are not recommended for this reason. Furthermore, Wikipedia, blogs, and online encyclopedias do not qualify as academic sources. The use of AI tools is explicitly not recommended in this context. As a general guideline: at least one scholarly

article per page of text. However, the focus remains on scientific discourse, and therefore the question of whether the amount of literature is sufficient cannot be answered in a general way.

In principle, academic literature can be categorized into three types:

- Theoretical Works: Using economic models, specific questions are discussed in detail. The goal is to explain real-world observations, make predictions, and provide policy recommendations.

- Empirical Works: Real data and econometric methods are used to test hypotheses. The hypotheses are typically derived from theoretical models or existing literature. Hypothesis testing allows for conclusions about causal relationships and the validity of theoretical models. The methodological approach plays a crucial role and should always be critically reflected upon. For this reason, you should always compare your findings with other studies and contextualize them.

- Descriptive Works: This category includes case studies or purely statistical-descriptive articles. Real data are used to confirm or refute empirical or theoretical results. This can also include policy recommendation papers.

Brainstorming and mind mapping can be helpful approaches in this context. They reveal connections between topics, terms, and argumentation chains. Core issues can be meaningfully distinguished from peripheral aspects. From this, a suitable research question can be derived, which will be explored in the thesis. Moreover, the literature review forms the basis for creating an outline and developing a "red thread" throughout the thesis.

Phase 3: Outline and „The red threat"

For the clarity and impact of the thesis, the "red thread" is indispensable. This refers to the meaningful and logical discussion and examination of the issues and arguments. Typically, a thesis follows this core structure:

$Problem\ statement\ \rightarrow\ Theoretical\ arguments\ \rightarrow\ Empirical\ aspects\ \rightarrow\ Discussion$

We recommend having personal discussions with your supervisor. Email communication can make precise follow-up questions and clarifications more difficult.

Phase 4: Implementation of the Writing Plan and Detailed Literature Research

Always orient yourself according to your writing plan. This helps maintain the red thread. Seek feedback from fellow students. If questions arise during the writing phase, do not hesitate to contact your supervisor.

Phase 5: Proofreading

In addition to spelling and grammar, adhering to formal requirements is important. This includes font type and size, line spacing, page numbering, citation style, formatting, and much more. Furthermore, the completeness of the bibliography should be checked. To avoid errors, it is recommended to use reference management programs such as Endnote or Citavi. The LaTeX writing software already includes a corresponding function. This software is freely available or provided by Friedrich Schiller University.

4. Additional hints for effective literature research

Skim the Literature and focus on the abstract, a brief summary of the literature at the beginning of each paper, the results, and the conclusion at the end. The sources used can provide inspiration for further research. Once you have identified suitable papers, you can delve into them more thoroughly. Take notes and make remarks on relevant passages.

$$Buzz\ Words \rightarrow Title \rightarrow Abstract \rightarrow Introduction/\ Conclusion \rightarrow Deeper\ research$$

Citation programs not only assist with formatting and completeness of sources, but can also serve as a small personal literature database. You can categorize literature, add brief descriptions, and include notes. Alternatively, an Excel spreadsheet can be useful, where you assign relevant sources to their citation, keywords, strengths, weaknesses, and methodology. If you download papers from the internet, save them with a meaningful file name (e.g., the citation) and organize them systematically on your computer. This will help you maintain an overview and check for completeness during the final review.

5. Additional hints for writing a thesis

Always stick to your structure ("red thread") and ensure a logical and consistent presentation of your arguments. Continuously ask yourself whether a particular section or argument brings you closer to your goal of answering the research question. The individual arguments and sections of your work must be logically connected. In-text references, such as "as described in Chapter 4," can help with this and improve the clarity of your thesis. Relevant sources should be cited consistently, and your own thoughts should be clearly marked as such. The formal requirements are outlined in the document "Formal requirements for thesis".

6. Plagiarism

All content derived from external sources must be clearly marked as such and cited in the bibliography. Plagiarism automatically leads to failure of the thesis. Therefore, be particularly thorough in your sourcing and always cite a source rather than risk omitting it.

7. Use of AI Tools

The use of generative artificial intelligence is not fundamentally prohibited, but, like other tools and sources, it must be properly acknowledged. In particular, it must be clearly indicated which ideas, texts, images, content, etc., were generated by AI.