

Guidelines for the Preparation of Seminar Papers and Final Theses

Date: April 2020

1 Research Question and Structure

The research question is essential, as it determines the objective of the thesis. It should be formulated in concrete terms and precisely define the topic. Writing an outline at an early stage helps to build a common thread that provides a logical structure. Following the common thread throughout the thesis, helps to decide which information is relevant to the specific topic.

To avoid misinterpretation of the topic, a draft of the outline should be presented to the supervisor at an early stage. Good preparation ensures an efficient meeting with the supervisor. This includes sending the outline to the supervisor at least 24 hours before the appointment.

In general, a paper or thesis has the following **sections**:

1. Introduction

2. Literature Review

3. Analysis

4. Discussion

5. Conclusion

The **introduction** gives the reader the first motivation to the topic of the paper. It explains the problem and illustrates the relevance of the research question. Moreover, the aim of the paper is stated and an overview of the structure is given. It is recommended to write the introduction at the end to ensure that the actual content of the finished text is introduced. However, writing a short exposé at the beginning helps not to lose the common thread during the process of writing.

The main part of the paper presents the **current state of research** on the topic and includes the scientific **analysis** of the theory, empirical findings or a case study as well as a **discussion** of the results and their limitations in answering the research question. The individual chapters should relate to one another and references should be made between the chapters.

In the **conclusion**, it is necessary to take up the research question, summarize the results, address problems and limitations or aspects of the topic to be solved in further research.

2 Understanding Academic Literature

When providing an overview of the topic, it is important to read the literature thoroughly. Students should research the literature independently and as early as possible in the process. Supervisors are available in case of questions.

There are different types of literature that can be used. It should be taken into account that information and data published online is often of varying origin and quality. *Wikipedia*, *Investopedia* and similar websites are not considered citeable sources.

Citeable sources are for example:

- **Textbooks and monographs**
- **Articles in academic journals**
- **Essays from collected volumes**

Publications by ministries and other institutions and **working papers** (versions of not yet published articles) are citeable. Working papers, however, should be questioned even more critically in terms of content, as they do not undergo the same quality control as articles in scientific journals.

The *Catalogue plus*, the library catalogue of the UB Freiburg as well as various databases and scientific online search engines such as *Google Scholar* offer access to a wide range of literature. An overview of the databases licensed for the University of Freiburg can be found in the *Database Infosystem (DBIS)* of the UB Freiburg.

With the help of the **snowball principle** (obtaining new literature through cited sources), further sources can be found. It is advisable to start with up-to-date literature since it usually covers previous literature. **Scanning and skimming** are helpful for orientation, i.e. identifying the most important information, marking passages with a clear reference to the topic and noting the page numbers, as well as collecting keywords and preparing short summaries. Even at this stage, programs such as *Citavi*, *Mendeley* or *Zotero* are recommended to keep track of what has been read. In general, it is always important to critically examine and question the literature and not take for granted that other papers present the only and full truth.

3 Referencing and Citation Styles

Scientific work builds on the findings of previous authors. It is therefore important to identify all sentences that are taken literally or as a paraphrase from other works and to provide them with a verifiable source. Referencing means not only the literal adoption of text passages, but also paraphrasing, i.e. the adoption of statements made by others in your own words. To avoid

plagiarism, a source must always be provided if the idea comes from another person. Only general knowledge (i.e. facts that are known to the general public) does not have to be cited. Software available free of charge on the Internet can help check for plagiarism in the text, but can not guarantee zero plagiarism.

The chair for Economic Policy and Constitutional Economics does not specify which citation style must be used, as long as you apply one style consistently. The most common citation styles are: *APA Style*, *Chicago Manual Style* and *MLA Style*. More detailed information on how to use citation styles can be found in manuals on the internet. The following examples are limited to the *APA Style*.

If a specific statement is cited, this can be done in a **direct** and **indirect** way:

1. **Literal quotes:** Literal or direct quotes are only used when the original wording matters. They are marked with quotation marks and always include a page reference. If the quote is shorter than 3 lines, it is inserted in the text body. If it is longer than three lines, the quotation is indented on both sides and provided with smaller font size and smaller line spacing. Changes or omissions in a literal citation must be marked by square brackets. Existing quotation marks within a literal quotation are replaced by single quotation marks.

Example:

“If they treat taxpayers as partners in a psychological tax contract, instead of inferiors in a hierarchical relationship, taxpayers have incentives to pay taxes honestly.” (Feld & Frey, 2007, p. 107)

2. **Paraphrase:** An indirect quotation is not typographically highlighted. The reference is placed in round brackets directly after the cited part and indicates the year of publication, the author’s surname and, if applicable, the page number. Avoid long citations and do not reproduce only a single source over several pages.

Examples:

When talking about the respectful treatment of taxpayers, two aspects must be taken into account... (Feld & Frey, 2007, p. 107)

Feld and Frey (2007, p. 107) claim that ...

In addition:

- Alphabetically sort references referring to different sources and separate them by a semicolon: (Eucken, 2004; Feld, 2017).
- Supplement the year chronologically by a/b/... when using several quotations from one author or a group of authors from one year: (Feld, 2017a).

- Quote both authors when referring to papers by two authors. In the text, “and” is used instead of the & sign: (Feld & Koehler, 2019).
- Quote all authors the first time when referring to papers by three to five authors. Then only quote the first author that is noted and add the abbreviation “et al.”: (Koessler, Torgler, Feld & Frey, 2019).
- Use the abbreviation “et al.” when referring to papers by six or more authors: (Fuest et al., 2019).
- Provide the page number when referring to a specific passage of a paper.
- Academic titles (e.g. Dr./Prof.) are not mentioned.
- To indicate one or more subsequent pages, “p.” or “pp.” is written.
- In principle, the original text is cited. If the original text is not accessible, secondary literature may be cited. In this case, the original passage should be indicated with “as cited in”, followed by the reference to the secondary literature.

4 Bibliography

The bibliography is an alphabetical list of all works cited in the text. In general, all necessary information must be provided so that the source can easily be found. The chosen citation style determines the style of the bibliography. The type of source determines the formality. If several sources are used by one person or one group of persons, they are listed chronologically by year of publication, beginning with the most recent. Each source ends with a full stop.

Examples:

Article in an Academic Journal:

Author, A. (Year). Title of the Article. *Name of the Journal*, Issue (Number), Page Reference.

Fritz, B. & Feld, L. (2020). Common Pool Effects and Local Public Debt in Amalgamated Municipalities. *Public Choice*, 183(1), 69–99.

Book:

Author, A. (Year). *Book Title* (Edition). Location: Publisher.

Feld, L. & Larsen, C. (2012). *Undeclared Work, Deterrence and Social Norms: The Case of Germany*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer.

Essay in a Collected Volume/ Chapter in an Edited Book:

Author, A. (Year). Title of the Chapter. In A. Editor (ed.), *Book Title* (p. Page Reference). Location: Publisher.

Feld, L. P. (2017). Public Spending Reduces Unemployment. In Frey B., Iselin D. (eds.), *Economic Ideas You Should Forget* (pp. 45–46). Cham: Springer.

Online Source:

Author, A. (Year of Publication). *Title of the Document*. Retrieved on Day Month Year, from URL.

Ministry of Finance (2019). *Economic Survey, December 2019*. Retrieved on 5 April 2020, from <https://uk.fm.dk/publications>.

5 Formal Terms and Structure

5.1 Structure

At the chair for Economic Policy and Constitutional Economics, papers and theses can be written in German or English. They include the following sections in the order listed:

1. Cover page
2. Table of contents
3. If applicable, list of abbreviations
4. If applicable, list of figures
5. If applicable, list of tables
6. Text
7. Bibliography
8. If applicable, Appendix with preceding list of content
9. Certification of the independent preparation of the thesis (only for final theses)

5.2 Format

- DIN A4 format, single-sided
- Line spacing: 1.5

- in Arial or Times New Roman
- Font size: 12 pt
- Full Justification
- Margins:
 - Left: 6 cm
 - Bottom and right: 1-1.5 cm
 - Top: up to the page number 1-1.5 cm
 - To the first line of text: 2 cm

5.3 Footnotes

- Font size: 10 pt
- Line spacing: 1
- All footnotes begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

5.4 Design of the Cover Page of Theses

5.4.1 B.Sc./ M.Sc. Volkswirtschaftslehre

- Capital letters at the top:
ALBERT-LUDWIGS-UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG IM BREISGAU
- Below normal upper and lower case: Fachprüfungsausschuss Volkswirtschaftslehre (B.Sc.)/
Prüfungsausschuss für M.Sc. Volkswirtschaftslehre
- Title, set off and separated by a horizontal line
- Leave space, then in a new line each time: Bachelorarbeit/ Masterarbeit, name of the
examiner, name of the author, matriculation number, place of birth, start and submission
date
- The cover page contains no page number.

5.4.2 M.Sc. Economics

- Prepare the cover page using the following template:

<http://master.econ.uni-freiburg.de/data/master-thesis-title-page-2014.doc>

- The cover page contains no page number.

5.5 Design of the Cover Page of Seminar Papers

- Top center: Seminar paper
- The title of the paper
- Left-aligned after some distance, each in a new line: Presented by: Last name, first name, matriculation number, subject, submission date, chair, examiner

5.6 Declaration of the Independent Production of the Thesis

“Hiermit versichere ich, die vorliegende Arbeit ohne unerlaubte Hilfe und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt zu haben. Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus Veröffentlichungen entnommen sind, habe ich als solche kenntlich gemacht. Die eingereichte Bachelor- /Masterarbeit wurde weder vollständig noch in wesentlichen Teilen Gegenstand eines anderen Prüfungsverfahrens. Die elektronische Version der eingereichten Bachelor-/Masterarbeit stimmt in Inhalt und Formatierung mit den auf Papier ausgedruckten Exemplaren überein.”

“I certify that the thesis at hand was made without unauthorized help and that I only used the tools denoted. All statements literally or logically taken from publications are marked as quotes.”

The declaration is followed by the place, date and signature of the author.

5.7 Submission

The submission of a **final thesis** is to be done in printed and digital form: As a rule, the thesis is submitted in two bound printed copies and in a digital form on a common data carrier system (e.g. USB stick or CD-ROM). After consultation with the supervisor, the digital version can also be sent by e-mail. Please note that both the supervisor and the examination office should receive the digital version by e-mail. A **seminar paper** is only submitted in digital form.

All the formal requirements given can also be found on the website of the Office of the Economic Examination Committees (Geschäftsstelle der Wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Prüfungsausschüsse). The most current information should always be taken into account:

<https://portal.uni-freiburg.de/pa-vwl>