

Guidelines for writing Bachelor's and Master's theses

General Framework

These guidelines apply to final theses for which I am the primary supervisor and first examiner. They elaborate on the general *guidelines and recommendations for the structure of term papers and final theses* at the IPU and, in some respects, also deviate from them. If you are unsure which guidelines to follow in your thesis, please come to my office hours.

Methodological focus

As a rule, I only accept empirical-qualitative work for supervision.

Capacity

You can find information about available supervision slots on my IPU website.

About the supervision process

If you would like to write an empirical-qualitative thesis under my supervision and there is availability (or if you would like to be placed on the waiting list for a later date), please come to my office hours for a personal meeting. You can find office hour dates and booking options on my IPU website.

Following the meeting and any further research, please summarise your thoughts on the thesis in the form of a 3–5-page synopsis. It should include the (provisional) research question and its relevance, provide an initial broad overview of the state of research on the topic, describe and justify the methodological approach (including methods of data production and analysis; sampling strategy), and include considerations regarding field access and ethical challenges; you are also welcome to address any outstanding questions. The synopsis serves as a shared basis for the supervision process. Please come to my office hours to discuss the synopsis and agree on the further research and supervision process. Approval of the synopsis is a prerequisite for the confirmation of supervision.

If you wish to write your dissertation under my supervision, I ask that you attend the seminar, which I usually hold every semester. You are required to present your dissertation at one of these sessions.

You must register your thesis with the BüSL using the form provided, at least four weeks before the submission deadline. The title of the thesis may change during the writing process. In this case, please send me an informal email. Once agreed, please inform the BüSL, copying me in, so that I can formally confirm my approval to the BüSL.

During the course of your research and the writing of the thesis, you may also attend two consultation sessions (one of which may be a double session) during my office hours.

Please understand that I am unable to offer any additional supervision outside the context of these seminars and office hours.

Formal requirements regarding the structure of the thesis

Regarding the length of the thesis: As a rough guide, I estimate approximately 35 to 40 pages for Bachelor's theses and 60 to 80 pages for Master's theses, based on Calibri 11pt with 1.5 line spacing and standard margins (2.4 cm left and right, and 2 cm top and bottom), including the title page, declaration of originality and bibliography; Appendices such as transcripts of interviews are not included in this estimate of length.

The font, font size and page margins specified above are *not* mandatory. Please choose a font and font size that you find attractive for your work, set the page margins as you see fit, and decide whether you wish to indent the first line of each paragraph (and by how much) or, alternatively, insert specific spacing between paragraphs to highlight the internal structure of the text. You are welcome to make headings larger if you feel the need, and you may also use a different colour. And for the sake of clarity, you can either indent new chapters consecutively or, for the sake of clarity, always start them on a new page. I have no specific ideas or expectations in this regard. It is your work, and you should design it in a way that you like, so that you would want to print and bind a copy of it and place it on your bookshelf once you have finished your studies. Please do, however, ensure consistency – so don't have some paragraphs with indented lines and others with spacing between paragraphs. And remember that your decisions regarding the formal aspects should also be guided by the aim of making the work accessible to readers (and these are, first and foremost, the examiners), making it easier to read rather than obscuring it.

The cover page of your thesis should include the following basic information: name of the university, title of the thesis, your first name and surname, student number, type of thesis (e.g. Bachelor's thesis), field of study, academic degree, names of both examiners, place and date of submission. If you wish to decorate the cover graphically (not simply because you enjoy drawing flowers, but because the decoration is relevant to the thesis, such as including images of tattoos in a study on the psychosocial significance of tattoos in the biographical process), this is permitted.

It is up to you whether you include a summary or abstract in your thesis. The added value lies in the fact that you can provide the reader with a concise overview of *key messages*, thereby guiding them through the thesis.

I would ask you to follow the APA citation guidelines in your thesis, i.e. to use the APA recommendations for in-text citations and the reference list. In principle, countless citation styles would be possible, provided they are applied consistently. However, the APA has produced a very comprehensive, detailed and clear guide, which also covers many special cases, allowing reviewers to quickly assess the quality of the academic work. Please familiarise yourself with this before you start writing, so that you do not end up having to put in a great deal of effort to standardise everything.

Language

I no longer accept (first-supervised) theses that render the researcher invisible by being written exclusively in the passive voice ("research was conducted") or by employing strange forms of objectification ("The author of this thesis is of the opinion that...") or similar. Please write in the first person ("I have investigated how..."; "I hold the empirically grounded view that..."). It is *your* work; *you* carried out the underlying research; *you* wrestled with the right words. The "I" does not make the work any less scientific; on the contrary, it is an expression of conscious positionality and reflective subjectivity as quality criteria for empirical-qualitative work in the best scientific sense.

I expect you to demonstrate an awareness of gender-sensitive language in your work. This certainly does not mean that you must use * or _ or the 'internal I' or any other variant in every single instance. In a piece of work about men talking about their feelings, it would be

strange, even absurd, to seek out formulations that are as inclusive as possible. Please choose a strategy that does 'justice' to the significance of gender-sensitive language in relation to your research topic, and briefly justify your decision where appropriate. If you can think of nothing better than to rely on the generic masculine form, this is certainly the option that requires the clearest justification; merely noting that the text is reader-friendly and that all genders are naturally intended to be included is not sufficient.

I would be delighted if you used the process of writing your thesis to develop your own research and writing style. Be creative. Qualitative research invites you to tell good (and empirically grounded) stories beyond rigid conventions and standardised jargon. This sometimes affects the entire structure of the thesis. Draw inspiration from reading qualitative studies to present your project and findings convincingly. The journal *Qualitative Inquiry*, for example, offers some examples of this. Here too, the style of presentation should emerge from the research itself and correspond as meaningfully as possible to the requirements of the topic, methods and research philosophy.

Peer review

Once you have submitted your thesis to the BÜSL – a digital version is sufficient for me – I will endeavour to assess it within six weeks. Please let me know in advance if you require an assessment within a shorter timeframe, or if you need confirmation in advance that you have passed your thesis, for example for job applications. You will not usually receive the assessment of your work from me, but from the BÜSL. Please enquire there if the assessments are not sent to you automatically.

If you disagree with the assessment of your thesis (and can best justify your criticism of the assessment(s)), you have the right, under Section 9 of the Framework Study and , you have the right to lodge a so-called 'counter-submission', i.e. an appeal, with the Examination and Admissions Committee within three months. The two assessors will then be asked to review their assessment and provide reasons for the revised assessment.