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## **Formal Guidelines for Academic Writing at the Chair of Strategic Management**



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## 1. PRELIMINARY REMARK

The presented guidelines have to be applied to bachelor and master theses. The requirements to write a bachelor or master thesis at the Chair of Strategic Management as well as the corresponding procedure can be found on our website:

<https://www.unternehmensfuehrung.rw.fau.de/>

## 2. FORMAL GUIDELINES

### 2.1 Scope, font size, and line spacing

The main body of the bachelor or master thesis should not exceed the maximum pages, which are determined in the “Prüfungsordnung”. A further specification for both bachelor and master theses can be found in chapter 3. A thesis should always contain all information that are necessary to understand the topic and the elaboration. However, the thesis should never provide irrelevant and dispensable information.

Font size is 12 pt. in Times New Roman. Use only three levels of headings. Number the headings in consecutive Arabic numerals only. Use boldface for all three headings. First level headings (all capital letters; centered) are first, they can be 14 pt. Second-level headings (title-style letters; flush left) are next. Third-level headings (title-style letters; flush left) are next. Do not skip steps: no second-level headings should be used before you use a first-level heading, for instance. Use second- and third-level headings in sets of two or more. Spaces after sections should always have a common spacing.

Examples:

### 1. METHODS [1<sup>st</sup> level]

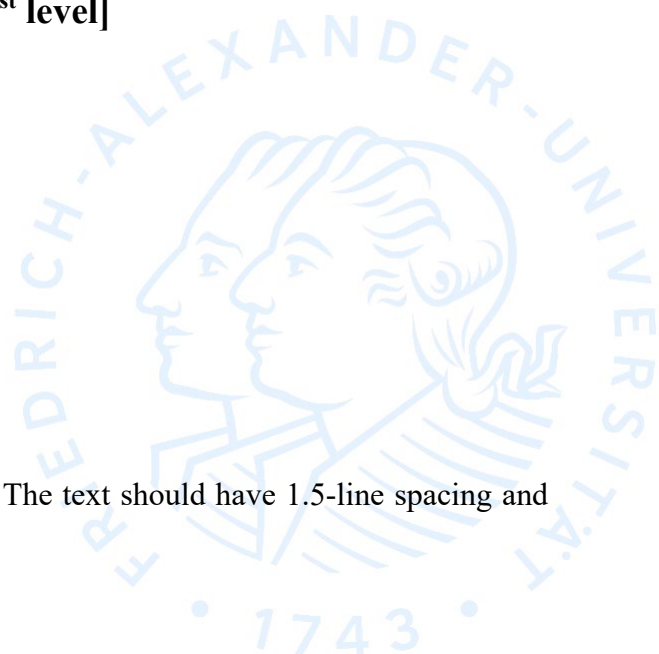
#### 1.1 Data and Sample [2<sup>nd</sup> level]

#### 1.2 Measures [2<sup>nd</sup> level]

##### 1.2.1 Independent variable [3<sup>rd</sup> level]

##### 1.2.2 Dependent variable [3<sup>rd</sup> level]

Footnotes should be 10 pt. (also Times New Roman). The text should have 1.5-line spacing and flush left and right.



## 2.2 Title page

The title page has to be designed as indicated by the following example. Make sure to select the appropriate type of thesis:

[Title]	
Bachelor Thesis / Master Thesis	
Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg	
School of Business, Economics and Society	
Chair of Strategic Management	
Professor:	[name of professor]
Advisor:	[name of advisor]
Autor:	[first name, last name]
	[postal address]
	[matriculation number]
	[program, semester]
Nuremberg, [date of submission]	

## 2.3 Page format

Page size is DIN A4. Margins should be as follows:

- left 2,6 cm
- right 2,6 cm
- upper 2,6 cm
- lower 2,6 cm

The pages of the main body of the text should be numbered in Arabic numerals, starting with the introduction on page number 1. **All** other pages (abstract, list of contents, references, etc.) should be labeled with Roman numerals. The title page does **not** show a number. Nevertheless, it counts as the first page. Therefore, the page count in Roman numerals starts with the abstract on page number II. Place all page numbers in the upper-right corner (as in this style guide).

## 2.4 Language

Make your thesis readily understandable for readers. This includes the following aspects:

- Define key technical terms (i.e. words or phrases that cannot be found in a general-use dictionary) with the meaning you ascribe to it.
- Avoid using abbreviations for the name of concepts. Names of organizations, software, databases, and research instruments can be abbreviated, but give the full name the first time you mention these and add the abbreviation in parentheses. Long terms that are important for your thesis and that you mention often should not be abbreviated unless there is a common abbreviation for them. Include all abbreviations in your list of abbreviations (cf. section 3.3).
- Use ordinary words for variable names and use the same name for a variable throughout your thesis.
- Use symbols and numbers to report results and give formulas. Define each new term in all equations. Center formulas and assign numbers to them. Example:

I used the following equation as basis for the ordinary least squares regression:

$$R_{i,t} = \alpha_i + \gamma_i \times R_{s,t} + \beta_i \times R_{m,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (1)$$

Where  $R_{i,t}$  is ...

- Write in the active voice instead of the passive voice to make it easy for readers to understand who did what. Use the first person (“I”) to describe what you did, although this may seem uncomfortable for you in the first moment, since this is not that common in German language.

## 2.5 Tables and figures

The design of your tables should be plain and simple. Tables should be formatted as follows: Arrange the data so that columns of like material read down, not across. The headings should be sufficiently clear so that the meaning of the data is understandable without reference to the text. Tables should have expressive titles and sufficient experimental detail in a legend immediately following the title to be understandable without reference to the text. Each column in a table must have a heading, and abbreviations, when necessary, should be defined in the legend or footnote. Number tables and figures consecutively (one series for tables, one for figures). Choose an appropriate position for each table/figure, i.e. they should provide a clear benefit for the reader at the point of your argumentation where you place them.

Each table needs an introductory sentence in your text. Use the same name for each variable that you use in your text. Avoid abbreviations. Each table should report one type of analysis (which is identified in the title), and each vertical column and horizontal row should contain only one type of data. Report only two decimal places for all statistics. Use superscript small letters for table footnotes.

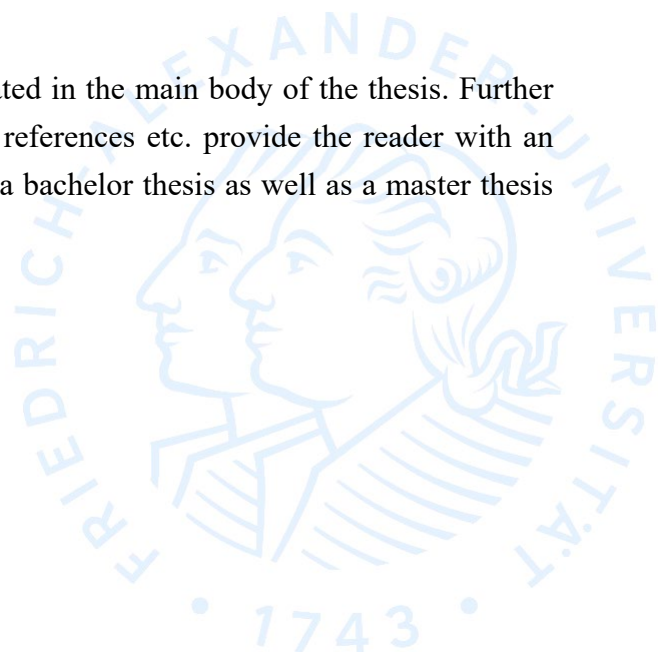
Figures, unlike tables, contain drawings (e.g., arrows, boxes). Each figure needs an introductory sentence in your text. Make sure your figures print out clearly so that they can be scanned.

## 3. CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The main body of a bachelor thesis should contain at least 25 pages and may not exceed a maximum of 35 pages including all tables/figures within the text. For a master thesis, the minimum page number is 60 and the maximum 80 pages including all tables/figures within the text. Title page, abstract, list of contents, list of abbreviations, list of figures, list of tables, references, appendix, and declaration are not included in the page count.

A thesis comprises different parts. The topic is evaluated in the main body of the thesis. Further sections like abstract, list of contents, list of figures, references etc. provide the reader with an overview of the structure of the thesis. In detail, both a bachelor thesis as well as a master thesis should be structured as indicated in the following:

- Title page (cf. chapter 2.2)
- Abstract (cf. chapter 3.1)
- List of contents (cf. chapter 3.2)
- List of abbreviations (cf. chapter 3.3)
- List of figures (cf. chapter 3.4)
- List of tables (cf. chapter 3.4)



- Main body (For specifications regarding the main body of a thesis, please see chapter 6.)
- References (cf. chapter 4.5)
- Appendices (optional) (cf. chapter 3.5)
- Declaration (cf. chapter 3.6)

### 3.1 Abstract

The abstract briefly outlines the most important results of your thesis. It contains no more than 200 words. In contrast to your introduction, the abstract does *not* concentrate on the problem, nor does it determine the scope of your thesis or describe the method of evaluation. The abstract concentrates on presenting the core theoretical and empirical results. Be careful that abstract and conclusion of your thesis can be clearly differentiated in terms of their respective content. Since the abstract will influence your overall grade, we recommend to follow the example of abstracts presented in prestigious academic journals.

### 3.2 List of contents

The list of contents mirrors the logical structure of your thesis and gives the reader a first overview of the content. So keep your wording short but understandable, be precise in labelling the content of different sections, and be logically consistent. Consider also the following remarks:

- Number the bullet points of your main body in consecutive Arabic numerals only (cf. chapter 2.1). For an example regarding the correct format of a list of contents, please refer to the list of contents presented in this document on page II.
- Abstract, list of contents, list of abbreviations, list of figures, list of tables, appendices, references, and declaration are also included as separate bullet points, but they are **not** numbered.
- Add respective page numbers to every bullet point: Arabic numerals for the bullet points of your main body, Roman numerals for all other bullet points (abstract, list of contents, list of abbreviations, list of figures, list of tables, appendix, and references) except for the declaration which has no page number.
- Bullet points of the same level should be formatted in an equal way, i.e. have the same indentation.
- Use three levels of headings/bullet points only (cf. chapter 2.1). Don't skip steps: Use second- and third-level headings **in sets of two or more**.
- Each bullet point summarizes the content of the respective section.
- Separate bullet points of the same level should not overlap in terms of their content. Taken together, all bullet points of the same level should cover the main message of the superordinate bullet point.



- Choose meaningful headings, e.g. “Labelling and assessment of the input-output-model” instead of “Input-output-model”.

### 3.3 List of abbreviations

Include all the abbreviations that you used in the list of abbreviations. Common abbreviations like “etc.” or “e.g.” do not need to be included in the list. For further information regarding abbreviations, please refer to section 2.4.

### 3.4 List of figures and list of tables

The list of figures gives the reader an overview of all the figures you present in your thesis. All figures presented in the main body of your thesis as well as in the appendix have to be part of the list of figures including their respective number, title, and page number. For further information regarding figures and tables, please refer to chapter 2.5. The same procedure applies to the list of tables and its contents.

### 3.5 Appendices

Present long but essential methodological details, such as the calculation of measures or more extensive tables/figures in an appendix or appendices. Be concise. Avoid exact reproductions of surveys. Label appendices “**APPENDIX A**,” “**APPENDIX B**,” and so forth. A substantive title, such as “Items in Scales,” should follow. Label tables within appendices “**Table A1**,” “**B1**,” and so forth.

### 3.6 Declaration

The last page of your thesis (which has no page number) includes the following declaration:

“I hereby declare that I have authored this thesis independently and that I have not used others than the declared sources and that I have not used any artificial intelligence. All direct or indirect sources used are acknowledged as references. This thesis has never been submitted in the same or substantially similar version to any other examination board.

Nuremberg, [date] [signature]”



## 4. CITATIONS AND REFERENCES

All direct and indirect sources that you use need to be cited correctly so that they can be verified. Always be precise – literally – when citing the work of others.

### 4.1 Citability and Need for Citation

In general, you can cite any (secondary) source that has been published in some form. If you want to cite a source which is not citable according to this concept, e.g. a bachelor thesis or lecture slides, you need to mark the usage of such material. The same procedure applies to oral expert opinions. However, this should remain an exception.

You are allowed to cite scientific encyclopedias. Wikipedia, however, is an online encyclopedia where also authors without any academic background contribute and change articles. Therefore, we strongly advise you not to cite this source.

You do not need to cite facts of common knowledge which can be found in any general-use dictionaries. The same applies to pertinent technical terms, commonly used terms which can be found in encyclopedias, and mathematical formulas.

### 4.2 Preliminary remarks regarding citations

#### 4.2.1 Direct citations

Put direct citations up to 40 words in quotation marks. Indent direct citations containing more than 40 words and do not use quotations marks for those. Be aware of specific requirements regarding the following situations:

- Interrupting citations: Sometimes you need to adapt a direct citation in order to fit it into your sentence or you need to omit parts of citations that are not relevant for your argument. Mark respective positions by using three dots: (...). Put citations within a citation in single quotation marks ('...').

Example:

This result supports the original hypothesis "...that higher environmental performance is associated with higher financial performance, and the relationship is strengthened as industry growth rises." (Russo & Fouts, 1997: 549)

- Extending citations: When you depart from the original wording of the citation, mark respective positions by using square brackets: [...].

Example:

"Once such hardware [end-of-pipe technologies] is installed, it does not fundamentally vary production or service delivery process." (Russo & Fouts, 1997: 538)

- Highlights in citations: Adapt highlights in citations, e.g. italicized letters. If you wish to highlight a passage in a citation on your own account, italicize the respective passage and add [highlighted by author] right after the passage that you highlighted.

Example:

“We are now in a *transitional phase* [highlighted by the author] of industrial history in which companies are still inexperienced in handling environmental issues creatively.” (Porter & Linde, 1995: 127)

#### 4.2.2 Indirect citations

Use indirect citations whenever you refer to, use or reproduce someone else’s work without citing the respective author(s) directly. Use indirect citations when you report another author’s ideas correspondingly but in shortened form or when other authors had similar ideas beforehand. The scope of the indirect citation should be indicated clearly (cf. chapter 4.3).

#### 4.3 Citations within the text

Citations within the text appear as follows: (author(s), date). Put citations in an alphabetic order. When a reference is made to more than one work by the same author(s) published in the same year, identify each citation in the text in the following manner: (Collins, 2005a, 2005b). When a work has two authors, give both names every time you cite it. Separate both names in the following manner: (Bagozzi & Phillips, 1982). For three through six authors, give all names the first time (e.g. “Foster, Whittington, Tucker, Horner, Hubbard, & Grimm, 2000”), then use “et al.” in citations. For seven or more authors, use “et al.” even for the first citation. Citations within the text should be uniquely defined in the reference section, e.g. all references must have a corresponding citation in the text and vice versa.

For page numbers in citations, use this format: (authors(s), date: page number). When a citation has no author, cite the periodical as author and italicize it, e.g. (*Wall Street Journal*, 2016). For reports, handbooks, and the like, cite the “corporate author” that produced them, e.g. (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2017). Regarding electronic sources, use a regular citation (author(s), year) whenever you can identify an author. If not, define a clear reference name and add the web address in the list of references

The position of a citation within the text indicates the scope of the citation, i.e. what part of your text it actually refers to. There are three different options for the position:

- If the citation refers to a single term, place the citation right after it.
- If the citation refers to part of a sentence, place the citation right before the punctuation character, which ends the respective part of the sentence.

- If the citation refers to a whole sentence, place the citation right before the punctuation character, which ends the respective sentence.

#### 4.4 Footnotes

Use footnotes to present additional or more detailed information that does not necessarily have to be included in your argumentation. The same applies to cross-references to similar sections of your thesis.

A short line separates the text and the first footnote on every page. Number footnotes consecutively. Start each footnote with a capital letter and end it with a full stop. If inevitable, a footnote can be continued on the next page. End such a footnote without further remark under the text of the next page, again separated by a short line.

#### 4.5 References

The reference section contains all the work that you cited and follows the main body of the thesis (first references, then appendix). It is to be sorted alphabetically. Order works by an identical author by year of publication, listing the earliest first. If the years of publication are also the same, differentiate entries by adding small letters (“a,” “b,” etc.) after the years. We recommend to use a citation program. The following explanations show you how to cite work from different publication types.

##### 4.5.1 Books

Follow this general form: Last names, initials (separated by a space). Year. ***Title***. (Boldface italic, capitalize only the first letter of the first word and of the first word after a long dash or colon.) City where published: Name of publisher.

##### Examples:

Badaracco, J. L. 1991. ***The knowledge link: How firms compete through strategic alliances***. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Bleeke, J., & Ernst, D. (Eds.). 1993. ***Collaborating to compete: Using strategic alliances and acquisitions in the global marketplace***. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

##### 4.5.2 Periodicals

Follow this general form: Authors' last names, initials. Year. Title (regular type; same single-capital rule as for books). ***Name of Periodical*** (boldface italic, title-style capitalization), volume number (issue number, if needed – see below): page numbers.

Include an issue number only if every issue of the referenced periodical begins with a page numbered 1. Look at more than one issue to check. If an article has no author, the periodical is referenced (see example “Harvard Business Review”).

Examples:

Bagozzi, R., & Phillips, L. 1982. Representing and testing organizational theories: A holistic construal. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 27: 459–489.

Grant, R. M. 1996. Toward a knowledge-based theory of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, Winter Special Issue 17: 109–122.

*Harvard Business Review*. 2003. How are we doing? 81(4): 3.

Jensen, M., & Zajac, E. J. 2004. Corporate elites and corporate strategy: How demographic preferences and structural position shape the scope of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 25: 507–524.

### 4.5.3 Book Chapters

Follow this general form: Authors’ last names, initials. Year. Title of chapter (regular type, single-capital rule). In Editors’ initials and last names (Eds.), ***Title of book:*** (boldface italic, title-style capitalization) Page numbers. City where published: Publisher.

Examples:

Bowman, E. H, & Singh, H. 1990. Overview of corporate restructuring: Trends and consequences. In L. Rock & R. H. Rock (Eds.), ***Corporate Restructuring:*** 1–16. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Collis, D. 1996. Organizational capability as a source of profit. In B. Moingeon & A. Edmondson (Eds.), ***Organizational Learning and Competitive Advantage:*** 139–163. London: Sage.

### 4.5.4 Unpublished works

Unpublished works include working papers, dissertations, and papers presented at meetings. Please refer to the following examples for the correct citation form:

Cohen M. D., Nelson R. R., & Walsh, J. P. 2000. ***Protecting their intellectual assets: Appropriability conditions and why U.S. manufacturing firms patent (or not).*** NBER working paper 7552, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA.

Child J., & Yan, Y. 1999. ***Predicting the performance of international alliances: An investigation in China.*** Working paper, Chinese Management Centre, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

D'Eredita, M., Misiolek, N., & Siow, J. 2005. *States of mind as stages of team development: making sense of strategies for building a virtual team*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 5th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Business, Honolulu, HI.

Misiolek, N. 2003. *Knowledge management and the corporate university: Insights from the knowledge-based view of the firm*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Management, Seattle, WA.

#### **4.5.5 Electronic documents**

Include the author's name, if known; the full title of the document; the full title of the work it is part of; the ftp, https, or other address; and the date the document was posted or accessed.

#### Example:

Rushe, D. Steel and aluminum tariffs trigger sharp stock market sell-off in US and Asia. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/mar/01/trump-to-impose-tariffs-on-steel-and-aluminum-imports-in-bold-trade-move> [date of access: 6 March 2018].

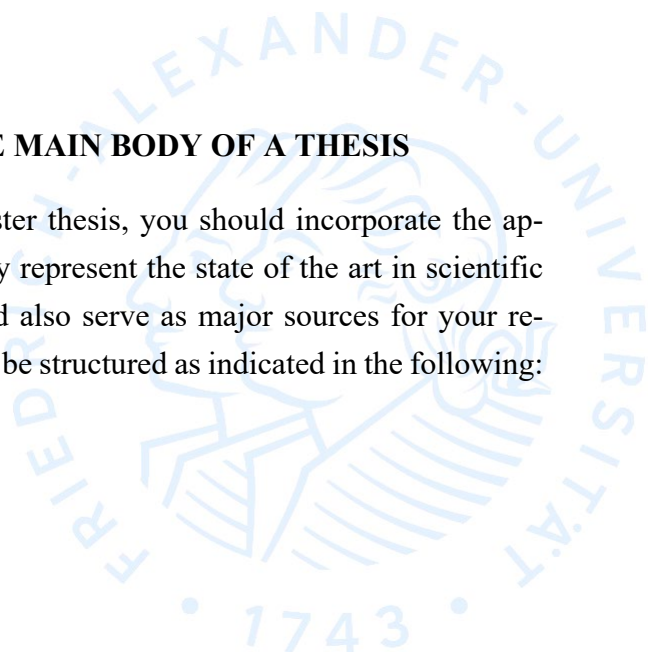
### **5. REQUIREMENTS REGARDING THE EXPOSÉ**

After the allocation of the topics, you start to write your exposé. The exposé should be structured according to the SCQA-approach and include the following aspects:

1. the current (research) situation and the corresponding problem,
2. the research question and objective of the thesis,
3. the procedure for dealing with the question,
4. the estimated schedule of processing,
5. the preliminary table of content,
6. and the used references.

### **6. REQUIREMENTS REGARDING THE MAIN BODY OF A THESIS**

Regarding the structure of the main body of your master thesis, you should incorporate the approach used in prestigious academic journals since they represent the state of the art in scientific research and writing. Work from those journals should also serve as major sources for your research. Therefore, the main body of a master thesis may be structured as indicated in the following:





1. Introduction
2. Theory (and Hypotheses)
3. Method
4. Results
5. Discussion

If you wish to write your master thesis at the Chair of Strategic Management, it is a prerequisite that you participate in the course “Advanced Theory and Methods in Strategy”. During this course, you will receive detailed information regarding the content of and the requirements for the structure indicated above. Thus, the following explanations can be seen as just a first hint towards a more comprehensive picture, which will be delivered during the seminar.

## 6.1 Introduction

Your introduction determines whether or not the readers will continue reading. Therefore, you need to capture the attention of the reader. A good story and some emotionality in the introduction can make the reader intrigued in the research question. An effective introduction has to answer three questions:

- “Who cares?”  
Highlight your thesis’ importance for both theory and practice.
- “What do we know, what do we not know, and so what?”  
Identify which conversation the thesis is joining, where the conversation has not yet gone, and why it should go there.
- “What will we learn?”  
Give a preview of the work’s theoretical contribution.

Always make sure that you motivate your thesis and problematize the literature.

## 6.2 Theory and Hypotheses

First, you should take a closer look on your grounding theory and then, separately, on your contributing theory. Furthermore, in a quantitative study you connect both theories and derive the hypotheses that you will test in the “Results” section.

## 6.3 Method

Describe the methods that you use in your thesis. Make sure that you address the three “C’s”, i.e. completeness, clarity, and credibility, in describing your sample, data, variables, and methods. Show how and why the data were obtained and how they will be analyzed.

## **6.4 Results**

Just like in the “Method” section, make sure that you consider the three “C’s” in describing the results you obtained. Relate your findings to your hypotheses.

## **6.5 Discussion**

In this section, you discuss the implications of your results. This includes theoretical implications, practical implications, study limitations, and future research. Make sure that your discussion has a clear focus on the benefit created by the findings of your thesis.

## **7. Guidelines for the submission of the thesis**

You must submit the thesis in duplicate at the “Prüfungsamt”. Besides two printed and bound exemplars (ring binding/spiral binding), the thesis needs to be submitted in digital format (pdf and word on a USB stick). All necessary documents and files (excel, etc.) need to be attached.

