

Thesis guidelines

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Introduction

This document serves as a guideline for master and bachelor students writing their thesis within the Department of Applied Economics, subgroup Organisation, Strategy & Entrepreneurship (OSE). It provides links to websites and additional literature, describes the process of writing a thesis, summarizes content requirements, and contains do's and don'ts. This document supplements and adds detail to other ESE websites containing information on writing a thesis such as:

1) for all students in Applied Economics:

http://www.eur.nl/ese/english/about_ese/departments/department_of_applied_economics/more_information/theses/

2) for bachelor students:

http://www.eur.nl/ese/informatie_voor/studenten/bachelorstudenten/bachelorscriptie/

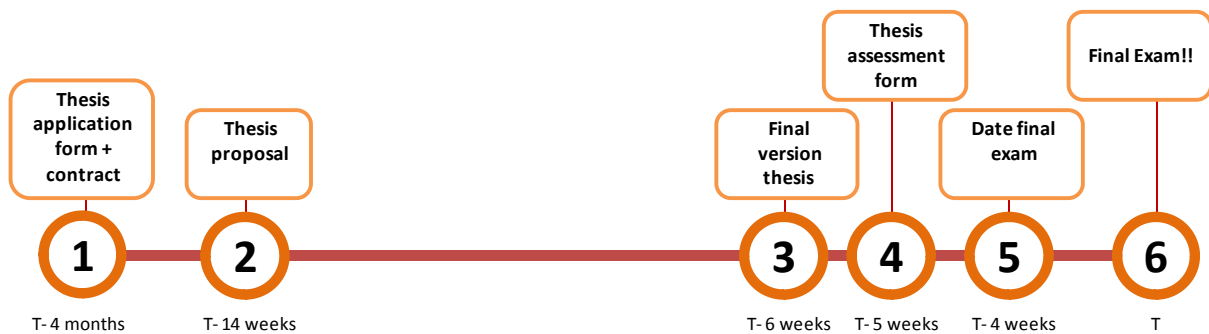
3) for master students:

http://www.eur.nl/ese/english/information_for/students/master_students/master_thesis/

The aim of this document is to serve as a reference to students, set expectations, and help them write an excellent thesis. In addition, we recommend students to read this guideline in order to avoid inefficient meetings with their supervisors.

This document is structured as follows. Section 1 describes the thesis process and provides insight into the different steps in the process, milestones and required documents. Section 2 provides guidelines on the communication with your supervisor. The official requirements and criteria for thesis assessment are subject to section 3. Next, section 4 and 5 describe in detail what elements you need to include in your thesis proposal and final thesis respectively. Section 6 provides you with the requirements for including Figures and Tables in your thesis. This document concludes with do's and don'ts in section 7 and useful web links and literature in section 8.

1. Thesis process



Master students

Bachelor students

	Master students	Bachelor students
Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student requests a lecturer to supervise thesis process by submitting a short proposal of their thesis topic in which they state their main research question (see for possible supervisors and subjects: http://www.eur.nl/ese/english/departments/department_of_applied_economics/more_information/theses/) Supervisor and student fill-out thesis application form + thesis contract at secretariat of Applied Economics (H13_25) Communication between supervisor and student via SIN-online idem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem Thesis contract is not signed for bachelor students Idem
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student hands in a thesis proposal and discusses it with supervisor Student writes the thesis. Supervisor adequately supervises the writing process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem Idem idem
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student hands in final thesis 6 weeks before final exam. Supervisor appoints a second reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem idem
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisor fills out thesis assessment form and performs a check on plagiarism. Supervisor, second reader and student sign thesis assessment form. Supervisor sends complete thesis assessment form to secretariat of Applied Economics (H13_25) (5 weeks before final exam). Supervisor hands in an electronic version of the final thesis at secretariat of Applied Economics to be archived in the Erasmus Thesis Repository (4 weeks before final exam). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> idem The assessment form is filled out and signed during a final meeting which is held in the supervisor's office in the presence of the second reader. NOTE! Ba. Students who want to subscribe for a Master in the subsequent academic year need to complete the entire procedure before August 1. Idem
Step 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student hands in three copies of the thesis at the Exam Administration (J5-27) and Exam administration set a date and time for the final exam (possible dates are available on http://www.eur.nl/essc/studentenadministratie/afstuderenden/master/ese/few/). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable
Step 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student defends thesis during a Thesis Committee session that lasts one hour and takes place in one of the examination rooms. The student gives a presentation of 15 min. about the thesis and a discussion will follow. The Thesis Committee determines the final grade immediately after the session. The diplome is handed out to the student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable Not applicable Not applicable

2. Communication with supervisor

1. SIN-online

You may use SIN-online to communicate with your supervisor including the exchange of documents. You will receive a link to SIN-online as soon as you register at the secretariat of the Department (see 'Thesis process'). Using SIN-online allow both supervisors and students to keep track of progress, set deadlines and make a student's dossier transferable to another supervisor if necessary.

2. Making an appointment with your supervisor

It is recommended to provide your supervisor with written input for each meeting e.g. a thesis proposal, a draft of your thesis, empirical results, a list with questions you would like to discuss etc. In order to get the most out of a meeting, allow your supervisor to prepare and hence, send your input a few days in advance.

3. File names

Make sure you use consistent file names. To avoid confusion, both for yourself and your supervisor, we suggest the following structure:

For Master theses:

- Ma_Student number_Student Name_date.doc [YYMMDD]

For Bachelor theses:

- Ba_Student number_Student Name_date.doc [YYMMDD]

Example: Ma_234567_Hoogendoorn_120308.doc

4. Communicating over mail

Some supervisors prefer to communicate outside SIN-online. We suggest to give your mails the following heading consistently:

- Ma_Student number_Student Name

For Bachelor theses:

- Ba_Student number_Student Name

3. Thesis assessment and official requirements

1. Official requirements

Check out the following websites for the official thesis requirements:

- Bachelor thesis:
http://www.eur.nl/ese/english/information_for/students/bachelor_students/bachelor_thesis/
 - Size (**20-30** pages, including introduction, diagrams, notes, bibliography; exclusive of annexes).
 - Empirical part recommended but not obligatory
 - Language: either Dutch or English, English recommended
 - Duo thesis is not allowed
- Master thesis:
http://www.eur.nl/ese/english/information_for/students/master_students/master_thesis/
 - Size (**50-75** pages, including introduction, diagrams, notes, bibliography; exclusive of annexes).
 - Empirical part required
 - Language: English
 - Duo thesis not allowed

2. Thesis assessment and criteria:

Each thesis will be assessed by your supervisor and co-reader making use of the following criteria. Read through them and keep them in mind while writing your thesis.

- Structure
 - The thesis has a clear introduction and problem definition; each chapter is a recognizable part of the thesis and is in keeping with the problem definition; the argument leads to (partial) conclusions regarding the questions derived from the problem definition. ☑
- Responsibility
 - The thesis must have a clear theoretic basis and (literature and empiric) sources have been recognizably and verifiably used.
 - The writer states clear reasons for his method of research. ☑
- Elaboration
 - Within the thesis the questions formulated within the problem definition are actually answered.
 - It is a consistent and logical argument. ☑
- Added value
 - Relevance to the subject field (science).
 - Relevance to practice. ☑
- Design
 - Neatness and readability
 - Size (50-75 pages for master students and 20-30 pages for bachelor students, including introduction, diagrams, notes, bibliography; exclusive of annexes). ☑
- Effort
 - Effort, motivation and enthusiasm of the student.
 - Independence/own contribution. ☐

3. Plagiarism

Each thesis will be checked on plagiarism by your supervisor using sophisticated tools to make sure students are not copying other people's work inappropriately. Copying from the Internet, using parts of texts of other students or researchers, translating texts from other languages to English using tools such as Google Translate, will be detected with a reference to the original sources. Using ideas and texts from others does not have to be problematic if:

- you use your own words and refer to the original source;
- you make use of quotations in case you literally use someone else's words;

Tip: see for additional information on how to format a quotation the Writers Handbook on Avoiding Plagiarism on the website of the University of Wisconsin:

http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_quoting.html

4. Thesis proposal

The aim of a thesis proposal is to convince your supervisor that:

- your research is significant and important;
- you are contributing something original to the field;
- your idea is feasible in terms of availability of data, current research, theoretical perspectives;
- the research can be completed in the expected time period;

Keep your proposal short (1-3 pages) and to the point containing elements as described in the following table.

	Section	Description
	Front cover	Containing working title/ Student details / Supervisor
1	Introduction & problem statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short overview of problem and its relevance supported by key references to put the problem in a certain domain and field of research; • Set the scene and describe the context in terms of what we know about the subject and what we do <u>not</u> know • Identify a research gap;
2	Motivations & Research objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation of the problem statement in terms of gap to fill; • Contribution of the study: how will you fill the gap? Present your research question(s);
3	Research design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short description of your strategy how to achieve the research objective; • What information do you need/use and how will you get it;
4	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable time plan & deliverables. When do you plan to graduate?;
5	Provisional references	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature list according to academic standard (e.g. APA);

5. Thesis

The content of your thesis should at least comprise of the following sections.

	Section	Description
1	Front cover	Containing at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title; • Student details; • Supervisor and co-reader details;
	Abstract	Include an abstract or a brief summary of your thesis (500 – 750 words maximum) stressing what is being researched, why this is important / relevant, your main findings and your contribution; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short overview of problem and its relevance supported by key references to put the problem in a certain domain and field of research; • Set the scene and describe the context in terms of what we know about the subject and what we do <u>not</u> know • Identify a research gap;
	Table of content	
	Preface	(optional)
	Introduction	A good introduction is informing and seducing. Follow the standard structure containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief opening statement about the societal meaning of the topic; • Provide a brief overview of current state of scholarly knowledge; • Define a problem statement; • Address the gap you are aiming to fill; A research gap may consist of: (1) missing dimensions or links; (2) conflicting theoretical explanations or empirical evidence; (3) new domain or empirical setting; • Research question and objective of the paper; • Research set-up; how are you going to achieve the research objective; • Contribution of your thesis; • Main results; • Structure of the thesis; announcement what you are going to do in what chapters;
2	Literature review & hypotheses	Use a literature review to: (1) demonstrate that you know the field; (2) justify the reason of your research (research gap!); (3) establish your methodological focus or theoretical framework (hypotheses). A literature review consists of the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall trends in what has been published about the topic such as conflicts, methodology, evidence, conclusions; • Summary of individual studies or articles (space / length denotes importance!) according to common denominators (e.g. objectives, type of research, empirical vs. theoretical etc.); • Evaluation of the current state of knowledge reviewed (e.g. flaws, gaps, inconsistencies); • Claim your niche: relate to your own research (question) and what you are going to do • Hypotheses, (i.e. a strong statement that expresses probable relationships) based on theoretical arguments and/or insights from prior literature;

3	Methodology & data description	<p>How are you going to study the subject? Give a description of the data source in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary / secondary data; • Data collection method; • Sample description; <p>Describe the measures used and how variables are operationalized:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent / independent / control variables; • Variable description table; <p>Which research method or data analysis techniques are applied? (e.g. descriptive, bivariate, multivariate);</p>
4	Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report what is found (avoid interpretation!); • Provide an assessment of whether the results reject or confirm the hypotheses;
5	Conclusion & discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize the (major and surprising) findings of your study; • Interpretation: what does it all mean and how do your findings relate to literature and/or logical reasoning; • Discuss limitations of your research (e.g. data limitations such as with respect to how variables are measured, sample size, sample bias or missing variables that may influence your findings) • Repeat and answer your research question; make a careful link which what you promised in the introduction and later; • Restate the contribution of the study and implications for practice and theory; • Propose avenues for further research;
	References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a consistent reference style guide such as APA. See for example the Purdue Online Writing Lab for APA formatting and style guide: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/
	Appendices	

“Announcements” and choices (“meta texts”)

In your introduction you ‘announce’ what you are going to do in what chapters. Repeat this on the level of chapters: ‘announce’ per chapter in its first paragraph what you are going to deal with in the chapter. Discuss the logic of the sections in the chapter.

Scientific work is all about the awareness of what you do and, hence, what you don’t do. Be aware of the choices you make and provide arguments/criteria why you make them. Why do you use a certain theory? Are there other theories? Why do you use certain phenomena to explain your dependent phenomenon? Are there other candidates? etc

6. Figures and Tables

Here are some guidelines for including tables and figures:

- Only add tables and figures if it adds to the understanding of the reader and contain meaningful relationships presented between dependent and independent variables;
- Number each table and each figure;
- Make sure the tables and figures present understandable results (odds ratio’s, marginal effects etc.)
- Add a header or caption that reflects the content of the table or figure. E.g.: *Table 2: Binary logit regression results with innovation as dependent variable.*
- Tables and figures should be readable independently from text;
- Under the table (in the footer) you indicate the data source, significance levels (***) denotes significance at 1%; ** at 5%; * at 10%)

- In addition, indicate: sample size and other aspects needed to be able to understand the table or figure;
- Specify axis;
- Specify how variables are defined (use unambiguous variable names, specify categories);
- Never include output directly copied from STATA or SPSS!

7. Do's and don'ts

Do's ☺	Don'ts ☹
Manage yourself! Your supervisor is not going to keep track of (your) time & deadlines!	Don't write about your personal motives & story in the thesis (or, if you do, put them in the preface);
Flawless English! (RE)CHECK your spelling!!! There is no excuse for spelling/grammar mistakes;	Don't say the following: "No one has looked at this before, so I did ..." "This is interesting"
Have regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss your work. This may help you to avoid missteps and save a lot of time and effort;	Relevance of study is absent or backed by personal statements
With every paragraph you write, think about how this helps answering your research question. Ask yourself why anybody else should read this;	Do not overload the reader with details and irrelevant context information
Define core terms as soon as you introduce them;	Plagiarism
Make use of references to show that it is not merely your own personal opinion;	Do not make strong statements without reference
Guide the reader by making use of meta texts; start each section with explaining what you are going to do, end each section with what you have done;	Do not directly copy output from STATA or SPSS!
Literature review: show that you thought about what others have done, synthesize the work of others and pass judgment on the relative merits of research conducted in your field;	Literature review: do not simply report on what others have done (laundry lists)

8. Additional websites and literature

Websites:

Potential examination dates (master student only):

<http://www.eur.nl/essc/studentenadministratie/afstuderen/master/ese/few/>

Thesis archive:

<http://thesis.eur.nl>.

General information thesis Erasmus School of Economics Bachelors:

http://www.eur.nl/ese/english/information_for/students/bachelor_students/bachelor_thesis/

General information thesis Erasmus School of Economics masters:

http://www.eur.nl/ese/english/information_for/students/master_students/master_thesis/

Thesis information Department of Applied Economics:

http://www.eur.nl/ese/english/about_ese/departments/departement_of_applied_economics/more_information/theses/

Literature:

Swales, J.M., Feak, C.B., 2004, *Academic Writing for Graduate Students. Essential Tasks and Skills*, The University of Michigan Press, USA.

Malmfors, B., Gransworthy, P., Grossman, M. 2004, *Writing and Presenting Scientific Papers*. Nottingham University Press, UK.