



# Guidelines for Writing Seminar Papers and Theses

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# Topic Selection and Planning

- Core of a scientific thesis is (at least) one research problem.
- Formulate hypotheses.
- Structure your Thesis.
- Create an organization plan, take notes and organize them as clear as possible.
- The main part of your thesis (more than 50%) should be an **independently prepared** (generally empirical) study.



## Formal Requirements

- For your final paper you have to fulfill the obligatory requirements of the examination office.
- We only accept bound papers. Use DIN-A4-Sheets and print only one-sided.
- The texts should be in Arial (12 pt, or a comparable font) and 1.5 line spacing, and the footnotes in Arial (10 pt).
- Page margins: left 3 cm, right 2.5 cm, top 2.5 cm, bottom 2.5 cm.
- Language is optionally German or English. In Master Seminars, students have to write (and present) in English.
- Master theses must be in English.



## Scope

- Master thesis: 50 pages (+/- 3 pages)
- Bachelor thesis: 20 pages (+/- 1 page)
- Seminar paper Bachelor:
  - Alone: 10 pages (+/- 1 page)
  - Group of 2: 12 pages (+/- 1 page)
  - Group of 3: 15 pages (+/- 1 page)
- Seminar paper Master:
  - Alone: 15 pages (+/- 1 page)
  - Group of 2: 20 pages (+/- 1 page)
  - Group of 3: 25 pages (+/- 1 page)
- This includes the running text with figures and tables, however, not the cover sheet, the lists as well as the appendices.



# Structure

- Title page with the title, author(s), Student ID, lecturers, submission date, and the writing “Seminar Paper” / “Bachelor Thesis”
  - The title page has no number but it is counted.
  - Using the logo of the Saarland University is permitted.
- List of Contents (with page references).
  - Each outline level should have at least two bullet points.
  - Do not go further than three outline levels.
- If necessary, List of Figures, Tables, Abbreviations and Symbols (with page references).
- Write an Abstract.
  - Summary of your thesis in 10 to 12 lines.



# Structure

- If necessary, Appendix.
  - In the Appendix you only provide information that is not necessary to directly understand the thesis.
- Bibliography.
- All symbols used in your thesis have to be listed in a List of Symbols.
  - Beispiel:  
 $R^d$  discretely compounded rate of return of a security



# Structure of the text

- Introduction
  - Start with an “Opener” that is introducing your topic suitably.
  - It should include a **motivation** (why is the topic important and interesting).
  - In the last part you have to outline the structure of your thesis (common theme).
- The **common theme** must be apparent throughout your thesis.
  - It combines the bullet points and provides a uniform picture.



## Layout of the text

- Literature
  - Start with a description of the relevant literature.
- Methodology
  - Describe and motivate the methods, you intend to use in your thesis.
- Data
  - Describe the data (source/descriptive statistics).
- Results
  - Describe your results (incl. tables and graphs).
  - Put your results in context of the literature.
  - Discuss the economic relevance of your results.
- Robustness
  - Additional tests, to further show the validity of your results.
- The Conclusion should summarize the most important points and refer for some points to the introduction.





# Quotations

- You are only allowed to quote from publicly available sources; you are not allowed to quote from lecture notes, theses or unpublished dissertations.
- Quotations are literal or analogous thoughts or opinions of other authors.
- Direct quotations:
  - Literal quotations have to be written in quotation marks and need a footnote at the end (without “See” in the footnote itself!).
- Indirect quotations according to the APA-Style (from 3 authors on with et al.): e.g.
  - Fama und French (1993) show...
  - ... (z.B. Rapach & Wohar, 2006; Goyal & Welch, 2008).



# Bibliography

- Bibliography:
  - **All** sources that are referenced in the text have to appear in the bibliography.
  - Non-referenced sources are not part of the bibliography.
- Example: Papers in scientific journals:  
Black, F.; Scholes, M. (1973): The Pricing of Options and Corporate Liabilities, *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 81, S. 637–654.
- Further examples are listed in the appendix.



## Figures, Tables and Formulas

- Figures and tables are part of the main document. They have to be numbered continuously, need a title and should be centered.
- Tables must contain table descriptions (below or above the table; as in academic papers).
- Longer and more important formulas have to be numbered continuously.
- They have to be placed at an extra row, but are part of the text (comma or dot are necessary)!

- Example:

Discretely compounded rates of return can be calculated as follows:

$$R_t^d = \frac{(P_t - P_{t-1})}{P_{t-1}}, \quad (1)$$

where  $R_t^d$  is defined as ...



# Data

- Data (primary) sources have to be stated clearly (e.g. Datastream, German Federal Bank)
- Example: If you use stock prices, you have to define clearly which prices you use, e.g., daily closing prices from the Xetra-trading system.
- Data sources in the internet (e.g. German Federal Bank, ECB, FRED, IMF, ...).
- Other data will be provided by your supervisor.



# Use of AI

- The use of artificial intelligence to create text and text modules is prohibited. We use software to check this. AI-plagiarism leads to failure of the seminar paper or thesis.
- What is permitted:
  - Use for literature research.
  - Improving the grammar of a self-written text, e.g. with DeepL.



## Supervision and Procedure

- A seminar paper or Bachelor thesis is an **independently prepared** scientific work.
- Kick-off Group meeting: Your advisor outlines the task.
- Apr. 1 or 2 weeks after the starting date you make an appointment with your supervisor to discuss the structure.
- During the processing time you will have the possibility of further appointments.
  - If possible, use the office hours.
  - You do the best if you arrange the meeting via e-mail in advance to avoid waiting periods / overlaps with other participants.
  - Each meeting can take up to 30 minutes. Please prepare well for the meeting!



## Submission

- Bachelor and Master theses have to be submitted prior to the submission deadline in a twofold written engrossment bounded at the examination office.
  - Hard-Cover for Master theses and Soft-Cover for Bachelor theses is required.
  - Please attach a sticker with your name and the title of the work to the spine of the book.
- In addition, please send your paper / thesis (PDF) per email to your supervisor.
- For Seminar papers an electronic submission (PDF) per email to your supervisor is sufficient.
- Furthermore, you have to submit additionally your paper / thesis (PDF) electronically together with all used data, analyses (all script data, resp. Excel tables), and all available electronic literature to your supervisor.
  - Use a CD to deliver the data and attach it to your seminar paper / thesis or bring a USB stick that you can pick up again.



# Presentation

- In case of **seminar papers**, the presentation directly affects the grade.
  - The written part has a weight of 60%, whereas the presentation just 40% of the total grade.
  - Both parts have to be graded at least with “sufficient”.
  - The length of the presentation for single works is 15 minutes, for a group of two 20 minutes and for a group of three 30 minutes.
- Additionally, there will be a discussion of appr. 15 minutes.
  - Questions will be asked at any time during the presentation.





# Statutory Declaration

- The last page of the thesis has to be a signed statutory declaration.

## Statutory Declaration

I assure that this thesis is a result of my personal work and that no other than the indicated aids have been used for its completion. Furthermore, I assure that all quotations and statements that have been inferred literally or in a general manner from published or unpublished writings are marked as such. Beyond this I assure that the work has not been used, neither completely nor in parts, to pass any previous examination. I assure that the text was created by myself and not by an artificial intelligence.

Place, Date

Signature



## Appendix (1) – Bibliography

- Monograph: Ross, S. A.; Westerfield, R. W.; Jaffe, J. F. (2005): Corporate Finance, 7. Aufl., Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Essays in collected editions:  
Sharpe, W. F. (1977): The Capital Asset Pricing Model: A “Multi-Beta” Interpretation, in: Levy, H.; Sarnat, M. (Hrsg.): Financial Decision Making Under Uncertainty, New York: Academic Press, S. 127–136.



## Appendix (2) – Bibliography

- Websites:  
Eurex (2005): About Eurex – Company Information – Overview,  
[http://www.eurexchange.com/about/company\\_info/overview.html](http://www.eurexchange.com/about/company_info/overview.html),  
28.10.2005.
- Working Papers:  
Branger, N.; Schlag, C.; Schneider, E. (2005): Optimal Portfolios  
When Volatility Can Jump, Working Paper, Johann Wolfgang  
Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main.
- Legal texts:  
German Commercial Code (GCC) as valid for November 23rd, 2002.