Guideline for Thesis Writing
at the
Chair in International Management and Governance

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www.uni-bremen.de/img

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

This document is a brief introduction to the thesis writing process at the Chair in International Management and Governance. It contains information on things such as rules, procedures and formal requirements. It also offers some tips for getting started. However, it should not be seen as an exhaustive introduction to thesis writing. You should take an additional look at literature or inform yourself elsewhere (e.g., internet or university courses).

2. RULES AND PROCEDURES

2.1. BACHELOR THESIS (9 WEEKS FROM OFFICIAL REGISTRATION; 30 PAGES MAXIMUM)

At the IMG, we offer you the opportunity to write a thesis regardless of whether you took our classes or not. However, experience has shown that the grades of those students that took part in our courses tend to be higher than those who are specialized in another area. Moreover, we only accept topics that fall into our research focus (see Chapter 3).

As of summer semester 2024, there is no longer offered a thesis seminar. **Instead, we offer students individual appointments for feedback and support.**

Students of the B.Sc. in Business Administration (PO 2016) with a focus on IEM 2 are required to apply in the period 01.02.-28.02. for their thesis. Send the completed application form (you can find it on our website) by e-mail to:

bewerbung.bachelorarbeit.iem2@uni-bremen.de

Other students can directly approach us via email, stating your interest to write your thesis at our Chair.

Important:

- You will be expected to write a short (2 pages) exposé. Without this exposé, you will not be able to officially register your thesis.

- For those students who want to start a master's degree in the winter semester or have other obligations, the official registration form must be handed in by **May 22**. You can double-check the exact date with the ZPA as it might change from one year to another. This ensures that you will get your result in time!

- The registration form can be found online, and you can already fill in most information. Prof. Bican or Dr. Leymann will be the first supervisor, and the second supervisor will be determined based on your topic area. In general, we offer two to three personal meetings during the phase of writing.

2.2. MASTER THESIS (15 WEEKS FROM OFFICIAL REGISTRATION; 40 PAGES MAXIMUM)

Master students will have to approach us via email. We will expect that you will provide a short proposal with a rough topic outline (2 pages) with your initial application. We will only consider you as a thesis candidate if you have sent us this proposal and if the topic is complementary to the focus of our Chair (see next section). After having agreed to your proposal, we offer personal meetings to discuss the thesis, usually not more than five in total.

Important:

You will have 3 months after we agreed to the proposal to officially register your thesis. Failing to do so will result in a decline! If you have a special obligation that will not let you register for the thesis within 3 months, like an internship or a semester abroad, you should include the reasons in your proposal. Moreover, you will have to give us a relatively precise date of registration so that we can plan the supervision process. If you cannot give a reasonable estimate of when you officially register the thesis, we will not accept your proposal.

3. FINDING A TOPIC

3.1. SOME ADVICE

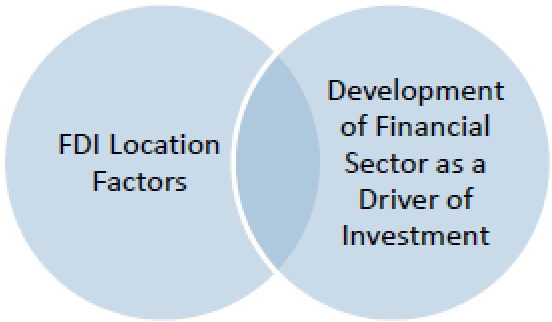
First of all, not all interesting and relevant topics lend themselves equally to thesis writing. The problem is usually a lack of data, which is most relevant for students (see Chapter 7). In the past, we had many students that were interested in Corporate Social Responsibility issues, and we are glad that the interest in more sustainable ways of doing business is so wide-spread now. The problem with this topic area is the scarcity of data. Secondary data is often not available and interviews with company officials can be extremely complicated since they are representatives of the firm. Obviously, there will be an interest to put their firm in the right light and such biases have been widely observed by prior researchers. Company reports have similar shortcomings and press articles often lack the depth to provide an analysis that actually says something new. You should be aware that taking a topic should not purely be guided by interest, but also by strategic considerations of what you can achieve, especially in terms of the data material available (link to databases on FDI/MNEs).

A second issue we often encounter is that students are not prepared sufficiently before they approach us. We consider ourselves as supervisors, but that does not mean we will do more than supporting work. The philosophy of our Chair is that students should be given the freedom to search and develop their own topic. After all, the process of finding and conceptualizing a topic is an important piece of the thesis process that students should be capable of. Past students sometimes made the mistake of thinking that a topic is equivalent to a title. However, 'The Effect of Outsourcing on Home Country Employment' could be a (broad) title, but, on its own, does not qualify as a topic! A thesis topic must be an argument and, most importantly, a question. The research question is central to your thesis and should be developed as soon as possible.

For example, you could argue, based on existing literature, that home country employment may be reduced by MNE's shifting jobs as a means of cost reduction. You could also present established arguments that the increase in productivity that results from outsourcing will lead to an increase in home country employment from a dynamic perspective. A research question could be: What is the effect of outsourcing on home country employment in the OECD and what contextual conditions influence the direction of this effect?

We want you to develop an argument and a question largely on your own. We may help you find adequate literature, but we do not develop your topic for you. Of course, this applies especially for master students – bachelor students will get a bit more support. If you lack any inspiration and cannot find a topic at all, we have a list of topics that could be assigned based on the research interests of the Chair. We recommend finding your own topic, though.

A final tip is to consider combining an area in which you have background knowledge, for example investment location factors, with another area that seems to create interesting questions. In this example, we could consider the literature that has extensively discussed the development of an adequate financial sector as a precondition for investment activity. Combining the insights of the two areas, you may end up asking if and why the development of financial markets attracts foreign direct investment.



3.2. TOPIC REQUIREMENTS AND CATALOGUE

The IMG Chair accepts bachelor and master theses that cover **at least one of the following research objects**. Sectors and geography can be discussed based on our focal areas listed below.

Research object:

- Large MNEs
- Medium-sized MNEs
- FDI
- Governance and Policies in relation to FDI and MNEs

Sectors:

- Manufacturing
- Services

Geography:

- Emerging Markets (especially China)
- EU (especially Germany)
- USA

The IMG Chair is currently especially interested in the following topics:

Emerging market multinationals

- Acquisition by emerging market MNEs in developed countries, post-merger integration and capability upgrading
- Internationalization of emerging market MNEs and the impact of home country institutions/policies
- What does "mutual benefit" and "win-win" stand for in the Chinese outward FDI context?

FDI and institutions

- Co-evolution between the internationalization of (emerging market) MNEs and institutions
- Impact of volatility and change of institutions/policies on FDI (e.g., how does the change of the outward FDI approval process effect the internationalization of Chinese firms?)
- FDI and host country impact
- Intellectual property rights and MNEs
- Cross-border M&As and host-country screening

State-owned multinationals

- State-owned enterprises' internationalization
- Impact of (state-owned) MNEs on institutions/ policies

Theory and methods

- Comparative perspectives on international business theory
- Exploring and comparing alternative measures of MNE activity

Green transition

- The role of MNEs and FDI to reach a zero-net economy

4. FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

Our formal requirements are presented below. We do not have very strict preferences but look for a classic and professional-looking thesis. The cover should be plain, without special designs or large images. We also do not prefer a certain type of binding. Good results are achieved with a simple glued thesis, a paper back and either a paper cover or a transparent plastic cover. Plastic folders or something similar are unacceptable.

- **Master theses should contain a maximum of 40 pages. Bachelor theses should contain a maximum of 30 pages**. To avoid a negative effect on your grade, the pages should stay within 10% of the limits above. Cover sheets, indices, appendices and references are **not** included in the page count.
- Bachelor and master theses have to be compiled in DIN A4 format and printed on one side only. The thesis has to be bound.
- The margin width has to be adjusted according to the binding for the left side; the right side should have at least a 3 cm margin for remarks; top and bottom 2 cm.
- Typing font has to be either "Arial" in size 11pt or "Times New Roman" (Calibri 11pt is an acceptable alternative) in size 12pt for text and 10pt for footnotes. The form of the text has to be justified. The line spacing has to be 1,5 for text and single for footnotes.
- Before captions, breaks as well as figures, tables or equations the spacing has to be doubled. Captions must be accentuated by bold type and typing larger than 12pt if necessary. The hierarchy of captions has to be consistent, and captions should be numbered consistently.
- All figures, tables or equations should be consecutively numbered (fig. 1 to fig n. and tab. 1 to tab. n.) and have a clear headline. In the list of tables/figures, only the headlines without the source of the table/figure should be listed.
- The cover sheet does not contain a page number. Preliminary materials (3-6) should be numbered with lowercase Roman numerals. The text and appendices as well as the reference list (7-9) have to be numbered in Arabic numerals (beginning with 1).

- The linguistic quality of the thesis is part of the grade and it is the student's responsibility to ensure it. Before submission the thesis has to be proofread. It should be pointed out that it is not the supervisor's task to correct linguistic or formal errors (you might want so look at Lorraine Eden's top 40 grammar tips).

All theses have to be delivered in threefold plus a digital copy to the ZPA.

Composition of the thesis:

1) Empty sheet (front cover)

2) Cover sheet with title

3) Table of Contents

4) List of Figures

5) List of Tables

6) List of Abbreviations

7) Text

8) Appendix

9) Reference list

10) Selbstständigkeitserklärung

11) Empty sheet (back cover)

Needed *content* of cover sheet (you can choose your own style, but no large images; keep it formal):

(Thema)
Bachelorarbeit zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades „Bachelor of Science"
ODER
Masterarbeit zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades „Master of Science"
im Fachbereich Wirtschaftswissenschaft
der
Universität Bremen
eingereicht am
Lehrstuhl für International Management and Governance
Prof. Dr. Sarianna M. Lundan
von
(Vor- und Nachname)
(Anschrift)
(Matrikelnummer)
(Ort, Datum der Abgabe)

5. REFERENCING

5.1. General Information

There are a lot of different referencing styles. For in-text citations, we expect an author-date style like APA (American Psychological Association). The author-date styles integrate author and date of the publication into the running text (see the second page for technical details). Otherwise, we do not restrict you regarding what style to use; however, you are expected to use one style throughout the whole document.

Careful! It is a misconception to think that references, since they point to the work of other people, will not be seen as added value in your text. You may think that a lot of citations equals no effort of the student, while few citations show more personal contribution. **This is wrong!** In academia, referencing is a tool to give your arguments relevance and validity. An idea not related to any existing theory could be considered an opinion; something academics will sharply criticize due to a lack of objective evidence. You should always base your writing on previous knowledge even if your goal is to criticize it. To understand how you want to extend or replace a body of knowledge, you must introduce your reader (and examiner) to the subject at hand, which is the art of combining relevant and fitting academic references. **Thus, referencing is value added!** *Plagiarism* with the goal of stealing intellectual credentials is entirely pointless.

When to cite?

Whenever you use information that you have extracted from another source (written documents), you must cite it. Whenever you have an idea or theory, you have to check if someone else already had the same idea and cite her/him accordingly. General knowledge which is not attributable to the work of particular academics, like the fact that a financial crash did occur in 2007/8, does not need citation. But more detailed arguments of the internal working of the crises based on, e.g., the subprime market, must cite relevant studies. The rule is: Better to cite than not to cite!

You may *quote* (indicate with '…') or *paraphrase*. Paraphrasing means to put another scholar's idea in your words. *Changing just a few words could be considered Plagiarism!*

You should only cite a source that you have read. Reading just one source and using its citations in your own work will be considered as very bad practice and may lead to failure (see also 'citing from a citation' on page 2). The problem is: you are not citing the actual source but another person's interpretation of that source.

What sources are good sources?

✓ Academic Journals (preferably) and Books. (Use the library and EBSCO.)

× Be careful not to use resources that have no peer review or a political tendency. For example, Personal Blogs, Homepages, Non-scientific Journals, etc.

Reference management software (RMS)

Today, there are several free-of-charge solutions for automated referencing. These programs allow you to sort your literature in a virtual library. With plug-ins, you can directly cite within your word processor. The software will create the in-text citation, as well as an entry to an automatically generated list of references at the end of the document. All you have to do is to make sure there are no mistakes.

Plagiarism, which can be seen as theft of intellectual property of another author, is a severe incident that can lead to penalties such as sanctioning fees and even the removal of a student from University. It is critical to reference very carefully since even unintentional mistakes can result in the impression of plagiarism and will be treated accordingly.

EBSCO is a search engine for academic literature. To get there, search for 'EBSCO' on the library homepage and click on 'Business Source Premier'. You can only access from the campus or via VPN from your home.

Of course, press articles can be cited but should not be displayed as factual evidence. Wikipedia and other collaborative sources should be avoided!

RMS that are free:

- Refworks (licensed by the University Library)
- Mendeley
- Zotero

5.2. A FEW EXAMPLES OF IN-TEXT CITATION

Single Author:

- Meyer (1991) claims that...
- …empirical research found largely contradicting results (Meyer, 1992; Schneider, 1993).
- …this assumption is false according to Meyer (1991a), as well as Meyer (1991b).

Two Authors:

- Meyer and Schneider (1995) claim that...
- …empirical research found largely contradicting results (Meyer & Schneider, 2005).

Three to six Authors:

- First citation: (Meyer, Schneider, Müller, & Schmidt, 2008)
- Subsequent citations: (Meyer et al., 2008)

Citing from a citation (only when you cannot access the source; avoid this!):

- Johnson argued that...(as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 102).
- Or: (Johnson, 2001, as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 102).

No Author or Date:

- When the author is unknown, use the title of the text you cite from or the first few words of the paragraph. If no date is available, you can use the abbreviation 'n.d.' in your citation.

Direct Citations

- Use direct citations sparingly! They are commonly needed when citing numbers/percentages and they must follow immediately after.
- According to Jones (1998), 'Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time' (p. 199).
- … 60% of the Students (Senoj, 1998, p. 199) to be precise.

5.3. LAST BUT NOT LEAST: THE BIBLIOGRAPHY (REFERENCES USED)

It contains all the literature that you have cited at the end of your text. Make sure not to include anything that is not indicated in the main text! The first two items are always the name and date. The list is sorted alphabetically and, in a second order, according to the publication date. The Bibliography can differ significantly between styles. **To avoid mistakes, use reference management software!**

Book:

• Author, A. A. (Year of publication). *Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle*. Location: Publisher.

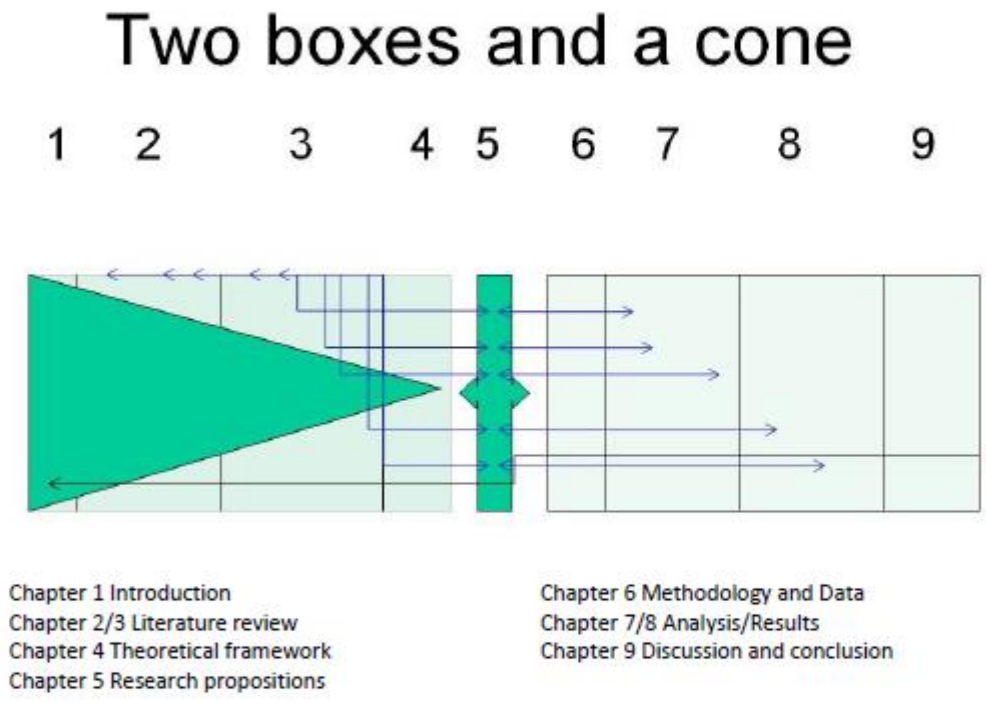
Chapter in an Edited Book:

• Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year of publication). Title of chapter. In A. A. Editor & B. B. Editor (Eds.), Title of book (pages of chapter). Location: Publisher.

Article:

• Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of article. Title of Periodical, volume number (issue number), pages. http://dx.doi.org/xx.xxx/yyyyy

6. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS



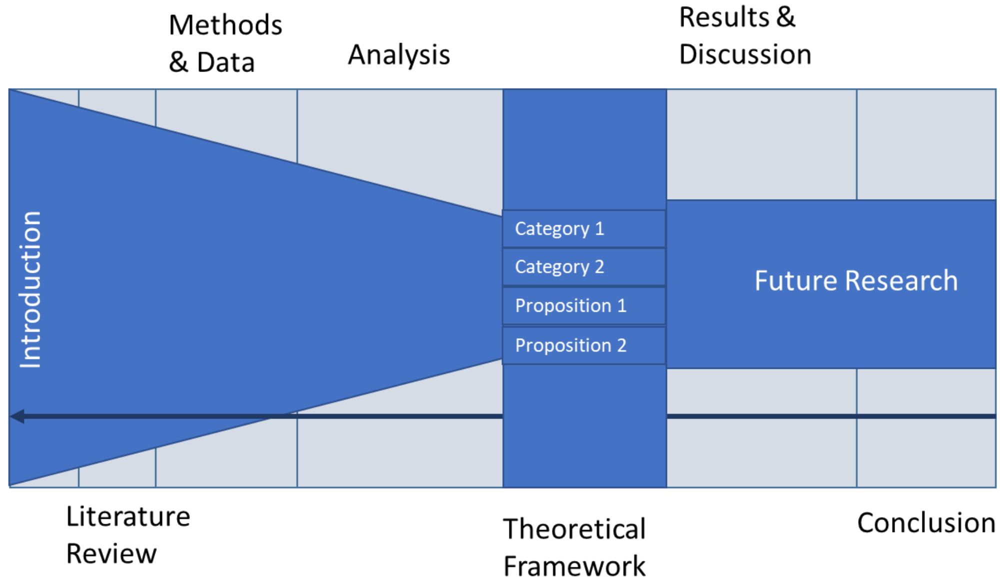
The structure of your thesis should closely resemble the general principles of academic texts. We usually teach this with the ‘two boxes and a cone model’. The model shows exemplary Chapter numbers at the top and two boxes, the first one containing a cone, connected by a transition box (Chapter 5). The basic idea is that the first box contains your introduction to the topic and your literature review (here Chapters 2 and 3). In very basic terms, the literature review is a collection of prior academic studies, their findings and a critical discussion. Often you can divide the review into two parts. Remember that most topic ideas stem from combination, e.g., the question of whether good governance attracts foreign direct investment could be logically divided into two parts. First, Chapter 2 would outline the previous theoretical and empirical literature discussing the factors attracting foreign direct investment. Chapter 3 would introduce the notion of good governance and explicitly review how good governance has been referred to as a factor of attracting foreign direct investment in the literature.

Note that the third Chapter, while being distinct from Chapter 2, does carry over the theme and becomes more concrete. This is symbolized by the cone. Your goal is to begin introducing the reader to the general and then proceed towards the more particular. At the end of the cone is Chapter 4 also known as the theoretical framework Chapter. It serves the purpose of utilizing the previous findings from the literature review to form a coherent argument about why (taking the example before) good governance would have a positive or negative effect on foreign direct investment. Often, the theoretical framework can be displayed as a graphic or diagram.

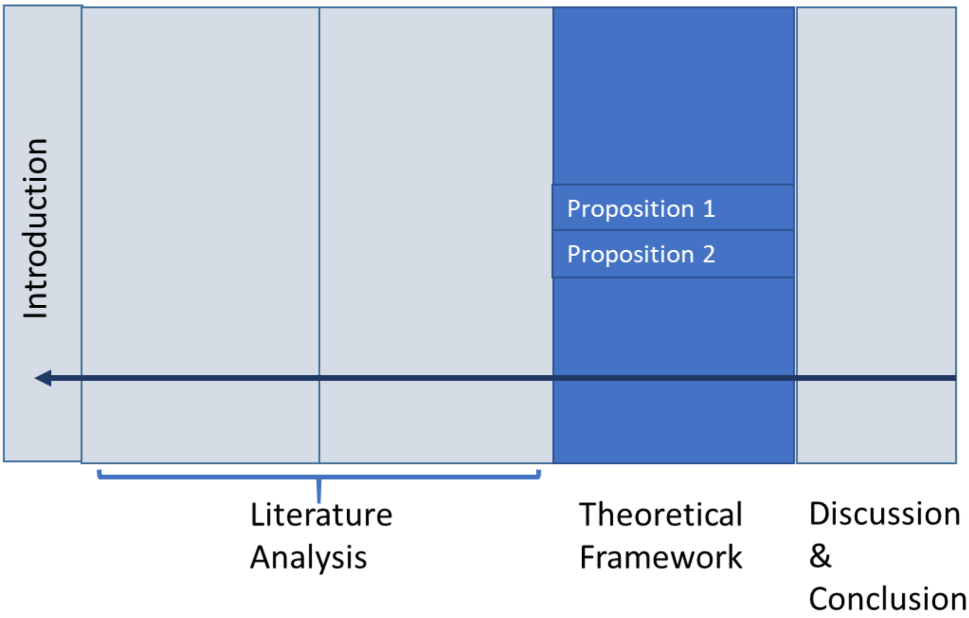
The first box is followed by the transition box, also known as the Research Propositions Chapter. Based on your theoretical framework, you will have to formulate hypotheses (measurable, testable) or propositions (contestable, broader) about what you expect reality to be like given your previous literature review. In our example, you would most likely hypothesize that good governance has a positive effect on foreign direct investment. In case you are working quantitatively, we must speak of hypotheses. Your hypotheses must enable you to evaluate your research question, and they are usually more precise to be able to adequately test them with data. For example, good governance has many dimensions so maybe you want to look at several of these separately to prepare your final evaluation.

Chapter 5 is followed by the methodology section that explains the data you used, the general research approach and the actual research method. This Chapter presents the tools you use to evaluate your hypotheses/propositions. It is essential that you apply some systematic method and are not just interpreting freely – academic work always allows the reader to understand how you came to your conclusions. Chapter 7/8 presents the analysis and its results, while Chapter 9 discusses the findings by connecting back to your literature review. You are also expected to give a final conclusion about your research question.

Importantly, there are many interrelations within the structure as indicated by the arrows. The end of your thesis must connect directly to the introduction, especially to the questions asked therein. The structure introduced here is very common in most **deductive** research and reading other theses or academic papers will give you an idea of how it plays out for different types of questions and associated methods. However, there is no one fixed recipe! It is possible that you work outside of theory testing, which, as you might have realized, is the main point of the 'two boxes and a cone model' – it is hypothetico-deductive. Another option is an exploratory structure which is **inductive**. Here you derive theory (propositions) from the data. This means that you begin with data and the method used to detect patterns in your data. You then translate this data into propositions and discuss how this can help future research as well as managers or policy makers. Typically, you use inductive methods when operating in a field that has little prior research or you have an open question such as "how do MNEs with operations in emerging markets address disclosure requirements in their home country?".



Finally, you might decide to work exclusively with literature. This is not as easy as it sounds at first, because your topic is most likely to be theoretical. In other words, you critically compare and contrast existing theory and maybe develop new concepts embedded in contestable propositions. The focus here is on a particularly critical and extensive literature review. As you can see, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. We are glad to help you choose a suitable structure for your project.



7. A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

It is important that you review some literature on basic research approaches and methodology to get an understanding of what your project will have to look like. An explorative analysis will have a different structure than a hypothesis testing approach. At the master-level, we only accept descriptive research when it is combined with deep theoretical insight or the topic is methodological, i.e., working on exploration and conceptualization of new measurements. Bachelor students are welcome to write a thesis based on secondary literature. Master students will only be allowed a literature-based thesis if the proposal is exceptional, or the method is a systematic literature review.

We accept both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative methods are more suited at the master-level, as they require special knowledge. Here, students most commonly rely on basic cross-sectional OLS regression models or, in cases of explorative research, on techniques like factor analysis and clustering. Qualitative methods also require special knowledge, but they are generally more accessible. Typical methods include semi-structured interviews and case studies. **Bachelor students that want to utilize quantitative methods in their thesis should consider taking one of the quantitative methods courses offered by the faculty.**