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Guideline for writing seminar papers, Bachelor theses, and Master theses

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Preface

The purpose of the guideline is to help students to write assignments – including Bachelor and Master theses – that consistently meet the requirements of science as well as the specific requirements of the Faculty of Business of the University of Applied Science Regensburg.

As there is not an "one-and-only" guideline for writing assignments, students are required to check with their respective professor which guideline to use. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the students to consider additional literature as this guideline is not exhaustive.

Several sections of this document have been taken from an updated version of *"Hinweise und Empfehlungen zu Studien- und Abschlussarbeiten"* by Prof. Dr. Karl Heinz Huber (OTH Regensburg) and of the *"Guidelines on Writing Dissertations"* by Prof. Dr. Alexander Ruddies (OTH Regensburg).

1 Table of contents

2 Components of an assignment

2.1 Title page

The title page of every written assignment should include the following information:
- Name of university and faculty (here: OTH Regensburg – Faculty of Business)
- Kind of assignment: Written assignment; Bachelor thesis; Master thesis
- Last name, first name
- Student ID
- Topic
- Name of the professor
- Semester / year

The title page of a final thesis should include the following additional information:
- Address (of the student)
- Name of the second professor
- Date of submission

Needless to say, the title page is the first page that catches the eyes of a reader.

2.2 Table of contents

The contents reflect the logical structure of a scientific paper and represent the central basis for composing the text. It should convey an initial impression of the paper's content to the reader.

As a general recommendation, avoid to use more than six chapters and more than four levels (example: 1.1.1.1). A common error is a subdivision of a section that contains just a single bullet point:
- Correct: 1, then 1.1 and 1.2
- Not correct: 1, then 1.1 and then 2 (omitting 1.2)

When it comes to chapter headings, preference should be given to the nominal style (nouns) instead of questions, statements or assertions. For example:
- Correct: "Types of job evaluation"
- Not correct: "What types of job evaluation are there?" (= question)
- Not correct: "There is non-analytical and analytical job evaluation." (= statement)

Hint: *Use the "insert table of contents" function in word. To create a table of contents that's easy to keep up-to-date, first apply heading styles, meaning labeling chapter titles as headings. You can customize the way a table of contents appears. Before printing your assignment, check that the table of contents is up-to-date and the format looks appealing (i.p. line breaks and page breaks).*

2.3   List of figures

A list of figures shows all of the diagrams, pictures, tables etc. in a document. Any diagram, drawing, graph, chart, map, photograph or other type of illustration in a thesis is presented as a "figure".

The list of figures should include the descriptive title of each figure in the body of your thesis and the number of the page that it appears on. You do not need to give reference details in the list of figures. Include these in a citation next to the figure itself and in your reference list or bibliography at the end of your assignment.

Hint: *Use the "insert table of figures" function in word. Before you begin, add captions to the figures that you want to list in your table of figures. When you build a table of figures, Microsoft Word searches for the captions, sorts them by number, and displays them in the document.*

2.4   List of abbreviations

After the list of figures, you should include a list of abbreviations. This list should include all abbreviations used in the paper, sorted alphabetically and NOT chronologically. Abbreviations should be used sparingly and not at all in headings. They should be written out in full the first time they appear, followed by the abbreviation in brackets, e.g. Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R). Common abbreviations such as i.e., p., cf., etc., e.g. need not be listed.

Hint: *Before printing out your paper, go through the entire document and ensure that all abbreviations are listed in the list and the list is alphabetically sorted.*

2.5   Body of the thesis

The body of the thesis should be organized in line with the table of contents. A scientific writing style should be applied (refer to chapter 3). Except for the Harvard citation guide, you use footnotes for the sources of the quotes and citations. Footnotes can be used for the author's comments and additions as well. They are useful if the flow of the main body of the text is enhanced as a result. A footnote is often a good 'home' for comments which are incidental but worth mentioning, references to controversial discussions in the literature and so forth.

When including figures (e.g. diagrams, pictures, tables), it is recommended to position them after the paragraph in which they're described. Label and name the figure. Cite the source in a separate "source line.

> Figure 1: Summary of descriptive statistics
> Source: Own representation

When you adapted a figure from another author or used it without modification, you should refer to as

> Source: Adapted from (NAME THE COMPLETE SOURCE)
> Source: (NAME THE COMPLETE SOURCE)

Hint: *Add captions to the figures that you want to list in your table of figures.*

Check with the professor about the length of your assignment or thesis. Typically, a Bachelor thesis contains 50 pages (as recommended by the faculty), and a Master thesis approximately 60-80 pages – in the body of the thesis. When being too short or too long, you may get a downgrade. So better check with your respective supervisor to be sure to meet his/her requirements.

2.6 Bibliography

Generally, a bibliography (or reference list) contains those sources you actually referred to in your assignment. So, for each resource on your list, there will be some direct or indirect citation in your assignment. In other words, the list should not include works which are not mentioned in the body of the paper. The sources should be listed in alphabetical order of the author's (last!) name. When using Internet sources, they should be listed separately. For the format of the references, refer to chapter 4.

The quality and quantity of the used literature is in most cases – in particular Bachelor and Master theses – a grading criteria. It is highly recommended to consider academic books, research papers and articles in academic journals. For the latter one, check with OTH library as there are many databases available. Emerald Insight is a great source for scientific articles (www.emeraldinsight.com).

Internet sources might provide valuable information, e.g. statistical data, however, use them with caution. Especially when citing a framework or theory (e.g. Balanced Scorecard), refer to the original source and not to Internet sources.

There's nothing more convenient than Wikipedia if you want to get a basic sense of what something means before starting more in-depth research. Nevertheless, when you're doing academic research, you should not use Wikipedia as a source. Its own disclaimer states, information on Wikipedia is contributed by anyone who wants to post material, and the expertise of the posters is not taken into consideration.

Hint: *For a Bachelor or Master thesis, you might consider using a reference management program such as Citavi (only for Microsoft) or Endnote (works also on Mac). The OTH library supports Citavi and provides training. If you do not use a reference management software, you will need to manually double check at the end if all sources in the body of your assignment are mentioned in the bibliography and if all sources in the bibliography are used in the body of your work.*

2.7 Statutory declaration (only for Bachelor and Master theses)

In case of a Bachelor or Master thesis, you are required to attach a personally signed statutory declaration concerning the usage of aids while writing the thesis. This is typically the last page of your thesis.

In the case of a seminar paper, check with the professor if a statutory declaration is necessary as well.

You may use the following template:

Statutory declaration

I, YOUR NAME, declare that I have developed and written the enclosed Bachelor / Master thesis completely by myself, and have not used sources or means without declaration in the text. Any thoughts from others or literal quotations are clearly marked. The Bachelor / Master thesis was not used in the same or in a similar version to achieve an academic grading or is being published elsewhere.

Moreover, I am aware that a copy of the Bachelor / Master thesis as a type of examination will be passed into the property of the Free State of Bavaria.

Location, Date, Signature

3 Formal design and style

3.1 General policies

The following general format guidelines should be applied:
- Margins: left 3.5 cm, right 2.5 cm, top 2.5 cm and bottom 2 cm
- Line spacing: 1.5 (!)
- Font and font size: Times New Roman 12pt or Arial 11pt
- Text alignment: Justified text alignment. Use automatic hyphenation with text that appears 'stretched'
- Footnotes: Place footnotes on the page containing the referenced text
- Page numbering: Numbering starts with the first page of the introduction (1, 2, …); the pages before the introduction need to be labeled with roman numbers (I, II, …)
- Page breaks: In a thesis, manually inserted page breaks are only allowed before the start of a new main chapter. Avoid unnecessary page breaks in seminar essays
- Print-out: A written assignment should be printed on one side of the page as the proofreader needs space for comments on the reverse or opposite page

Hint: *It is a good time investment to format your document before you actually start writing. Automatization and standardization pays off. Font, spacing, paragraphs, headings etc. can be defined upfront and do not need manual adjustments when writing.*

3.2 Logical structure and style

When it comes to your writing style, it should above all be reader-friendly and scientific. Here are some useful tips:
- Ensure reader-friendliness:
  - Keep sentences short and succinct.
  - Keep clarity and accessibility in mind when composing lengthy theoretical passages. A small example will often have more impact than pages of theory.
  - Use a sufficient number of clear paragraphs – with same spacing between paragraphs. Logical sections should be visually recognizable.
  - Use bolding (sparingly) to highlight text.
  - Consider illustrations as aid to the clarity and comprehension of a text. However, the text must familiarize the reader with the illustration, and while 'a picture tells a 1000 words', an illustration alone can never completely take the place of text, nor can a section consist of an illustration alone. If your illustrations represent other peoples' ideas, then you must reference the source.
  - Use abbreviations sparingly (don't forget to include them in the list of abbreviations) and only when a term is used frequently.
  - Use foreign terms and expressions sparingly and then only when you are certain of their meaning.
  - To improve clarity, you may insert the title of the current main chapter in the header of the individual pages (use function in Microsoft word).

- Apply a scientific, matter-of-fact and business-like style:
  - Avoid one-sided or biased viewpoints, personal judgements and – above all – to be polemic. Statements must be critically challenged as there are very few things in science which are 'self-evident' or 'matter-of-fact'.
  - Avoid terms such as 'naturally', 'evidently', 'in any case', 'hugely', 'totally', 'incredibly', 'plainly', 'namely', 'super' etc.
  - Avoid the 'we' and 'I' forms:
    - Correct: "The subject of this paper is …"
    - Not correct: "In my paper I would like to …"

Hint: *When reading research papers or articles in academic journals, you will get a good feeling of the writing style. This is one more argument not just relying on Internet sources and non-academic books.*

4   Citations and reference style

4.1   Introduction to citation styles

Citation is one of the major requirements for all research papers. It is important to cite sources you used in your assignment or thesis for several reasons:

- To show the reader you've done proper research by listing sources you used to get your information
- To be a responsible scholar by giving credit to other researchers and acknowledging their ideas
- To allow your reader to track down the sources you used by citing them accurately in your paper
- To support your ideas
- To maintain your academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism involves taking another person's ideas, words or inventions and presenting them as your own. Paraphrasing or rewording another person's work, without acknowledging its source, is also plagiarism. It is a not acceptable practice and considered a serious academic offence. You must expect to be failed if found guilty of plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism, all sources, whether directly quoted, summarized or paraphrased, must be acknowledged correctly.

There are literally hundreds of different referencing styles from which to choose when you are citing the sources of your research material. The following are the most popular:

- **Harvard:** Harvard is a generic term for any style which contains author-date references <u>in the text</u> of the document.
  (http://www.library.hbs.edu/guides/citationguide.pdf)
- **APA:** APA (American Psychological Association) is an author-date based style. This is the standard style used in Psychology and one of the many variants of the Harvard style. (http://www.apastyle.org)
- **Chicago:** The Chicago Manual of Style is probably the most commonly used <u>footnote</u> format.

You need to check with your professor which style he/she recommends. When the professor gives you the freedom to select a citation style, you should stick to the selected style and must not mix-and-match.

When writing papers in German language, it is common to use footnotes. Therefore, many professors might have a preference for a footnote format, also for papers written in English language. The following section contains a summary of the most commonly used footnote format – the Chicago referencing style.

4.2   Chicago referencing style

Below is a brief summary of the Chicago referencing style and contains information on *The Chicago Manual of Style* method of document formatting and citation. It follows the sixteenth edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, which was issued in September 2010. For more online information, refer to http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html as well as to https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/1/.

Footnote:
- You should include a footnote each time you use a source, whether through a direct quote or through a paraphrase or summary.
- Footnotes will be added at the end of the page on which the source is referenced.
- In the footnotes, note numbers are full-sized, not raised, and followed by a period.
- 1. This is an example for a footnote.

Note numbers:
- In the text, note numbers are superscripted.
- Note numbers should be placed at the end of the clause or sentence to which they refer and should be placed after any and all punctuation.
- This is an example for a superscripted note number after the period.[1]

Bibliography:
- Order: Although bibliographic entries for various sources may be formatted differently, all included sources (books, articles, websites, etc.) are arranged alphabetically by author's last name. If no author or editor is listed, the title or keyword by which the reader would search for the source may be used instead.
- Components: All entries in the bibliography will include the author, title, and publication information:
  - Author's names: The author's name is inverted in the bibliography, placing the last name first and separating the last name and first name with a comma; for example, John Naisbitt becomes Naisbitt, John.
    - Use „and," not an ampersand, "&," for multi-author entries.
    - For two to three authors, write out all names.
    - For four to ten authors, write out all names in the bibliography but only the first author's name plus "et al." in notes and parenthetical citations.
    - Sources that have no known author or editor should be cited by title (omitting author and beginning respective entries with title).
  - Titles: Titles of books and journals are *italicized*. Titles of articles, chapters, poems, etc. are placed in quotation marks.
  - Publication information: The year of publication is listed after the publisher or journal name. If you cannot ascertain the publication date of a printed work, use the abbreviation "n.d."
  - Punctuation: All major elements are separated by periods.

General model for citing books in the Chicago notes and bibliography system:
- **Footnote (FN):** Firstname Lastname, *Title of Book* (Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication), page number.
- **Corresponding bibliographical entry (B):** Lastname, Firstname. *Title of Book*. Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication.

Book by one author:
- **FN:** John Naisbitt, *Megatrends* (New York: Warner Books, 1982), 10.
- **B:** Naisbitt, John. *Megatrends*. New York: Warner Books, 1982.

Book by multiple authors:
- **FN:** James McCalman, Robert A. Paton and Sabina Siebert, *Change Management – A Guide to Effective Implementation*, 4th edition (London: Sage Publications, 2016), 66-81.

- **B:** McCalman, James; Paton, Robert, A.; Siebert, Sabina. *Change Management – A Guide to Effective Implementation*, 4th edition. London: Sage Publications, 2016.

Article in an edited collection:
- **FN:** Christian Homburg and Torsten Bornemann, "Key Account Management," in *Handbook of Business-to-Business Marketing*, ed. Gary L. Lilien and Rajdeep Grewal (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2014), 465.
- **B:** Homburg, Christian and Torsten Bornemann. "Key Account Management." In *Handbook of Business-to-Business Marketing*, edited by Gary L. Lilien and Rajdeep Grewal, 456-472. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2014.

Article in journal:
- **FN:** John P. Kotter, "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail." *Harvard Business Review* 73, no. 2 (1995): 60.
- **B:** Kotter, John P. "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail." *Harvard Business Review* 73, no. 2 (1995): 59-67.

General model for citing internet sources in Chicago style
- **FN:** "Title of Web Page," *Publishing Organization or Name of Website in Italics*, publication date and/or access date if available, URL.
- **B:** Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Web Page." *Publishing Organization or Name of Website in Italics*. Publication date and/or access date if available. URL.

Webpage with known author and date:
- **FN:** „Latest Thinking: Open Innovation and Getting Things Right," *Clayton Christensen*, September 19, 2012, accessed September 07, 2016, http://www.claytonchristensen.com/latest-thinking-innovation-blog/.
- **B:** Christensen, Clayton. „Latest Thinking: Open Innovation and Getting Things Right." *Clayton Christensen*. September 19, 2012. Accessed September 07, 2016. http://www.claytonchristensen.com/latest-thinking-innovation-blog/.

Webpage with unknown publication date and author:
- **FN:** "About us," *Project Management Institute*, accessed September 07, 2016, http://www.pmi.org/About-Us.aspx.
- **B:** "About us." *Project Management Institute*. Accessed September 07, 2016. http://www.pmi.org/About-Us.aspx.

Article in online periodicals (journal, magazine, and newspaper article):
- **FN:** Hui Feng, Neil A. Morgan, and Lopo L. Rego, "Marketing Department Power and Firm Performance," *Journal of Marketing* 79, no. 5 (2015): 5, accessed September 7, 2016, http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jm.13.0522.
- **B:** Feng, Hui; Neil A. Morgan, and Lopo L. Rego. "Marketing Department Power and Firm Performance," *Journal of Marketing* 79, no. 5 (2015): 1-20. Accessed September 7, 2016. http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jm.13.0522.

Secondary sources:

- In the case that an original source is utterly unavailable, use the "quoted in" for the note.
- **FN:** Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 103, quoted in Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 2.

If you cite the same source and page number(s) from a single source two or more times consecutively, the corresponding note should use the word "Ibid.," (abbreviated form of the Latin "ibidem", which means "in the same place"). If you use the same source but a different page number, the corresponding note should use "Ibid." followed by a comma and the new page number(s).

5 Final version and submission

Before submitting your written assignment, it is to be checked whether all references in the quotations and in the bibliography are correct. Furthermore, all specifications (page numbers, references, headlines, figures, tables, abbreviations, symbols) in the text should correspond to those in the table of contents and different lists. Use automated procedures to avoid problems in this regard. Furthermore, the entire appearance of the document should be reviewed.

In the case of a Bachelor or Master thesis, you have to attach a personally signed statutory declaration concerning the usage of aids while writing the thesis (for a template, refer to chapter 2.7).

Two bound copies of the thesis have to be submitted at the secretary of the Faculty of Business within the time limit. Both copies need to include a CD with the electronic version of your thesis including a folder with all the Internet sources (pdf) you used in your work.

Ask your supervisor, if you should additionally upload an electronic version of your paper on a plagiarism detection page (instructions to be provided) or send him/her the file directly.

In the case of a seminar paper, check with the professor if a statutory declaration and a folder with a copy of your Internet sources are necessary.

Good luck!