

Guidelines on writing a Bachelor or Master thesis

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General remarks

- Great that you are interested in writing a Bachelor/Master thesis at my chair!
- Please read these guidelines carefully to ensure a smooth process and to increase the chances of a mutually satisfactory outcome.¹
- Please read all the official HSG documents on Bachelor/Master theses as well. It is your job to ensure that you follow all the rules and stick to all the deadlines.
- I supervise Bachelor/Master theses in development economics, political economics, and public economics.
- I do not reject students based on their grades, or the number of other supervisees.
- I teach Bachelor- and Master-level courses in the economics and the international affairs programs. Ideally you have taken some of these courses. Otherwise, please explain why you would like to write your thesis at my chair, and why you think you are well prepared to do so.
- There are three possible types of theses:
 1. Empirical (i.e., econometric/quantitative) analysis of an interesting or relevant question. This type is strongly recommended for all students.
 2. Extension of a formal theoretical model. This type is an alternative for strong students.
 3. Discussion of a policy-relevant topic based on a thorough literature review. This type is an alternative for Bachelor (but not Master) students. It rarely leads to high grades as it is difficult to make a substantial contribution beyond the previous literature.
- I recommend writing your thesis in English. Bachelor (but not Master) students can also write in German.

Research proposal

- I do not “offer” topics. You have to develop your own idea(s), and write a research proposal of 3–5 pages.

¹These guidelines are relevant if and only if you consider writing a Bachelor/Master thesis at my chair. Other professors have different ideas and procedures.

- The research proposal should include:
 1. Research question, and a short motivation why it is interesting or relevant.
 2. Short overview of the relevant literature, and an explanation of how your thesis would contribute to it.²
 3. Data sources and data description (if applicable).
 4. Methodology, e.g., empirical specification.
 5. Prospective structure of the thesis.
- You should submit your research proposal, your current grade transcript and a short CV to roland.hodler@unisg.ch.
- I may ask you to revise your proposal (based on my comments).
- If I think your original or revised research proposal is appropriate (either in its current form or after some rather minor modifications), we will schedule a meeting – typically on a Monday.
- You should bring the registration form for Bachelor/Master theses to this meeting for signature. The title of your thesis will be jointly determined.
- Use this meeting to ask all your open questions related to your thesis.

Grading

- You should send your thesis (in pdf), and your data and do files (preferably in Stata) to roland.hodler@unisg.ch when submitting your thesis.
- I care about academic honesty and correct quotation (see “Fact sheet: Quotation and plagiarism” on StudentWeb). In my view, plagiarism and the like deserve to be punished severely.
- I care about your answer to your research question and your contribution to the literature, not about all vaguely related things you have read or thought while writing your thesis.

²Economic journals differ hugely in their quality. Relevant literature is most likely found in leading journals:

- Top-5 journals: American Economic Review, Econometrica, Journal of Political Economy, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Review of Economic Studies.
- Further leading general-interest journals: Economic Journal, European Economic Review, International Economic Review, Journal of the European Economic Association, Review of Economics and Statistics.
- Leading journals in development economics: Journal of Development Economics, World Development.
- Leading journals in political and public economics: American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, Journal of Public Economics. (Next best: European Journal of Political Economy, International Tax and Public Finance, Public Choice.)
- Leading non-technical journals: Journal of Economic Literature, Journal of Economic Perspectives.

- I care about the quality of your economic argument(s) and your empirical/theoretical analysis.
- I care about intersubjective validity. For example, in case of an empirical analysis, I want to understand how you constructed your dataset, and what regressions you ran.
- I care about the readability and structure of your thesis.
- I do *not* care which reference style you choose as long as you apply it consistently.
- I do *not* care about the length of your thesis. After all, John Nash got the Noble prize for his PhD thesis of 28 pages.