

Formal Guidelines for Written Work

Contents

1. Preface	1
2. Bachelor's Thesis and Semester Projects	1
3. Master's Thesis	3
4. Allocation of Grades	4
5. Scientific Writing.....	4
6. Proposals for Written Assignments	5
7. Assessment Grid of Written Assignments.....	7

1. Preface

During their studies, students must complete various written assignments in the context of seminar projects, Bachelor's and Master's theses in order to graduate successfully. The following guidelines for written work show which requirements are placed on students at the Chair of Spatial Development and Urban Policy (SPUR) and how the concrete implementation of seminar, Bachelor's and Master's theses is organised. This document is to be understood as a suggestion, the binding nature of which is to be clarified in each case with the supervising person. In principle, the modalities of the written work always depend on the supervisors.

2. Bachelor's Thesis and Semester Projects

The aim of Bachelor's theses (ECTS according to the study programme) and seminar papers (9 ECTS) is to deal with a topic in depth. A seminar paper can also be written as a basis for a later Master's thesis. In addition to the purposeful delimitation and classification of the topic as well as the reproduction of existing theories and scientific literature, the independent examination of the

problem and the demonstration of possible approaches to a solution are also core points of the assignment. The juxtaposition and differentiation of existing knowledge and self-developed arguments is central. Within the framework of seminar papers, students can deepen theoretical questions and deal with them in particular with suggestions for solving concrete practical problems. The concrete requirements are discussed with the supervisor in each case.

Formalities¹: Length: 7,000 - 9,000 words (in consultation with the supervisor) without bibliography and appendix

Language: German or English (in consultation with the supervisor)

Correct spelling and punctuation

Paragraphs not too short (1 - 2 sentences), not too long (more than half a page)

Line spacing at least 1.5 times

All necessary information on the title page: Title, Name, Mat. No., subject, semester, supervisor, number of words, date

Citation style according to citation etiquette (or as agreed)

Label graphs and tables and number them consecutively

Timeline Semester Project:

- I. Request to supervisor with subsequent discussion
- II. Proposal with question and time schedule of the paper (approx. 3 pages) already before the start of the semester
- III. Official start of seminar paper at the beginning of the semester
- IV. Interim presentation (after 6 weeks)
- V. Final presentation (after 14 weeks)
- VI. Deadline for submission (last day of the semester)
- VII. Submission as PDF (deadline) to the supervisor and two printed versions (within two working days after deadline)

¹ For formalities also see the checklist of ETH Zürich: <https://www.ethz.ch/de/studium/rechtliches-ab-schluesse/leistungskontrollen/plagiate.html>

3. Master's Thesis

The Master's thesis is written at the end of the degree programme and enables students to comprehensively work on a topic of their choice. The master's thesis lasts 16 weeks and is completed with a written report and an oral presentation. The topic is proposed independently by the students - if necessary on the basis of one of the Master's thesis projects recommended by the Chair of SPUR - and developed in consultation with the respective supervisor.

The aim of a master's thesis is to work on an issue in a scientifically sound manner. The core of the work is the delimitation and classification of the chosen topic, the commenting and analytical reproduction of existing literature and theories as well as the independent examination of a problem and the identification of possible approaches to solutions for politics and practice. In doing so, the students must demonstrate their ability to work on a self-selected problem by means of a scientific approach and by using methodologically justified instruments. The modalities of the master's thesis also depend on the requirements of the supervisor.

Formalities²: Length: 9,000 - 15,000 words (in consultation with the supervisor) without bibliography and appendix.

Language: German or English (in consultation with the supervisor).

Correct spelling and punctuation

Paragraphs not too short (1 - 2 sentences), not too long (more than half a page)

Line spacing at least 1.5 times

All necessary information on the title page: Title, Name, Mat. No., subject, semester, supervisor, number of words, date.

Executive Summary of about one page

Citation style according to citation etiquette (or as agreed)

Label graphs and tables and number them consecutively

Timeline of Master's Thesis:

- I. Request to supervisor with subsequent discussion

² For formalities also see the checklist of ETH Zürich: <https://ethz.ch/studierende/de/studium/leistungskontrollen/plagiate.html>

- II. Proposal with question and time schedule of the thesis (approx. 5 pages, see chapter 6) already before the start of the thesis (up to 4 weeks before the start of the semester)
- III. Official start of Master's thesis at the beginning of the semester
- IV. Interim presentation (after 6 weeks)
- V. Final presentation (after 18 weeks)
- VI. Deadline for submission (after approx. 19 weeks)
- VII. Submission as a PDF (deadline) to the supervisor and in duplicate (within two working days after deadline)
- VIII. Within one week after submission of the Master's thesis, an additional poster for the purpose of clear presentation and posting in the HIL is prepared and submitted (as a PDF). The poster will not be taken into account in the assessment.

4. Allocation of Grades

6.0 = excellent

5.5 = very good

5.0 = good

4.5 = satisfactory

4.0 = sufficient/satisfactory

1.0-3.5 = insufficient

The work is assessed with a grade. The criteria for assessing the work can be found in our assessment scheme. This is attached in chapter 7 of this document. A grade of 4.0 or more is considered sufficient and leads to the award of the ECTS credits provided for the thesis. If the grade is below 4.0, the work can be repeated once. If it is repeated, a new topic must be worked on. Important: Each submitted paper must contain a signed declaration of independence.

5. Scientific Writing

Papers should meet basic standards of academic writing. Particularly important are 1) *grammar and spelling* and 2) *structure*. With regard to grammar and spelling, it is important that the text contains no errors. Since a correction programme, such as Word often does not recognise grammatical

errors, it is important that students allow enough time to correct their work with regard to grammar and spelling. As a tip, we recommend sending the work to friends or fellow students for review at the end.

Secondly, the structure of the text is also of central importance. The text should be clearly formulated and easy for readers to follow. It is important to divide the text into paragraphs. A paragraph should contain about 150 to 250 words. As a rule of thumb, one paragraph = one thought. A paragraph has a "Topic Sentence" as its first sentence, which states what the paragraph is about. In addition, the paragraph often ends with a sentence that briefly summarises what the main finding of the paragraph is.

Regarding citation and bibliography, the citation etiquette provided by us should be used as a working aid. Each paper must also be accompanied by a statement of independence. Plagiarism is handled according to ETH guidelines. For more information, see: <https://ethz.ch/studierende/de/studium/leistungskontrollen/plagiate.html>

Further information on scientific writing can be found, for example, in the following book: Plümper, T. (2012). *Effizient schreiben: Leitfaden zum Verfassen von Qualifizierungsarbeiten und wissenschaftlichen Texten*. Oldenburger Verlag.

When writing your research paper, please also pay attention to gender-appropriate language use.

6. Proposals for Written Assignments

Submission deadline: approx. 4 weeks before the official start of the semester (or by arrangement).

The proposal stands at the beginning of every paper and forms the basis for a goal-oriented and planned research procedure. It is a proposal or work plan, which comprises approx. five pages (or more if necessary) and contains the following points:

Title

This is still a working title and may be revised.

Introduction (approx. 0.5-1 page)

The introduction includes the initial situation, the practical and/or theoretical problems as well as the relevance and, derived from this, the research question. First, the initial situation is outlined very roughly (Where can the topic be classified theoretically and conceptually? What is the problem in practice?) and, based on this, gives a precise explanation of the problem to be investigated, shows

the relevance of the problem, why this thesis should be written at all, and thus justifies the chosen research question of the thesis.

Example of a research question: How do policy measures in the context of densification and inner development affect the socio-economic composition of the population?

Context and Theory (approx. 1-1.5 pages)

The students briefly describe the context and a more detailed starting point of the problem. Based on the literature reviewed and possible existing theories, concrete hypotheses or expectations to be tested should be formulated. Each hypothesis and expectation should be followed by a brief description of how it will be operationalised. It should be clear what the student wants to achieve with his/her work. In addition, the object of investigation is delimited from obvious questions and topic areas.

Examples of hypotheses:

If the local population is involved in the development of the area through participatory processes, then local resistance will be less.

The more a city is affected by the impacts of climate change, the more stringent measures are implemented.

Methodology (approx. 1-1.5 pages)

The students justify the concrete case selection and then describe the data basis. The next step is to describe the selection and application of the research method (comparative case study, regression analysis, etc.). The empirical investigation should only be carried out after the proposal has been approved and in consultation with the supervisor.

Rough outline (approx. 0.5-1 page)

An initial overview of the chapter sequence should provide clarity about the structure of the thesis.

Provisional list of sources and literature

Potential literature that is of central interest for the thesis should already be collected.

Timetable

In principle, it is very difficult to plan a scientific paper in detail. Nevertheless, the students should try to put their main activities into a time structure, starting from the given or targeted submission date (e.g. kick-off meeting, initial research work, writing the proposal, literature processing, data collection, data analysis, writing the text, submission).

7. Assessment Grid of Written Assignments

[Student Name, Title of Written Work]

Distribution of points: Content (120); Form (20); Presentation (20).

Critical Appraisal

Overall classification and evaluation of the work

Assessment of the Work

Criteria	Maximum Points	Points Achieved	Comments
Implementation Fulfilment of the task Working on the problem Independence in working on the task Initiative Originality	20		
Content and Argumentation Capture the relevant relationships Depth and breadth of argumentation Completeness and logic of the argumentation Clarity of statements Quality of reasoning Reflectiveness	40		
Structure Structure of the work Comprehensibility Red thread Reader guidance	20		
Literature Review Elementary and appropriate texts identified and included Structuring of the literature review Identification and addressing of the research gap Linking to existing literature	20		
Methodology Applicability of the methods Description of the methods Comprehensibility of the methodical procedure Correctness of implementation	20		
Formal Criteria Well-written References and citation Graphics and tables Formatting and layout Plagiarism check Word count	20		
Sum of points	140		

Assessment of the Final Presentation

<p>Final Presentation</p> <p>Structure and form (structure and time) Content (main points of the paper) Language and argumentation Quality of slides Discussion</p>	<p>20</p>		
--	-----------	--	--

Final Grade

Points Implementation	
Points Content and Argumentation	
Points Structure	
Points Literature Review	
Points Methodology	
Points Formal Criteria	
Points Final Presentation	
Sum of Points	
Grade (sum / 160 *5 + 1)	
Final Grade	

Maximal Number of Points: 160 Points