



Academic Writing – Guidelines for Seminar Theses at the Department of Management and Entrepreneurship (University of Bern)

As of February 2019

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1. Introduction

This guideline defines standards which relate to formal aspects of academic writing. The following instructions and suggestions aim at facilitating the process of writing a (conceptual) seminar thesis at the Department of Management and Entrepreneurship (University of Bern).

The seminar serves as an ultimate preparation for the successful completion of a master thesis at the University of Bern. A seminar thesis shall be the result of an independent process by which the writers document their ability to write a (conceptual) academic paper in a professional manner. By doing so, students prove that they are capable of dealing with a specific topic, learning about popular scientific procedures or issue-related theories and generating their own findings and presenting them in a structured fashion. Thereby, the intellectual processing of a problem, its integration into a wider context, the theoretical foundation as well as coherent reasoning are especially important. Additionally, linguistic together with grammatical style and formal composition of the paper are taken into account for the final evaluation.

After handing in a seminar thesis at the Department of Management and Entrepreneurship, students will have the ability to structure and write a (conceptual) academic paper according to the scientific journals in management-related research. The seminar thesis has to be written in teams consisting of two or three students dependent on the breadth of the systematic literature review.

The paper is assessed with respect to content-related and formal criteria. The standards mentioned hereinafter are binding. It is compulsory to quote every external thought.

2. Supervision

The nature and extent of assistance depends on particular conditions which may vary by semester. The supervising assistants monitor the academic process. They have the task of preserving the students against big mistakes. Before consulting your supervisor for help please keep in mind that you always should try to scrutinize and solve the issue on your own/in your group. Students have to report to their supervisors on their work progress (e.g., submission of a proposal, raw version) during the semester.

3. Submission

Latest by the submission deadline date, please submit a bound print version (one-sided, use of white paper) of your seminar paper in Engehaldenstrasse 4, room 125 and send a digital version (MS-Word document; no pdfs please) to your supervisor.

4. Structure of the Seminar Thesis / of a Typical Academic Paper

The seminar thesis is to be framed like a typical academic paper including some additional formalities (e.g., cover page, indices before the text, statement of authorship). Note: As systematic literature reviews differ, your supervisor will provide you with example papers which you can use as a structural guideline. In general, the outline and the table of contents should already reflect the weight that is given to specific topics within the seminar paper.

4.1 Cover Page

For template see annex A. *Note: This is a compulsory part of each seminar paper at our department.*

4.2 Table of Contents

The table of contents (see annex B for an example) and its corresponding titles or headings as well as page numbers within the thesis must always be identical. Before handing in a seminar paper, particular attention should be paid to this point.

The numbering of titles/headings has to be done in numerical order with the use of Arabic numerals (beginning with 1). Subdivisions must contain of at least two separate subheadings/subtitles (i.e., 1.1, 1.2, ...). Headings of directories (i.e., table of contents, list of figures, list of tables, table of abbreviations, references, annex), however, must not be numbered.

With regard to the page numbers, Roman numerals are required (beginning with I) for tables of contents and abbreviations as well as lists of tables and figures and anything else preliminary to the actual content of the thesis (i.e., introduction). Everything else has to be numbered with Arabic numbers (beginning with 1). *Note: This is a compulsory part of each seminar paper at our department.*

4.3 List of Tables and Figures

All tables and figures need to be labeled and numbered. The numbering can either be done consecutively or according to the respective chapters. The formatting of tables and figures

should occur in a coherent and consistent way. In case a table/figure has been copied or stems from an external source, this source must be mentioned. However, it is not necessary to list these kinds of sources in the reference section. Remarks such as ‘own illustration’ for author’s own work are not necessary. Tables and figures need to be included and explained in the text. Extensive tables and figures (i.e., extensive literature reviews, questionnaires, extensive statistical analyses, contracts, legal texts, etc.) have to be attached as an annex. Specific units (e.g., \$, CHF, %, etc.) should be stated in the corresponding titles. Decimal numbers are supposed to be used uniformly and there shall never be more than two decimal places. *Note: In case you are using tables or figures in the paper this is a compulsory part of a seminar paper at our department.*

4.4 Table of Abbreviations

As a basic principle it is advisable to be sparing with (common) abbreviations since they disrupt the reader’s flow of reading. Uncommon abbreviations have to be put on the index (i.e., table of abbreviations) in alphabetical order. At the time of the first-time application of an abbreviation it must be spelled in full followed by the respective abbreviation put in brackets. *Note: In case you are using uncommon abbreviations in the paper this is a compulsory part of a seminar paper at our department.*

4.5 Abstract

An abstract should be a very short (maximum of 250 words), clear and concise summation of the entire paper. An abstract should provide enough of a preview that a typical reader will know whether or not they wish to read the paper. It should reveal both the purpose and conclusions of the paper. *Note: This is a compulsory part of each seminar paper at our department.*

4.6 Introduction

Most academic introductions follow an ‘inverted pyramid’ structure: they start broad and narrow down to a specific thesis or research question (i.e., scope of the thesis). The introduction should reveal some broad knowledge of the overall topic and quickly focus on the major point of the paper. Furthermore, it should present a general view of the structure and the outline of the following review and it must be pointed out why the topic was chosen (i.e., motivation) and why it should be relevant to researchers and/or practitioners (i.e., relevance). An amount of 25% of the paper’s total content should not be exceeded. *Note: This is a compulsory part of each seminar paper at our department. Generally, there are no subchapters within this section.*

4.7 Definitions/Theories

If specific terms need to be defined and/or theories relevant to the issues addressed in the seminar thesis have to be explained this should be done right after the introduction. In case there are several definitions of the same construct available in the literature you should limit to a single definition and clarify your choice. *Note: There can be various subchapters within this section.*

4.8 Background/History/Review of Literature/Methodology

In papers that rely on secondary research, this section would provide the necessary background or history for understanding the discussion to come. A Review-of-Literature more specifically synthesizes information from a variety of (past and current) significant sources related to the major point of the paper. In papers that rely on primary research, the Methodology section provides a detailed description of the research design. In either case, this section justifies the research done by either showing that the writer has done their homework and/or has a clear understanding of research methods. *Note: The structure/title(s) of this segment(s) cannot be dictated or standardized among all papers and always depends on the content and scope of the respective thesis. As such, there can be various subchapters within this section.*

4.9 Results/Findings/Analyses

This section is only included in papers that rely on primary research. This section catalogues the results of the study/review. The findings should be presented in a clear and unbiased way. *Note: There can be various subchapters within this section.*

4.10 Discussion

Within this section the writer finally makes the major point or claim the previous sections have led the reader to expect. It should include a thorough and well-supported argument, critique or discussion. In papers that rely on primary research, the discussion should posit an interpretation of the results that is reasonable and precise. The writer might also present complications (i.e., limitations) the study illustrates or suggest further research the study indicates is necessary (i.e., research agenda or directions for future research). *Note: There can be various subchapters within this section. For instance, limitations and future research could be addressed in separate segments.*

4.11 Conclusion(s)/Concluding Remarks

The conclusion should reinforce the major claims or interpretation in a way that is not mere summary and refer to the problem/question stated former in the introduction. The writer should try to indicate the significance of the major claim/interpretation beyond the scope of the paper but within the parameters of the field. The writer might also present complications the study illustrates or suggest further research the study indicates is necessary. This section is usually rather short and should have a maximum share of about 10% of the whole text. *Note: This is a compulsory part of each seminar paper at our department. Generally, there are no subchapters within this section.*

4.12 References

The reference section should entail all sources cited or quoted in the text in alphabetical order (beginning with A) of the author's names and secondarily-if more than one publication of the same author is being cited-in chronological order (beginning with the earliest). If more than one publication of the same author in the same year is being cited, a small letter (beginning with a) has to be placed next to the year of publication (e.g., 2016 a; 2016 b). In case an author has collaborated with colleagues these publications must be listed after the works the author did on his/her own. In doing so, literature with only one coauthor shall be mentioned first, followed by publications released by two coauthors, and so on. It is important to note that journal articles, books or book chapters, dissertations, etc. must not be listed separately. *Note: This is a compulsory part of each seminar paper at our department.*

Examples:

- General Order:

Baldauf, A. (2000), ...

Baldauf, A. (2001 a), ...

Baldauf, A. (2001 b), ...

Baldauf, A., Cravens, D. W. (1998), ...

Baldauf, A., Cravens, D. W., Piercy, N. F. (2001), ...

- Books:

Grünig, R., Kühn, R. (2002). Methodik der strategischen Planung – Ein prozessorientierter Ansatz für Strategieplanungsprojekte. 2nd edition, Bern, Stuttgart, Wien: Haupt-Verlag.

- Chapter in a Miscellany:

Hitt, M. A., Ireland, R. D., Camp, S. M., Sexton, D. L. (2002). Strategic Entrepreneurship: Integrating Entrepreneurial and Strategic Management Perspectives. In Hitt, M. A., Ireland, R. D., Camp, S. M., Sexton, D. L. (Eds.), Strategic Entrepreneurship: Creating a New Mindset: 1-16. Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishing.

- Journal Articles:

Baldauf, A. (2000). Wettbewerbsstruktur und Unternehmenserfolg. Die Unternehmung, Vol. 54 (Issue 6), 423-426.

- Compilations:

Aaker, D. (1988). Kriterien zur Identifikation dauerhafter Wettbewerbsvorteile. In Simon, H. (Eds.), Wettbewerbsvorteile und Wettbewerbsfähigkeit. Wiesbaden: Haupt-Verlag.

- Internet Sources:

Universität Bern – Strategie 2012 URL:

<http://www.unibe.ch/organisation/dokumente.html> [14.06.2011].

Martel, A.: Rekord an Firmenkonkursen. In: NZZ Online, 7. Januar 2010. URL:

http://www.nzz.ch/nachrichten/wirtschaft/aktuell/rekord_an_firmenkonkursen_1.4457839.html [18.09.2011].

- Working Papers:

Cools, E., Vermeulen, S. (2008) What's in a name? An inquiry on the cognitive and entrepreneurial profile of the social entrepreneur. Vlerick Leuven Gent Working Paper Series 2008/02, Belgium.

- Entities:

Bundesamt für Statistik (2010). Betriebszählung 2008: Branchenportrait. Baugewerbe. Neuchâtel, BFS.

- Personal interviews:

Welser, Maria (2010). Persönliches Interview, geführt vom Verfasser. Bern, 14. Mai 2010.

4.13 Annex

The annex contains further/supporting information that is too detailed or extensive to be included in the main text but which is still important for the reader's deepened understanding. Examples might be tables of further readings, large figures, interviews or questionnaires and comprehensive statistical analyses. The shift of regular text into the annex is prohibited. It is important to reference appendixes in the main text and to label and display appendixes in a very clear way. *Note: There can be various subchapters within this section.*

4.14 Statement of Authorship

By the single-handed signing of the statement of authorship the author assures his/her autonomy in writing his/her share of the seminar thesis (see annex C for a template). In case the seminar paper has been written in collaboration with an external institution that provided confidential information/data, a non-disclosure agreement needs to be included and to be signed. *Note: This is a compulsory part of each seminar paper at our department.*

5. Formalities

- Language: The seminar paper must be in English
- Fonts: Generally 'Times New Roman'
 - 1.5-spaced and 12-point font for regular text
 - Normal spaced and 10-point font for footnotes
 - At least 10-point font for tables and figures
- Margins: 2.54 cm margin on all sides
- Alignment: Justification
- Spaces:
 - Preliminary to new paragraphs: 6-point space
 - Between two footnotes: 1.5-space
 - References: 1.5-spaced as well as a hanging indent (1.5 cm)
- Abstract that summarizes the seminar paper: maximum of 250 words
- Page limit: 35-40 text pages (without abstract, tables, figures, and references)

6. Writing Style

Please make sure to utilize a clear and accurate linguistic style. Slang, conversational and journalistic language as well as statements including ‘I’ and ‘we’ should generally be avoided. Whenever possible, neutral language should be applied. Orthographic mistakes must not appear. Self-made abbreviations are mostly inconvenient.

The reader should be able to read the text without previous knowledge. Introducing comments, thoughtful transitions and summarizing comments help guiding the reader through the text. A reader should always be aware of what part of the text he or she is reading.

The writing style needs to be fluent and interesting. Short sentences are always favored over longer ones. Technical or very specific terms should be used cautiously and have to be defined in advance.

7. Citation Method

Scientific writing follows the principle of intersubjectivity and therefore each quotation, whether paraphrased or literal, must be verifiable. Sources need to be indicated in brackets in the regular text (after the respective quote/citation) and must not be listed in footnotes.

7.1 German or American Citation Style

Basically, with regard to citation style, German or American style can be distinguished. The former always asks for specific page references whereas the latter demands page numbers only in case of direct (i.e., literal) quotations.

Note: Every student who writes a seminar thesis at the Department of Management and Entrepreneurship (University of Bern) is asked to use the American citation style.

The typical citation structure is as follows: (author’s [s’] last name[s] + publication year). Authors’ last names (up to three) need to be separated by a slash (/). For more than three authors only the lead author’s last name (followed by the expression et al. [which means: ... and colleagues) has to be mentioned. If there is more than a single reference linked to a specific statement, different sources must be hyphenated by a semicolon (i.e., ‘;’). With regard to page number(s) (direct citations), references can be drawn from just one single page (p.) or from a consecutive number of pages (pp.). An exception can be made if a source (article or book) is cited as a whole. In this case page numbers do not have to be mentioned. Last but not least, a slight difference between a direct quotation (i.e., literal) and an indirect citation (i.e.,

paraphrase) needs to be taken into account. Direct quotes must be indicated by quotation marks (i.e., "..."), while paraphrases have to be marked by cf. (i.e., see [vgl. in German]). Furthermore, omissions within direct quotes need to be signaled by '[...]' (omissions in the middle of a sentence) or by '... ' (omissions at the beginning or at the end of a sentence).

7.2 Examples

- *Paraphrases (single reference):*

Studies should not be conducted in an US-American context (cf. Silk 1993).

- *Paraphrases (several references):*

The importance of a point of sales' design has frequently been emphasized in the literature (cf. Babakus et al. 1996; Piercy/Cravens/Morgan 1999).

- *Direct quotation (single reference):* "... an organization's set of procedures of monitoring, directing, evaluating, and rewarding its employees" (Anderson/Oliver 1987, p. 76).

- *Sources as a sentence's subject:*

Alternatively, a source can be used as a subject to a sentence. In this case only the year of publication and the respective page number(s) need to be put in brackets. Examples:

- Silk (1993) believes that ...
- Anderson and Oliver (1987) believe that...
- Kohli, Jaworski and Kumar (1993) believe that ...
- Hult et al. (2004) believe that ...

8. Evaluation

The following criteria shall provide some points of reference concerning the evaluation of the seminar paper.

8.1 Content

- Does the paper provide an added value?
- Have important terms been scientifically defined?
- Have appropriate theories been addressed and have they been critically deliberated?
- Are terms and theoretical constructs/approaches inherently consistent?
- Have specific research questions been formulated?

- Have answers to these specific research questions been found?
- Is there a common thread throughout the paper?
- Is the reader being guided through the paper?
- Has the reasoning been logically and consistently?
- Is there one's own line of argument?
- Has the paper been organized and structured appropriately?
- Have the propositions been supported sufficiently by other research?
- Does the literature used meet academic/scientific requirements?
- Is the linguistic style applied precise and objective?
- Is the paper clear of orthographic mistakes?
- Have the scope and the overall appearance met the guidelines on hand?
- Has the typical structure of an academic paper (stated in these guidelines) been implemented?

8.2 Formalities

- Is there a correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation?
- Is there a table of content (and possibly other directories) and is it/are they formatted correctly?
- Is the writing style applied sufficiently academic/scientific?
- Has the citation/quotation style been applied properly and have all sources been listed in the reference section?
- Have all relevant components of an academic paper been considered?
- Is there an objective line of reasoning?
- Are the titles listed in the table of contents identical with the titles throughout the regular text?
- Have complex coherences been visualized by figures or tables?
- Have tables and/or figures been mentioned in the text?
- Have tables and/or figures been formatted consistently and “reader-friendly”?

9. Common Mistakes

- The central research question/s has/have not been addressed in-depth
- The article is lacking a proper and clear definition concerning the relevant construct(s)
- The content does not follow a clear structure
- Nonscientific sources or (only) low rated journals are being cited

- An intricate style of writing has been applied

10. Readings

10.1 Required Reading in Advance

Short, J.C. The art of writing a review article. (2009). *Journal of Management*, Vol. 35 (Issue 6), 1312-1317.

10.2 Recommended Reading in Advance

Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., Smart, P. (2003). Toward a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 14 (Issue 3), 207–222. (available online: <http://www.cebma.org/wp-content/uploads/Tranfield-et-al-Towards-a-Methodology-for-Developing-Evidence-Informed-Management.pdf>).

Denyer, D., Tranfield, D. (2009). Producing a systematic review. In Buchanan, D., Bryman, A. (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Research Methods*: 671–689. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (available online: <http://www.cebma.org/wp-content/uploads/Denyer-Tranfield-Producing-a-Systematic-Review.pdf>).

Hitt, M. A., Ireland, R. D., Hoskisson, R. E. (2006). *Strategic Management: Competitiveness and Globalization: Concepts and Cases*. 7th edition, Mason, Ohio: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.

10.3 Further Readings

Becker, F. (1994). *Anleitung zum wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten*. 2nd edition, Köln: Bergisch-Gladbach.

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., Tight, M. (1996). *How to research*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Churchill, G. A., Iacobucci, D. (2002). *Marketing research: methodological foundations*. 8th edition, Mason, Ohio: South-Western/Thomson Learning.

Cooper, H. M. (1988). The structure of knowledge synthesis. *Knowledge in Society*, Vol. 1, 104-126.

Kruse, O. (1997). *Keine Angst vor dem leeren Blatt*. 5th edition, Frankfurt/Main, New York: Campus.

Theisen, M. R. (2000). *Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten: Technik, Methodik, Form*. 10th edition, München: Verlag Franz Vahlen GmbH.

Zikmund, W. G. (2003). *Business Research Methods*. 7th edition, Mason, Ohio: South-Western/Thomson Learning.

Annex

A. Cover Page Template

submitted to the

Institute of Marketing and Management
Department of Management

Prof. Dr. Artur Baldauf

Supervisor:

Name of the supervisor

University of Bern

Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences
Department of Business and Economics

Fall/Spring semester 20XX/XX

by

Student's name

Address

Student ID number

Telephone

E-Mail

Bern

Date

B. Table of Contents – An Example

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1.2 Goal setting and structure of the thesis	3
1.3 Methodological approach	4
2 Theoretical framework of entrepreneurship	5
2.1 Definition and dimensions of corporate venturing	5
2.2 Definition and dimensions of corporate entrepreneurship	7
2.3 Critical comparison of corporate venturing and corporate entrepreneurship	9
3 Performance implications of corporate venturing and corporate entrepreneurship	11
3.1 Impact of corporate venturing on performance	12
3.2 Impact of corporate entrepreneurship on performance	15
3.3 Possible mediators and moderators of these relationships	17
3.3.1 Mediators and moderators in corporate venturing-performance relationship	19
3.3.2 Mediators and moderators in corporate entrepreneurship-performance relationship	22
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C. Statement of Authorship for a Group Work

„We hereby declare that each of us has contributed their part to this thesis without any help from others. Furthermore, we declare that we have written it without the use of aids other than those stated above. We have mentioned all used sources and cited them correctly according to the established academic citation rules. We are aware that otherwise, according to the University Act, the Senat is entitled to revoke the degree awarded on the basis of this thesis.“

Place, Date Signature I (Name)

Place, Date Signature II (Name)