

Manual for writing a thesis

Guideline for dissertations at the division Media Use Research

Each thesis written at the division Media Use Research needs to meet the **academic standards** illustrated in this manual.

1. Formal elements of a dissertation

Cover page –see template on last side (no mandatory use)

List of content – hierarchical structure, page numbers

Introduction – not “foreword”

Main part – usually with subsections/chapters

Conclusion – summary, résumé, outlook

Reference – by alphabetical order

Appendix – for instance questionnaires, transcripts, additional charts etc.

1.1. List of content - example

All chapter headings need to be numbered according to a hierarchical system and incorporated in the list of content. Example

1	Introduction	1
2	The evolution of development theory	5
2.1	Modernization Theory.....	5
2.2	Alternative development	12
3	Integrating ICT4D in the development discourse	20
3.1	The interdisciplinary research of ICT4D.....	21
3.2	ICT4D – a revival of Modernization?	23
3.2.1	Liberalizing the telecommunication structure	23
3.2.2	The role of private actors	28
4	Conclusion	56
5	References.....	61

1.2. Introduction

The introduction serves three goals: First, it should introduce the topic and illustrate its relevance. Second, it should mention the general research question (RQ) that will be answered in the following. Third, it should shortly mention the procedure and methodology applied in the dissertation.

The RQ does not necessarily have to be an analytical, explanatory question, but can also – depending on the requirements of the seminar – be of descriptive nature. However, analytical questions are usually more interesting.

1.3. Main part

The main part gives the reader all information necessary to answer the research question. It should follow a clear line of argumentation that interlinks all parts of the text logically. When asking oneself whether to include or omit facts or arguments, one should consider whether it contributes to answering the research question. If it does not help directly, leave it out.

The following structure has proved to be meaningful, but is not mandatory:

1. Explaining the theory
2. Literature review/state of research
3. If there will be empirical research: Demonstrating the methodology
4. Presenting the main findings

1.4. Conclusion

In the conclusion, the author should revisit the research question and summarize the main findings. Either the initial question will be answered, or the author needs to explain why it cannot be answered. If there has been empirical research, the author should critically reflect upon the applied methodology - independent on whether it has delivered the desired results or not. Based on this reflection and new emerging questions, the author should suggest new research questions for further studies.

1.5. References

Include all literature that you refer to in your dissertation and sort them by alphabetical order of the names of the authors (don't sort it along types of texts!). Do not include any literature that you have not referred to. You are free to choose any citation style that is commonly used in social science. We would, however, recommend APA. For more information on APA, please read the manual: <http://www.apastyle.org>.

1.6. Appendix

The appendix serves the purpose of documentation. Charts and graphics that are important for the exposition should be presented in the text and not appendix. For all other documents, you should consider whether they are important for the understanding of the paper. If this is not the case, they do neither belong in the text nor in the appendix. In certain cases it can make sense to provide it on CD or a Flash-device. Principally, every thesis needs to be passed in as a paper **and** electronic version.

2. Layout of thesis

The quantity of text is not decisive for the quality of the paper. However, usually your study regulations will determine a maximum or minimum of pages to ensure the comparability of the dissertations and clarify what is expected from you. The cover page, the list of content and the references are not included in the required number of pages.

- Margins: left 4 cm, right 3 cm, top/bottom 2,5 cm. Deviations are only approved when necessary for the inclusion of charts etc.
- Line space: 1,5 cm
- Font: Times New Roman or similar standard font (for running text, serifs are preferred)
- Font size: 12 (headings can be larger, text in tables can be smaller)
- Number of pages: The pagination starts with the introduction chapter, with Arabic numerals on every side on the right bottom of the page or in the middle. The cover page and the list of content do not have a page number, the pages with references and the appendix do.

Tables and graphs

- Tables and graphs should be understandable without reading the associated text (lines, columns and data properly labeled, meaningful title, annotations).
- Likewise, the text should be understandable without the tables or graphs.
- Tables that are not referred to in the text are dispensable (→ appendix).
- Not every number in a table needs to be mentioned in the text.
- SPSS-outputs should not be included into the text without modification, but needs to be edited in regard to the assertions.
- Copy-Pasting tables and graphs from other texts should be the exception, for instance if the graphical composition of the original is important. Normally, however, the author should create all illustrations.

3. Academic sources

A central requirement of academic work is that each source of information needs to be quoted. There are three reasons for this requirement:

- It is not acceptable to adorn oneself with borrowed plums, thus, acting like thoughts of another author are one's own. This is, however, the case when not quoting a source.
- By quoting sources, it is ensured that the quotes are not wrongly echoed, since the reader can look up the source.
- By quoting other sources the author is protected from being punished for other's mistakes (since the quoted authors are responsible for wrong statements).

Do not be unsettled by the fact that many theses predominantly consist of quotes and only have few own statements (especially in the case of Bachelor students). Do, however, try to echo statements of other authors in your own words and do not only copy texts from others. Direct quotes should be used economically and only if the wording is very trenchant.

Every new thought needs to be quoted – it is not sufficient to quote only at the beginning or the end of a chapter.

Cover page – Example

Prof. Dr. John Smith
Institute for Media and Communication Studies
Division Media Use Research
Type of seminar/ topic of seminar
Wintersemester 2015/16

Using Digital Media for Development Communication

A survey study of aid workers

Presented by

Joana Francis
Universitätsallee 1
10117 Berlin

Date: 12.12.2015

Student number: 12345