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GUIDELINES FOR MASTER'S THESIS GENERAL MANAGEMENT

Institute for Retailing, Sales and Marketing

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To facilitate master's thesis applications and to simplify procedures for students, these guidelines are in place in the Department of Retailing, Sales and Marketing.

Lists of potential topics for master's theses are publicised via the Department homepage and also via the homepages of the two units "Marketing for Emerging Markets" and "Business to Business Marketing".

Students who wish to write a master's thesis on a topic included in the official lists are asked to contact the respective supervisor (named on the list) and to arrange for an initial consultation. In the course of this preliminary meeting, students will be asked to state what motivates them to explore a specific topic and to outline their methodological approach. For admission requirements please see the curriculum. A Transcript of Records has to be furnished. Topics of the master theses should preferably refer to the research interests of the department and the research area(s) of the respective supervisor.
The department also provides supervision of master's theses on topics suggested by students. In this case, we would ask you to contact the member of department whose scope of research comes closest to the specific topic for a preliminary consultation. If a student has opted for a topic which entails cooperation with a firm or with a third party, an exploratory meeting between the firm, as a potential co-operational partner, and representatives of the department is a binding prerequisite

As a matter of principle, students doing the Specialized Management Competence Marketing (Modules: Marketing and International Marketing 1 and/or Marketing and International Marketing 2) take precedence. Second priority will be given to students doing the Master Seminar Globalization: Network Perspectives and/or the Master Seminar Innovation: Marketing Perspectives. Staff capacity permitting, supervision is also provided for other students, on condition that their approach to the research topic is deemed promising. All students should have completed the two courses on qualitative and quantitative research methods.

On the basis of the preliminary meeting, supervision may be granted on a provisional basis. Subsequently, a thesis proposal (draft) has to be prepared. Applicable guidelines can be downloaded from the homepage www.marketing.jku.at. The quality of the thesis proposal serves as a basis for confirmation of approval, or rejection, of the application. Only after approval of a thesis topic has been confirmed, will the topic be deleted from the official list. For this reason, students interested in a specific thesis topic are advised to contact the respective supervisor well in advance.

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GUIDELINES ON HOW TO PROCEED AFTER THE PRELIMINARY MEETING

Effective: Mai 2020

After a preliminary meeting with the supervisor, a thesis proposal has to be submitted in order to gain definite approval by the supervisor. The following is a list of departmental guidelines on how to prepare such a proposal. Subsequently, citation rules and regulations are set out. Furthermore, the master thesis has to adhere to the guidelines of the following source: Turabian, K.L. (2007), "A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations", 7th edition, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. The relevant chapters are 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15.

1. Thesis proposal

The proposal of a master thesis must be structured as follows:

1. Preliminary title
2. Problem definition / Objective of the study
3. Proposed course of action to solve the research problem / achieve the objective, methodological underpinnings
4. Outline of the structure
5. Preliminary list of references
6. Timeline for completing the thesis

To be enclosed with the thesis proposal:

- Application form: obtainable from the secretary's office or the Department homepage (/Downloads)
- Biographical sketch (in tabular form): focus on university education
- Record of examinations taken: copies of the individual exam records, or
- Transcript of records

A thesis proposal comprises approx. eight pages (not counting the list of references), with special attention to be paid to Items 2 to 5. Confirmation of approval or rejection by the supervisor is dependent on the standard of the proposal. The topic has to be registered by the Department of Examination and Recognition Services. The corresponding form can be found here: https://www.jku.at/studieren/studium-von-a-z/abschlussarbeiten/masterarbeit/.

As soon as the thesis proposal is approved by the supervisor, the master thesis colloquium (not to be confused with the master thesis seminar!) is considered as completed successfully.

2. Writing the thesis

Subsequent to gaining formal approval, work on the topic can start in earnest. The master thesis is to be written in English. In compliance with regulations, it has to be produced without any outside help. However, if questions should arise, the student can ask for a meeting with his/her supervisor. The agenda for this meeting has to be drawn up in advance, since its purpose is to deal with specific questions and not to serve as a forum for a general discussion of the paper. Any materials needed for this consultation (structure, questionnaires, etc.) must be submitted to the supervisor in advance and in hard copy.

2.1 Contacts with third parties

If the master thesis comprises an empirical part, any questionnaires and interview guidelines to be used must be submitted for approval. Any contacts with third parties (e.g. companies, for interviews) are always made on behalf of the student. Only in cases specifically agreed with the supervisor can such contacts be made on behalf of the Department of Retailing, Sales and Marketing.

2.3 Maste thesis seminar

As laid down in the syllabus, attending the master thesis seminar is obligatory. Students who write their thesis at the Institute for Retailing, Sales and Marketing have to take the seminar that is offered by the institute.

2.4 Timeline

As a rule, the time limit for completing the thesis is six months. However, depending on the scope of a topic, the supervisor may agree to extend this limit. If the agreed extension is exceeded, the master thesis may not be acceptable on account of lack of relevance to the current situation.

3. Evaluation of the master thesis

In the evaluation of the master thesis, both formal and research-related criteria are taken into account.

The formal requirements the evaluation focuses on are set out in the following *Table 1*. If the thesis fails to meet the formal standards required, it will be rejected.

The decisive point in the evaluation of the thesis content is whether and how the problem was solved or how the objective was achieved. With empirical studies, special attention is paid to clarity and explicitness of data collection and analysis, as well as on the evaluation of the findings.

The following *Table 1* gives an overview of the criteria applicable to the overall evaluation of master theses.

Table 1: Criteria applicable to the evaluation of master theses

	Excellent and distinctive work	Competent work	Significantly deficient work
Aims, objectives and justification	Clear aims able to be operationalized. Explanation of the topic with succinct justification using the literature. Shows full awareness of the need to focus on what is able to be done.	Clear aims and objectives. Acceptable justification with identification of the topic.	Aims and objectives unclear due to no logical connections between them. Insufficient attempt to justify the topic. Actual topic not clear due to lack of focus.
Methodology and data collection	Choice of methodology explained in comparative terms showing considerable evidence of reading and understanding. Overall research design abundantly clear and logical for the student to apply. Strengths and weaknesses in previously used methodologies/data-collection techniques are recognized and dealt with.	Methodology described but not in comparative terms; so no explanation given for choices; nevertheless, an appropriate methodology employed. Research techniques clear and suitable for the topic. May have replicated weaknesses or bias inherent in previous work on the topic.	No explanation of the methodology, its choice or appropriateness for the research. No indication of reading on methodology or data-collection techniques, so no demonstration of ability to collect data in a systematic way. No overall research design.
Literature review and evaluation	Thorough review of the relevant literature; systematically analysed and all main variables and arguments identified. Critical evaluation firmly linked to justification and methodology.	Review of the main literature with main variables and arguments identified. Some links made to methodology and justification.	No review of the literature; annotations of some items but no attempt at a critical evaluation, therefore no arguments or key variables identified relevant to the topic. No bibliography or too large a bibliography to have been used.

continued overleaf

	Excellent and distinctive work	Competent work	Significantly deficient work
Style and presentation, including the use of graphic materials	Clear and cohesive structure. Very well presented with accurate citations and bibliography. Impressive use of visual and graphic devices, and effective arrangement of materials. Accurate and proper use of English, employing scholarly conventions.	Clear structure and arrangement of materials with accurate citations, appropriate use of visual and graphic devices.	Structured presentation but very thin on substantive content. Citations mostly correct but not consistent. Little evidence of thought about the use of visual or graphic devices. Sloppy use of language.
Overall coherence and academic rigour	Systematic and considered approach; critically reflexive; clarity and logic in the structuring of argument; proper use of language; assumptions stated; charity of interpretation; identification of gaps and possibility for further research. Of a publishable standard.	Considered approach; clarity in the structure of presentation; satisfactory use of language; assumptions mostly stated, though some implicit; conclusions and ideas for further research identified.	Not a considered approach therefore no planning evident. Poor use of technical terms and overuse of cliché. No argumentative structure evident. Some attempt at interpretation, but not based on the data.

Source: taken from Hart, C. (1998): *Doing a Literature Review*; London et al.: Sage

4. Formatting requirements

4.1 Length of thesis

The length of the master thesis is primarily dictated by its scope and is no end in itself. General guideline: between 80 and 120 pages of text (not counting formatting, tables and appendix).

4.2 Layout

Please refer to the “Handbook on Formatting Academic Papers”.

4.3 Structure of the thesis

The master thesis is to be structured as follows:

- Title page
- Signed affidavit
- Table of contents, with page numbers
- List of figures, with page numbers
- List of tables, with page numbers
- List of abbreviations
- Body of text
- References / Bibliography
- Appendix (if applicable)

4.4 Title page

A standardized cover sheet must be used. The sample cover sheet is available here: https://www.jku.at/studieren/studium-von-a-z/abschlussarbeiten/masterarbeit/.

5. Table of contents

Roman numerals are to be used for **all lists** preceding the main body of the thesis. For the main body and all sections following on to it, Arabic numerals are to be used.

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Figure 1: Sample table of contents

Table of contents

I

Table of contents

Page

For the structuring of the main body of the thesis, decimal classification is to be used.
For reasons of clarity, the number of subsections is to be kept to a meaningful limit. Alternatively, Roman numerals can be used for the main parts, and decimal classification can be used for subsections.

5.1 List of figures, illustrations and tables

Figures and tables always have to be put in separate lists. These lists contain numbers, captions and page references of the figures or tables.

Illustration 2: Sample list of figures

List of figures III

List of figures **Page**

5.2 List of abbreviations

Only specialist technical abbreviations are to be included and explained in the list of abbreviations. This includes any abbreviations used in the Appendix or in the List of references. Abbreviations in general use, such as “e.g.” for “for instance” are not to be included. To improve readability of the text, the number of abbreviations used is to be kept to a minimum.

Figure 3: Sample list of abbreviations

List of abbreviations IV

List of abbreviations

DBW	Die Betriebswirtschaft
DU	Die Unternehmung
JAMS	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science
JMR	Journal of Marketing Research
LRP	Long Range Planning
RoQ	Return on Quality
SMJ	Strategic Management Journal
ZfB	Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft
zfo	Zeitschrift Führung + Organisation

5.3 References / Bibliography

Items are to be listed in alphabetical order by surname of author. For **books** these details are required:

- Surname,
- initials,
- year of publication,
- *title,*
- number of volume quoted (if there are multiple volumes),
- edition (if there are multiple editions),
- place/s of publication and
- publisher.

If a book has more than three authors, only the first author's name is to be given, followed by "et al." If there are more than three places of publication, only the first place is to be included, followed by "et al."

Examples:

Kotler, P. et al. (1996): *Principles of Marketing: The European Edition*; London et al.: Prentice Hall

Miller, D. C. (1991): *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*; 5th ed., Newbury Park et al.: Sage

Thibaut, J. W., Kelley, H. H. (1959): *The Social Psychology of Groups*; New York/London/Sydney: Wiley

Wührer, G. A. (1995): *Internationale Allianz- und Kooperationsfähigkeit österreichischer Unternehmen: Beiträge zum Gestaltansatz als Beschreibungs- und Erklärungskonzept*; Linz: Trauner

If there are two or more books by the same author or authors, they are to be listed in chronological order. If several books by the same author/s were published in the same year, they are to be distinguished by lower case letters after the year of publication.

Example:

Jöreskog, K. G., Sörbom, D. (1993): *LISREL 8: Structural Equation Modeling with the SIMPLS Command Language*; Chicago: Scientific Software International

Jöreskog, K. G., Sörbom, D. (1996a): *LISREL 8: User's Reference Guide*; Chicago: Scientific Software International

Jöreskog, K. G., Sörbom, D. (1996b): *PRELIS 2: User's Reference Guide*; Chicago: Scientific Software International

For articles in **compendia**, **manuals** and **encyclopaedias** these details are required:

- Surname,
- initials,
- year of publication,
- title of article
- "in",
- name and initials of editor
- "ed." or "eds.",
- *name of compendium, manual or encyclopaedia,*
- number of volume quoted (if there are multiple volumes),
- edition (if there are multiple editions)
- place/s of publication,
- publisher and
- page reference.

Examples:

Marr, R. (1989): Betrieb und Umwelt; in: Bitz, M. et al. (Hrsg.): *Vahlens Kompendium der Betriebswirschaftslehre*, 1; 2nd ed. Munich, München: Vahlen, 47-114

Möller, K., Wilson, D. T. (1995): Introduction: Interaction and Networks in Perspective; in: Möller, K., Wilson, D. T. (eds.): *Business Marketing: An Interaction and Network Perspective*; Boston/Dordrecht/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1-18

For **journals, magazines** and **newspapers**, these details are required:

- Surname,
- initials,
- year of publication,
- title of the article,
- *name of the magazine or newspaper,*
- volume and number of the respective issue of the journal / magazine, or number and date of the newspaper and
- page reference.

If a source cannot be traced to the author, the abbreviation ”n.a.” is to be used, and it is to be listed under the letter ‘N’ in the list of references.

Examples:

Kaufmann, P. J., Dant, R. P. (1992): The Dimensions of Commercial Exchange; *Marketing Letters*, 3 (2), 171-185

Mühleder, K. (1996): Wertgestaltung: Ein Beitrag zur Gestaltung von Produktinnovationen; *Journal für Betriebswirtschaft*, 46 (1), 23-35

n.a. (1984): Making Service a Potent Marketing Tool; *Business Week*, 11 June 1984, 165-167

If **internet sources** are used in addition to printed sources, a **List of sources** is to be compiled which comprises a list of internet sources in addition to, and separate from, the list of references. For internet sources, these details have to be provided:

- *web address* (= URL), giving the *complete link to the document* and
- access date.

If at all possible, also these details are to be provided:

- Surname and initials, or name of the organisation "(ed.)",
- year of publication and
- title of the article.

If there is any doubt, all available details are to be listed.

Examples:

Müller-Stewens, G. (1998): Post Merger Management: Organisatorische Integration bei Unternehmensübernahmen; Guest lecture at University of Berne, 7 January 1998, *http://www.iop.unibe.ch/tondokumente/ mueller.ram/*, 25 October 1999

PMSI (ed.) (1998): Homepage, *http://www.pmsinc.com/,* 25 October 1999

If **interviews** were conducted in order to answer the research question / achieve the goal of the thesis, the list of sources also has to contain a list of interviews. This is to be compiled in alphabetical order (last names of interviewees) and has to comprise

- Name and initials of the interviewee,
- enterprise / organisation,
- capacity,
- place and
- date of the interview.

When interview results are discussed in the text, the interviewee is to be quoted at the appropriate point. To do this, name, place and date of the interview are stated.

Example of a footnote with information on an interview:

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1 cf. Interview with M. Meier, Linz, 12 August 2001

5.4 Appendix

The appendix only contains relevant **additional** information to back up the thesis. For instance:

- Questionnaire/s,
- interview guidelines,
- covering letters and
- corporate documents.

If applicable, any sources the appendix draws on have to be listed and included in the list of references or sources. In the body of the text, the respective appendix has to be indicated in an appropriate manner.

5.5 Main body of the thesis

5.5.1 Language

Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as a scholarly and fluent style are mandatory requirements. Inconsistencies, such as alternate use of British and American spelling, constitute a breach of the formal requirements.

5.5.2 Citing references

Each reference has to be clearly acknowledged by giving precise source details for each section (or even sentence). The reference details have to be positioned in such a way as to be unambiguous.

When using sources in the text, a distinction has to be made between

- direct quotations and
- indirect quotations (paraphrases).

A **direct quotation** signifies the **verbatim citation** of a text, an **indirect quotation** refers to the **sense** of a passage quoted.

As regards **source references in footnotes** in papers written for the Department of Retailing, Sales and Marketing, a distinction has to be made between

- parenthetical citation and
- full-detail citation.

In papers produced for the Department of Retailing, Sales and Marketing, **parenthetical reference citation** is to be used. Each reference must give these **consistent** details in the footnote:

- author/s,
- year,
- page/s and, if applicable,
- f." / "ff."(following page/s) or "n.p." ("no page", if the page number is not available).

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Example:

Original passage:

However, sustainable supply and resource advantages are indispensable to ensure success in the battle against the most immediate competitors. This very point is challenged by the advocates of the "resource based view", whose concepts are outlined in the following chapter.

Indirect quotation:

Advantages in the field of resources and supply are indispensable for success in the battle against competitors[1].

Footnote:

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1 cf. Kühn/Grünig (1998), p. 139

Direct quotation:

"However, sustainable supply and resource advantages are indispensable to ensure success in the battle against the most immediate competitors"[2].

Footnote:

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2 Kühn/Grünig (1998), p. 139

Direct quotations should be the **exception**, i.e. they should be used sparingly. If a text is quoted verbatim, its original spelling and punctuation must be retained. Any alteration has to be marked as such.

Example:

Direct quotation:

"However, sustainable *supply and resource advantages* are indispensable to ensure success in the battle against the most immediate competitors"[3].

Footnote:

---

2 Kühn/Grünig (1998), p. 139 (Italics by the author)

If, to shorten a quotation or for stylistic reasons, single words or sentences have been left out, an ellipsis has to be used. Omission of a word is indicated by the ellipsis [..], omission of several words is to be indicated by [...]. With omissions at the beginning or end of a direct quotation, no ellipsis is used.

Any insert into a quotation is to be indicated by square brackets.

Example

Direct quotation:

What needs to be stressed is the fact that “supply and resource advantages are indispensable to ensure success in the battle with [...] competitors”[4].

Footnote:

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4 Kühn/Grünig (1998), p. 139

If a quotation is enclosed in a quotation, single quotation marks are used.

Example:

Direct quotation:

“This very point is challenged by the advocates of a ‘resource based view’, whose concepts are outlined [...]“[5].

Footnote:

---

5 Kühn/Grünig (1998), p. 139

Every quotation must always be taken from the **original source**. If, despite intensive search, the original source cannot be made out, **secondary sources** may be used in exceptional cases.

Example:

Direct quotation:

"People stay in relationships for two major reasons: because they *want to*; and because they *have to*"[6].

Footnote:

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6 Johnson (1982), p. 52f., quoted from Söllner (1993), p. 101 (Italics by the author)

The list of references must give both the primary source (here: Johnson) and the secondary source (here: Söllner).

5.5.3 Figures, illustrations and tables

Figures and tables must be self-explanatory without requiring any recourse to the body of the text. If necessary, clarity has to be ensured by the use of legends. With figures or tables copied or scanned from the original text, clear legibility is paramount.

With every figure and table, the source of the data has to be clearly stated. If no source is given, the figure or table was drawn up by the **author** of the thesis.

Examples:

Source: taken from Wilson/Jantrania (1994), p. 62 (*original*)
Source: following Tröndle (1987), p. 19 (*modified*)
Sources can be cited in a footnote or directly below the figure. Once a scheme has been decided upon, it is to be consistently maintained throughout the paper. All figures and tables are to be numbered and given explicit and comprehensible captions. Additionally, they have to be integrated into the text and – if deemed necessary – explained.

Example:

In redistributive cooperation, two partners, referred to as A and B in *Figure 3*, decide to pool their resources, only to share out the value between them at a certain point in time.

5.5.4 Abbreviations:

Any abbreviations not in common use are to be explained when first used in the text, and they must be included in the list of abbreviations.

Example:

The concept of Return on Quality (RoQ) has achieved a prominent place in marketing literature.

Alternate use of abbreviations and full forms is to be avoided. To facilitate readability of the text, the number of abbreviations is to be kept to a minimum.

Department of Retailing, Sales and Marketing

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