

BSc Thesis Guideline

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Introduction

The aim of the BSc Thesis is to demonstrate your mastery of domain of study in an assignment that integrates your acquired knowledge and skills. This guideline gives a detailed description of organisational aspects and explains what matters for a good Bachelor thesis. In the Education and Exams Regulations, guide the following information is provided (Art.12.1):

1. The Bachelor's thesis is an individually and independently written essay based on scientific articles and other texts/materials that concludes the SBE Bachelor's programmes.

Economics and Business Economics (EBE)

specialisation Economics

specialisation Economics and Management of Information

The topic of the thesis has to be related to a specific domain related to the chosen specialisation.

specialisation Emerging Markets

The topic of the thesis has to be related and/or linked to the internship.

specialisation International Business and Economics

The topic of the thesis has to be related to the chosen major in the third year.

Econometrics and Operations Research (EOR)

The topic of the thesis has to be related to one of the relevant courses within the third year.

Fiscal Economics (FE)

The topic of the thesis has to be related to a specific domain related to the study programme.

International Business (IB)

no specialisation

The topic of the thesis has to be related to the chosen major in the third year.

specialisation Emerging Markets

The topic of the thesis has to be related and/or linked to the internship.

2. Students who fail their Bachelor's thesis in the first opportunity will be given one more opportunity to pass the thesis. Students will receive feedback on their first version at the latest on the date of the final deadline for publishing results.

3. Students must submit their thesis through Safe Assignment in EleUM as well as in a hardcopy version. Students do not need to register for the first resit. Deadlines for handing in a revised version are published on EleUM.

4. The Bachelor's thesis, except within Econometrics and Operations Research, may be replaced by the successful completion of a Service Science Factory project, during which the student successfully completes the writing of the Bachelor's thesis.

The BSc thesis is an individual assignment of 8 ECTS; except for the EOR students, who write a thesis in combination with a course for 10.5 ECTS consisting of and covering 1 Bachelor's thesis related course of 6.5 credits and 1) skills training of 4.0 credits.

New approach

In the past years, the belief within SBE has grown that the capstone needed a reform. More in particular, the BSc Thesis and the accompanying process highlights the importance of reflection and feedback, the opportunity to give peer feedback and the inclusion of societal relevant themes/topics.

Legal Status

The legal status of this document is as follows. It is at the discretion of BSc Thesis coordinators to announce additional or refined requirements on code.unimaas.nl, or communicate such requirements in an early stage to registered students. If coordinators do not make use of this option, it means that they agree with this guideline.

Structure of the BSc thesis

Students can choose between two periods for the Bachelor thesis: the Semester 1 (i.e., starting in period 1 and handing in in period 3) or the Semester 2 (i.e., starting in period 4 and handing in in period 6). This makes the Bachelor thesis a six month commitment instead of a skill assignment and still allows students to go abroad for one semester.

The BSc thesis will start with an opening lecture in the first week (i.e., beginning of September for the September to January period and beginning of February for the February to June period). This opening lecture provides general guidelines for the thesis and will introduce the different topics among which students can choose.

The students work on their BSc thesis simultaneously with their courses as a floating skill in so-called BSc thesis circles. The BSc thesis circles will take place during period 1 and 2 (or 4 and 5 respectively). Period 3 (period 6 respectively) will be used to write up the final report. About half of our students that go abroad in the second semester already start in January with classes. In order to circumvent a potential conflict, the planning of the BSc thesis allows students to finish at the end of period 2 (or 5). They can hand in their report earlier at the end of period 2 (or 5), or can finish their report in period 3 (or 6).

Given the increased workload, the number of ECTS has increased from 4.0 to 8.0 for the BSc IB, the BSc EBE and the BSc FE.

BSc thesis circles

3rd year bachelor students will be enrolled in BSc thesis circles. A BSc thesis circle runs in parallel with the two courses and lasts two block periods. The circle will be led by a supervisor (the faculty member assigned by the board of examiners to examine the students), and consists of +/- 10 students. The circles will meet throughout the whole semester. These meetings will be planned by the scheduling office and will be spread over the course.

During the BSc thesis circles, students present their research ideas and research methods and receive feedback from the supervisor and other members of the circle. The first circle meeting focuses on the 'research question' (what will be my specific research question?, is this question interesting?, what are the theories?, how can this question adds value?, etc.) while the second meeting might refine this and focus on the contribution and discusses the literature. The last meeting will be on the research design and data collection.

The meetings serve as a progression evaluation moment where the progression of the students is evaluated. This means that the supervisor indicates if s/he thinks the student has made sufficient progress or not and a particular component is covered in a sufficient manner. Students are evaluated on their progression (assessment).

Content-wise, the BSc thesis includes a kind of knowledge or research application. These applications might be for instance: apply theory to a company case (with the information that found on the internet or through interviews), an analysis on a small data set, a question to design a future research project or a meta-study. This makes it possible for the students to use their own 'creativity' and knowledge and move beyond just a literature review.

Throughout the meetings, the focus is on discussion of progress and feedback. Students will provide feedback on the theses of their peers and will also receive feedback from the supervisor. Besides feedback, the focus of these meetings is on reflection of the writing process. Furthermore, the thesis circles provide students with a structure so set goals and deadlines in a research process.

Students write the BSc thesis as part of their specialisation or major. The students are therefore registered for a BSc thesis linked to the specialisation or major. Regardless of the topic they have chosen, students are mixed. So, one tutorial group consists only of students from major X, but these students can write on topic Y1 or Y2.

Themes of the BSc thesis

The point of departure for the student is his/her specialisation (Economics, EMI, EM) or the major (for IB and EBE students). The thesis is written on broad societal topics that can be

viewed from different angles. Examples are the Economic crisis in Greece, the ageing population in Europe or corporate social responsibility. Each period, 2 themes will be proposed to students.

Students choose one of the themes and link this with their major/specialisation. For instance, a marketing student can write his/her Bachelor thesis on how companies in the FMCG industry can target elderly people (marketing campaign); an emerging markets student can investigate parallels between the economic crisis in Greece and the Asian economic crisis in 1997 (link with Asean economic crisis as part of the EM specialisation). The themes/topics will be announced before July in the academic year previous to the writing up, to make sure students can prepare during the summer.

Form of the BSc thesis

The BSc thesis is an essay of 4500-5000 words (excluding any appendices) based on scientific articles. It should consist of an introduction, one or several main sections, conclusions, and references.

Use of Sources. BSc thesis coordinators might require explicitly in the description that you have to search yourself for articles related to the topic or they might give you an initial reading list. Please check the description on code.unimaas.nl whether this is the case for your BSc thesis. Only add literature in a meaningful way; i.e., if the literature supports your argumentation, and if it adds to the literature already proposed by the coordinator. If you misinterpret literature and draw wrong or doubtful conclusions from it, additional sources could decrease your grade.

Hand-in. You have to hand-in a digital copy as a safe assignment on the last day of the corresponding skills period. Some coordinators might also ask for a hard copy version. The digital copy has to be handed-in in the ELEUM site related to your BSc thesis, using the safe-assignment feature.

Grading. Grading of all BSc theses starts after the deadline, and is done within 15 working days. You will receive a filled-in evaluation form (see ELEUM), which motivates the grade given. On request you will get the opportunity for an inspection.

The form of the BSc thesis should please the reader. If the form is of low quality it will distract the reader's attention from the content. Therefore:

- ✓ Omit spelling errors by using spell-checks.
- ✓ Omit clumsy sentences (schedule at least two days to polish the language).
- ✓ Omit paragraphs with two or less sentences, but make also sure that paragraphs are

- not too long (more than half a page).
- ✓ Use meaningful section and sub-section headings,
 - ✓ Make sure that references are correct and complete. As styles differ across disciplines and journals, we suggest to select one of the articles and use the citation style of this article consistently.
 - ✓ Omit figures and tables that are not explained in the text.
 - ✓ Integrate important figures and tables in the main part, rather than putting them in the appendix.
 - ✓ Omit appendices that are not adequately referred to in the text.

Content of the BSc thesis

Your BSc thesis should demonstrate that you are able

- ✓ to read and understand academic literature,
- ✓ to synthesise this literature in your own words, and where useful, illustrate it by means of examples,
- ✓ to take a position on the topic and to use the academic literature to defend this position,
- ✓ to be self-critical in taking a position by giving also room to arguments that are not in support of your position,
- ✓ to structure your argumentation in a logic way, using the scientific sources where necessary,
- ✓ to follow the rules of academic writing as you learned them during your bachelor studies, in particular with respect to scientific citations,
- ✓ Set up a proper research design,
- ✓ Find additional data to support your literature review and research design,
- ✓ Draw meaningful conclusions.

The introduction should invite the reader to read more. It should introduce into the topic, explain the relevance of the topic and introduce your position.

In order to demonstrate all this you should read carefully all relevant literature. Get yourself an overview on what the provided articles share and how they differ. Think about reasons for potential differences. Think about omissions in the provided articles. What would you have included to investigate the problem? Also, check the suggestions for future research in the articles.

Based on the recommended literature study you should develop your own position on the topic and develop thereby a goal for your BSc thesis: what is it that you want to tell the reader and which position do you want to carry over. The position does not have to cover all aspects of the literature to the same extent. It should be focused and show that you are able to get deeper insights from studying the literature.

If you search for literature, prefer peer reviewed journals. Ask yourself how the literature connects to the recommended literature, and what does it add. How and why does the additional literature change your position, in particular, which weaknesses of provided literature does it overcome. Again, unless it is explicitly required, be careful in adding extra literature and do not add it at the cost of a reduced treatment of the recommended literature.

The main part should synthesise the literature in a critical but respectful way. It is usually not a good idea to discuss the literature article by article. Rather identify themes that the articles address and discuss the articles along these themes. Criticise the literature based on weakness and strengths. Criticise theories, arguments, ideas and methods, but not motives. Reflect your critique and show respect. Most importantly, the main part should be focused towards your position and build up a logic argumentation to support your position without neglecting findings from the literature that might question your position.

A research design is a set of advance decisions that make up the master plan specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the needed information. It includes amongst others typically the following elements:

Information. What kind of information will you collect? Will you do a survey, a case study, create a data file drawn from published works, or something else? Why do you expect this information will provide you an answer to your research question?

Techniques and methodology. How will you analyse your data? Will you statistically assess the relationship between variables? If so, how? If proposing a case study or some possible non-quantitative approach what sort of results will support or challenge your expectations?

The research design is followed by a section on results. Good research is dependent upon the quality of the arguments you have made in prior sections, not the results. In case your approach is a logical, theoretically and statistically sound way of addressing a problem, you have conducted good research.

The conclusion should repeat the main arguments that are presented. You may place these arguments in a broader context: what do they imply for other related problems, and how do they advance our thinking or organisations, industries, markets, or economies. You should also

mention limits of your BSc thesis, and discuss weaknesses from a theoretical perspective. You may make suggestions for further research.

Assessment

As to the assessment of the BSc thesis, the BSc thesis circles give opportunities for feedback. Throughout the process, the following aspects of the BSc thesis have to be evaluated on the four elements of the AOL learning goals (and consequently programme objectives):

1. Knowledge and insight: incl. research method, definition of central problem, own contribution, relevance of literature used, creativity.
2. Academic Attitude: incl. depth of arguments, answer to central problem, argumentation, scientific relevance.
3. Global Citizenship: incl. practical and societal relevance.
4. Interpersonal Competences (ability to communicate their ideas clearly and effectively): incl. style, readability, layout, section linkages, citations, structure of chapters, literature references.

Next to these criteria for the literature review and the final BSc thesis report, students will be evaluated on their input in the BSc thesis circle: 10% of the grading to participation in the circles, 25% to the literature review and 65% to the final BSc thesis.

The assessment of the BSc thesis will be done by two staff members, including the thesis circle supervisor.

Re-examination

In case students do not pass the BSc thesis, the same resit conditions as in the old capstone process apply. If you get an insufficient grade for your BSc thesis, you have about 2 weeks to hand-in a revised version. Precise deadlines for handing in the resit version can be found on ELEUM. If the version that you hand-in as resit is still not sufficient, you will have to register for a new topic in the next semester. In this case, the meetings have to be followed again. Note that this also applies if you did not make use of the first submission deadline, that is, the resit always counts as second chance.

Additional information

For additional information regarding transitional rules and consequences for the BSc curriculum, we refer to the EER.

