

GUIDE TO WRITING SEMINAR PAPERS, PROJECT REPORTS, INTERNSHIP REPORTS, AND THESES AT THE CHAIR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, ESP. BUSINESS INFORMATICS IN THE SERVICE SECTOR

(As of 06/2024)

1.	PROCEDURE FOR SUBMITTING AND REGISTERING THESES	2
2.	GENERAL INFORMATION	3
2.1	THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE	4
3.	PROCEDURE FOR THESES	4
3.1.	ASSIGNMENT OF TOPICS	5
3.2.	INITIAL LITERATURE REVIEW	5
3.3.	“STATE OF THE ART” DOCUMENT (MASTER ONLY)	5
3.4.	CHECKLIST FOR THE THESIS	5
3.5.	INTERIM PRESENTATION	7
3.6.	SUBMISSION OF THE THESIS:	7
4.	STRUCTURE AND CONTENT	8
4.1.	STRUCTURE	8
4.2.	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	9
4.3.	LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	9
4.4.	LIST OF APPENDICES	9
4.5.	MAIN BODY	9
4.6.	APPENDIX	9
4.7.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	10
4.8.	AFFIDAVIT	10
5.	FORMATTING	10
6.	CITATION STYLE	10
6.1.	CITATION GUIDELINES	11
7.	REFERENCES	13
8.	ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS	14
8.1	SUBMISSION OF THESES	14
8.2	SUBMISSION OF PROJECT AND INTERNSHIP REPORTS	14

1. Procedure for Submitting and Registering Theses

Some thesis topics are posted on the department's website. Students interested in writing a thesis at the ISS Department should fill out the form linked below¹. The form requests the following information, among other things:

- Name
- Degree program
- Topic the student wishes to research
- Type of thesis (Bachelor's, Master's)
- Preferred date for starting the thesis
- Unadjusted transcript of records

Applications for the topic must be submitted via the form no later than 6 weeks before the registration deadline for the desired exam date (see Figure 1). Applications received after this deadline cannot be considered for the desired starting date. After the department has reviewed the application, the student will receive a positive or negative response within 2 weeks at the latest, based on the following criteria:

- The deadline prior to the selection date was met
- The student's profile meets the requirements of the topic
- The department has the capacity to supervise the thesis

If the response is positive, the student will receive a suggested date for a topic consultation. The student can then register their thesis with the Examination Office. The deadlines for registration with the Examination Office are available online.²

¹ <https://forms.office.com/e/wkEbsYusVL>

² <https://www.uni-saarland.de/fakultaet-hw/vipa/abschlussarbeiten/ablauf.html>

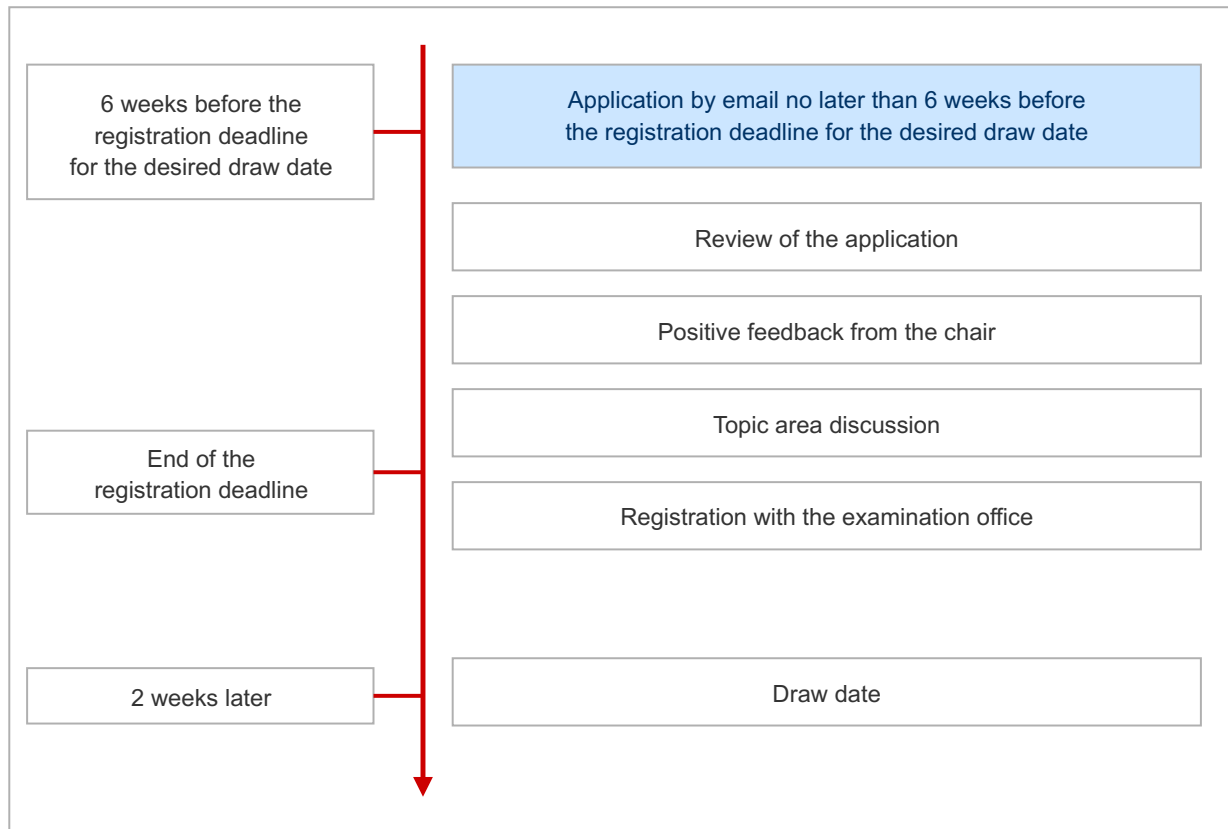


Figure 1: Procedure for Theses

The primary point of contact during the writing of the thesis is the supervising assistant. Throughout the writing process, the student is responsible for maintaining communication. If, despite best efforts, the student is unable to make further progress on the thesis, it is the student's responsibility to actively contact the supervisor.

2. General Information

This guide is intended to assist you in writing seminar papers, project reports, internship reports, bachelor's theses, and master's theses at the Chair of Business Administration, esp. Information Systems in the Service Sector, and to familiarize you with the requirements for academic work at the Chair. Sample topics from past project reports, internship reports, bachelor's theses, and master's theses are publicly available on the Chair's website.³

Below you will find guidelines on the general procedure, the content and format of your paper, citation style, bibliography, and organizational aspects. Chapter 3 (Procedure) applies exclusively to final theses, i.e., bachelor's and master's theses, while the remaining chapters on content, citation style, etc., also apply to seminar papers, project reports, and internship reports.

Project and internship reports document the results of the project or internship, describe the

³ <https://iss.uni-saarland.de/teaching/thesis>

process of gaining knowledge, and identify open research questions.

Theses and seminar papers address a clearly defined topic from which specific research questions are derived, which the paper then examines. Each thesis or seminar paper builds on existing knowledge, identifies a need for research, and, based on this, addresses a new topic. The problems or research questions must be relevant, and their answers must yield either a well-founded theoretical-conceptual or practical benefit.

The goal of a bachelor's or master's thesis is to demonstrate that one can independently and scientifically familiarize oneself with a topic, develop new solutions to defined questions, and prove or disprove their usefulness.

The grade for the final thesis is based on:

- Midterm presentation
- Final Thesis

Both components are graded and contribute equally to the final grade.

2.1 The Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT, GitHub Copilot) for text generation in all seminar papers and theses is prohibited. Any violation of this rule constitutes academic misconduct in the form of an attempt to deceive and will result in a grade of “fail” (5.0). In addition, further disciplinary measures (e.g., loss of the right to take the exam) may be imposed in accordance with the applicable study and examination regulations. A violation of the prohibition on the use of generative artificial intelligence also occurs if individual passages of the paper were generated verbatim by an AI application or if AI-generated text was merely paraphrased.

The ISS Chair is thus following the regulation issued on June 1, 2024, by the Chair of the Examination Office for Business and Economics.⁴

3. Procedure for Theses

The following section outlines the five phases that should be followed when developing a thesis at the department (see Figure 2).

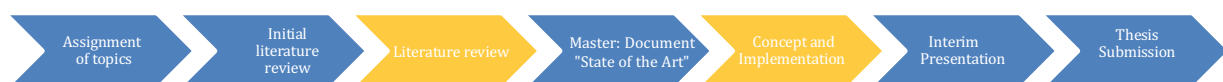


Figure 2: Stages of a Thesis

⁴ <https://www.uni-saarland.de/fakultaet-hw/vipa/news/verbot-generativer-ki-bei-abschlussarbeiten-und-seminaren-32253.html>

3.1. Assignment of Topics

After discussing the topic with the advisor, the student is provided with a list of relevant websites for literature research and given a general idea of what initial search terms to use. The student uses this information to generate additional search terms and begins the research process. The goal is to identify the most relevant academic publications for their own paper.

3.2. Initial Literature Review

The advisor will be sent a list of related works so that they can assess the overall quality of the identified literature and provide further guidance if necessary. This list should include at least ten relevant academic publications. In this list, each publication should be presented with its title and authors, along with a brief summary (2–3 sentences), and an explanation of the publication’s relevance to the thesis (2–3 sentences; the aim here is to highlight what you have learned from reading it for your own work, e.g., which methodological approaches you wish to adopt). This list serves to ensure that the advisor can verify that the student has identified the most relevant papers. The student receives feedback on this list from their advisor, and a deadline is set for the first submission of the actual written summary.

Date:

- 1) **Bachelor: End of Week 2**
- 2) **Master: End of Week 2**

3.3. “State of the Art” document (Master only)

By the set deadline, the master’s student must incorporate the feedback provided by their advisor regarding the literature list (i.e., search for new literature if necessary) and draft an initial summary of the publications. This summary should be written in the style of a “Related Work” section found in academic papers. The summary to be prepared should therefore not only reflect what is described in the papers but also place this in the context of the student’s own work. It should be noted that, as a rule, more works must be read, understood, and described in order to ensure a high-quality “Related Work” chapter in the bachelor’s or master’s thesis; however, the summary serves as a good foundation for this chapter.

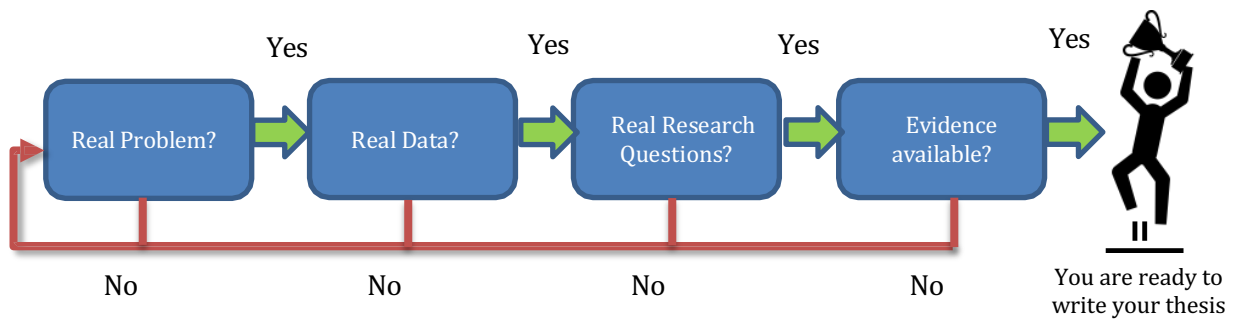
Date:

- 1) **Bachelor: N/A**
- 2) **Master: End of Week 8**

3.4. Checklist for the Thesis

1. Always make sure your work addresses a real-world problem.
 - **Real problems are identified as such by experts.**
 - You shouldn't waste your time on non-real problems.
2. To investigate a real-world problem, you must gain access to real-world data.

- **Real-world data** represents a specific area of interest defined by the problem, with sufficient detail and quality.
 - Gaining access = any means by which you obtain access to real-world data, such as through a third party or by collecting data yourself
3. If you have a **real-world problem** and **real-world data**, the next step is to formulate a **real-world research question**
 4. You must be able to demonstrate that your research question is **novel** compared to the state of the art in IS (Information Systems) research.
 - A literature review is a standard method that can be used for this step.
 5. Table 1 must be completed and presented during the interim presentation



Your Name			
Problem	Data	Research Question	Evidence
Problem description (max. 2 sentences)	Data description (max. 2 sentences)	Research question (max. 2 sentences)	Have you proven your research question [Yes/No] link?
Real / Not-real	Real / Not-real	Real / Not-real	

Table 1. Interim Presentation Table

3.5. Interim Presentation

Following the conceptual section of the thesis (literature review, methodology), an interim presentation is required. The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate that the topic has been understood and to discuss the approach (e.g., methodology, questionnaires, study design, technical development concept, etc.). It is the student's responsibility to contact the advisor early and proactively regarding this matter.

1. The interim presentation will be graded and will count toward the final grade for the bachelor's or master's thesis. The presentation should cover the following aspects:
 - Brief motivation
 - Brief overview of related work
 - Concept
 - Implementation / Method
 - Results (if applicable)
 - Potential impact of the intended results
 - Limitations of the work and potential future avenues for further research ("Future Work")
2. Presentation time:
 - Bachelor's: 20 minutes [followed by a Q&A session]
 - Master's: 30 minutes [followed by a Q&A session]
 - Language: German / English
3. The advisor coordinates the date with the secretary of the chair of Prof. Maaß. Ideally, the second reviewer or their office should also be involved in setting the date. The student sends an email to their advisor using the following format:

Title: [Add the title of the thesis]

Type of Talk: [Bachelor-/Master Defense Talk]

Speaker: [Add your name]

Language: [Will you give the Talk in German or English?]

Time and date: [Add the time and date]

Room: [Add the location where the talk will be given (will be given by the thesis advisor after selecting a date)]

Abstract: [Provide a short abstract of the talk in the language it will be held in]

Date

- **Bachelor: End of Week 3**
- **Master: End of Week 8**

3.6. Submission of the thesis:

1. Length of the thesis:
 - **Bachelor:** 25–30 pages (excluding the title page, the second page, all directories/index and appendices)

- **Master:** 45-55 Seiten (excluding the title page, the second page, all directories/index and appendices)
2. Once the thesis is complete, in addition to the bound and digital copies submitted to the Examination Office, it must be emailed to the advisor.

Date

- **Bachelor: End of Week 10**
- **Master: End of Month 6 (approx. 24 weeks)**

4. Structure and Content

When structuring the content of the thesis, you must consistently adhere to the precise topic and scope of the work. Meetings with your thesis advisor should be used to clarify any open questions. The outline of the thesis should be meaningful and reveal a clear thread of thought. Repetitions and contradictory sections must be avoided.

Clear and concise sentence structure facilitates the reader's understanding. Long, complicated sentences should be avoided, as should unnecessary foreign terms. Established academic terms remain untranslated, such as "Big Data."

The writing style must be appropriate for an academic paper. Colloquial expressions should therefore be avoided, as should personal phrasing. This includes the use of "I." This should be replaced with passive constructions or "the author." The language of the paper is English or German.

4.1. Structure

The basic structure of a thesis consists of the following elements:

- 1) Title page
- 2) Abstract
- 3) Table of contents
- 4) List of abbreviations (if applicable)
- 5) List of figures (if applicable)
- 6) List of tables (if applicable)
- 7) List of appendices (if applicable)
- 8) --- Main body ---
- 9) Bibliography
- 10) Appendix (if applicable)
- 11) Affidavit

The title page must follow the template provided by the Registrar's Office. Upon request, the title page may also be made available in digital form.

4.2. List of Abbreviations

If abbreviations are used, they must be listed in a glossary of abbreviations and introduced in the text (e.g., ERP for Enterprise Resource Planning). Commonly used abbreviations (i.e., abbreviations found in the Duden dictionary such as “cf.,” “e.g.,” “etc.”) do not need to be listed.

4.3. List of Figures and Tables

Tables and figures in the text must be numbered consecutively and listed in two separate lists. These lists of figures and tables should be inserted before the main body of the text.

4.4. List of appendices

All appendices to the paper are numbered consecutively and listed in the table of appendices.

4.5. Main body

The main body of the thesis consists of an introduction, a main section, and a conclusion.

The introduction introduces the reader to the thesis topic. It explains the initial context and the relevance of the topic for research and practice. The thesis should begin with the objectives and an explanation of its structure, and define and delineate key terms related to the topic. The introductory chapter may have a more creative and meaningful title than “Introduction” or “Preface”.

The main body consists of a literature review chapter as well as the design and implementation chapters. The literature review chapter should comprise approximately one-third of the paper. In this section, the current state of research is presented, and the research questions for the paper are derived. The design and implementation section presents the investigation of the research questions.

The conclusion summarizes the results of the thesis and presents their significance for research and practice. Furthermore, the scope of the thesis is delineated to highlight which aspects were not addressed in this study. Finally, an outlook is provided.

Transitions must be inserted between the individual chapters to link them together and establish the “common thread” of the thesis.

4.6. Appendix

The appendix should list relevant documents that are too lengthy to include in the main body of the paper. These include, for example, code examples or questionnaires from empirical studies. The appendix should not be printed on paper with the thesis but made available online in a suitable format (e.g., via SharePoint). The printed thesis should include a note indicating how to access the appendices.

4.7. Bibliography

The bibliography lists, without exception, all sources that were used and cited in the paper.

4.8. Affidavit

An affidavit must be attached to the paper. This affidavit confirms that no unlisted resources were used and that the work was completed independently. It must be dated and signed and include the following text:

“I certify that I have completed this work independently, have used no resources other than those cited, and have clearly identified all direct or indirect quotations as such. Furthermore, I certify that no generative AI was used in the creation of this work.”

5. Formatting

The thesis should be written in 12-point font (Times New Roman) and 9-point font in the footnotes. Line spacing should be 1.5 in the main text and 1.0 in the footnotes. The margins are 2 cm on the right, 3 cm on the left, and 3 cm at the top and bottom. You may choose to create the paper using Word or LaTeX. Theses, project report, and internship reports should have the following page count:

- Internship report: 10–20 pages (complete report)
- Project report: 10–20 pages (complete report)
- Bachelor’s thesis:
 - 25–30 pages (excluding the title page, second page, all lists, and appendices)
- Master’s thesis:
 - 45–55 pages (excluding the title page, second page, all lists, and appendices)

6. Citation Style

Ideas from other sources must be cited. A distinction must be made between direct and paraphrased quotations. In direct quotations, sentences are reproduced verbatim, exactly as written by the author. These are indicated by quotation marks. In paraphrased quotations, only the author’s ideas are cited. In the text, citations are accompanied by a brief reference. Following the main text, all cited literature is listed in the bibliography. If the citation is paraphrased rather than verbatim, the abbreviation “Cf.” is added before the author’s name.

- Brief reference: (Name (Year), page number)
- Example: (Smith (2011), p. 10)

Entries in the bibliography must be listed in alphabetical order. Please ensure that the bibliography is complete. We recommend using a reference management program such as EndNote, Mendeley, Citavi, or JabRef. Select the “APA” citation style in its most recent version (as of June 2024: APA 7th).

If publications by the same author from the same year are cited, they should be distinguished by adding “a,” “b,” etc.

- Example: (Smith (2011a), p. 10)

If the author is unknown, this should be indicated by “Anon.” When citing an internet source, the date the page was accessed should be indicated in square brackets in addition to the URL. A book is listed in the bibliography by providing the last name, first initial, year of publication in parentheses, title (italicized), edition, and publisher. For journals, the entry in the bibliography is as follows: last name, first initial, year of publication in parentheses, title (in quotation marks), journal (italics), volume (bold), issue (in parentheses), page numbers.

Examples:

- **Books:** Hamel, G. & Prahalad, C. (1994), *Competing for the Future*, 2. Aufl., Harvard Business Press.
- **Journals:** Brockhoff, K. (2008), 'Produktinnovation und internes Unternehmenswachstum', *Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft* **78**(2), 225-245.
- **Entries in anthologies:** Bullinger, H.-J. & Renz, K.-C. (2011), Forschungs- und Entwicklungstrategien, in Albers, S. & Gassmann, O., Hrsg., 'Handbuch Technologie- und Innovationsmanagement', Gabler Verlag.
- **Online articles:** Wiehr, H. (2009), 'Grün durch IT bringt viel mehr als Grün in der IT', *CIO*, 20.04.2009, <http://www.cio.de/news/cionachrichten/881769/>, [07.05.2012].

For tables and figures taken from other sources, the source must be cited directly below using the format “Source: Author (Year), Page.” If tables or figures were created or modified based on a source, this must be indicated using “Source: Adapted from Author (Year), Page. In this context, we recommend the book „Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten: Technik – Methodik – Form“ by Theisen, published by Vahlen-Verlag.

6.1. Citation Guidelines

The following provides an overview of the most important rules for handling third-party intellectual property⁵. When writing academic texts, it is essential that ideas, methods, and theories borrowed from third parties be clearly identified as such.

Basic Rules:

Short passages from another author’s work may be quoted. However, this requires that the quotation be clearly identified and the source cited.

- 1) **Citation:** Cite all sources used completely and clearly so that an outside reader can verify them. To do so, follow the standard academic citation rules for your field as well as the specific guidelines for citing electronic sources.

⁵ Adaptation of the “Guidelines for Dealing with Plagiarism” issued by the Teaching Commission of the University of Zurich on April 30, 2007.

- 2) **Original Work:** Clearly distinguish between your own work and that of others. For work by others, name the author. This applies equally to texts, computer code, tables, graphics, and data, even if they originate from the World Wide Web.
- 3) **Direct Quotations:** Enclose text taken verbatim (including parts of sentences or terms) in quotation marks.
- 4) **Paraphrases:** For passages from the literature that you have rephrased in your own words or summarized, cite the source in parentheses.
- 5) **Secondary sources:** Label a citation as a secondary source if you have taken it from another author without verifying the original source.
- 6) **Bibliography:** At the end of your paper, list all sources used and the “inspirational sources” for your work in alphabetical order.
- 7) **General knowledge:** Information that is considered general knowledge (basic knowledge) does not need to be cited. However, if this basic knowledge is taken from other authors (such as a textbook), the source must be cited.

What constitutes plagiarism?

Plagiarism is defined as the complete or partial reproduction of another person’s work without citing the source and the author. The following is not permitted:

- 1) The verbatim or paraphrased use of another person’s intellectual property (text passages, ideas, structure, etc.) without clearly citing the source.
- 2) The use of text excerpts from the Internet without providing the URL and the date of access.
- 3) The use of your own written works, or parts thereof, in multiple term papers or assessments without explicit identification.
- 4) The translation of foreign-language texts or text excerpts without citing the source.
- 5) Submitting a work under your name that was written by another person (“ghostwriting”) or by artificial intelligence.
- 6) The use of text excerpts from another work, even if paraphrased and with a citation of the source used, but not within the context of the excerpt (example: hiding the plagiarized sources in a footnote at the end of the paper).

Citation Check:

- a) Are you familiar with the citation standards of your field? (If in doubt, check with your advisor early on.)
- b) Are direct quotations enclosed in quotation marks and does the author’s name appear (with page numbers)?
- c) Are all authors of cited, paraphrased, or borrowed ideas acknowledged?

- d) Is third-party intellectual property clearly separated from your own work and properly cited?
- e) Are all sources used listed alphabetically in the bibliography?
- f) Are online sources cited?
- g) Have primary sources been given preference over secondary sources?
- h) Have formal criteria been followed?
- i) Have tables, figures, and images taken from other sources been cited?
- j) Has the affidavit been signed and included?

If you can answer “yes” to all 10 questions, your written work should pass any electronic plagiarism check, and you can submit it with a clear conscience.

7. References

The thesis should primarily cite academic journals, as well as specialized texts and textbooks. These are available in the university libraries, through electronic journal databases (e.g., Ebsco), and, if necessary, via interlibrary loan. Priority should be given to citing relevant literature from the ISS Chair. Care must be taken to ensure that the latest editions of the books are used, as well as books that meet the requirements of academic work. Rankings for academic journals include, for example, the “VHB-JOURQUAL” ranking by the Association of University Professors of Business Administration and Business Informatics or the Handelsblatt ranking for business administration journals.

In addition, all students have access to a tutorial on the procedure for conducting a literature analysis.⁶ In addition to the methodology for structured literature analysis, this tutorial also discusses other literature databases and approaches to evaluating the quality of literature.

⁶ <https://www.loom.com/share/2954056aff87460baa7f429fe3aaefa1?sid=a866e8ed-7823-4333-8bea-ddcf7e03fab0>

8. Organisational matters

8.1 Submission of theses

Theses must be submitted in the following format:

- Two single-sided, bound copies and an electronic version on a physical data storage medium (to be submitted to the Registrar's Office)
- Electronic copy (PDF and OpenOffice / MS Word / LaTeX file) via email to the supervising thesis assistant
- Signed consent form authorizing the thesis to be checked using online plagiarism detection software

If an empirical study is conducted as part of the thesis:

- Submission of all datasets, transcripts, video and audio recordings, and questionnaires to the supervising assistant in digital and processable form (e.g., CSV, XLS, SPSS, R, Smart-PLS)

8.2 Submission of Project and Internship Reports

Project and internship reports must be submitted in the following format:

- One printed and bound copy
- An electronic copy (PDF and OpenOffice / MS Word / LaTeX file) via email to the supervising thesis assistant
- A signed consent form authorizing the use of online plagiarism detection software to check the thesis

If an empirical study is conducted as part of the paper:

- Submission of all data sets, video and audio recordings, and questionnaires to the supervising teaching assistant in a digital and processable format (e.g., CSV, XLS, SPSS, R, Smart-PLS, MAXQDA)