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*Guidance for the preparation of a seminar paper, project reports,
a Bachelor Thesis or a Master's Thesis*

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List of Abbreviations

LoA List of Abbreviations

MRP Material Requirements Planning

List of Symbols

- d Demand rate [units/time unit]
- F Fixed cost for ordering [monetary units]
- h Holding cost rate [monetary units/(unit·time unit)]
- q Lot size [units]

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1 Introduction

These guidelines are intended to give students rules that may help them write a small scientific work. Knowing these rules will help writers successfully put forth their ideas on the subject while correctly crediting others' work and allowing the reader to follow their thoughts.

This guidance is structured as follows. In the second section, we describe the general appearance of a document and specify its contents. Section 3 answers fundamental questions of scientific writing. The fourth section deals with issues related to supervision. Section 5 focuses on the specifics of a Master's thesis in cooperation with a company. In addition to this document, a Word template is provided. This file supports students in concentrating on their primary task, which is writing a scientific paper. When working with LaTeX or alternative word processor software, the requirements below can be used to set up the document.

Please note that the guidelines are subject to change or might not comply with the study regulations' most recent changes. Ensure that you use the latest version of this document and consider the applicable study regulations before starting your writing project. You can find the date of the guidance version on the cover page.

2 General Appearance and Structure of a Paper

2.1 Length of Paper and Format Requirements

The length of any work is restricted. A seminar paper's main body should include approximately 15 pages unless otherwise stated in the seminar description. A Master's thesis does not exceed 50 pages, and for a Bachelor's thesis, a page target of 20 applies. The main body includes everything between the first word of the Introduction and the last word of the Conclusion, and it comprises all figures and tables embedded in the text. Deviating from the target number of pages is possible but can lead to downgrading if the supervisor does not consider the extra space necessary. Please, contact your supervisor if you intend to deviate from the target length of your paper.

In case of not using the provided template, please follow the subsequent formatting:

- A4 paper, in single-column pages, with 12pt font (Times New Roman or similar) and 1.5 line spacing, justified text, hyphenation active

- Page margins: Left 4 cm, Right 2 cm, Top 2.5 cm, Bottom 2 cm.
- No page break for a new heading is necessary unless there are less than two lines left on the current page (hint: check manual page breaks before submission)

We recommend 14pt bold for main headings and 10pt for footnotes and captions. Printouts should be one-sided only, and pages should be numbered. All pages before the main body are referred to as 'front matter' and receive Roman numerals (I, II, ...). The main body and the back matter (all pages following the main body) are numbered with Arabic numerals (1, 2, ...).

2.2 Structure

The following structure is recommended:

- Title page
- Table of Contents
- Lists of Abbreviations, Symbols, Figures, Tables (if necessary)
- Main body (Introduction, further sections, Conclusion)
- Appendix (optional)
- Bibliography
- Confirmation (only for Bachelor's and Master's theses)

The respective list can be omitted if no abbreviations, symbols, figures, or tables are used.

2.3 Table of Contents and Headings

The table of contents provides the reader with a sketch of the work. It represents the work's logical structure. Headings are brief and give precise information about the content of the respective section. Headings are numbered. Subheadings (e.g., 4.1, 4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2) must follow structural logic. In particular, heading 4.1 is not necessary without heading 4.2 following it. Avoid more than three levels of headings.

The main sections (except Introduction and Conclusion) should be balanced, i.e., they should not differ significantly in length. If less than one-half of a text page appears under a heading, perhaps it makes more sense to move it into another section. Along the same lines, a section title followed by five text pages would seem too long, suggesting a paper restructuring may be appropriate.

2.4 Use of Abbreviations and Symbols

Abbreviations or acronyms are used to shorten long scientific terms. Since standard abbreviations in one field of research are not generally known to students at the author's level (like MRP for material requirements planning), their meaning should be clearly and unambiguously defined at first use. They are added to the List of Abbreviations (LoA). Commonly used abbreviations (e.g., i.e.) which appear in, e.g., Webster's dictionary are excluded from the above rule and need not be defined nor placed into the LoA. Abbreviations used only once are unnecessary and should be avoided.

Symbols are used in mathematical models. They have to be used in a single sense (unambiguously) within the whole paper, i.e., two different symbols should not have the same meaning. One symbol should always have the same meaning (even in different models). All symbols must be defined in the text where they occur for the first time. Additionally, they are added to the List of Symbols.

2.5 Figures, Tables, and Formulae

Figures and tables transfer information to the reader in a concise and clear form. Tables and figures are placed in the text, and a caption is added that is also listed in the List of Figures or List of Tables, respectively. The caption contains a consecutive number throughout the work (like Figure 1 or Table 3), a text that shortly describes the figure or table's content, and the source. Own illustrations are credited like "Source: own figure" or "Source: own table," respectively. The axes must be labeled concerning values and units if mathematical graphs are used. Any figure or table must be discussed in the main text, describing what information it conveys and how to read it. Excessive use of tables and figures is to be avoided, as they use much space. Colored figures should be made so that their interpretation is possible when printed in greyscale. Avoid low-quality graphics or scans.

Formulae should be created using an appropriate software tool (e.g., Microsoft Equation Editor) and numbered. Their meaning should be explained in the text.

Example: Let q^* denote the economic order quantity. The demand rate is d , the fixed cost is F , and the holding cost rate is h :

$$q^* = \sqrt{\frac{2 \cdot d \cdot F}{h}} \quad (1)$$

Equation (1) describes how the economic order quantity depends on the parameters.

2.6 Electronic Version of the Thesis and Literature

The submitted seminar papers or theses must be accompanied by an electronic version of the paper/thesis. Depending on the type of work, this version can be sent via email (e.g., as a zip file for seminar papers), uploaded at eLearning, or attached to the printed thesis on a storage medium such as a CD/DVD or SD card. Please consult the applicable rules in your study regulations. Moreover, all spreadsheet and program files should be added to the medium. To support the assessment process, all sources used, which are available in electronic format, have to be submitted as a pdf file. If the thesis is written in cooperation with a company, all data are handled according to the agreed-upon level of confidentiality.

3 Scientific Writing

3.1 Style

Academic writing is centered on answering predefined research questions. The intended reader is a student in a management program at the same level as the author. The work should be focused, well-structured, and follow a common thread. The aim is not to write as much as possible but as necessary to answer the research questions. Separate essential from irrelevant content and keep to the point. The author should use an objective style, avoiding slang and superficial opinion altogether. Value judgments should be well-grounded and justified. Pursue clarity in the presentation and avoid confusion. As many terms are used ambiguously in the literature, terminology must be clearly defined. If the reader undoubtedly understands terms because they have been introduced in the core study program, they need not be explained.

Seminar papers and theses should be written in good British or American English. Use a spell and grammar check (provided with any word processor like Word) and reread and revise the work. Apps such as LanguageTool or Grammarly can even improve the writing style.

3.2 Introduction and Conclusion

The Introduction briefly describes the topic and motivates the research. It poses research questions and shortly discusses the methods applied for their answer. It usually includes a short discussion of the topic's relevance, a definition of the thesis objectives by giving three main research questions, and an overview and methodological approach. The

research questions serve as a framework that guides the work, and they should be answered in the Conclusion. The overview outlines the structure of the work (refer to main sections only), illustrates which methods are used, and provides a preview of the main insights. In a Bachelor (Master's) Thesis, the Introduction covers a max of one (1.5) page(s).

The Conclusion should summarize the work's main results and indicate the starting points for further research (outlook). Just think about what you would have done next if there had been more time. In a Bachelor's (Master's) Thesis, the Conclusion covers at most one (two) page(s).

3.3 Working with Literature

Scientific work must appropriately consider the work of other scientists. It is helpful to consult the given literature, subject-specific dictionaries, encyclopedias, literature reviews, or state-of-the-art articles to get an overview of the topic. A thesis for a Master's degree should contain a survey of the relevant fundamental and current literature. The minimum of sources depends on the subject and must ensure that the appropriate research is competently summarized. A seminar paper (Bachelor/Master's Thesis) should consider at least 5 (10/20) scientific articles as a guideline.

The latest results are usually published in journals first. We recommend using scientific literature databases the university library provides, like Scopus or Business Source Premier, to find recent papers. In contrast to a simple internet search, which helps you find the *easiest accessible* sources, databases provide tools to find the *most relevant* articles. Besides, we suggest looking for review articles and working papers which have not yet been published. Non-scientific journals and publications should be avoided, except for motivating research by citing industry or business periodicals (e.g., The Wall Street Journal, Harvard Business Review, etc.). The following journals provide reliable sources:

- Annals of Operations Research
- Computers & Operations Research
- Decision Sciences
- European Journal of Operational Research
- IIE Transactions
- International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management
- International Journal of Production Economics

- International Journal of Production Research
- Journal of Business Economics
- Journal of Forecasting
- Journal of Operations Management
- Journal of Supply Chain Management
- Journal of the Operational Research Society
- Management Science
- Manufacturing & Service Operations Management
- Naval Research Logistics
- Omega
- Operations Research
- Operations Research Letters
- OR Spectrum
- Production & Operations Management
- Schmalenbach Journal of Business Research
- Transportation Research Part A, B, E
- Transportation Science

Other scientific journals can be equally relevant (ask the supervisor). There is also a negative list of journals that should be avoided (<https://beallslist.net/>).

The latest edition should always be used for citation when referring to textbooks, provided it is available. Typically there is redundancy in several textbooks' content. Therefore, keep the number of textbooks used small and only add other textbooks if they provide additional ideas. A published paper should be cited instead of the corresponding working paper. Internet sources should only be used when reliability is ensured and if the information is not found in books or journal articles. Lecture scripts, handouts, and anything else that the reader cannot access is not used and cited in scientific writing.

Any idea directly (through quoting) or indirectly (through paraphrasing) obtained from another source must be appropriately credited to that source by citation. This also applies to terms that are not common knowledge and lines of thought. **All ideas taken from other sources should be identified** as a general principle, accomplished by quoting the source. Not every sentence needs such a reference, but it must be recognizable which idea comes from which source. Taking words or ideas without crediting their source is plagiarism, and plagiarism is entirely unacceptable in the academic community.

Any violation of the citation rules is treated as academic misconduct and will cause the work to be graded as insufficient.

Every source quoted should be added to the Bibliography, and every source given in the Bibliography must have been cited in the work.

Quoting can be accomplished using several methods (indirect quoting, direct quoting, or secondary quoting), as explained in the following.

Indirect quoting is the most commonly used way to repeat ideas by others. It consists of a *paraphrased* work, which means that the ideas are repeated in the author's own words of the seminar paper or thesis. Just rearranging a sentence or replacing single words is not enough. At an appropriate point – which could be either at the beginning or the end of the passage – the source must be given in line with the text:

According to Lee et al. (1997, p. 93), the so-called bullwhip effect was first mentioned
by Procter & Gamble.

or

The so-called bullwhip effect was first mentioned by Procter & Gamble (see, e.g., Lee
et al., 1997, p. 93)

Direct quoting or translating foreign language formulations should be used sparsely, i.e., only if precise phrasing is essential. Complete phrases are repeated word by word (including punctuation and typographical errors). To quote directly, the phrase is inserted into quotation marks and is followed by the source like:

"P&G called this phenomenon the "bullwhip" effect." (Lee et al., 1997, p. 93)

Secondary quoting. Since quoting is standard in scientific works, you might find ideas in a paper that credits another source, i.e., you want to "quote a quotation." In any case, you should try to get and read the original to cite it. Given the effort and time requirements, it could be impossible to obtain the source, then secondary quoting should be used. A secondary quote consists of the origin as well as the source where you found the expression connected by "cited using," e.g.

According to Lee et al. (1997, cited using Chopra and Meindl (2013), p. 263), the so-called bullwhip effect was first mentioned by Procter & Gamble.

Both sources are added to the Bibliography. Overusing secondary quoting is considered a bad style and should be avoided.

Sources are given in Harvard Citation Style (the so-called 'short-form'), which includes:

- (1) Author's last name(s). Initials should be used only if more than one author has the same last name. If there are more than two authors, the first author's last name is given, followed by *et al.*
- (2) Year of publication. If there is more than one publication per year for a particular author, the year should be followed by 'a', 'b', 'c', ... and this addition should be consistently applied to the Bibliography.
- (3) Page numbers for the citation unless you refer to a whole work and not some specific information.

By supplying the above information, curious readers can consult your Bibliography if needed, including the sources in 'long form.' Make sure that your citation style is consistent throughout the work.

Note on *plagiarism check* using software: The submitted work is checked by plagiarism software to determine whether others' ideas and text are displayed as your own. What matters the most is whether the source was correctly given or not. If a source of ideas is concealed, it is considered plagiarism. Consequences of such a discovery may lead to legal sanctions, in addition to failing the exam requirements due to attempting to deceive.

With the submission of your work, you agree that it is tested using the software.

The **Bibliography** contains references to all sources that are cited in the text. It should be constructed using a uniform format (like the APA Style; see apastyle.apa.org), allowing the reader to obtain the literature of interest quickly. The entries must be sorted first by the first author's last name, then by the name of the second (or following) author(s), and so forth. Suppose all authors are the same by date. We give examples of references and information on how they are referred to in Table 1 in Appendix A: References and Bibliography.

4. Scientific Presentations

A scientific presentation should inform the audience about your work. It should account for the knowledge of the audience, and it should be easy to follow. The presentation rests upon clearly designed slides that contain the information to be conveyed in an abbreviated form (e.g., bullet points but no complete sentences). In the best case, slides are understandable even without the talk. The structure should be appropriate for the contents. Formulae and figures/tables can be used. Commonly used are Overview or Agenda slides,

a Motivation or Introduction part, and a Conclusion and Outlook slide. The oral presentation must be held in a fluent and free manner and stick to the time limit. Test driving the presentation is highly recommended. Questions during the discussion have to be answered thoroughly.

5 Supervision

You are encouraged to ask your supervisor for an appointment in case of questions. To guarantee efficient guidance, any meeting must be preceded by informing the supervisor of your request's purpose or the question you want to be answered. Attach any material/references/links that you deem essential in the matter to your request.

To assist in the preparation, you must provide the following information on your project to the supervisor. You should provide two or three **research questions** that you want to answer with your work, the proposed structure of your paper (**table of contents**), and a **list of literature** to be used (formatted according to the guidance). If the necessary information is not provided at least 48h/2 days before the meeting (excluding weekends), it will be canceled, and another appointment will be made.

Please note that you are the project manager of your thesis or seminar paper and bear any responsibility for the supervision process's progress. You are responsible for making appointments and submitting your thesis to the examination office on time.

5.1 Bachelor Theses

A bachelor's topic might include a short project description. The project description is not to be changed without the explicit approval of the supervisor. A first appointment is used to discuss your project plan. Provide your supervisor with a preliminary table of contents and a list of literature to assist the discussion. We offer you to present your intermediate results in an interim presentation, which is not graded. This presentation should describe the problem to be solved and your proposed solution. The intention is to provide you with additional feedback and ideas for improvements. We offer to sample read a small part of the thesis (2-3 pages) before final submission and feedback on style and writing. Please make sure that there is enough time left to implement the feedback from the supervisor.

5.2 Master's Theses

When writing a Master's Thesis, you will receive a topic. During the reading time, you are responsible for developing a single-page project description that should include the following items:

- Short description of the topic
- 2 or 3 research questions that should be answered in your thesis
- Methodology to be applied to answer the research questions
- The above points should be linked to at least three scientific articles that are important when working on the topic

The project description needs approval from the supervisor. As for a bachelor thesis, an interim presentation will take place. A sample read is not offered.

6 Master's Theses Written in Cooperation with a Company

Students have the opportunity to write their Master's thesis in cooperation with a company. However, the topic must be interesting both from an academic and from the company's point of view. For instance, this is the case if novel methods/concepts from the academic literature are applied in a business context. To achieve the best possible results, the student should gain appropriate knowledge of the firm's processes by entering an internship beforehand. A project description (2 to 4 pages) must be written during the internship. It should emphasize all of the following:

- Shortly introduce the department(s) of the firm involved.
- Delineate the decisions for which decision support is needed.
- Relate the problem to the attended lectures using the terminology from class.
- Motivate the concepts and (quantitative) methods to analyze the problem setting and derive recommendations for future actions. Add references to the relevant scientific literature.
- Describe the available company data that is to be used in the project.
- Describe the evaluation criteria to compare the improved decision support system's performance with the department's currently used approach.

Based on this project description, the scientific supervisor decides whether the thesis project should be conducted.

7. Working on Case Studies and Writing a Project Report

In teaching using case studies, much of the learning process occurs in groups of students who discuss a case (a written description of a business problem), bringing their individual experience and understanding of the relevant literature as presented in the course. This teaching method prepares students to cope with real-life issues that require understanding a complicated situation, applying relevant theory and common sense, and formulating and testing a solution. Much like in real life, cases are often written so that there is no correct solution – you will find that you and your classmates may have radically different ideas about the nature of the described situation and the best way to resolve it. That is fun, and that is where the learning is. We use case teaching because it makes education relevant, lets the students apply theory and judgment to real problems, and enables students to learn from each other and not just from the instructor. Working with cases helps bridge the gap between the simplistic examples used in class and the real world.

7.1 How to Solve a Case

We suggest the following **procedure to solve a case**:

- First, scan the case to get an overview and understand the company, industry, and exhibits. Next, read the case carefully, list the questions you would like to answer, and think about the theory that helps answer them. Feel free to add your questions to those already posed in the case description. These questions highlight salient portions of the case and make you do the analysis.
- Update your knowledge of the theory using appropriate sources, make a sheet of notes with your suggested solution method (or alternative solutions), and discuss it with your team members. Use methods that have been discussed in class or which are introduced in a textbook.
- Implement your solution method using a spreadsheet model. This can be done jointly or individually. In any case, discuss the results with your team members and plan the next steps. The spreadsheet models should account for the modeling principles and preferably use the functions introduced in class. Modeling principles are:

- Separate data from the model.
 - Document the spreadsheet model to make it self-explaining. The decision-maker (or you at a later point) might want to work with the spreadsheet.
 - Use simple formulas and cell names. Distribute complicated formulae over several cells where necessary.
 - Make proper use of relative and absolute cell references
- Document your (finally chosen) solution method and your recommendation in a report.

7.2 How to Write a Project Report

When writing the report, you assume the analyst's role in informing the decision-maker. You want to convince the decision-maker that the applied methods are appropriate and the results are correct. The text should sketch what you did, how you did it, and why you did it this way. Do not just describe what you did but also explain why you did it this way, e.g., if you had to decide between different models or procedures. Your report's audience is the decision-maker, i.e., a manager in a company with a university degree at your level but without detailed knowledge of the quantitative methods you learned in class.

You don't need to give full models, and solution procedures since these already have been implemented in the spreadsheet model / R script / program code and are checked there. Since you adapt models/methods from literature, add precise references to information sources (including page/chapter numbers). Add all sources used to the Bibliography.

The text should include:

- *A sketch of the decision situation*, the alternatives to be compared, and the precise criterion/criteria to evaluate the alternatives.
- *A motivation of the method/model* used to obtain the criteria values, critical assumptions restricting the method/model's applicability for the decision situation, and a sketch of the solution process (provide appropriate sources; textbook rather than lecture slides). Describe the technical limitations of the spreadsheet model (e.g., the maximum number of customers for which the formulae will produce correct results).

- Comparison of the alternatives' performance regarding the criteria, a *proposal for the decision*, and critical discussion of the impact of the assumptions on this choice. Where possible, include a sensitivity analysis.
- *Further analysis suggests* additional alternatives, an extended model, and generalized assumptions (preferably with appropriate sources). Think of what you would like to analyze next if you had the time and data. Or, which information that you might be able to gather in real life would be helpful?

A joint Introduction and a Conclusion section are not required when working on multiple mini-cases, and each mini-case is documented in a different section. Stick to the page limit and hand in the report on time. There is a Word template file at your class site.

7.3 How to Present a Project Solution

You are expected to explain your solution methods when presenting a project solution in class. Quickly sketch what you did, how you did it, and why you did it this way. Make use of the Excel sheets your team developed. Extra PowerPoint slides are not required. The presenting team will be selected randomly, and the presenting team member switches during the presentation as requested by the instructor.

8 Conclusions

We hope this guide will provide valuable assistance as you write your paper. We would draw your attention to our references if a specific case were not covered. Turabian (1996) should be used as the working reference, a short version of the Chicago Manual of Style (Grossman 2003), considered the complete reference. The recommended dictionary for English is Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. Appendix B: Grading Criteria summarizes the essential aspects of grading your work.

Lastly, you are encouraged to contact your supervisor if you have any questions.

Appendix A: References and Bibliography

The following table contains guidelines for citing in footnotes and the Bibliography. Please note that the references in the bibliography entries are sorted in alphabetical order, and differentiation concerning the type of source is not necessary.

Table 1. Examples of different kinds of references

	Citation in text	Reference in bibliography
Books	Author(s) (year, page number)	Author(s) (publishing year) title. edition (if > 1st), publisher.
Single author	Nahmias (2008, p. x)	Nahmias, S. (2008) Production and Operations Research. 6th ed., McGraw-Hill.
Two authors	Chopra and Meindl (2013, p. x)	Chopra, S., Meindl, P. (2013) Supply Chain Management. 5 th ed., Pearson/Prentice Hall.
More than two authors	Silver et al. (1998, p. x)	Silver, E.A., Pyke, D.F., Peterson, R. (1998) Inventory Management and Production Planning and Scheduling. 3rd ed., John Wiley & Sons.
Journal articles	Author(s) (year, page number)	Author(s) (publishing year) title of the article. Name of the journal and volume, pages (first-last).
	Inderfurth and Mukherjee (2008, p. x)	Inderfurth, K., Mukherjee, K. (2008) Decision Support Systems for Spare Parts Acquisition in Post Product Life Cycle. Central European Journal of Operations Research 16, p. 17-42.
Articles in collections	Author(s) (year, page number)	Author(s) (publishing year) title of the article. Name of the editor(s), ed(s), title of the collection and edition (if necessary), publisher, pages (first-last).
	Inderfurth and Langella (2008, p. x)	Inderfurth, K., Langella, I.M. (2008) Planning Disassembly for Remanufacture-to-order Systems. in: Gupta, S.M., Lambert A.J.D., eds., Environment Conscious Manufacturing, CRC-Press, Boston, p. 387-411.
Working Paper	Author(s) (year, page number)	Author(s) (publishing year) title of the working paper. Publishing institution.
	Inderfurth and Voigt (2008, p. x)	Inderfurth, K., Voigt, G. (2008) Setup Cost Reduction and Supply Chain Coordination in Case of Asymmetric Information. FEMM working paper 16/2008, Otto-von-Guericke-University Magdeburg.
Internet sources and web page	Author(s)/editor(s)/company (year)	Author(s)/editor(s)/company (year) title. URL: address, Last visit on: date.
	Oanda (2012)	Oanda (2012) Currency Converter for 164 Currencies. URL: http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic Last visit on: 2012/09/18.

Appendix B: Grading Criteria

The grading of seminar papers and theses considers different aspects relating to the content and form of the work.

Regarding the content

- The research question and the focus of the work fit the scope of the topic.
- The table of contents is consistent, and the headings are informative and fit the sections' contents.
- The Introduction contains motivation, research questions, and methodology and gives an overview of the work. The Conclusion provides short answers to research questions and an outlook.
- The argumentation is consistent and logical and follows a common thread.
- The work is written in a scientific style and motivates reading.
- The language is precise and free of superficial opinions.
- The presentation of used methods and theoretical concepts is correct.
- Methods are correctly applied to own example(s) and convincingly presented.
- The discussion of the topic has been done independently and shows originality.
- The current and relevant literature on the topic has been integrated meaningfully.
- Tables, graphs, and similar aids have been usefully integrated.

Regarding the form

- The citation style is flawless.
- The Bibliography is complete and correct.
- Table of contents, list of symbols, list of abbreviations, list of tables, and list of figures are complete.
- All specific terms and abbreviations have been explained.
- The notation is comprehensible and standardized.
- The specifications regarding the length and form of the paper have been met.

Grading of presentations considers the following aspects:

- The slides are clearly designed.
- The structure is appropriate for the content.
- The oral presentation was held in a fluent and free manner.
- Questions during the discussion have been answered thoroughly.

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