

UmeÅ... school of business and economics



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Umeå... SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS LATEST CHANGE: 2012-01-09 Umeå University Thesis writing in Business Administration Thesis work is often perceived as fun, rewarding and challenging; you get to choose the topic and immerse yourself in your own area of interest. However, you will also face large demands on independence and analytical ability. If you write on commission, you can also experience the fulfillment that the knowledge you develop will benefit others. The work is very different from other courses; you will be trained to plan and carry out a project during a limited period of time. This text is a general introduction to thesis writing in Business Administration at Umeå School of Business. You should be able to use the table of contents to quickly find the information you are looking for. Although the text covers many different issues, it does not cover all possible issues; rather it constitutes a common ground for the variety of theses written at Umeå School of Business and Economics. In many areas, such as references, you can find additional instructions on the Internet and in various books. The instructions provided in this manual are primarily focused on thesis work, but the formal requirements, reference system, etc. are applicable to all written assignments and project works in Business Administration. Good luck with your thesis! 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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1 1. 1 Introduction Basic Rules for Thesis Writing This manual applies to thesis writing in Business Administration at Umeå School of Business and Economics. There is a variety of theses on different levels and scope (for an overview, see table 1 below). For 30 hp theses, the thesis work begins at the start of the semester and is then continued on full time during the whole semester. Also for the 15 hp theses the thesis work should begin early in the semester in order to increase the likelihood that it is completed on time. If you have registered to write your thesis during the second part of the semester, you will in the beginning of the semester team up with a fellow student and be assigned with a supervisor. You should also choose your topic and have the first meetings with your supervisor. Once the formal thesis writing period begins, you should have come so far that you immediately can start working very hands on and efficiently with your thesis. Please note that all thesis courses are campus courses so that you are expected to be able to collaborate with a partner in Umeå and participate in supervision meetings and seminars at campus. Some formal rules:

- Theses at the Bachelor's level are linked to each individual supervisor and his/her thesis group. Supervisors are assigned at the beginning of each semester and the supervisors contact the students for a first supervision meeting. The notification is usually sent via e-mail (to your @student.umu.se address). In case of questions regarding this, please contact the thesis coordinator.
- Theses in Business Administration at Umeå School of Business and Economics are normally co-written by 2 authors. It is not possible for two co-authors to write one and the same thesis on differing levels. For example, a student can only coauthor a

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Bachelor thesis with another student writing at the Bachelor's level. i,·

Students following a Master's degree program are to write their thesis within the program's area of knowledge to be able to make a relevant scientific contribution. i,· Theses must be complete in order to be presented and defended at the final thesis seminar, which in turn may only take place during semester time. If authors are unable to complete, present, and defend their thesis within the designated semester, the seminar is postponed to the next semester.

1. 2 Required activities in the thesis course

The most extensive assignment to pass the thesis course is, obviously, writing the actual thesis. It requires your full attention during the assigned time period, and as mentioned above, we strongly recommend that you begin your preparations beforehand, for instance elaborating upon a possible thesis topic, in order to be well-prepared when the course begins. Furthermore, there are a number of other activities that you must also plan to execute during the semester. They are clearly described in the thesis syllabus and you will find further information about each activity in this manual. Below is an overview of all required activities to be performed during the thesis period.

1 Table 1. Overview of required activities to pass the thesis course.

Bachelor's thesis, 15 ECTS	Thesis + defense.	Graded by the grading committee
Sideoppositions + seminars		Graded by seminar leader
Main opposition		Graded by seminar leader
Work-inprogress seminars		Graded by supervisor
Required. Normally in pairs	Magister/1st Year Master's thesis, 15 ECTS	Required Normally in pairs
Required	Degree Project, 30 ECTS	Required Normally in pairs
Required	2nd year Master's thesis, 15 ECTS	Required Normally in pairs
Required	2nd year Master's thesis, 30 ECTS	Required Normally in pairs
Three Individual assignment	Two Individual assignment	Two Individual assignment
Two Individual assignment	Two Individual assignment	Two Individual assignment

Individual assignment Two Individual assignment Required. Written part: individual assignment. Oral part: could be in pairs. - Required. Written part: individual assignment. Oral part: could be in pairs. - Required. Written part: individual assignment. Oral part: could be in pairs. Three. Individual/ in pairs Required. Written part: individual assignment. Oral part: could be in pairs. - Required. Written part: individual assignment. Oral part: could be in pairs. Three. Individual/ in pairs 2 Supervision and Supervisors At the beginning of each semester (or, for 30 hp theses, at the end of the previous semester), the thesis coordinator for Business Administration at Umeå School of Business and Economics will call to information meetings regarding thesis writing. Information on date and time for these meetings and for course registration will be posted on USBE thesis website. During the first weeks of the semester, the thesis coordinator will assign supervisors to each thesis (30 hp theses are firstly attended to). Accordingly, students and supervisors cannot make their own agreements on supervision. 2. 1 The Role of the Supervisor The role of the supervisor is to be a discussion partner; he or she should ask the (critical) questions and point to problems, rather than clarify exactly how to improve your text in large and small. The supervisor tries to coach you and your co-author to be sufficiently ambitious and / or to focus the aspirations so that thesis project is realistic and feasible. The mentor will provide advice, but will also make sure you are working independently. Above all, the supervisor is a ‘sounding board’ against which you can test your ideas. As for the grade, the supervisor is not responsible for leading the paper to VG (pass with distinction); rather, this grade is achieved by your independent work and your ability to 2 use the supervisor’s comments to develop your thesis. Further, the supervisor is not responsible for

proofreading the thesis. If you choose to write the paper on commission, the supervisor's role is to discuss how the scientific requirements for the thesis can be reconciled with the commission. The supervisor's task is, however, mainly to help with the report's academic standards, not the commissioned task as such. (More information on writing on commissions can be found at the home page and in Section 2. 4). A good advice: before any meeting with your supervisor - plan what it is you want to discuss and what you want answered. This may involve the presentation of the theory chapter, how to design a questionnaire, etcetera. You will gain the most from the supervision/ tutorial if you can tell the supervisor how you, for example, plan to make your selection, and then asks the supervisor for feedback on your suggestion. It is not recommendable to start by asking the supervisor " how should we make our sample" or " what should our research question be", because with such questions, you are not giving any input into the process.

2. 2 The Supervision Process Each supervisor holds an introductory meeting where the supervisor and the thesis writers jointly draw up guidelines for their cooperation. For example, the supervisor clarifies the options available for coaching at different times and how to book a meeting with your supervisor. Comprehensive planning for the rest of the semester is typically made at this or the next meeting. To this meeting you should bring any prior theses (e. g. a Bachelor thesis) that you may have written. Depending on the type of thesis you are writing, different requirements applies for your supervision. A minimum requirement for all types of thesis is that students and tutors meet to discuss the drafts of various parts of the thesis on at least three occasions. The syllabus for 30hp Master's Thesis and the Project Degree sets additional requirements about participation in in-progress

seminars (see the respective syllabus and section 2.3 in this manual).

Normally supervision meetings are booked in advance and the supervisor has no obligation to be available for drop-in visits. Sometimes the supervision meeting is connected to a draft of a chapter or a questionnaire, etcetera. This draft should then be delivered to the supervisor on an agreed upon time and date well before the tutorial. Normally, the draft is provided in hard copy form outside the supervisor's office. In case of problems in the thesis work or with supervision, the student should first contact the supervisor, thereafter the thesis coordinator or the director of studies.

Students are only guaranteed supervision during the semester when they are (first-time) registered on the thesis course. Supervision is only provided during the semesters (i. e. not during summer). In case you have registered on the course but realize that you will not write your thesis this semester, you must immediately notify your supervisor and study counselor. Please note that the thesis course is a campus course, i. e. you are expected to meet with the supervisor in person on regular occasions.

2.3 Work-in progress seminars

During the 30 ECTS Degree Project or the 30 ECTS Master's Thesis (2nd year), three work-in progress seminars (WIP seminars) are held which are obligatory for the student to participate in. The seminars are scheduled by the respective supervisor, who also provides specific instructions for each seminar. The intention with the WIP seminars is to support the thesis writing process. You must fulfill this assignment in order to pass the course. Also in other types of thesis supervision, the supervisor may call her/his thesis students to seminars for joint discussions during the writing process. This is an important opportunity to receive valuable feedback on your own work and practice how to scrutinize the work of

others, which you should make the best use of. 2. 4 Writing on Commission

Writing on commission can be a stimulating process. It can feel particularly worthwhile conducting a study for one's thesis that has a clearly practical application/contribution. It also makes the process of choosing a field of research that much easier, providing at the same time a contact/contacts with the business world (which may be of use when entering the labor market). At the same time, it is worth noting that writing a thesis on commission can involve considerably more work than otherwise. Also, it is rare that a commissions' stated problem can be "transferred" directly into an academic research question. Rather, the student/s themselves must, more often than not, further define, delimit and formulate an acceptable academic research question (that is clearly linked to theory, delimited and that is reasonable to carry out) within/based on the commission. To fulfill the demands of the syllabus, a commissioned thesis cannot be too controlled and detailed; you as the author must be allowed to make independent choices. For example, a commissioned assignment is too controlled if it contains specifications of exactly what questions to ask, who to ask, when and how. It is also worth noting that students writing a thesis on commission should find out from the very start what resources (time, money, etc.) the client company/organization is willing to make available, and what the client expects in return (e. g. format for the report, presentation of results to the company, etc.). Be clear with the commissioner exactly how much it is reasonable to expect that you can do within the frame of a thesis. In particular, you should be clear on when you will be performing the data collection, to make sure that 4 the commissioning organization can provide information and/or participate in the study on those particular dates/weeks

Another important question is who will own the data that you gather, and who will be using it upon the completion of the study. This issue has consequences for how you present the project/thesis to potential respondents and others; and it is important that you can give them appropriate and fair information about how data will be used and for what purpose the study is being made. Sometimes, the company or organization that has issued the commission may require of you to sign an agreement on secrecy in order for you to gain access to company data. If so, please study the contract carefully in order to make sure that your thesis work could proceed satisfyingly. Please note that any such agreement only concerns you and the company and should not involve the University or your supervisor, but we recommend that you consult with your supervisor before signing such a contract. It is important that the company understands that once the thesis has been defended on the final thesis seminar, it becomes a publicly available document — there are very few, in practice no, possibilities to classify a thesis as secret. On the other hand, facts like company name and other information may be made anonymous or altered to protect company secrets or individual integrity. Your supervisor must, however, always be allowed full access to all raw data that you utilize in your thesis. On the thesis home page, you find information about current assignments from companies and links to other sites where you can find external assignments. There is also an information folder aiming at both students and commissioner that you could present to the company.

2. 5 Ethical Guidelines for Thesis Work

In your thesis work, existing ethical guidelines for social science research must be adhered to. Some of the general ethical principles are: Anyone who participates in a study (e. g. respondents in interviews)

must be given enough information to give so called "informed consent" about their participation; studies should be carried out and reported in such a manner that participants do not experience inconvenience because of their participation; promises of anonymity and confidentiality must be maintained. Guidelines on the use of data in accordance with such rules and regulations such as the Swedish Data Act (Datalagen) must be respected; the researcher may not act deceptively in data collection and data reporting; information about the starting points for research and possible commercial or other interests must be disclosed. Although these rules may seem obvious to many, borderline cases do occur, and to the extent you are unsure about what is appropriate, you should discuss the matter with your supervisor. 5

Information on ethical guidelines can be found in most method books. For in-depth information on ethical guidelines, we refer to the Research Council's website, www.vr.se, and their section on ethics. Furthermore, an essay is an independent project. This means that it is you and your thesis partners that must carry out the work and write the text. Both authors are equally responsible for all parts of the text, and the work should be equally divided between the authors. On the thesis web page, you find detailed instructions about the requirements for independent text processing in academic texts (such as theses). There are also links to UmeÅ Business School and UmeÅ University's policies on plagiarism and attempt to mislead. All theses are to be submitted to Urkund before the thesis seminar (to the supervisor's Urkund address). In chapter 12 you also find information on how to cite different types of texts. Another important concern is the fact that the thesis, after the final seminar and approval, will become a public document and that it will be publicly available on the internet. It is therefore very important that

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you as thesis author reflect upon which information that should be included in the thesis and if it might be appropriate to anonymize companies / respondents (but of course your supervisors and your main opponents must be informed of which organization/s you have studied). At a bare minimum, respondents should be informed that the material will be available to the public so they know what they agree to when they participate in the study. Concerning anonymity, it is important to distinguish between on the one hand, a situation where fictional names are used, but where it still is possible for people who have insights into a specific company or industry to understand which the studied company is or even exactly which individuals that have been interviewed, and on the other hand, complete anonymity. It is also recommended that you are informed about the rules that apply for research according to the Swedish Personal Data Act (Personuppgiftslagen, PUL, SFS 1998: 204). See e. g. the home page of the Swedish Data Inspection Board for further information.

3 Thesis Types and Syllabuses

Thesis writing is an important part of a university education because it trains and tests your ability to run and complete an independent project during a limited time. You are trained to select a topic, design a study and draw conclusions. Theses differ from other papers that you write at university in terms of the time allotted to the work, the demands on depth, breadth, and quality as well as independent work. There are different types of theses, and which thesis you write depends on the type of program and the type of courses you read and on which type of degree you are pursuing. At Umeå School of Business and Economics, we currently have the following theses within Business Administration:

- 6 On basic level: Bachelor's thesis, 15 hp (for a Bachelor's degree)
- On advanced level — at the end of in total four years of

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study i,§ Magister thesis, 15 hp (for a Magister degree) i,§ Degree Project, 30 hp (for a “ Civilekonom Degree”1) On advanced level — at the end of 2 year Master’s program: i,§ Master’s thesis in Business Administration (2nd year), 15 hp i,§ Master’s thesis in Business Administration (2nd year), 30 hp

Possible combinations of theses and degrees: i,§ Degree Project 30hp + 15hp Master’s thesis (2nd year) = “ Civilekonom degree”2 + Master’s degree 120 hp. i,§ 15hp Bachelor’s thesis + 15hp Magister thesis (first year) = Bachelor degree + Master’s degree 60 hp. i,§ 15hp Bachelor’s thesis + 30hp Master’s thesis (2nd year) = Bachelor degree + Master’s degree 120 hp. i,§ 15hp Bachelor’s thesis + 15hp Magister thesis (first year) + 15hp Master’s thesis (2nd year) = Bachelor degree + Master’s degree 60 hp + Master’s degree 120 hp. The above theses are written at different levels and with different time frames (15 or 30hp); hence the requirements also differ. It is important that you read the syllabus and the learning outcomes for the particular thesis you are writing (you will find links to all syllabuses on the thesis web page. See also the comparisons of theses in chapter 4 and description of generic marking criteria in chapter 7.

4 Differences and Similarities between Thesis Types

Table 1 contrasts key differences and similarities between different theses. The demands on scientific contribution and the observation of scientific practices increase as we move to the right in Table 1. On the Bachelor’s level, the demand to develop new knowledge is relatively low, and there are fewer restrictions on your choice of topic. However, we strongly recommend that even on the Bachelor’s level you choose a topic relatively close to your field of specialization. On the Magister and in particular the Master’s level, it is crucial to pick a topic within the confines of your particular program in order to fulfill the demands on scientific

contributions. Overall, the demands on a Master's thesis are naturally higher than those for a Bachelor's thesis. 1 NB! The Degree Project work for a Civilekonomen degree can be translated into a 15hp Bachelor's thesis + a 15hp Magister thesis; but the reverse, that is to receive a Civilekonomen degree by converting a 15hp Bachelor's thesis + 15hp Magister thesis into a 30hp degree project work, is not possible. 2 In English: M. Sc. in Business and Economics 7 Table 2. Overview of differences and similarities in the requirements for different types of theses. Bachelor's thesis 15hp

Formulation of research question and purpose. May be primarily practically motivated and focus on problem solving (for a particular organization).

However, even a thesis targeting a practical problem must contain an academically acceptable research question. It is acceptable to include some course literature and introductory literature on the topic. The main part of the theoretical frame of reference should however be comprised of scientific journal articles and research based books. Magister thesis 15hp The research question/ purpose should primarily focus on knowledge development. It should preferably also be practically motivated. Degree Project 30hp The research question/ purpose should focus on both practical problem solving and knowledge development. Master's thesis, second year, 15hp The author should identify, define and motivate a research gap (either in theory, in the application of theoretical models on a new empirical area, or methodologically). Master's thesis, second year, 30hp The author should identify, define and motivate a research gap (either in theory, in the application of theoretical models on a new empirical area, or methodologically). The study must give a scientific contribution. The main sources in the theoretical frame of reference should have a clear research

focus. The literature review should be thorough and the choice of literature should indicate a good insight into the field. Very strong emphasis is placed on the student's ability to process and evaluate theories. A very strong demand on designing the study to provide a contribution to prior literature. It is required that the student can position the results relative existing literature and explain the contribution (i. e. ' contextualizing the study).

Literature choices. For all types of theses, the students must independently search relevant literature and position their theoretical framework relative established research on the chosen topic. The main sources in the theoretical frame of reference should be scientific journal articles, doctoral dissertations and books based on research. The student's ability to

independently process theories is important. The main sources in the theoretical frame of reference should be scientific journal articles, doctoral dissertations and books based on research. The student's ability to

independently process theories is important. The main sources in the theoretical frame of reference should be scientific journal articles, doctoral dissertations and books based on research. The choice of literature should

indicate a good insight into the field. The student's ability to process and evaluate theories is important. A very strong demand on designing the study to provide a contribution to prior literature. It is required that the student can position the results relative existing literature and explain the contribution (i. e. ' contextualizing the study). Use of theory / Scientific ambition & approach

It is accepted that the theoretical frame of reference primarily is used to solve a practical problem. E. g. using the GAP-model of service quality to explain a company's interaction with its customers. The conclusions must have theoretical implications. E. g. by testing or developing theories or

generating new ones. An example is studying a number of firms to develop the GAP-models and reach more general conclusions. The conclusions should have certain theoretical implications (see magisteruppsats). 8 Choice of method and methodological discussions. For all types of theses, the methodological discussion must be tied to the specific thesis. The methodological discussion must be relevant based on the research question. The demand on generalizability/transferability can be reduced The demands on methodological awareness increases (also concerning epistemology and ontology). Relatively large demands are place on the argumentation for methodological choices and on a stringent and scientifically acceptable study and analysis. The demand on generalisability/transferability is strengthened. The methodological discussions should have a very clear connection to the problem area and show methodological maturity. Strong demands on a stringent and scientific empirical study and analysis. The demand on generalizability/ transfer-ability is strengthened. . Presentation of results and analysis Here, the theoretical framework is combined with the empirical results in a systematic, trustworthy and independent way. A more descriptive result presentation and analysis is accepted. The presentation of results, the analysis and the conclusions should provide knowledge that to some extent can be considered scientifically accepted. An extensive (i. e. solid) empirical material is required. Presentation of results, analysis and conclusions should provide knowledge that to some extent can be considered scientifically accepted. The thesis should result in an empirical and theoretical contribution. Practical recommendations are required. The methodological (and theoretical) choices should show a good understanding of the study and the field's ontological and epistemological underpinnings.

The methodological discussions should be very clearly connected to the problem area, show methodological maturity and be in accordance with the remainder of the thesis. Strong emphasis on generalizability/ transferability. Presentation of results, analysis and conclusions should provide scientifically generated knowledge. High demands on independent treatment of data, on systematic analysis of theory as well as data, and ability to lift the level of abstraction in the analysis. Other. Number of pages 40-60 40-60 50-80 50-70

The methodological (and theoretical) choices should show a good understanding of the study and the field' ontological and epistemological underpinnings. The methodological discussions should be very clearly connected to the problem area, show methodological maturity and be in accordance with the remainder of the thesis. Strong emphasis on generalizability/ transferability. An extensive (solid) empirical material is required. Presentation of results, analysis and conclusions should provide scientifically generated knowledge. High demands on independent treatment of data, on systematic analysis of theory as well as data, and ability to lift the level of abstraction in the analysis. The main differences compared with the 15hp Master's thesis are increased demands in depth and breadth. 70-100 9 5 The Final Thesis Seminar The thesis work ends with a two-hour final thesis seminar where the authors defend their thesis. If the thesis has been authored in English, the students and their opponents must be prepared to hold the seminar in English. Only when all participants (including sideopponents) speak Swedish, it is possible to hold the seminar in Swedish; however such a decision cannot be made in advance as it would exclude English speaking sideopponents. Students studying the International Business Program must always write the thesis in English and hold the

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seminar in English, as the program is given entirely in English. 5. 1 Before the Thesis Seminar Each author is responsible for recruiting main-opponent/s for the thesis seminar, normally from outside the author/s thesis group (that is, do not exchange theses with students supervised by the same supervisor if you have met on seminars during the thesis semester). You are able to advertise for a main opponent at our thesis website. Do not forget to firstly check whether there is already a suitable web-ad posted! We recommend that you organize the exchange of theses and main opponents as a constellation of three theses; so that A critiques B's thesis, B critiques C's thesis and C critiques A's thesis. A key advantage of such a system is that the set up will function even if one of the three theses involved is not completed on time. When opponents have been recruited and the thesis is in its final stages of completion, the seminar needs to be scheduled with the supervisor and the opponents. As supervisors usually have both other responsibilities and other theses to supervise, it is a good idea to have a number of alternative dates and times. (In case the supervisor is unable to attend the seminar, the School will arrange with another supervisor to lead the seminar.) Sometimes a preliminary date may be set as a guideline for work on the thesis. When date and time for the seminar has been finally agreed upon, the authors will book a room for the seminar. At the thesis seminar, the authors, supervisor, main opponent/s and side-opponents will participate. The thesis is held accessible to side-opponents access via the thesis website³. 10 days (weekends included) before the thesis seminar, the thesis should be made available for side-opponents via uploading on the designated web page no later than 15. 00. (During the last two weeks on the spring semester, the time is reduced to 7 days.) You will also state name of <https://assignbuster.com/ume-school-of-business-and-economics/>

the supervisor and main opponents as well as date, time and place for the seminar. When the thesis has been uploaded to side-opponents, Studentexpeditionen will announce the seminar on a blue Seminar Notice at the thesis notice board. Printed copies should at the same time be handed in to the main opponents 3 Please note that it is not your responsibility to “find” side-opponents! It is they who choose your thesis, if they wish. The seminar could, in principle, be executed without side-opponents. 10 and the supervisor). The seminar version of the thesis should also be submitted electronically to Urkund (to the supervisor’s Urkund address). For Bachelor’s theses up to 7 side-opponents may register for a specific thesis. For Magister and Master’s theses and Degree Project work, up to 5 side-opponents may register for a specific thesis. Further, 2 copies should be handed in to the supervisors (one of these copies is intended for the grading committee, see section 7. 3), and finally one copy to each main opponent. Authors are responsible for printing the required number of their thesis. If you choose the University service office Print and Media (in “ FÅ¶rvaltningshuset”) for printing, it is advisable to book in good time. Whatever print alternative is decided upon, do not miss the 10-day or 7-day (see above) distribution rule. (See also information on Printing and Archiving at the home page). 5. 2 After the Thesis Seminar After the thesis seminar, revisions to both content and form may be assigned. Any complementary work needs to be approved by the supervisor. This approval is included in the comments given by the supervisor to the grading committee. Complementary work should be completed and handed in to the supervisor at the latest four weeks after the need for revisions was announced. Time outside the official semesters is not included in these four weeks. The supervisor will then hand over the thesis to <https://assignbuster.com/ume-school-of-business-and-economics/>

the grading committee for assessment (you can read more about this procedure in section 7. 4). The thesis is then graded by the grading committee, and the grade is announced by an email to the authors' @student. umu. se- e-mail addresses. Thereafter, the thesis should be published as a pdf-file in DiVA (UB's database for scholarly work). For details, see " Printing and Archiving" on the home page. A printed archive copy of the thesis should also be handed in to Studentexpeditionen. When this has been achieved, the grade can be reported into the reporting system Ladok. However, the complete grade on the thesis course can only be reported in Ladok when not only the author's thesis, but also his/her main opposition and side-oppositions as well as potential compulsory work-in-progress seminar have been reported with the grade pass (see the applicable syllabus for details about the compulsory parts in for your particular type of thesis). 6

Opposition The opposition on a thesis comprises the critiquing of and reflections about the thesis as a whole and in parts, by one or two main discussants/opponents (fellow students). This critical examination is an important part of the process of assessing and evaluating the value and contribution of scientific or scholastic work. A thesis seminar is therefore a forum for this critical examination, but is also an important opportunity for further 11 learning by and feedback to the authors. The critical examination that takes place in the thesis seminar, which comprises a scientific dialogue, is also intended to increase understanding of the thesis by the seminar participants and also to provide suggestions for improvements. 6. 1

Principles for Opposition/Critical Examination A critical examination of a thesis can be organized in many different ways, and there are many guidelines in the relevant literature which basically say the same thing.

However, no guideline can replace an understanding of the work that is reported in the thesis under examination, and therefore no guide can give an exact recipe for a specific opposition. The content of such an examination depends on the research question and the actual form of the thesis to be examined. Despite this, it is possible to give some general pointers for how to approach an opposition. The written and oral examination of the thesis should be well proportioned in terms of time and text, and should cover both strengths and weaknesses of the thesis in its entirety and in its parts. A critical examination contains an overall assessment of the entire text, based on points of view/departure that are well-argued. A well-run and carried out opposition gives both positive and negative appraisal of the work, and is best organized in the form of a dialogue between the opponent and the author. A constructive dialogue can allow the opponent to ask questions or highlight issues that may require further description or elaboration in the text, or that may need further developing or rethinking. Initiating and maintaining a dialogue means that the authors who are defending their thesis must be given the opportunity to respond to the questions and issues raised; not just in terms of time but also in terms of openness to listen to such responses. The opponent should lay up a well thought-through and well-motivated line of argument to support such issues and questions, arguing for his/her point of view in a constructive manner, and thereby highlighting the effects and consequences of choices made in the thesis relative to the study's research question and objectives. The opponent should be prepared to suggest improvements and discuss both alternative interpretations and the fruitfulness of the chosen approach. Serious criticism should never be subverted, but should be presented and discussed in a factual manner.

Further, the opponent is responsible for ensuring that the thesis receives a good opposition, whatever the quality of the thesis (even those that are very good or very bad!), as discussion of alternative approaches and interpretations of findings are always relevant and useful. Critique that is central to the quality of the thesis should be separate from that which is of less importance. The opponent should as far as possible, keep the whole of the thesis in mind even when dealing with parts of the text — which means that the opponent should always link the critique of the part back to the effects the issue in question has on the 12 whole content of the thesis. For example, when discussing the research question chosen the discussion can be linked to follow-on effects, such as consequences for the choices made later in the thesis, and what these may mean for the relevance of the findings. When discussing the method, for example, this can be related to consequences in terms of data presented, findings and back to the stated research objectives and question. An opposition should highlight the fundamental issues and show how the choices that are made affect the whole. It may be appropriate for example to follow one train of thought or comment at a time, and to develop the effects and consequences of that train of thought or comment throughout the different following sections of the thesis. This ‘thematic’ opposition means of course that an opposition organized in this way does not involve a strictly chronological chapter-by-chapter assessment, and may be a form for a fruitful dialogue to arise. It follows from the above that a critical examination is not a page-by-page assessment, mixing major and minor issues. Such an approach does not bring clarity to a thesis, but rather hide the main points, and result in an overemphasis on trivialities. The resulting impression may be that the

opponent has not really understood what the important issues are. Further, page-by-page opposition almost always leads to lack of time or scope in the thesis seminar, so that the concluding parts of the thesis, such as the analysis and findings are subject only to superficial treatment. There are rarely any “ right” or “ wrong” choices in a thesis. Rather the value of the choices made have to be seen in the light of the arguments made for each choice. This means that a well-discussed and well-motivated line of argument supporting each methodological choice made in the thesis needs to be present in the text. Lack thereof should be paid attention to and discussed by the opponent. Similarly, each individual section of the thesis should build logically on and from previous sections, and if this is not so, then the opponent should comment on this (it should be mentioned that what is logical in one situation may not necessary be logical for another — look for the line of argument supporting such choices). However, there are factual errors that may occur, such as when the author states that a random selection of interviewees has been made when in fact the author has interviewed those individuals who happened to be in the room at the time of interview, or that the author states that the study is inductive but that it is in fact testing whether a theory is correct, or that the authors have made gross errors of calculation that affect the results of the study, and so on. The main opponent/s are responsible for checking how sources of references 4 have been used in the thesis. If plagiarism or any other unclear issues arise or are suspected, this has to be made known. Format and language are to be commented from an overall point of view, rather than continually during the opposition. Detailed comments on language and format are to be given to the author/s and supervisor on a separate list. 4 As a general rule, the main

theoretical/ literature sources should be such that it is possible for the opponents, the supervisors, the grading committee and others to identify and check the use of these sources.

13 6. 2 Course Requirements: One Main Opposition

Every thesis author must act a main opponent (Sv: 'huvudopponent') of one other thesis at the same level, at some point time of the process of writing his/her own thesis (e. g. one main opposition of another C-level thesis if the student is writing his/her own C level thesis, or one main opposition of another 30 hp Master's thesis if the student is writing his/her own 30 hp Master's thesis). On top of this requirement, the student must also conduct a number of side-oppositions (Sv: 'sido-opponent') — see below. The main opposition consists of both an oral examination at the thesis seminar and a written text that is submitted to the seminar leader. It is important to conduct the critical scrutiny with regard to the specific learning outcomes in the course syllabus related to the thesis you are examining! The oral part of the main opposition can be carried out by a single opponent or by a pair of opponents. The main opponent is expected to lead the thesis seminar from beginning to end, whilst side-opponents are expected to complement the main opposition with their active participation. A main opposition should cover the different sections of the work, and it is the main opponent's responsibility to dispose of the time available in such a manner that there is enough time to highlight/examine every part. It is also the responsibility of the main opponent to ensure that both strengths and weaknesses are discussed. The supervisor is primarily to be seen as a resource/support in relevant discussions arising in the seminar, rather than as the leader of the seminar itself. The written main opposition is an individual assignment, resulting in a memo of 5-6 pages to be handed in to <https://assignbuster.com/ume-school-of-business-and-economics/>

the seminar leader in the beginning of the seminar. The written part of the main opposition is intended to ensure that the opposition is well prepared and to provide a good foundation for grading the opposition (fail/pass). Further, in case two students are doing the opposition together, the individual written part will ensure that both opponents are well prepared and equally contributing to the seminar discussion. The thesis seminar and the main opposition — crucial phases: The seminar begins with the authors being given the chance to address any errors and/or adjustments to the text. Thereafter, the main opponent/s presents how he/she has planned the seminar. The main opponent should then continue with a short presentation of the contents of the thesis to be examined, in order to bring to light any potential misunderstandings and to establish a common ground between author and opponent concerning the core of the work reported in the thesis. The formal opposition of the thesis then follows. At the conclusion of the thesis seminar, the main opponent hands over to the supervisor for his or her comments and assessments of the thesis and seminar. The main opposition is graded with either a Pass or Fail. The grade is individual and based upon both written and oral performance. Therefore, the grade cannot be delivered at the seminar; instead, the seminar leader will give you feedback on your oral performance. As soon as possible after the seminar, the supervisor will read your memo and set the grade; however it might take a couple of days since the supervisor could be fully booked with thesis seminars. S/he will report the grade to Studentexpeditionen who then registers the grade. You are advised to check your grade via “ Portalen” rather than contacting the seminar leader or Studentexpeditionen. Should the main opposition be graded as fail, a new main opposition on a different

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thesis has to be undertaken. 6. 3 Course Requirements: 2 or 3 Side-oppositions Apart from conducting a main opposition, every student writing a thesis has to individually complete side-oppositions of other theses and attend and participate in the related thesis seminars. Every student writing a Bachelor's thesis will write 3 side-opposition papers and actively participate in these thesis seminars. Every student writing a Magister thesis, a 15hp or 30hp Master's thesis, or a 30hp Degree Project will write 2 side-oppositions and actively participate in these thesis seminars. The side-oppositions must be performed on thesis of the same level and type as the thesis you are writing. However, in case of shortage of theses on your level, you could do your side-opposition on a thesis on the level above. 5 Please note that during the semester, there are generally very few theses available for side-opponents, which does not mean that there is a shortage! Instead you must await the last day for publication of theses during the semester before choosing a thesis on the level above. (If you pick a thesis on the level above, please indicate this on the memo.) In case you have questions or concerns about this you should contact the thesis coordinator. Please note that side-oppositions are individual assignments. 6. 3. 1 Routines for Side-oppositions a) Check regularly the Thesis Notice Board outside the Student Office for notices on coming thesis seminars (blue Notice, posted 10 days prior to the seminar, or 7 days during the last two weeks of the spring semester). Alternatively, check the thesis home page under the heading side-oppositions for upcoming thesis seminars. b) Download a copy of the thesis from the thesis home page. It is not possible to 'book' in advance a thesis for side-opposition. It's a "first come, first served" system. c) Write up your comments regarding the thesis, and hand in the written opposition in 1

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hard copy to Studentexpeditionen no later than the date and time stated at the Thesis Seminar Notice. Normally, submission of side-oppositions via e-mail is not accepted. On the title page of the written side-opposition, please include the following information:

5 For example, a student writing a Bachelor thesis may in case of a shortage of other Bachelor theses to make side-oppositions on, instead choose a 1st year Master's thesis. . 15

Name and civil registration number Title of the thesis to be examined and the name of the supervisor Side-opposition no: _____ (Insert the level and number. E. g. Bachelor's 3, or, Magister 2, Degree Project 1, and so on. In addition to the side-opposition, active participation is required at the thesis seminar. Absence from the seminar will result in fail regardless of the causes for the absence. Written side-oppositions are graded either as Pass or Fail. Grading is based on both the formal criteria such as length and quality of the written opposition, and on participation during the seminar. Should the side-opposition be graded as a Fail, a new side-opposition on a different thesis has to be undertaken. (It is not possible to revise a failed sideopposition.) Grading of side-oppositions is announced at the thesis seminar. A short written feedback is given on the first page of the written side-opposition which is returned to the student at the seminar. The rest of the written side-opposition is delivered to the authors. However, if the side-opposition receives the grade fail, the entire side-opposition is given back to the side opponent (and not to the thesis authors).

6. 3. 2 Requirements on Side-oppositions A side-opposition should comprise 4-5 pages which constructively examine the contents of the thesis in accordance with the general criteria laid down for writing and examining theses (see above). Any direct re-presentation of the text of the thesis cannot be counted towards

the 4-5 page scope of the side-opposition, nor can discussion regarding the layout of the opposition itself, etcetera. Further, the written side-opposition should not be ‘fluffed out’ by an overdriven use of titles. The layout and font should correspond to the instructions for theses (see section 10.3 in this manual). It is important for the student to note that the quality of discussion to be found in the sideopposition should not be different from that of a main opposition, even though the limited scope in terms of number of pages may probably limit the number of issues that can be taken up. The use of examples and concrete suggestions for improvement are important elements of a good side-opposition. Further, your overall assessment of the thesis must be clearly stated. An assumption is that there should be a progression in quality in your sideoppositions. That is, your second or third side-oppositions should be of a higher quality than the first.

6.4 Opposition — Examples of Questions

As mentioned previously, there are many ways to plan an opposition. The question or issue raised are intended to act as a source of inspiration for what questions it is useful to ask oneself when examining a thesis — they are not meant to dictate how to lay up the opposition. It is also worth keeping in mind the assessment criteria used by the supervisor in evaluating the thesis.

16 Problem background, problematization, research question and purpose

Is the topic relevant? For a thesis in business administration on the particular level? Which other sectors within and outside of business administration are affected by or related to the topic? Why is it interesting and/or important to write about this topic? What has the scientific and practical development within the area been like? What is expected to happen in the future?

Is the research question clearly introduced, motivated and formulated? Do you understand

the general idea of the thesis? Why is it a problem? For whom? Where — in which country, which type of organization, for which group of people? Is the research question possible to answer? What type of knowledge can result from answering the research question? Are the scientific value and the practical value of the study clearly stated? What are the links to previous research? Is the research question well anchored in previous research? Have relevant concepts (such as concepts appearing in the research question or the purpose) been properly introduced and defined? § What is the relation between research question and purpose (and possible delimitations)? Are the research question and/or the purpose too broad or too narrow? Is there a connection between the research question and the purpose? Is the purpose wider than the research question? § What is the link between the research question and the purpose and the actual work in subsequent chapters of the thesis? Methodological points of departure § Is there a reasonable connection and compatibility between research question, purpose, epistemology and scientific approach? Are the different methodological choices clearly stated and argued for? Are the authors clear on their epistemology and ontology? Do the authors display in-depth methodological understanding? § Are the research design and the chosen methods appropriate for answering the research question? Have the authors provided clear and relevant arguments for their choice of study objects (e. g. respondent selection)? For the choice of data collection methods? For the choice of method for analysis? § Is the conduction of the study clearly described and argued for? Do the authors show a reasonable understanding for flaws in their work and how they have attempted to overcome different shortcomings? Theoretical frame of reference § Are the chosen theories

relevant — possible to use in this particular study? Are there other and more appropriate theories/literature? Are there theories of importance for the thesis that are missing/have been excluded? Have the authors done a thorough and systematic literature search? Is there an adequate scientific level of chosen theoretical sources? Have the authors understood and adequately used the theories? Is the place given to discuss a certain theory relevant given its overall role in the overall thesis? Do the authors clearly argue and take a stand in the theoretical chapter?

17 Presentation of results

Is the presentation of results reasonable and does it fit logically with the research question? Have data been appropriately gathered, e. g. has the questionnaire been developed based on relevant theoretical concepts? Has the operationalization of the theoretical concepts been successful? Is the presentation of results in accordance with the method of data collection? For example, have case studies been appropriately described? Have interviews been handled and described in an appropriate manner? If statistical methods have been used, have the proper procedures for different tests been observed? Does data allow for the tests made? (E. g. issues of the scales used). Does the results section prepare for the analysis in a fruitful manner? Is the presentation of results systematic and easy to understand and follow? Is it possible to assess/evaluated the instruments of data collection (e. g. questionnaires, interview guide, schema, observation plan, analysis tools)?

Analysis

Is the analysis reasonable and logical based on the research question? Is it consistent with epistemological claims and is it reasonable based on method, theory and scientific approach (e. g. deduction and hypothesis testing)? Are factors strengthening as well as weakening the interpretations included? Is there a clear connection to theory in the

analysis? Are the authors successful in analytically raising the level of abstraction in the analysis to avoid it merely repeating the results section? Credibility in conclusions and recommendations i,§ Has the research question been answered? And is the purpose fulfilled? Are conclusions and recommendations clearly related to the research question? And anchored in the data presented? And are they reasonable? Is the contribution of the study, theoretically and practically, made clear? Overall impression, stringency and argumentation i,§ Is the disposition of the thesis stringent? How have the authors succeeded in connection the different parts of the thesis? Is there a logical structure? Have some parts (e. g. chapters or specific cases or theories) received too much/little space? What contribution does the thesis as a whole provide? i,§ Are the language and the argumentation clear throughout the thesis? Is the title of the thesis, well-formulated, interesting and relevant to the content? Is