

Guidelines for Academic Writings

Professorship Financial Accounting

Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf
Faculty of Business Administration and Economics

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Version: April 2022

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1. General Remarks

Academic writings are subject to formal requirements. Therefore, the present guidelines for academic writings are mandatory for the compilation of scientific work at the Professorship Financial Accounting. The most current version of the guidelines that is available on the website of the professorship need to be applied. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in a strong devaluated grading. Please consider that guidelines for academic writings may differ between professorships and that the present guidelines differ from the guidelines offered by the Examination Office.

The following explanations and examples will not cover all emerging issues that can come up during your academic writing process. In this case, please adhere to alternative and common approaches or better consult your supervisor in special cases. Make sure that any formal decision you made is consistently used throughout the whole paper. Inconsistency in the use of the present guidelines may also result in a strong devaluated grading. Pay special attention to the citation and reference requirements described in these guidelines. If you miss to refer to someone else's work in any manner, this may result in the grade "not sufficient" (5.0). The failure to comply in this regard can also have legal consequences. A master's or bachelor's thesis differs from a project study/seminar paper not only in terms of required page numbers or binding type, but also by the Declaration of Authorship the student needs to sign. This declaration has a binding legal character.

2. Fundamentals

All master's and bachelor's theses, as well as project study/seminar papers, need to be formatted as white DIN A4 paper that is one-sided printed. Use Times New Roman as font type and justified text alignment throughout the whole paper. Footnotes are left-justified. Furthermore, please use hyphenation to make sure that your main text is as readable as it can. To avoid mistakes, please use the automatic hyphenation in MS Word and check the hyphenation properties in advance. Do not do it manually!

The current rules for orthography, grammar and punctuation need to be applied within the whole academic work. If the rules allow more than one alternative, make sure that you stick to the chosen alternative consistently throughout the whole work.

The only appropriate language to use in an academic paper is the scientific language! For this reason, pay attention to the following requirements:

- Academic writing is about facts. Do not use intense and emotional language. For example, replace words such as "bad" or "terrible" by using the words "inadequate" or "poor."
- Avoid colloquial language and use the dictionary in cases where you are not sure about whether the wording is inappropriate.
- Do not use contractions. For example, replace "don't" by writing "do not."
- Avoid writing in the first person. Do not use personal words like "I," "me" or anything else from your perspective. For example, you should replace terms such as "In my opinion, the results are..." or "I prefer the methodology because..." by terms like "The results imply..." or "One advantage of this methodology is..."

2.1 Academic Paper Formats

Master's and Bachelor's theses need to be uploaded to the student portal in electronic form as PDF-document by the deadline. In addition, a printed copy of the master's and bachelor's thesis must be submitted to the chair. Every thesis and project studies/seminar paper needs to be submitted electronically to the respective supervisor – both as Word- and PDF-document via email. Data that was collected by hand or from databases in order to conduct empirical or non-empirical analyses in the academic paper need to be submitted to the chair in electronic form.

	Bachelor's Thesis	Master's Thesis	Project Study/ Seminar Paper
Number of pages	30 pages (+/- 10 %)	45 pages (+/- 10 %)	10 pages (+/- 5 %)
Binding	Paperback	Paperback	-
Declaration of Authorship	Yes	Yes	No
Number of printings	1	1	-
Electronic version	Supervisor	Supervisor	Supervisor
Submission	Examination office	Examination office	Supervisor

2.2 Margins and Line Spacing

Set up all document properties before you start writing your academic paper, including also margins and line spacing properties as stated below. Please leave one-line space between each chapter. Use normal line spacing between headings and the main text.

Margins		Line Spacing	
Top	3 cm	Main text	1,5-lines
Bottom	2 cm	Footnotes	1,0-lines
Left	3 cm	References	1,0 lines and 1,0-line space between sources
Right	3 cm		

2.3 Font Size and Styles

Use font size and style as stated below. Do not highlight words, terms or sentences. The only exceptions where you are allowed to highlight terms in italics are terms in foreign languages. Avoid underlining, blocked and other extravagant formats.

	Font Size	Font Style
Main text	12 points	Normal
Footnotes	10 points	Normal
Tables and figures	10 points	Normal
Main headings	14 points	Bold

Sub-headings	12 points	Bold
Sub-headings w/o numbering	12 points	<i>Italics</i>

2.4 Paper Content, Heading and Page Numbering

Please find all paper components in the table below, including information about the heading and page numbering. You will find templates for the cover page of bachelor's and master's theses, as well as of project studies/seminar papers, in the appendix – for both papers written in German and English). In the table of contents, all paper components need to be considered, indicating the corresponding page numbers. In the list of abbreviations, all abbreviations used throughout the whole paper need to be listed. This requirement also holds for those mentioned in the dictionary.

	Heading Numbering	Page Numbering
Cover page	w/o numbering	w/o numbering
Table of Contents		Roman numbers
List of Abbreviations		
List of Figure		
List of Tables		
Main text	numbering (Arabic numbers)	Arabic numbers
Appendix	numbering (alphabetical order)	
Laws, Legislative Decrees, and Administrative Orders	w/o numbering	Roman numbers (continued)
References		
Declaration of Authorship		

3. Information Sources and Citations

In an academic paper, it is the most important to refer to someone else's work in any manner. By using direct or indirect citations, you can mark foreign ideas and thoughts. Each reference needs to be traceable and included in the list of references. Because it is at the core of academic work to create new scientific value by personal contribution, direct citations should only be used for outstanding statements that drive your argumentation in some way. Rather, use indirect citations than a string of direct citations that you did not personally formulate. In principle, all contents should be rendered in own words.

Please use superscripted Arabic footnotes for references to sources in the main text. The footnote is placed at the quoted word or term, behind the following punctuation mark or at the end of the idea or thought you cite. Headings cannot be marked by footnotes. Footnotes need to be placed on the same page as the main text refers to this footnote in the text. Within the same footnote, the use of multiple sources is allowed and encouraged. In this case, the sources within the footnote should follow the alphabetical order. If this criterion does not allow a clear order, sources can also be sorted by year or date of publication. Direct citations should have an own footnote in any case. For both direct and indirect citations information about the exact page numbers is required that indicate both the beginning and ending page. Do not use abbreviations such as "f." or "ff."

Direct citations start and end with quotation marks followed by a direct footnote reference. The reference in the footnote does not use "Cf. ...". Within direct citations, omissions or additional words or terms need to be marked by using square brackets as follows: [...] for omissions and [word or term by the author] for new inserted words or terms. Citations within a direct citation are equipped with an apostrophe before and after ('...'). If an indirect citation contains a direct citation, the direct quotation needs to be marked in addition to the indirect citation mark, which yields in two separate footnotes. Indirect citations do not use question marks. The reference in the footnote starts with "Cf. ...". Please note that mentioning the author's name in the main text does not exempt you from referring to the information source in the footnote. The only exception here are laws and regulations directly mentioned and referred to in the main text.

The use of secondary literature, respectively secondary citations, should be avoided. To avoid citation mistakes, you should generally use the original source for references. The requirement to cite the original source especially applies for the citation of laws and other regulations from accounting standards, such as HGB, IFRS and US-GAAP. Internet sources should only be used in cases where important information is only available online. Internet sources often deliver more timely information than traditional information sources such as books or journal articles. Depending on the timeliness of the paper topic, it is therefore likely that internet information is more updated and therefore valuable for inclusion in the paper. However, please note that not all internet sources are also citable. For example, information from the platform Wikipedia is a non-citable source of information.

In the following you will find some examples for citations in footnotes, from laws and other regulations, and in the list of references.

3.1 Footnotes

- Direct citations

¹⁰ Chen (2009), p. 1781.
¹¹ Carson (2009), p. 356.

- Indirect citations

⁸ Cf. Hope (2003), p. 238.
⁹ Cf. Heckman (1976), p. 475.

- Internet sources

²³ Cf. Tailor (2017).
²⁴ Cf. Magnan (2017).

- Two authors

² Cf. Dechow and Dichev (2002), p. 35-37.
³ Cf. Dichev and Tang (2009), p. 160.

- Three or more authors

If more than two authors published an article, only the first author name of the publication is used as identifier with the additive “*et al.*” in italics. This proceeding is valid for references in the main text as well as for references in the footnotes.

²⁸ Cf. Francis *et al.* (2005), p. 1127.
²⁹ Cf. Dhaliwal *et al.* (2012), p. 724.

- Multiple sources from the same author

Should one author publish several publications within the same year, the source needs to clarify this by introduction letters in the alphabetical order. This referencing scheme needs to be applied in the footnotes as well as in the corresponding reference list. The reference in the reference list and the corresponding reference in the footnotes always need to comply with each other.

³ Cf. Francis *et al.* (2005a), p. 1127.
⁴ Cf. Francis *et al.* (2005b), p. 318-321.

- Alphabetical order and chronological order

If sources cannot be sorted in alphabetical order, the year of publication indicates the order (chronological order).

²⁸ Cf. Dhaliwal *et al.* (2012), p. 724; Waddock and Graves (1997), p. 303-304.
²⁹ Cf. Francis *et al.* (2005a), p. 1127; Francis *et al.* (2005b), p. 319.

- Authors representing institutions

If an author functions as a representative for an institution and published the cited article under the name of this institution, the institution's name should follow the author's name – separated by a comma.

²⁸ Cf. King, GRI (2013), p. 8.

²⁹ Cf. Hales, SASB (2018), p. 3.

- Citations of laws, regulation, comments, and dictionaries

Comments on laws, regulations or standards, and dictionaries need to be stated under its titles (e.g., Beck'scher Bilanz-Kommentar, Münchner Kommentar). Law references are cited as accurately as possible. Please consider that legislation changes over time. For this reason, it is necessary to state the year of the version's publication date.

¹⁷ Cf. § 289b Abs. 3 Satz 1 Nr. 1 HGB (2018).

¹⁸ Cf. § 248 Abs. 2 HGB (2009).

¹⁹ Cf. Beck'scher Bilanz-Kommentar (2006), § 342b Abs. 1 HGB, Nr. 3-6.

²⁰ Cf. Marten *et al.* (2006), Keyword: Bestätigungsvermerk.

3.2 Laws and Regulations

One paper component is the section “Laws, Legislative Decrees, and Administrative Orders” in which all cited regulations are listed, including legislative proposals, court decisions, precedents, governmental or stock exchange orders, notices, and instructions (e.g., Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) orders, notices and information, International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), Deutsche Rechnungslegungsstandards (DRS)). For standards or interpretations the date of publication is to be given. In case of European directives, standards or interpretations, the publication date in the Official Journal of the European Union (“Amtsblatt der Europäischen Union”) and its official file number needs to be stated.

HGB (2009): Handelsgesetzbuch vom 10.05.1897 (RGBl., p. 219) mit allen späteren Änderungen einschließlich der Änderung durch das Gesetz zur Neuregelung der Rechtsverhältnisse bei Schuldverschreibungen aus Gesamtemissionen und zur verbesserten Durchsetzbarkeit von Ansprüchen von Anlegern aus Falschberatung as of 31.07.2009, in: BGBl. I, p. 2512.

CSR-Directive (2014): Directive 2014/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 amending Directive 2013/34/EU as regards disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by certain large undertakings and groups, as of 22.10.2014, in: Official Journal of the European Union (L330/9) as of 15.11.2014.

3.3 List of References

In the list of references, all information sources used in your thesis or paper need to be listed in alphabetical and increasing chronological order. This includes all sources that you have cited directly or indirectly. Sources you have read through, but did not cite in your thesis or paper will not be included in the reference list. Please find below some examples for citations in the reference list for monographs, journal articles, institutional articles, as well as internet sources. The following citation rules are binding.

Hunton, J. E., R. Libby, and C. L. Mazza. (2006). Financial reporting transparency and earnings management. *The Accounting Review*, Volume 81, Issue 1, p. 135-157.

Ioannou, I., and G. Serafeim. (2010). The impact of corporate social responsibility on investment recommendations. *Working paper, Harvard Business School*, date of version: July 13, 2010.

Jones, J. J. (1991). Earnings management during import relief investigations. *Journal of Accounting Research*, Volume 29, Issue 2, p. 193-228.

Kagan, R. A., N. Gunningham, and D. Thornton. (2003). Explaining corporate environmental performance: How does regulation matter? *Law & Society Review*, Volume 37, Issue 1, p. 51-90.

KPMG. (2008). KPMG International survey of corporate sustainability reporting. Available at: <http://www.kpmg.com/global/en/issuesandinsights/articlespublications/pages/sustainability-corporateresponsibility-reporting-2008.aspx>, last access date: October 10, 2018.

Lang, M., and R. Lundholm. (1996). Corporate disclosure policy and analyst behavior. *The Accounting Review*, Volume 71, Issue 4, p. 467-493.

Maroun, W. (2018). Sustainability reporting after a crisis, in: De Villiers, C. and W. Maroun (ed.), *Sustainability accounting and integrated reporting*, Routledge, London and New York.

Wooldridge, J. M. (2016). *Introductory econometrics: a modern approach*, 6th edition, Cengage Learning, Boston, USA.

4. Tables and Figures

Well-prepared tables and figures (e.g., graphs, line drawings, maps, photographs, micrographs, or other illustration designs) in an academic paper help you to present complex relationships and data in a concise and visually appealing manner. In particular, it helps the reader with quick overviews of theoretical basics, correlations, findings etc.

All tables and figures need to be listed in the corresponding lists and therefore should be numbered consecutively! Use clear and informative titles for your tables and figures, and label column heads, axis labels, figure labels, etc., clearly and appropriately. Well-prepared tables and figures should be self-explanatory.

If you use tables and figures, you need to refer to them in the main text. It is very important to note that both tables and figures will only be part of your thesis or paper, if you elaborate them in the main text – but do not repeat the contents of your tables and figures within the main text! Instead, use the main text to focus on the significance or key points of your tables and figures. Tables and figures without explanation in the main text are not included an academic work in any manner.

If you decide to use tables or figures, please note that you need to create them by yourself wherever possible. Do not copy or scan tables and figures from other sources! This means that even tables and figures based on other sources need to be rebuilt with a corresponding reference! Tables and figures can be framed and can contain color elements. Below the table or figure, you need to indicate the information source you took the table or figure from or the information about the self-created table or diagram as follows:

- In case of tables and figures taken from another source: “Source: ...”.
- If a table or figure is modified from its original form but is based on another source: “Based on: ...”.
- In case of self-created tables or figures: “Own presentation”.

In general, all information, e.g., the number, title, and description, of the table or figure have to be placed below the table or figure by using a font size of 10 points. Furthermore, the tables and figures need to be placed in the appendix in case of writing a project study/seminar paper. In a bachelor’s or master’s thesis, tables and figures can either be placed in the main text part or in the appendix. The placement depends on whether the table or figure offers substantial information to the elaborations in the main text or rather represents supplementary information for the reader that is “nice to know”. Depending on the extent the author uses tables and figures in the main text, tables and figures in the main text can count as admissible text volume. Please discuss this specifically with your supervisor. In general, mathematical formulas need to be numbered and inserted in the main text.

[TABLE or FIGURE]

Table 1: Value creation process of company XY

$$(x + a)^n = \sum_{k=0}^n \binom{n}{k} x^k a^{n-k} \quad (1)$$

5. Declaration of Authorship

In Bachelor's and Master's theses, a declaration of authorship needs to be included.

Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my own unaided work. All direct or indirect sources used are acknowledged as references.

I am aware that the thesis in digital form can be examined for the use of unauthorized aid and in order to determine whether the thesis as a whole or parts incorporated in it may be deemed as plagiarism. For the comparison of my work with existing sources I agree that it shall be entered in a database where it shall also remain after examination, to enable comparison with future theses submitted. Further rights of reproduction and usage, however, are not granted here.

This paper was not previously presented to another examination board and has not been published.

Place, Date

Signature

Ehrenwörtliche Erklärung

Ich erkläre hiermit ehrenwörtlich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbständig angefertigt habe. Die aus fremden Quellen direkt und indirekt übernommenen Gedanken sind als solche kenntlich gemacht.

Ich weiß, dass die Arbeit in digitalisierter Form daraufhin überprüft werden kann, ob unerlaubte Hilfsmittel verwendet wurden und ob es sich – insgesamt oder in Teilen – um ein Plagiat handelt. Zum Vergleich meiner Arbeit mit existierenden Quellen darf sie in eine Datenbank eingestellt werden und nach der Überprüfung zum Vergleich mit künftig eingehenden Arbeiten dort verbleiben. Weitere Vervielfältigungs- und Verwertungsrechte werden dadurch nicht eingeräumt.

Die Arbeit wurde weder einer anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt noch veröffentlicht.

Ort, Datum

Unterschrift

Appendix

Bachelor Thesis
Professorship Financial Accounting
at the Faculty of Business Administration
of the Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf

Titel (Deutsch)
Title (English)

First examiner:	Univ.-Prof. Dr. Janine Maniora
Second examiner:	H. Mustermann
Course of study:	Bachelor BWL/VWL...
Submitted by:	Tom Mustermann
	Straße
	PLZ Ort
	Matrikelnummer
Submitted on	00.00.0000

Master Thesis
Professorship Financial Accounting
at the Faculty of Business Administration
of the Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf

Titel (Deutsch)
Title (English)

First examiner:	Univ.-Prof. Dr. Janine Maniora
Second examiner:	H. Mustermann
Course of study:	Master BWL/VWL...
Submitted by:	Tom Mustermann
	Straße
	PLZ Ort
	Matrikelnummer
Submitted on:	00.00.0000

Project Study/Seminar Paper
Professorship Financial Accounting
at the Faculty of Business Administration
of the Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf

Titel (Deutsch)
Title (English)

Examiner:	Univ.-Prof. Dr. Janine Maniora
Supervisor:	H. Mustermann
Course of study:	Bachelor/Master BWL/VWL...
Submitted by:	Tom Mustermann
	Matrikelnummer
	E-Mail
Submitted on:	00.00.0000