

Writing a Thesis at the Institute of Marketing

Guidelines for Master, Diploma and Bachelor Theses

Prof. Dr. Sven Reinecke

What is the purpose of the thesis?



- The thesis is an examination paper.
- scientific work with an own contribution to a relevant marketing topic
- proper literature work
- sound empirical work
- critical-reflective attitude
- independent project management

What is the role of the supervisor?



- Assignment of subject of the thesis
- Feedback and input provider (literature, empirical work ...)
- Favorable support
- Assessment of the thesis

- not:
 - Project manager of the thesis
 - Primary contact person for partner companies
 - Process manager with Dean's Advisory Office

How are topics assigned at the Institute of Marketing?



- Topic list on thesis application portal:
<https://ifmhsg.ch/en/teaching/thesis-application/>
- Applications exclusively via this portal
- The topics listed correspond to the research interests of the Institute's researchers; referees are assigned according to specific topics.
- One can suggest an own topic with a detailed description via the portal. The probability of acceptance of your own proposal depends strongly on the topic and the current workload of the referees.
- Sometimes it may not be possible to assign topics at all, or they may have to be restricted to certain university programs in which the referees are involved as lecturers.

Can the work be written in cooperation with a company?

- principally possible (e.g. regarding specific data access)
- A double objective can lead to conflicts of objectives ("One is servant of two masters.").
A consulting project is not a scientific thesis.
- Coordination and agreement with possible corporate partners remain the responsibility of the student, not the referee.
- It is recommended not to include a company's name in the title of the thesis.

How do meetings with the referee work?



- Generally, a short paper with the following points is to be sent to the referee by e-mail 3 days before the meeting:
 1. problem definition (2 pages)
 2. objectives (main and sub-objectives) (1 page)
 3. procedure/methodology (empirical work) (1 page)
 4. preliminary outline (1-2 pages)
 5. concrete questions to the referee

- An updated version is to be delivered with each further meeting.

- Discussions (depending on the topic) do not always take place with the referee, but also with the scientific researchers of the institute (doctoral students).

- Number of meetings: depending on the need for support, but at least 2 (possible also by telephone or zoom, if required by e-mail)

Which empirical methods are possible?



- The empirical part of the work has a decisive influence on the student's own scientific output. Pure literature work is rare (exception: meta-studies).
- The choice of methods ultimately depends on the topic and the research objective.
- In principle, both qualitative research (expert discussions, Delphi studies, focus groups ...) and quantitative research (mostly standardized surveys, experiments) as well as a combination of both are possible.
- The acquisition of a sufficient empirical basis (e.g. expert acquisition, address pool for standardized surveys) is part of the final thesis.

How comprehensive must the empirical work be?



- topic-dependent, i.e. there is no basic rule
- with qualitative research: The decisive question is always whether further interviews will lead to a gain in knowledge.
- quantitative research (rules of thumb!!!):
 - Under $n = 30$ most quantitative methods are usually not effective.
 - Multivariate analysis methods are often only really productive from $n > 100$.
- The empirical documentation (e.g. transcription of interviews or data analysis) is usually provided in the appendix of the paper; details should be discussed with the referee.

What principles apply to the structure of the thesis?



- The introduction always consists at least of the problem description, the objective(s) and a depiction of the research methodology, if required definitions and - if not evident from the disposition - an explanation of the structure of the work.
- The red thread of the work must become visible through both the structure and the text.
- A "top-heavy" nature of the work (very basic idea of the topic, general and broad market/company descriptions) should be avoided. The aim is: diagnoses instead of analyses. The focus should always lie on the central topic.
- Theses are not textbooks. The current state of research should be presented concisely.
- A critical (!) appreciation of one's own work and a presentation of further research possibilities are very important.

Literature, language & formalities: What is important?



- Here the principles of the University of St. Gallen (HSG) regarding Bachelor or Master theses apply.
- Citation and scientific documentation should be carried out as taught in the courses on scientific work. Important are:
 - Consistency (a continuous citation method, e.g. APA method),
 - scientific traceability,
 - primary before secondary sources,
 - actuality of the sources,
 - observance of the relevant international scientific research,
 - caution regarding and critical reflection of internet sources.
- (Own) illustrations improve the structure and clarity and increase the student's own research contribution.
- The scientific linguistic quality is extremely important.

How is the thesis evaluated?



- The work will be evaluated using the assessment form of the University of St. Gallen (HSG).
- The highest grade will only be awarded in exceptional cases and with special justification.
- Students can view the assessment after the official announcement of the grade by the University at the Institute of Marketing (application by e-mail to the referees).
- The rules of the Dean's Advisory Office apply with regard to the passing on of the thesis to external parties and the release of the thesis for publication.



Prof. Dr. Sven Reinecke

University of St. Gallen (HSG)

Institute of Marketing


Executive Director

Dufourstr. 40a

CH-9000 St. Gallen

Email: Sven.Reinecke@unisg.ch

www.ifm.unisg.ch

 www.facebook.com/ifmhsg

 www.linkedin.com/in/svenreinecke/

Phone: +41 71 224 28 73