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**Guidelines are VALID  
from October 2023.**

# GUIDELINES FOR MASTER'S THESIS



MSc Management

Competence Area: Marketing Management in a Digital World

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## 1. Introduction and purpose

To facilitate master's thesis applications and to simplify procedures for students, these guidelines are in place at the Institute for Retailing, Sales and Marketing. Expectations can be discussed with the supervisor(s).

## 2. Process\*

\*Each Step must be communicated and accepted by the Supervisor(s).

On the basis of the preliminary meeting, supervision may be granted on a provisional basis.

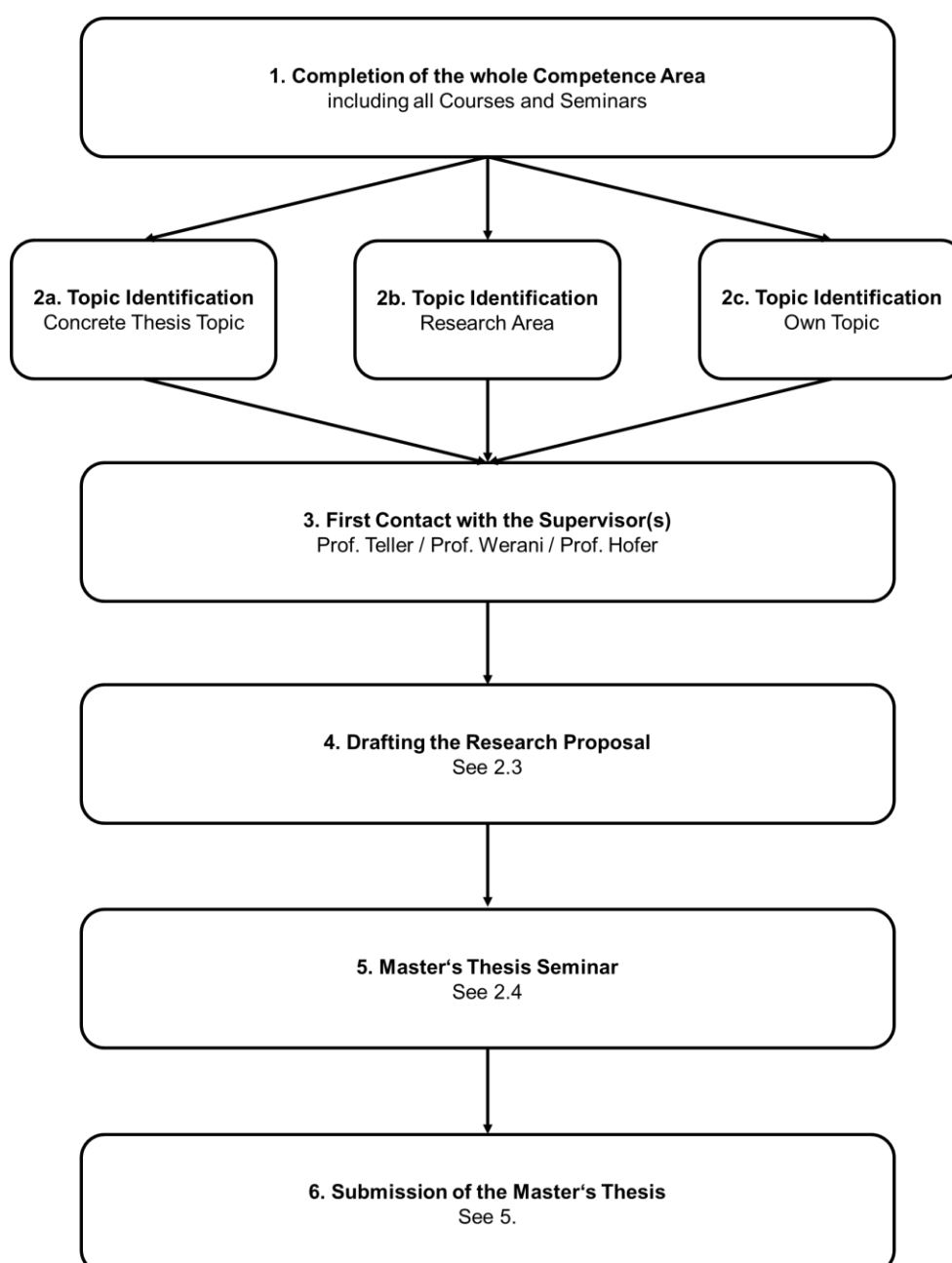


Figure 1: Process for master's thesis

Subsequently, a thesis proposal (draft) has to be prepared. Applicable guidelines can be downloaded from the homepage [of the institute](#). The quality of the thesis proposal serves as a basis for confirmation of approval, or rejection, of the application. Only after approval of a thesis topic has been confirmed will the topic be deleted from the official list. For this reason, students interested in a specific thesis topic are advised to contact the respective supervisor well in advance. After a preliminary meeting with the supervisor, a thesis proposal has to be submitted in order for definite approval to be gained from the supervisor. The following is a list of departmental guidelines on how to prepare such a proposal. Subsequently, citation rules and regulations are set out. Furthermore, the master's thesis has to adhere to the guidelines of the following source: Turabian, K.L. (2007), "A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations", 7<sup>th</sup> edition, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. The relevant chapters are 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 15. Furthermore, the guidelines are based on Saunders et al. (2019), "Research Methods for Business Students", 8<sup>th</sup> edition, Harlow: Pearson.

## 2.1. Requirements

Students must be enrolled in the master's program "Management" – competence area "Marketing Management in a Digital World". Staff capacity permitting, supervision is also provided for other students, on condition that their approach to the research topic is deemed promising. All students must have completed the course on methods in management research as well as the whole competence area. A first contact with the supervisor may be established at the end of the competence area (more precisely at the end of the seminar "Interdisciplinary Business Project").

## 2.2. Topics

Topics of master's theses should preferably relate to the research interests of the institute and the research area(s) of the respective supervisors. There are different options for defining your topics. Theses must be concerned with the main issues in the fields of Retailing ([Prof. Teller](#)), B2B Marketing ([Prof. Werani](#)) or International Marketing ([Prof. Hofer](#)). For a detailed description of the research interests of the different professors, please have a look at the homepage of the institute.

First, there are lists of potential topics for master's theses publicised via the [institute's homepage](#) and also via the homepages of the two departments, "[International Marketing](#)" and "[Business to Business Marketing](#)". Students who wish to write a master's thesis on a topic included in the official lists are asked to contact the respective supervisor (named on the list) and to arrange for an initial consultation. In the course of this preliminary meeting, the student will be asked to state what motivates them to explore a specific topic and to outline the methodological approach they will take.

Second, there is the possibility of working on different projects according to the research interests of the different supervisors / professors. Should this be of interest, please contact the supervisors and inform yourself about the research projects available.

Third, the department also provides supervision of master's theses on topics suggested by students. Should you wish to do this, we would ask you to contact the member of the department whose scope of research comes closest to the specific topic of interest, for a preliminary consultation. If a student has opted for a topic which entails cooperation with a firm or third party, an exploratory meeting between the firm, as a potential cooperative partner, and representatives of the department is a binding prerequisite.

## **2.3. Thesis Proposal**

After a preliminary meeting with the supervisor, a thesis proposal has to be submitted in order for definite approval to be gained from the supervisor. The following is a list of departmental guidelines on how to prepare such a proposal. Furthermore, the master's thesis proposal has to adhere to the guidelines of Saunders et al. (2019).

The proposal of a master's thesis must be structured as follows:

1. Introduction
  - 1.1. Problem definition
  - 1.2. Practical and theoretical relevance
    - 1.2.1. Practical relevance
    - 1.2.2. Theoretical relevance
  - 1.3. Research question(s) and objectives
  - 1.4. Outline of the structure
2. Methodology
3. Timeline for completing the thesis
4. List of references
5. Appendix
  - 5.1. [Application form from the institute](#)
  - 5.2. [Application form from the PAS](#)
  - 5.3. Curriculum vitae
  - 5.4. Record of examinations taken
  - 5.5. Transcripts of records (if available)

A thesis proposal comprises approximately eight pages (not counting the list of references), with special attention to be paid to the chapter "Introduction". Confirmation of approval or rejection by the supervisor is dependent on the standard of the proposal.

The topic has to be registered by the Department of Examination and Recognition Services. This will be done by the office of the institute. All material must be prepared by the students themselves and given to the office as a package. The corresponding form can be found on the [JKU homepage](#) or obtained from your supervisor.

## **2.4. Enrolment in the master's thesis seminar**

As laid down in the syllabus, attending the master's thesis seminar is obligatory. Students who write their thesis at the Institute for Retailing, Sales and Marketing have to take the seminar that is offered by the institute. Please enrol in the master's thesis seminar on time. Detailed information regarding the seminar will be given by the professor in the first session.

## **2.5. Writing the thesis**

Subsequent to gaining formal approval, work on the topic can start in earnest. The master's thesis is to be written in English. In compliance with regulations, it has to be produced without any outside help. However, if questions should arise, the student can ask for a meeting with the supervisor. The agenda for this meeting has to be drawn up in advance, since its purpose is to deal with specific questions and not to serve as a forum for a general discussion of the paper. Any materials needed for this consultation (structure, questionnaires, etc.) must be submitted to the supervisor in advance.

### **2.5.1. Contact with third parties**

If the master's thesis comprises an empirical part, any questionnaires and interview guidelines to be used must be submitted for approval. Any contact with third parties (e.g. companies, for interviews) is always made on behalf of the student. Only in cases specifically agreed with the supervisor can such contact be made on behalf of the Institute for Retailing, Sales and Marketing.

### **2.5.2. Timeline**

As a rule, the time limit for completing the thesis is four to six months. However, depending on the scope of the topic, the supervisor may agree to extend this limit. If the agreed extension is exceeded, the master's thesis may not be acceptable on account of lack of relevance to the current situation.

## **3. Formatting requirements**

### **3.1. Length of thesis**

The length of the master's thesis is primarily dictated by its scope. General guideline: between 80 and 100 pages of text (not counting figures, tables, reference list and appendix).

### **3.2. Layout**

You will receive a template from the Institute for Retailing, Sales and Marketing. Please use this for writing your proposal and your master's thesis.

### 3.3. Structure of the thesis

The master's thesis is to be structured as follows. Expectations need to be discussed with your supervisor(s):

Title Page  
Sworn Declaration  
Abstract

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List of figures	V
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List of abbreviations	V
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1.1. Problem definition	1
1.2. Practical and theoretical relevance	1
1.2.1. Practical relevance	1
1.2.2. Theoretical relevance	1
1.3. Research question(s) and objectives	1
1.4. Structure of the thesis	1
2. Literature review	1
2.1. Basic terms and definitions	1
2.2. Concepts and theories	1
2.3. Status quo of the literature	2
2.4. Hypotheses and research model (for quantitative projects)	2
2.5. Propositions and category system (for qualitative projects)	2
3. Methodology	3
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3.2. Research setting	3
3.3. Selection of the sample and data collection	3
3.4. Data analysis procedures	3
3.5. Ethical considerations	3
4. Results	3
4.1. Sample description	3
4.2. Descriptive statistics	3
4.3. Statistical testing	4
5. Conclusion	4
5.1. Theoretical and practical implications	4
5.1.1. Theoretical implications and discussion	5
5.1.2. Implications for practitioners and policy makers	5
5.2. Limitations and future research	5
List of references	VI
Appendix	VI

### 3.3.1. List of figures, illustrations and tables

Figures and tables always have to be put in separate lists. These lists contain the numbers, captions and page references of the figures or tables. Here are sample lists of figures and tables.

#### List of figures

Figure 1: Most Relevant Theories .....	13
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Table 1: Sample table of figures

#### List of tables

Table 1: Overview of the Literature Review .....	9
Table 2: Empirical Research Design .....	12
Table 3: Timeframe for the Thesis .....	20

Table 2: Sample table of tables

### 3.3.2. List of abbreviations

Only specialist technical abbreviations are to be included and explained in the list of abbreviations. This includes any abbreviations used in the appendix or list of references. Abbreviations in general use, such as “e.g.”, used to mean “for instance”, are not to be included. To improve readability of the text, the number of abbreviations is to be kept to a minimum.

#### List of abbreviations

JAMS	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science
JMR	Journal of Marketing Research
LRP	Long Range Planning
RoQ	Return on Quality
SMJ	Strategic Management Journal

Table 3: Sample list of abbreviations

### 3.3.3. Main body of the thesis

#### 3.3.3.1. Language

Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as a scholarly and fluent style, are mandatory requirements. Inconsistencies, such as alternating between British and American spelling, constitute a breach of the formal requirements.

#### 3.3.3.2. References / bibliography / citation

At the Institute for Retailing, Sales and Marketing, we follow the rules of the APA but with page numbers. In addition, the use of a citation program is strongly recommended but not mandatory.

##### 3.3.3.2.a APA in-text citation

**APA in-text citations** consist of the author(s)' last name(s), the year of publication and the page number(s) (based on a decision from the Institute of Retailing, Sales and Marketing), e.g. (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 130). In-text referencing can take two forms: parenthetical, e.g. (Saunders et al., 2019, p.



130), at the end of the statement / sentence / paragraph; or narrative, e.g. According to Saunders et al. (2019, p. 130) ... . An in-text citation changes slightly when a source has multiple authors:

One author	(Smith, 2020, p. 35)	Smith (2020, p. 35)
Two authors	(Smith & Jones, 2013, p. 68)	Smith & Jones (2013, p. 68)
Three or more authors	(Saunders et al., 2019, p. 130)	Saunders et al. (2019, p. 130)

If the publication date is unknown, write "n.d." for "no date"; if the page numbers are missing, please write "n.p." for "no page". If a source cannot be traced to the author, the abbreviation "n.a." is to be used, and it is to be listed under the letter 'N' in the list of references.

### 3.3.3.2.b List of references

For the **list of references**, items are to be listed in alphabetical order by surname of author.

For **books**, these details are required:

- Surname,
- Initials,
- Year of publication,
- *Title*,
- Number of volume quotes (if there are multiple volumes),
- Edition (if there are multiple editions),
- Place(s) of publication and
- Publisher

If a book has more than three authors, only the first author's name is to be given, followed by "et al." If there are more than three places of publication, only the first place is to be included, followed by "et al."

#### *Examples:*

Miller, D. (1983). Handbook of research design and social measurement : a text and reference book for the social and behavioral sciences. In Longman eBooks. Longman. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA01220152>

Kotler, P. et al. (1996). *Principles of Marketing: The European Edition*. London et al.: Prentice Hall

Miller, D. C. (1991). *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*; 5th ed. Newbury Park et al.: Sage

Wührer, G. A. (1995). *Internationale Allianz- und Kooperationsfähigkeit österreichischer Unternehmen: Beiträge zum Gestaltansatz als Beschreibungs- und Erklärungskonzept*. Linz: Trauner

If there are two or more books by the same author or authors, they are to be listed in chronological order. If several books by the same author(s) were published in the same year, they are to be distinguished by lower case letters after the year of publication.

*Examples:*

Jöreskog, K. G., Sörbom, D. (1993). *LISREL 8: Structural Equation Modeling with the SIMPLS Command Language*. Chicago: Scientific Software International  
 Jöreskog, K. G., Sörbom, D. (1996a). *LISREL 8: User's Reference Guide*. Chicago: Scientific Software International

For articles in **compendia**, **manuals** and **encyclopedias**, these details are required:

- Surname,
- Initials,
- Year of publication,
- Title of article,
- "in",
- Name and initials of editor,
- "ed." or "eds.",
- *Name of compendium, manual or encyclopedia*,
- (if there are multiple volumes),
- Edition (if there are multiple editions),
- Place(s) of publication,
- Publisher and
- Page reference.

*Examples:*

Marr, R. (1989). Betrieb und Umwelt; in: Bitz, M. et al. (Hrsg.): *Vahlens Kompendium der Betriebswirtschaftslehre*, 1; 2nd ed. Munich, München: Vahlen, 47-114  
 Möller, K., Wilson, D. T. (1995). Introduction: Interaction and Networks in Perspective; in: Möller, K., Wilson, D. T. (eds.): *Business Marketing: An Interaction and Network Perspective*; Boston/Dordrecht/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1-18

For **journals**, **magazines** and **newspapers**, these details are required:

- Surname,
- Initials,
- Year of publication,
- Title of the article,
- Name of the magazine or newspaper,
- Volume and number of the respective issue of the journal / magazine, or number and date of the newspaper,
- Page reference and
- DOI.

If a source cannot be traced to the author, the abbreviation "n.a." is to be used, and it is to be listed under the letter 'N' in the list of references.

*Examples:*

Rogers, R. W. (1975). A Protection Motivation Theory of Fear Appeals and Attitude Change<sup>1</sup>. *The Journal of Psychology*, 91(1), 93–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.1975.9915803>

Floyd, D. L., Prentice-Dunn, S., & Rogers, R. W. (2000). A Meta-Analysis of Research on Protection Motivation Theory. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30(2), 407–429. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2000.tb02323.x>

Ooms, W., & Ebbekink, M. (2018). In search of the sweet spot: The role of personal proximity in three Dutch clusters. *Journal of Business Research*, 92(November 2018), 48–60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.010>

n.a. (1984). Making Service a Potent Marketing Tool. *Business Week*, 11 June 1984, 165-167

For **websites**, these details are required:

- Surname,
- Initials,
- Year of publication or publication date,
- Title of the page or article,
- Website name,
- URL,
- Last access

*Examples:*

Slat, B. (2019). *Whales likely impacted by Great Pacific garbage patch*. The Ocean Cleanup. <https://www.theoceancleanup.com/updates/whales-likely-impacted-by-great-pacific-garbage-patch/>

Slat, B., & Worp, C. (2019). *Whales likely impacted by Great Pacific garbage patch*. The Ocean Cleanup. <https://www.theoceancleanup.com/updates/whales-likely-impacted-by-great-pacific-garbage-patch/>

Slat, B., Worp, C., & Holierhoek, L. (2019). *Whales likely impacted by Great Pacific garbage patch*. The Ocean Cleanup. <https://www.theoceancleanup.com/updates/whales-likely-impacted-by-great-pacific-garbage-patch/>

Slat, B., Worp, C., & Holierhoek, L. (2019, April 10). *Whales likely impacted by Great Pacific garbage patch*. The Ocean Cleanup. <https://www.theoceancleanup.com/updates/whales-likely-impacted-by-great-pacific-garbage-patch/>

### 3.3.3.3. Figures, illustrations and tables

Figures and tables must be self-explanatory, without requiring any recourse to the body of the text. If necessary, clarity has to be ensured by the use of legends. With figures or tables copied or scanned from the original text, clear legibility is paramount.

With every figure and table, the source of the data has to be clearly stated. If no source is given, the figure or table is assumed to have been drawn up by the **author** of the thesis.

### 3.3.4. Appendix

The appendix only contains relevant **additional** information to back up the thesis. For instance:

- Questionnaire/s,
- Interview guidelines,
- Covering letters and
- Corporate documents.

## 4. Evaluation of the master's thesis

In the evaluation of the master's thesis, both formal and research-related criteria are taken into account.

The formal requirements on which the evaluation focuses are set out in the following *Table 4*. If the thesis fails to meet the formal standards required, it will be rejected.

The decisive point in the evaluation of the thesis content is whether and how the problem was solved or how the objective was achieved. With empirical studies, special attention is paid to clarity and explicitness of data collection and analysis, as well as the evaluation of the findings. *Table 4* also gives an overview of the criteria applicable to the overall evaluation of master's theses.

Scoring Master's Theses			
1. Abstract	Criteria	Scores	Max.
	Inclusion of key statements of the whole thesis		2
	Inclusion of purpose, aims, methods, key results and practical conclusions		5
	Comprehensiveness, compactness and profoundness		3
2. Content originality and relevance	Creative approach to the topic		1
	Reference to a wide range of high-quality literature data sources		5
	Elaboration and presentation of practical relevance of the topic		3
	Identification and description of research problem		3
	Identification of research gaps based on literature review		3
	Critical review of existing theories and empirical data		5

<b>3. Methodology, results presentation and discussion</b>	Critical review of existing research methods and their relevance for the research topic		5
	Appropriate selection and presentation of methodological research design		5
	Outline, description and justification of way of conduct, including data collection approach, research instrument and data analysis		5
	Presentation and discussion of key findings in correspondence with research questions and research objectives including practical implications		5
	Discussion of limitations of research approach and findings		5
<b>4. Academic insight and comprehension</b>	Indication of critical thinking related to task and argument		5
	Inclusion of examples to illustrate theory		5
	Conclusion and summary of research draws on theory and argument to provide useful evidence-based recommendations for managerial practice		5
<b>5. Logical structure and argument</b>	Clear and target-specific argumentation stringency		5
	Well-defined structure in correspondence with the research objectives		5
	Development/application of a suitable conceptualization		5
	Evidence-based argumentation throughout the thesis		5
<b>6. Reflection</b>	Scope (applicability of learnings for the future)		5
	Completeness and intensity		5
<b>Total score</b>			<b>100</b>

Table 4: Scoring sheet for master's theses

- (1) Very good: 90-100%
- (2) Good: 77-89%
- (3) Satisfying: 64-76%
- (4) Adequate: 50-63%
- (5) Negative: 0-49%

In order to prevent plagiarism, your academic work will be subjected to a plagiarism scan. In dealing with artificial intelligence, the current rules of the vice-rectorate for academic affairs apply.

Once your thesis has been accepted for submission by your supervisor(s), you can start the submission process.

## 5. Submission of the thesis

All information regarding the submission process can be found [here](#).

From March 1, 2022 the submission of your academic paper to the Examination and Recognition Service can be made exclusively in electronic form.

In addition, please ask your supervisor(s) if a hardcopy is required. If so, please produce a hardcover of your master's thesis for your supervisor(s). The thesis should be submitted to the Institute for Retailing, Sales and Marketing in hard copy. The requirements are as follows:

- Hardcover in black
- Text colour: silver
- Front should cover the title of the thesis
- Side back should include the name(s), "Master's Thesis" and the year of your submission