

Bachelor thesis: Tips and resources

Dear students,

We have compiled the information below to support you in writing your Bachelor's thesis. This document is intended as a general guideline. It is neither exhaustive of all potential questions nor a guarantee of a particular grade. None of the papers listed are mandatory readings.

As also emphasized throughout this document, many aspects of your thesis will depend on your specific topic and research approach. Therefore, in case of any questions or uncertainties, please always consult your supervisor. Their guidance takes precedence over the general recommendations provided here.

Please note that this document does not constitute an evaluation or grading scheme. Your grade will depend on the overall quality of your thesis.

This document is intended for internal use only. Please do not share it.

We wish you a successful and rewarding thesis process.

Your ILO Team

Finding the topic

As soon as your supervisor contacts you, start thinking about how to **narrow down** your topic. The final version of the topic will be registered by the ISC. The date of registration constitutes the official start of writing your thesis. We cannot change your topic after registration. The title of your thesis must exactly mirror the registered topic - yes, word by word.

While your supervisor will gladly offer you topics, we expect you to prepare at least two topic proposals for your first meeting with your supervisor. The topics you propose should include at least some context (see below). The thesis may further narrow down your chosen topic, as long as it stays in line with the topic registered at the ISC.

Example

You have chosen the topic "Organizational Change", potentially more narrow topics could be:

1. "Outcomes of Organizational Change on Team Performance."
2. "Why do organizations change? A Review."
3. "Navigating Organizational Change: Antecedents of Employee Resilience."
4. "Organizational Adaptation and the Role of Digital Technologies."

If your supervisor approves it, you can still switch your domain (within the areas that your supervisor supervises) and look for topics in those domains. The **context of your study** includes, for example, the level of analysis (individual, team, or organizational level), sample characteristics (e.g., small and medium enterprises, first-gen students, digital-native firms), environments (e.g., change caused by technology or disruptive change, technologically turbulent environments), and so on. These elements are illustrative and must not necessarily apply to your topic.

Your topic proposal should be a short verbal introduction explaining what you would like to study exactly and why the topic is relevant (~5 minutes; no written documents).

Type of paper

Your Bachelor thesis can consist of a review, a conceptual paper, or an empirical paper. The resources below should enhance your understanding of methodologies.

Review

Basic types of reviews with their explanations and guidelines for writing:

Dwertmann, D. J., & van Knippenberg, D. (2021). Capturing the state of the science to change the state of the science: A categorization approach to integrative reviews. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 42(2), 104-117.

Siddaway, A. P., Wood, A. M., & Hedges, L. V. (2019). How to do a systematic review: a best practice guide for conducting and reporting narrative reviews, meta-analyses, and meta-syntheses. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 70(1), 747-770.

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333-339.

Example of a (systematic) review paper:

Hundschell, A., Razinskas, S., Backmann, J., & Hoegl, M. (2022). The effects of diversity on creativity: A literature review and synthesis. *Applied Psychology*, 71(4), 1598-1634.

If you write a literature review, please refer to the end of this document for further information.

Conceptual paper

Types of conceptual papers and guidelines for writing:

Cornelissen, J. (2017). Editor's comments: Developing propositions, a process model, or a typology? Addressing the challenges of writing theory without a boilerplate. *Academy of Management Review*, 42(1), 1-9.

Jaakkola, E. (2020). Designing conceptual articles: four approaches. *AMS Review*, 10(1), 18-26.

Example of a conceptual paper:

Hoegl, M., Gibbert, M., & Mazursky, D. (2008). Financial constraints in innovation projects: When is less more?. *Research Policy*, 37(8), 1382-1391.

In the ILO seminar "Leadership and Organization", you learned extensively how to write a conceptual paper. Steps 2-3 of the information on literature reviews that you find at the end of this manuscript provide a good starting point for understanding the literature that you build upon to develop a conceptual framework.

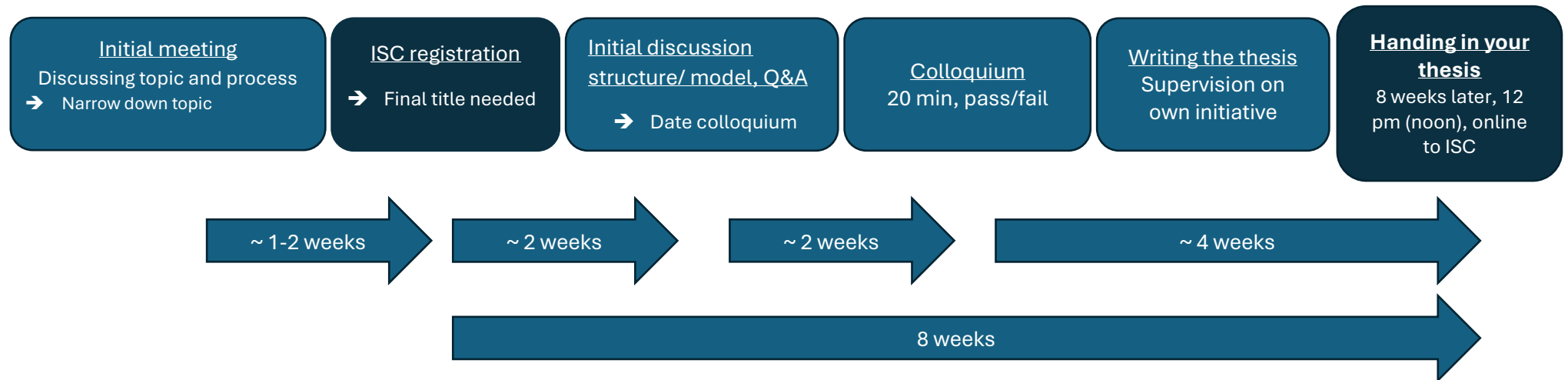
Colloquium

The colloquium takes place ~4 weeks after you start your thesis. It lasts **20 minutes** in total, including questions from your examiners. You will outline your **research question, what you have done so far**, and **how you plan to proceed**. If you write a conceptual paper, you should

show an initial conceptual figure. If you write a review, you should outline the initial dimensions that emerged from synthesizing the literature. We are aware that the conceptual figure or the dimensions may change after the colloquium, as you will potentially receive feedback on it.

Please arrange a date for your colloquium with your supervisor early on. Please send your presentation to your supervisor at least one day prior to the colloquium. The colloquium is graded only on a pass/fail basis.

Illustrative process



General tips for writing a scientific paper

The Writing Center (Schreibzentrum) of LMU offers a plethora of resources to help students with their theses: [LINK](#)

The minimum requirements of a thesis include, among other criteria,

- Fulfillment of all formal writing requirements (ILO Style Guide), including selection of preferred English standard (ILO standard: American English – one style across the whole paper)
- Logical structure of the thesis
- The topic chosen is consistent with the content of your thesis
- Justification of why the chosen topics matter and what we know already from previous literature
- Identified research gap and why it is important
- Clear research question
- Appropriate selection of relevant literature (PRISMA model) of high quality (e.g., A+ and A in [VHB ranking](#))
- Precise description of research methods and steps of analysis, justification of methods used
- Precise theoretical contribution and positioning of your paper in the existing literature stream
- Understanding of and critical reflection on the paper's limitations
- Projection which further research directions would be valuable to investigate

Information on Literature Reviews

The aim of a literature review is to be able to answer a research question based on the integration of scientific literature. Results shall be factual but include a critical reflection per article, as well as a general critical reflection on the topic. The steps below are just for illustrating the whole process. You will notice that you will likely work through them in an iterative manner.

How to approach your literature review

Step 1: Formulate your research question	Your research question must be specific, with at least one independent variable (or input factor including a comparison condition) and one dependent variable. You should avoid vague concepts and use variables that are clearly defined and operationalized.
Step 2: Conduct your literature search	Use databases that contain scientific, peer-reviewed articles. Select relevant database(s) and search fields by working with Boolean operators (e.g., AND and OR and (...) and *). You can also use Google Scholar to search in the future (i.e., 'cited by'); however, this can introduce bias. Save your search history and report <i>which databases you searched and which terminology you used</i> , so your search is replicable. Only report searches that produced relevant results.

Step 3: Select literature	Do so by looking at the abstract, method section, tables, figures, as well as the first paragraph of the conclusion.
Step 4: Write your method section	Beware that your search should be replicable. Mention the exact search terms of all successful searches and when they were performed. Mention the database(s). Mention what your exact criteria were for including articles. You do not have to mention all individual articles here.
Step 5: Write the introduction	Include the following: Original title that grabs the attention and matches the content (done prior to register your thesis); opening that grabs the attention and matches the content; correct introduction of the literature stream and the most important variables; clear and convincing description of scientific importance (including a clear and relevant theoretical basis) and of societal importance; clear and coherent research question that corresponds with step 1.
Step 6: Write the theoretical framework	Include the following: a brief, relevant, and correct explanation of the theory used to cluster or organize your review (optional); a clear and precise discussion of all the concepts in the research question and their relation to each other; a clear and precise discussion of topic-relevant theories, models, or phenomena that help to explain the reviewed effects. You can find topic-relevant theories, models, or phenomena by (amongst others) reading textbooks, the theoretical frameworks of other papers on your topic, meta-analyses, or review papers, or by reading papers on comparable independent variables and arguing why their theories might also apply to your independent variable.
Step 7: Write up your results	Beware that you only review articles that help to answer your research question, nothing else. Identify differences and similarities between the results, and discuss them by identifying the causes of divergent results. Explain relevant moderators and mediators in complete, precise terms. Discuss reviewed articles in an integrative way (that is, do not summarize article by article). If you reviewed multiple effects, formulate an overall conclusion for each dependent variable.
Step 8: Write your conclusion and discussion	Make sure that your conclusions follow from the results and are to the point, and that you answer all (sub-)research questions. Further, write a critical, convincing reflection of your own review and results, addressing and exceeding the shortcomings of the reviewed articles. Also, write a reflection on shortcomings of your own approach that go beyond a conclusion per effect and provide a general overview of the topic, and a critical, convincing discussion of results using the theories, models, or phenomena from the theoretical framework. Provide detailed, topic-specific proposals for future research that follow the results. Explicate how this research contributes to future scientific knowledge

	(preferably fewer limitations and recommendations that are well elaborated upon than plenty of superficial comments). Finally, provide actionable, practical implications or recommendations for the field that follow from the results.
Step 9: Refine your work	Make sure to be consistent in your terminology, that you write scientifically, construct good paragraphs, and avoid (APA) mistakes. Most importantly: take the reader by the hand. A paragraph consists of at least three sentences and covers at most one topic. A layperson should be able to understand the gist of your review by reading each paragraph's first sentence. Those 'topic sentences' convey the main message and connect the paragraphs effectively. Avoid fraud and plagiarism.

How to organize your results – an illustrative example

Dependent Variable (DV) <i>Effects of IV on xx</i>	Independent Variable (IV): xxx			
	Author A & Author B (year)	Author C & Author D (year)	Author E (year)	Total
DV 1	Insert findings here		Positive effect of IV on DV 1	Summarize effects on DV 1 here
DV 2		Interaction effect: IV x Moderator <u>IV high</u> : main effect strengthens. <u>IV low</u> : main effect weakens.		
Shortcomings	Insert shortcomings of paper here			

Note. You can find multiple ways to best organize your results; this is just one option. To find further inspiration, feel free to look at literature reviews published in top journals (e.g., ranked A+ or A in [VHB Jourqual 3](#)).