

# Master thesis: Tips and resources

Dear students,

We have compiled the information below to support you in writing your Master's thesis. This document is intended as a general guideline. It is neither exhaustive with regard to all methodologies and potential questions nor a guarantee for 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 "Looking behind closed doors: Examining the role of CEOs in corporate behavior and performance". Potential more narrow topics could be:

1. "The power of psychology: Analyzing CEO narcissism as an antecedent to firm performance."
2. "Insiders vs. outsiders: Which firms appoint external managers as CEOs?"
3. "Stronger together: Examining the role of C-level networks in technological innovation."

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 area of antecedents or consequences that you are interested in, 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., firm

behavior 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).**

## Deciding on the type of paper

Generally, you are free to choose any research methodology. Your contribution to literature should be more significant than in a Bachelor thesis, and we require a significant amount of critical thinking and analytical skills.

We strongly encourage you to write an empirical paper, as having quantitative or qualitative results to test your theoretical model will enhance your work. In the process of choosing a preferred research design, ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) Is it feasible to conduct this research in 6 months?
- 2) What data may I collect? (Please see below for more information.)
- 3) Is my supervisor specializing in this type of research design? If not, am I okay with exploring the methodology on my own?
- 4) What methodologies were used by other scholars in the field? What is the most popular approach towards the topic?

## Colloquium (only “Prüfungsordnung 2024”)

The colloquium takes place within ~ 4-6 weeks after submitting your thesis. It lasts **20 minutes** in total, including questions from your examiners. You will have **3 minutes** to present the main parts of your thesis; please ask your supervisor for the respective PowerPoint template.

**The date for your colloquium will be arranged with your supervisor as you approach the end of your Master’s thesis processing period.** The colloquium is graded only on a pass/fail basis.

## Data collection

Below we list some of the possibilities for data collection:

- 1) Accessing databases provided by LMU: <https://www.som.lmu.de/ifb/en/research-publications/databases/>
- 2) Using existing scales for running surveys – if needed, we may provide you with access to Qualtrics to host your survey there.
- 3) Web-scraping the data on your own (we do not provide any courses in coding)
- 4) Running interviews on your own - around 15 interview partners, depending on your chosen sample (e.g., interviews with top managers of German DAX firms are harder to find than any employees). Please check the sample size with your supervisor.
- 5) You may ask your supervisors if they have any datasets that they would like to share – in this case, we will ask you to sign a non-disclosure agreement (Verschwiegenheitserklärung)

## Perfecting your writing

We recommend a series of articles from the Academy of Management Journals' editors on how to write 'good' scientific papers:

George, G. (2012). Publishing in AMJ for non-US authors. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(5), 1023-1026.

Colquitt, J. A., & George, G. (2011). Publishing in AMJ—part 1: topic choice. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(3), 432-435.

Bono, J. E., & McNamara, G. (2011). Publishing in AMJ—part 2: Research design. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(4), 657-660.

Grant, A. M., & Pollock, T. G. (2011). Publishing in AMJ—Part 3: Setting the hook. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(5), 873-879.

Sparrowe, R. T., & Mayer, K. J. (2011). Publishing in AMJ—part 4: Grounding hypotheses. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(6), 1098-1102.

Zhang, Y., & Shaw, J. D. (2012). Publishing in AMJ—Part 5: Crafting the methods and results. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(1), 8-12.

Geletkanycz, M., & Tepper, B. J. (2012). Publishing in AMJ—part 6: Discussing the implications. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(2), 256-260.

Bansal, P., & Corley, K. (2012). Publishing in AMJ—Part 7: What's different about qualitative research?. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(3), 509-513.

For crafting your theoretical contribution, we further recommend the following article:

Makadok, R., Burton, R., & Barney, J. (2018). A practical guide for making theory contributions in strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(6), 1530-1545.

Another resource that we recommend is the following article, which, despite the title, can be applied by every scholar:

Cochrane, J. H. (2005). Writing tips for Ph. D. students.

## 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 problem 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
- Correct interpretation of results
- Precise theoretical contribution and positioning of your paper in the existing literature stream
- Actionable recommendations for managers that are grounded in the results of your thesis
- Understanding of and critical reflection on the paper's limitations
- Projection which further research directions would be valuable to investigate