

## **Master Program: Strategic Management**

Department of Strategic Management, Marketing & Tourism



**Innsbruck University School of Management**

## **Master's Thesis – a roadmap to success**





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## Objectives

The process of writing your Master's thesis constitutes the heart of the professional skills of a graduate education. We are looking forward to supporting you in developing your thesis. The main objective of the Master's thesis is to enable you to engage in self-standing and original academic research (and project work). You learn how to extract relevant insights from academic literature, how to design a research project, and how to draw practical implications from your theoretical and empirical work.

## Topics

Topics will be discussed, developed and allocated at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester in October. All topics are theory-based and related to the research focus of the department of Strategic Management, Marketing & Tourism. Master's theses may also deal with a practical problem (often in collaboration with a company) and usually encompass empirical research.

## Time schedule and supervision

You and your academic supervisors are allocated by topic and mutual agreement. The academic supervisor and you agree on the frequency of meetings, feedback, and deadlines for drafts of chapters and sections. Every student/peer group will receive personal coaching two to three times, depending on the complexity of the topic. Coaching is provided via face-to-face meetings or written feedback.

Two hard copies of the Master's thesis must be submitted at the end of May at the registrar's office. Additionally, an electronic version on CD-ROM has to be attached to the inside of the front cover of one of the hard copies of the thesis. The presentation and defense of your thesis will be at the end of June. The time schedule looks as follows:

<b>Assignment of topics</b>	<b>beginning of October</b>
<b>Discussion and evaluation of thesis proposals</b>	<b>end of 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester</b>
<b>Submission of the final thesis</b>	<b>May 31, 24.00 CET</b>
<b>Grading</b>	<b>beginning/mid of June</b>
<b>Oral presentation</b>	<b>mid/end of June</b>



## Peer groups

Students with similar theoretical and/or empirical topics will form peer groups. Peer groups meet regularly to exchange their thoughts, literature, and provide mutual feedback. Coaches will ensure that the topics are not overlapping but complementary. Coaching will be provided in groups as well. The written work, however, is individual.

## General rules

- You are responsible for your progress. This includes the timely organization of appointments with supervisors. Keep in mind that it may take up to two weeks from your request to the date of appointment.
- You are requested to submit a progress report and points for discussion before meeting with your supervisor(s).
- We will provide detailed comments on the thesis outline and on a draft of up to 10 pages. For the remainder of your work you will receive general feedback.
- Spell check your work before submission of the thesis outline and the draft version, otherwise it will be returned.
- In case of major flaws in your work, we will return it to you for a general revision. If the revision is fine, we will provide more detailed feedback.
- In case of delayed submission of the thesis, supervision ends with the original due date.

## Evaluation criteria

- Clarity of the problem formulation and objectives of the thesis
- Structure (logical flow)
- Consistency and strength of the arguments brought forward
- Quality of the description and analysis
- Contribution to research and practice
- Soundness of the proposed solution
- Argumentation and originality of the work
- Critical reflection of your work in relation to the literature
- Writing style
- Formalia (spelling, aesthetics, figures, tables, references, etc.)

## In more detail:

### *Introduction (15%)*

- is there an adequate problem statement?
- is there a clear research question?
- is the research question relevant?
- after reading the introduction, did you find yourself motivated to read further?

### *Theory (25%)*

- does the thesis contain a well-developed and articulated theoretical framework?
- are the core concepts of the thesis clearly defined?
- is the logic behind the research questions/hypotheses persuasive?
- do the hypotheses or propositions logically flow from the theory?
- is literature appropriately reflected, or are critical references missing?



*Methodology & Findings (25%)*

- are the methods used appropriate for the research questions formulated?
- is the study conducted with methodological rigor?
- is the data collection method consistent with the analytical technique(s) applied?
- are the analytical techniques applied appropriately?
- are the results reported in a comprehensible manner?

*Discussion / Contribution (25%)*

- could you provide an appropriate answer of the research question?
- is the interpretation of the findings adequate?
- are there alternative explanations for the results, and if so, are these adequately controlled for in the analyses?
- does the thesis make a contribution to existing research?
- does the author discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of the work?

*Formalia (Spelling, Aesthetics, Figures, Tables, References, etc.) (10%)*

Please remember that a positively graded Master's thesis must sufficiently meet all evaluation criteria!

**Tips for writing**

- Provide a logical thread throughout your thesis, i.e. the line of arguments should display a logical and consistent structure. Explanations of epic dimensions are undesirable. All content should be of relevance to the problem under consideration.
- Formulate chapter and section titles precisely. They should accurately reflect the subsequent content.
- Relate your conceptual (“theoretical”) arguments to state-of-the-art literature in the research field of your thesis. A critical analysis and discussion are of particular importance, in the theory section as well as in the interpretation and discussion of the main findings of your empirical part.
- Choose the empirical method for your field study carefully and provide a sound and well-explicated rationale for your choice. Document your data generation and analysis process so as to demonstrate academic rigor.
- Illustrations constitute an effective means of visualizing complex content. They must be understandable and need to be explained in detail. Illustrations that lack content should be omitted. Illustrations must bear a title and the source, if applicable.
- Avoid incomprehensible multi-clause sentences.
- Eliminate spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors through intensive editing of the thesis. If you are not sure about your English skills, consult a proofreader or copyeditor.

**Literature, writing, and referencing**

Academic writing and referencing follows particular and strict rules. Please refer to the following Internet page for guides and useful tips for good writing:

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocGeneral.html>. When you draw on the work of others, you must give proper credit. The key issues with regard to quotations are to clearly mark the intellectual property of others, give exact information relating to the source, and keep consistency



of quotation throughout the entire work. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Every thesis will be checked with plagiarism software.

The following Journals are good sources for your Master's thesis:

- *Academy of Management Journal*
- *Academy of Management Review*
- *Administrative Science Quarterly*
- *Consumption, Markets & Culture*
- *Creativity and Innovation Management*
- *Harvard Business Review*
- *Journal of Advertising*
- *Journal of Business Research*
- *Journal of Consumer Research*
- *Journal of Management*
- *Journal of Management Studies*
- *Journal of Marketing*
- *Journal of Marketing Research*
- *Journal of Product Innovation Management*
- *Journal of Service Research*
- *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*
- *Journal of Travel Research*
- *Long Range Planning*
- *Management Science*
- *Marketing Theory*
- *Research Policy*
- *Sloan Management Review* for managerial articles and practical examples
- *Strategic Management Journal*
- *Technovation*
- .....

Books can be good sources as well but are unlikely to capture all the relevant literature on your topic.

Please use parenthetical (in-text) quotation, for example:

(Johnson / Scholes 2005, 435); (Barney 2005, 313); Bougon et al. (2006, 117) show that ...  
Literal quotations of a text passage should be put in quotation marks. Omissions in the quoted text can be made apparent by the use of three full stops. Non-literal quotations are not put in quotation marks but referenced at the end of the respective paragraph.

Provide a detailed bibliography where the sources used are listed in alphabetical order by author or origin at the end of the thesis. Please consult your supervisor for the preferred reference style.



## Format

On average, our former students produced 60 pages *excluding* the cover pages, table of contents, table of figures, list of references and appendices. We accept no more than 80 pages.

A standard format for your work is

- DIN A4
- 1.5 line spacing
- Times New Roman 12 point or Arial 11 point
- 2.5 cm margin
- Thesis on CD-ROM (for plagiarism check)

## The good, the bad and the ugly....

We invite you to have a look at previous Master's theses in order to provide some guidance concerning quality and length requirements of your Master's thesis. Many of them take a different approach. Find out which one is most appropriate for your own purpose.

## Oral presentation of your thesis

The oral presentations take place in front of the official examiner, the thesis supervisor(s), and other Master students. The duration of the presentation is 15 minutes. Of these, a maximum of 10 minutes are allocated to the presentation, 5 minutes to the discussion. Candidates should concisely present their theoretical framework, the empirical study, and the main findings of their work. Following all presentations, the examiners will decide on the grade of the oral presentation which is part of the Master Research Colloquium (5 ECTS). The grade of this colloquium course is not necessarily correlated with the Master's thesis grade.

In case of late submission or negative grading of the Master's thesis the oral presentation will be **one year later** during the Master Research Colloquium after a re-submission and positive grading of the Master's thesis. In case of negative grading of the Master Research Colloquium the Master Research Colloquium has to be completed **one year later**.

Good luck!