

## Guidelines for Bachelor and Master Theses in the Research Group of Media Studies<sup>1</sup> at TU Ilmenau (Nov. 2018)

### Aim, scope and requirements for the final thesis

By writing your thesis you should demonstrate that you can solve a scientific problem independently within a given period of time by using socio-scientific methods. In order to prove your qualification, your thesis must meet the following **scientific requirements**:

- Clarify the relevance and objectives of your thesis and pose one or more research questions.
- Refer to scientific sources which you discuss in relation to your question (your own literature study).
- Use a self-conceived and implemented empirical study for your thesis. Not only quantitative but also qualitative research methods can be reasonable. You can expect the following workload (guideline values, deviations can be possible or even necessary due to content-related or methodological reasons):

Method	BA	MA
Content analysis of newspaper and journal articles (for a medium complex codebook with approx. 30 variables and articles with at least 200 words)	200-300	400-500
Content analysis of social media (Tweets, Facebook posts, Instagram posts, etc.; for a medium complex codebook with approx. 30 variables)	1000-1500	1500-2000
Guided interview (approx. 60 min)	5-6	10-12
Quantitative surveys	50-100	>= 100
Other possible methods are: observational studies, meta-analyses, secondary analyses, document analyses, experimental studies, etc. Please discuss the scope of the study with your supervisor.		

- Present the steps of the methodological approach (sampling, development of survey instrument, pretest, data collection, data selection) in a comprehensible way.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Vowe, G. et al. (2008): Leitfaden für mündliche und schriftliche Präsentationen: Seminarvortrag und Seminarhausarbeit vom Institut für Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaft [ ...]. Retrieved on 30.10.2018 from [https://www.tu-ilmenau.de/fileadmin/media/empk/Qualifikationsarbeiten/Doc-A3\\_Leitfaden\\_Praesentationen.pdf](https://www.tu-ilmenau.de/fileadmin/media/empk/Qualifikationsarbeiten/Doc-A3_Leitfaden_Praesentationen.pdf).

- Discuss and interpret your findings, also take into consideration the theoretical discussions, and indicate limitations of your study.
- Conclude with a summary of your findings, implications and ideas for further research.

You have a **processing period of six month** for the conception, implementation and writing of your thesis. You should plan the following periods for the individual phases: Introduction and state of research - 2 months, method and empirical study - 2 months, results and final part (incl. proofreading) - 2 months. A completed Bachelor thesis should be about 50 to 70 pages long, a Master's thesis about 100 to 110 pages.

The evaluation of theses does not focus on theoretical or methodological innovation, but on the correct and solid reception and classification of the relevant literature. Additionally, the appropriate implementation of the empirical part, including a clear link between the empirical study and the state of research, through correspondingly derived research questions and hypotheses, is of importance.

Theses may be based on applied research and conducted in cooperation with external partners. All above mentioned requirements still apply. External partners may serve as source of ideas, partners for cooperation, or financiers. Please be aware of extra coordination effort and potential conflicts of academic requirements and companies' interests

**Group work** is possible. There is a limit of three persons as a group. In particular cases, this must be required for the topic or procedure. Details can be found in the examination regulations.

Also take notice of:

- All processes should be closely coordinated, consequently a "red thread" should be visible. Therefore, try to link the individual thoughts with each other or to build a bridge between them.
- An interim conclusion after larger sections helps you to arrange your thoughts and increases traceability.
- Create your own overviews and illustrations which put your thoughts illustratively in a nutshell. For example, develop your own research-guiding model from the theoretical and empirical research reports. This serves to guide your empirical study.
- Review current literature. Search for literature in international scientific journals. Wikipedia is not a scientific source!
- Source all assertions and theses with authors or studies.

- Theses must be written according to the rules of scientific work. For quotations and literature references we recommend the 'APA-Style' developed by the American Psychological Association (APA) (see Layout and Formalia).

## Procedure of finding a topic to defending your thesis

If you are interested in writing a thesis in the field of media studies, please note the following phases and aspects:

### Identification of a topic and preparatory discussion

- On the homepage of the research group you can find the research fields for which you can write a thesis in the subject area media studies: 1. Journalism Research, 2. Strategic Communication and Public Relations, 3. War and Crisis Communication, 4. International and Intercultural Communication, 5. International Political Communication and Public Diplomacy.
- Decide on a research area and make an appointment to discuss it with Prof. Dr. Martin Löffelholz.
- During the consultation, you will talk about possible topics – preferably based on concrete ideas you have developed - and the organizational process.
- Who is responsible for your work as a second reviewer is usually decided when you register your work. Then it will also be decided whether the first or second evaluator will take over your main supervision. In the specialist area, one supervisor acts as the main contact partner. You make all further arrangements with him or her.

### Exposé and registration phase

- After the preparatory discussion and, if necessary, further clarifications, a short exposé will be prepared, which comprises about five pages and forms the basis for the decision on the topic.
- It should provide information on the following points:
  1. Cover sheet with contact details and working title of the paper
  2. Aim of the work: The relevance of the topic, the aims and limits of the work as well as the research question, which will be examined, should be presented.
  3. Theoretical basis/ state of research: briefly explain on which theoretical basis the question should be dealt with and how the topic is anchored in the international state of research.
  4. Planned procedure: The planned (empirical) approach to answer the research question should be presented (e.g. research design). The presentation should allow, among other things, an estimation of the expenditure for the empirical study.

5. Timetable: The timetable should indicate both central milestones (start of processing, intended deadline) and the most important dates of the empirical project (development of instruments, field phase).
  6. Reference list
- The brief exposé must be coordinated with the first evaluator. Several correction and improvement rounds may be necessary. The exposé should be submitted to the first evaluator within 6-8 weeks after the preparatory discussion and should lead to the registration of the work. Otherwise, the agreed topic usually cannot be dealt with any further.
  - The following criteria will be taken as a basis for the assessment of the short exposé:
    - Content-related and methodological closeness to the research areas of media studies,
    - Implementation of the formal requirements for the exposé (see below) and the final paper in general,
    - Conciseness of the topic / research question and quality of the proposed project.
  - After acceptance of the short exposé, the final thesis will be registered at the examination office. The necessary form (registration of the final thesis) is available online.

### **Bachelor's and Master's colloquia and editing phase**

- By registering your thesis you commit yourself to participate in the colloquium of the department of Media Studies. The colloquium usually takes place once a month. The dates will be announced by the secretariat of the research group by e-mail. A personal participation is expected. If you cannot participate in a colloquium, you must inform the research group about it in an e-mail to the secretary's office (mw-wm@tu-ilmenau.de), explaining the reason.
- The colloquium serves to discuss questions and problems. Make a short presentation (e.g. PowerPoint) about the status of your work and possible questions and problems (approx. 5 minutes). If you are at the beginning of the session or have no current questions, you can talk about your work without a presentation.
- In addition to the colloquia, you have the opportunity to arrange consultations with your supervisor (please make sure you make your appointment requests in advance). The consultations serve to discuss the structure, investigation instruments, evaluation strategy, etc. Before the empirical work starts, i.e. before the field-stage (survey, experiments, interviews etc.), the procedure has to be coordinated with the supervisor.

- Please note that a preliminary correction or review of entire sections or chapters is not carried out by the advisors for legal reasons.
- If external partners (companies, administrations, organisations) or study participants have concerns, e.g. regarding data collection or the confidentiality of information and/or results, it is possible to keep the thesis confidential.
- Students are strongly advised to check their thesis for plagiarism - i.e. the verbatim transfer from sources without identifying them - before submitting it. Plagiarism software can be obtained from the university library or computer centre. It is advisable to clarify possible inconsistencies before submitting the thesis. Plagiarism, even on a small scale, leads to failure (assessment as deficient).

### **Submission and assessment**

- An extension of the processing period is possible in individual cases. There must be convincing reasons for this, such as illness or delays for which you are not responsible (e.g. slow response to questionnaires, problems with interview agreements, inaccessibility of material, etc.). The reasons must be explained in an application to the Board of Examiners. You submit the application to the first supervisor, who checks it and forwards it to the Board of Examiners. Applications should be submitted as soon as you know that you will need an extension, but not later than approx. four weeks before the deadline.
- The final thesis must be submitted to the examination office within the prescribed period. Three printed, hardback copies of the thesis must be submitted (including a digital appendix with the complete digital version of the thesis and all appendices). Further information can be found in the examination regulations.
- The evaluation is carried out according to an evaluation scheme (see evaluation criteria for the final paper). For the preparation of the defence, the notes and comments of the reviewers in particular must be considered.

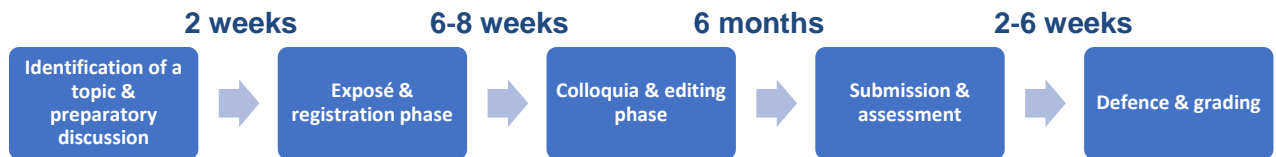
### **Defence and grading**

The oral defence usually takes place 4-6 weeks after the submission of the thesis, lasts 30 minutes and consists of two parts.

- Part 1 - Presentation of the thesis: Here you should respond to the reviewers' criticism. You can prepare a presentation for that (e.g. PowerPoint). Please keep it short and focus on the questions, points of criticism and recommendations formulated in the review (max. 15 minutes).
- Part 2 - Discussion with the examination commission (approx. 15 minutes)

After that, you will receive a grade for the defence and a final grade for the thesis, consisting of: 1. grade of the first evaluation, 2. grade of the second evaluation, 3. grade of the oral defence.

Finally, here is a summary of the procedure and the time to be planned:



## Structure of the thesis

The final thesis is structured according to this scheme:

### Cover page

*Supervisors*

*Institute for Media and Communication Studies*

*Department of Media Studies*

*Title and subtitle of the work*

*Submitted by*

*Your first names and surnames*

*Matriculation numbers/addresses*

*Submission date*

**Table of contents** (*hierarchically structured and with page references*) → optional also list of tables, list of figures, list of abbreviations

**1. Introduction** (*no foreword; from here on pages are numbered, usually in the middle at the bottom or on the right*)

- Introduction to the topic (relevance)
- Question of the final thesis (aim) and indication of the main research question(s)
- Brief overview of the procedure (structure)

**2. State of research** (*usually subdivided into several parts*)

*2.1 Text ...*

*2.1.1 Text .... a maximum of three structure points (e.g. 2.1.1)*

*2.1.2 Text ...*

*3. Text ... etc. (further chapters)*

- Presentation of the international state of research, including theories / theoretical background and empirical state of research / relevant studies

### 3. Method

- Intersubjective comprehensible description and argumentation of the research design (e.g. description of the sample, procedure for sampling, description of the survey instrument, procedure and results of the pretest)
- Procedure for data collection
- Discussion of methodological limits

### 4. Results and interpretation

- Presentation of results
- Interpretation of the findings

### 5. Final Part (summary, resume/conclusion, outlook)

- Summary of the main results of the work (reference to the initial question)
- Presentation of the theoretical & methodological implications
- Discussion of possible follow-up research & practical implications

### 6. Literature list (*sorted alphabetically*)

The entire literature used is to be listed here with the exact bibliographical data:

- alphabetical order of author names
- a catalogue (monographs, essays, Internet sources, etc.)
- all sources cited in the text, including those to which you only refer

**Appendix:** The appendix is for documentation purposes only (e.g. complete codebook). Tables or graphics that are important for the thesis belong in the text. For all other evaluations, documents, etc., it should be carefully checked whether they are necessary or helpful for understanding the work. If this is not the case, they should neither be included in the text nor in the appendix.

**Electronic appendix:** Attach a CD/ USB stick with your data record (raw data and final data record), your survey instrument as well as tables and graphics of the evaluation.

### Layout and formalities of the thesis

The following formalities must be followed:

- Edges: Top and bottom 2 to 2.5 cm each / left 4 cm / right 3 cm
- Line spacing 1.5
- Font size 12 pt, usually Times New Roman (or similar standard fonts)

- Keep the citation method you have chosen, whereby the American citation method (APA: <https://www.apastyle.org/>) is recommended.
- For online sources the URL and retrieval date have to be stated.
- Tables: Each table must have a short descriptive title and a legend at the bottom of the table to the values shown, as well as a reference and footnotes, if it is the case. All units of measurement must be mentioned. Tables and graphics should be numbered consecutively so that they can be clearly referred to in the text.
- Abbreviations need to be explained at the first use (supplemented in brackets).

### Evaluation criteria for the thesis

The following categories are not equally weighted and therefore do not correspond to the grading scale. Very good or poor performance in specific categories can strongly influence the overall grade. It is therefore not possible to calculate an average with the ratings and derive the final score from this. The individual dimensions merely illustrate the extent to which good or less good performance has been achieved.

Dimension	Criteria
<b>(1) Introduction/ research question</b>	Research question and goals are clearly presented
	Relevance of the topic is clearly presented
	Claim and scope of the formulated objectives are appropriate (no divergence from the agreed objectives)
<b>(2) State of research/ literature review</b>	Literature review is up to date and systematically arranged
	Theoretical approaches are relevant to the study and precisely and correctly presented
	Research questions and hypotheses derive from theory and or literature review
<b>(3) Metho-dology/ methods</b>	Operationalization is based on literature review and theory
	Appropriate data base
	Methodological steps (research design, sampling, data collection and analysis) are correct and accurate
	Presentation of methodological steps is transparent; study could be replicated
	Methodological limitations and weaknesses are discussed
<b>(4) Findings</b>	Presentation of findings is well structured
	Findings are appropriately presented by tables and or diagrams
	Appropriate interpretation of findings
	Important steps are summed up; an innovative and useful outlook is given.
<b>(5) Formal requirements</b>	Paper is clearly structured
	Citation and bibliography are correct
	Abstract is correct
	Text is well written
	Orthography and grammar are correct
	Layout is adequate