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Standard structures of theses

There are roughly three different types of theses:

1. a literature review thesis,

2. an empirical analysis,

3. and a theoretical analyis.

In what follows, we introduce possible ways to structure the main text of these three types of thesis (on other elements of a thesis such as lists, appendices etc. check the Guidelines on Academic Writing).[1]

Clariyfy which type of thesis you want to write, choose the strucure accordingly, and adapt it to your needs.

Disclaimer: These are not the one-and-only ways to structure a thesis, of course. Discuss with your supervisor.

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[1] These guidelines are available here: https://iw.wiwi.uni-halle.de/information_for_students/

Literature review thesis

1. Introduction

2. Conceptual framework

   2.1. Theoretical background

   Task: Introduce relevant theoretical models and concepts that are necessary to understand the research literature you discuss in Chapter 3.

   2.2. Empirical methods used in the literature

   Task: Explain the empirical method(s) that researchers have used to obtain the results that you discuss in Chapter 3.

   2.3. Other relevant background information (e.g., on the country, sector etc. you study)

3. Discussion of the literature (possibly divided into sub-chapters)

   Tasks:

   - *Develop own scienfic opinion based on scientific arguments and counterarguments*

   - *Explain which empirical (theoretical) results researchers have obtained on your question.*

   - *Answer your question based on your literature review: which (counter-)arguments do you consider as important and why?*

   - *Use self-prepared tables and descriptive figures (based on data) to illustrate your discussion. Do not copy-paste.*

4. Conclusion

Empirical thesis

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
    2.1. Theoretical background

    Task: Introduce relevant theoretical models and concepts, which form the background for the empirical analysis.

    2.2. Empirical findings

    Tasks:

    - *Explain which empirical results have researchers obtained so far.*
    - *Which methods did they use?*

    2.3. Other relevant background information (e.g., on the country, sector etc. you study)
3. Data and Methodology
    3.1. Data

    Task: Introduce the dataset and sources you use.

    3.2. Method

    Task: Explain the methodology you use.
4. Results

    Task: Description and interpretation of your results
5. Discussion

    Tasks:

    - *Compare your results to those found in the literature.*
    - *Answer your question based on your results and those found in the literature.*
    - *Use scientific arguments and counterarguments.*
6. Conclusion

Theoretical thesis

1. Introduction

2. Literature review

   2.1. Theoretical background

   Task: Introduce theoretical models and concepts on which you build your analysis.

   2.2. Empirical findings

   Tasks:

   - *Explain which empirical results researchers have obtained that are relevant for the model.*

   - *Which methods did they use?*

   2.3. Other relevant background information (e.g., on the country, sector etc. you study)

3. The Model

   Task: introduce the model you use.

4. Results

   Tasks:

   - *Description of how the results are obtained*

   - *Description and interpretation of the results of the model*

5. Discussion

   Tasks:

   - *Compare your results to those found in the literature.*

   - *Answer your question based on your results and those found in the literature.*

   - *Use scientific arguments and counterarguments.*

6. Conclusion