

Guidelines for thesis grading

1. Structure and grading

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Abstract ~ 15 %

Introduction ~ 20 %

Methods ~ 15 %

Results ~ 15 %

Discussion ~ 20 %

References ~ 5 %

Appendix ~ 5 %

Language/Grammar ~ 5 %

2. Expectations

Content/overall structure

Abstract

Clear puzzle in the beginning:

- 1. Good intro/background to show its relevance and what you find
- 2. Body of abstract: provide your study and arguments
- 3. Conclusion: end strongly

(see for detailed guidelines

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/documents/writing-scientific-abstracts-10242025.pdf)

Introduction

- Hypotheses and research question/s:
- clearly stated and appropriate for the scope of the thesis
- embedded and linked to a bigger topic
- clear operationalization of how they will be tested/addressed
- overall thesis structure is coherent and logical
- Golden thread
- argumentation logical

- why is the study important?
- level of detail appropriate for each section
- paragraph structure: Each paragraph discusses one aspect
- statements are supported by appropriate references

Methods

- the empirical and statistical methods are sound
- the methods are described in such a detail that replication is possible
- no mix-up with results
- Structure is linked to research questions

Results

- descriptive overview of data set
- all important results are described in detail and supported by meaningful figures
- figures and tables have short titles and detailed legends
- structure is linked to research questions

Discussion/conclusion

- brief overview of aim of the study and research questions
- brief overview of main results
- detailed discussion of findings in relation to relevant literature
- the arguments are supported by empirical evidence
- the conclusions are valid
- the gap in the literature and how it was filled is discussed
- limitations
- what next?

References

- all statements which are not due to the ideas of the author are accompanied by appropriate references
- all important references are cited
- correct citation distinguishing direct and indirect quotes
- consistent citation style

Language

- syntax/grammar is correct
- sensible word choice and use of expert terms
- (Typos)

3. Guidelines for scientific writing style

1. Meaningful short paragraphs (addressing one aspect or question, see context content conclusion scheme in Mensh & Kording, 2017)
2. Simple and clear sentences (reading sentences out loud often helps!)
3. Variety in the length of the sentences
4. Use punctuation and discourse markers (e.g., but) to indicate connections and argumentation

5. Know specialist terminology and use it sensibly
6. Verbal language (avoid nouns, especially in English)
7. Quote correctly

3. Grading

The Prüfungsordnung specifies grades as follows:

- 1 Excellent
- 2 Good
- 3 Satisfactory
- 4 Sufficient
- 5 Fail

- Intermediate grades are used to indicate tendencies and to weigh minor and major issues
- For theoretical work, the language, structure and argumentation has (even) greater weight
- For empirical work, the methods are a the most important aspect

1,0 - excellent thesis, all guidelines are met (if the student has worked very independently and made a novel contribution, this grade can be assigned even if there are minor issues)

1,3 - excellent thesis with very minor issues

1,7 - very good thesis

2,0 - good thesis, some issues

2,3 - good thesis, some issues

2,7 - okay thesis, major issues

3,0 - satisfactory thesis, major issues

3, 3 - satisfactory thesis, major issues

3,7 - sufficient thesis, leaning towards satisfactory

4,0 - sufficient thesis, barely passes the standards

5,0 - the thesis does not adhere to the principles of writing and scientific research

4. Dissertation grading for PhD students

Promotionsordnung:

„Die Gesamtnote der Promotion errechnet sich aus der Gesamtnote für die Dissertation und der Gesamtnote für die mündliche Prüfung. Hierbei geht die nach § 12 Absatz 2 Satz 3 gebildete ungerundete Gesamtnote der Dissertation mit einem Gewicht von 2 und die nach § 16 Absatz 2 Satz 1 gebildete ungerundete Gesamtnote der mündlichen Prüfung mit einem Gewicht von 1 in die Gesamtnote der Promotion ein. Die Gesamtnote der Promotion wird durch Bildung des arithmetischen Mittels unter Berücksichtigung der genannten Gewichtungen ermittelt.“

Die Gesamtnote der Promotion lautet bei einem Durchschnitt kleiner als 0,5: summa cum laude (excellent)

gleich oder größer als 0,5 und kleiner als 1,5: magna cum laude (very good)

gleich oder größer als 1,5 und kleiner als 2,5: cum laude (good)

gleich oder größer als 2,5 und kleiner als 3,5: rite (sufficient)

As a rule of thumb, the most common grade is a „magna cum laude“. A summa cum laude is only handed out for remarkable contributions.