

## Guidelines for writing Research Papers

Guidelines to help MIEPP students structuring and writing the master thesis.

Important: citations must be clearly indicated and plagiarism will result in the grade "fail".

### General

**Length:** a standard format would cover 40-70 pages (main body and appendix, excluding title, lists of figures and tables). Deviations from that format are possible if agreed on with your supervisor.

**Formatting:** settings for font, margins, title page, references etc. are predefined in the document *MasterThesis\_shell.tex*. You are strongly encouraged to use this LaTeX template. [Alternative format, if agreed on with your supervisor, is a word document with font size of 12p in Times New Roman, 1.5-spaced, standard margins.]

**Hand-in:** You are required to hand in two hardcopies to the Studienbüro. One additional electronic version, including the thesis, do-files and data-files, must be send or handed in to the supervisor.

### Structure

The structure outlined here by defining Chapters and sub-sections is not a strict and rigid corset but rather a useful framework for beginners in academic writing. The function of each subsection is specified [in squared brackets and in grey color].

### Abstract

Summary of the paper's question addressed, methods and findings with 100-150 words.

#### 1. Introduction

- The general topic [motivation, convey importance of topic]
- The paper's
  - Question [narrow the reader's expectation and focus minds]
  - Method [choice of tools, reasons for this choice]
  - Findings [key take-away and lesson]
- The related literature(s) [clearly structured according to subject/question, theory/empirics,]

- main messages [inform the reader of previous findings]
  - the paper's contribution [other researchers should care about results]
- Outline of the paper's section [guide the reader]

## 2. Data and Methodology

- *If applicable*: Brief historical and/or political background of episode [if case study]
- Data [facilitate replication]
  - Sources
  - Definitions of variables used in study (ordered by relevance)
  - Summary statistics (of all key variables including units)
  - Limitations (data gaps or drawbacks)
  - Use of dataset in previous literature
- Theoretical foundations and empirical strategy [clarify procedures and use of tools]
  - The empirical strategy [familiarize with tools and avoid misunderstandings]
  - Extent to which strategy is used in previous work, how it is adapted [motivate or justify use of specific modelling choice]

## 3. Results

- Baseline results
  - Main finding and narrow interpretation of coefficients, including economic interpretations. [describe findings and lay out their economic meaning]
  - Examples:
    - "...a one percent (unit) increase in the independent variable is associated with a X percent (unit) increase in the dependent variable..."
    - "...going from the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of the distribution of the independent variable to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of its distribution would imply a change in the dependent variable of..."
    - This is large (small) compared to the overall variation in the independent variable...
  - *If applicable*: How did previous literature address similar questions?
- Robustness [show that results did not emerge by sheer chance only]
  - Alternative specifications – motivate why
  - Possible concerns and how they are addressed
- Discussion and interpretation [explain broader meaning and implications of results]
  - What the findings may imply in the broader sense
  - The limitations of the analysis

## 4. Conclusions

- Summary of the paper – brief repetition of motivation, question, findings.
- Policy implications (if appropriate)
- Remaining open questions and possible future analysis

## References

Related papers, mainly academic (starting point: key references, their references and google-scholar cites)

Key references, selected according to

- publication rank (journal ranking, impact factor)
- citations (e.g., google scholar)

## Appendix

- Additional details on data (Figures and Tables)
- Additional Estimation Results

### Typical mistakes to avoid:

- unspecific research questions (Example: “It is interesting to know the trends...”)
- many parallel thoughts at the same time (rule of thumb one idea or message = one paragraph).
- unexplained acronyms
- overly long sentences
- passive (instead of active) voice