Guide to meeting and maintaining academic standards in your written work

HAW Hamburg, Department of Health Sciences

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Content

1. Preface

The purpose of this guide is to provide support to students on Master's degree courses in the Department with acquiring and developing academic/scientific research and writing skills. It contains an overview of key criteria for working to proper academic standards during your degree course, in examinations and beyond, making it an ideal reference guide throughout your studies. Alongside this, it details the requirements you will need to meet in order to write successful seminar papers and degree theses in the Department.

The standards and stipulations detailed in this guide are the product of consensus among the Department's academic staff, who have drawn on their experience in teaching and examining students and on relevant legal provisions.[1] It is nevertheless important to be aware that consulting this guide cannot be a substitute for talking to your own examiners (lecturers/supervisors) about your particular case and gaining their agreement to your proposed approach. Stipulations they issue that may diverge from the information in this guide (due to disciplinary conventions or other factors) take precedence, and you must make sure you comply with them. Please note that when we refer to an 'examiner' in this guide, we mean the person who will examine/assess your *Prüfungsleistung* (thesis, paper, examination or module).

Prof. Dr. Sabine Wöhlke and Prof. Dr. Judith Brockmann are the lead authors of this guide. The Departmental Council approved its predecessor version, for Bachelor's students, on 5 May 2022; that document forms the core of this guide for Master's students. While we drew in part on the preceding version of this guide[2], we also took inspiration from the work and good practice of our colleagues, particularly from the guidelines on writing academic papers and theses issued by HAW Hamburg's Department of Nutrition and Home Economics[3]; our express thanks in this context are due to Prof. Dr. Stephan G.H. Meyerding and Prof. Dr. Anja Carlsohn. Another key source of our work was the guide to academic and scientific writing for students and academic staff issued by the Health Campus Göttingen; we are grateful to Prof. Dr. Juliane Leinweber and particularly to Maria Barthels, M.A., for their kind permission to use their work. We also wish to thank Lynn Saftig, Hanna Horstmann and Tobias Rübner for their contribution to realising this guide.

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1 Legal provisions: please refer to the website information on the Master's degree in Health Sciences: https://www.haw-hamburg.de/en/study/degree-courses-a-z/study-courses-in-detail/course/courses/show/health-sciences/Student/

2 'Erstellen von wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten im Department Gesundheitswissenschaften der HAW Hamburg', June 2019.

3 https://www.haw-hamburg.de/fileadmin/LS/Studiengang/B.Sc.OT/%C3%96T_Leitfaden_Erstellung_wissenschaftlicher_Arbeiten_2020.pdf

Dr. Katherine Ebisch-Burton translated and adapted the guide's original German version.

2. Structuring a piece of academic writing

2.1 Title and title page

The **title** of a piece of academic work should give a concise statement of its core topic and content. You should not word your title as a question, but it can be a research question reworded in the form of a statement. You should not mention names of companies or organisations in your title, even if the work underlying your paper or thesis is taking place within, or in collaboration with, a specific company or organisation. As a guide, your title should be around 200 characters (with spaces) long, although this will depend on the type of paper or thesis you are writing.

The title page (cover page) of your paper or thesis should contain, in this order:

- the type of paper or thesis (such as a Master thesis or a written seminar paper (*Hausarbeit*))
- its topic, given in a clear and concise title
- your name, address and student ID number (*Matrikelnummer*)
- your institution (i.e. HAW Hamburg), faculty and degree course
- where relevant, the course/class and semester for which and in which you are writing this piece of work
- the name(s) of your examiner(s) (as stated above, this means whoever will be marking/assessing the work)
- the date of submission
- where required, the total number of words or characters

When writing your Master thesis, you should additionally use the template provided by the Faculty of Life Sciences.[4]

2.2 Abstract/summary

You will need to submit an abstract alongside your degree thesis (Master thesis). The abstract should be followed by three to five keywords related to the content of your thesis. As a rule, you will not need to provide an abstract for a written seminar paper.

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[4] The guidelines are available at https://www.haw-hamburg.de/fileadmin/LS/FSB/Informationsblatt_Abschlussarbeit.pdf. There is an English-language version of this information here: https://www.haw-hamburg.de/fileadmin/LS/FSB/Information_for_writing_a_thesis.pdf. When using the HAW Hamburg logo, please be sure to follow the stipulations set out in HAW Hamburg's corporate design manual: https://www.haw-hamburg.de/hochschule/hochschuleinheiten/presse-und-kommunikation/corporate-design/.

The abstract of your thesis should follow the title page. Its purpose is to provide a very concise overview of your thesis. In most cases, an abstract will have four sections: **introduction/background, methods, results**, and **discussion/conclusions**. Corresponding to the structure of the thesis itself, the abstract provides your readers with a summary of the theoretical background to your thesis, the research question you have investigated, the methods you have used, your findings/results, their discussion, and the conclusions you have drawn. Students taking the Master of Public Health will usually be required to submit their abstract in English, but can add a German-language version of it if they wish. The reverse is the case for Health Sciences students (i.e. the abstract should be in German, with the option to supplement it with an English-language version). Your abstract is limited to a maximum of 250 words.

2.3 Contents page(s)

The contents page(s) of your seminar paper or thesis has (have) the job of showing your readers (i.e. your supervisors and/or examiners) how you have approached and investigated the topic. It outlines the structure of your piece of writing and the stages you have passed through while exploring the topic and answering your research question(s). Make sure that your section headings are appropriate to the content of each section. Page numbers appear (right-aligned) alongside each heading. A contents page (or pages) should show a detailed structure, not simply the overarching parts of a thesis or paper (background, methods, discussion etc.), and should contain all subsection headings with their page numbers.

2.4 List of figures, tables and abbreviations

You will need to include a list of figures, tables and abbreviations; see below (p. 28) for guidelines on this.

2.5 Sections of a piece of academic writing

Materials on academic writing may refer to some of the sections of a piece of academic writing that we will discuss in what follows - particularly the section on the background to the topic, the methods section, and the discussion - as the 'main body' (*Hauptteil*), preceded by an introduction and succeeded by a conclusion. You should never call a section of an essay, paper or thesis the 'main body' or *Hauptteil*. It is simply an illustrative term that indicates which part of the writing is the core part. This core consists of a number of sections which may differ in accordance with the type of paper or thesis (empirical, theoretical, conceptual, practical) you are writing.[5] The extent to which your introduction will reference specific new content will depend on the context of your work, including the relevant disciplinary conventions. In many instances, writing describing empirical studies (for example) will follow the introduction with an overview of the current state of research

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[5] See also 3. 'A brief typology of degree theses'.

on this particular question (2.5.2), then going on to describe the methods used (see section 2.5.3) and the empirical findings of the research (2.5.4), before proceeding to a discussion (2.5.5). Such a structure, however, is by no means mandatory; in the course of your writing, you may make various changes to your initially planned structure, refining it in line with your increasing exploration and comprehension of the topic. You can use checklists, such as the EQUATOR guidelines[6] and the CASP checklists[7], for guidance with structuring your writing and ensuring you have included all relevant points. Choose your checklist in accordance with your research question and, where appropriate, your study design (for empirical papers/theses).

You should therefore regard the information that follows as a guide rather than as a set of definitive stipulations. While you may choose a different type of structure, you should always make sure to discuss it with your examiner(s) first and obtain their approval.

It is important to avoid presenting the sections and subsections of a paper, essay or thesis as a succession of unconnected pieces of text. You need to make sure to guide your reader through your work, so they can always understand the relevance of your writing to the topic or research question at hand, and so they always know what is coming next. Ways of doing this include introductory information for new aspects of the topic, (very) brief summaries of findings or results discussed up to that point, and transitions between sections and subsections.

2.5.1 Introduction

An introduction is intended to give readers an initial overview of the topic and your chosen approach to it. The information it gives should be fairly general, progressing to the more specific as the introduction continues.

The introduction serves to guide your reader towards the research question or specific issue your piece will be tackling, enabling them to understand its relevance to the field, the current state of research in relation to it, and existing gaps in our knowledge of it. As is the case throughout a piece of academic writing, you need to support all statements you make in your introduction using academically robust sources/references, preferably recent, peer-reviewed articles/papers.

Your outline of the current state of research on your topic, the specific issue, problem or question at hand, and the research gaps you have identified in this context provides the rationale for your research question and demonstrates the relevance of your topic to the field. The introduction should also set out background information, such as scientific theories, that enable your reader to grasp the specific issue on which your paper or thesis

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[6]   https://www.equator-network.org/library/resources-in-german-ressourcen-auf-deutsch/die-richtige-leitlinie-fur-ihren-forschungsbericht-auswahlen/.

[7] https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/.

centres. (Keeping in mind the question 'Why am I working on this particular topic?' can help you here). You should outline the current state of research concisely and in a manner that will catch readers' interest (but not in a sensationalist tone!). You may choose to include references to relevant publications, such as evidence-based studies; make sure you cite these correctly. It may be necessary to give brief definitions of key terms you will be using (and which may, in the case of a Master thesis, be identical with the key words you supply along with your abstract) or an overview of the broader issues or research landscape within which the topic sits. Make sure you set out clearly and precisely the aim of your piece and the research question or issue you are investigating. Your introduction should also contain a brief reference to the methodological approach you will take (i.e. are you writing about an empirical study, for example, or is the emphasis practical, conceptual, or on research literature?) and to your hypotheses or the assumptions from which you will proceed. If your essay or paper is part of a module assessment (a *Studien-* or *Prüfungsleistung*), you should locate it within the context of your degree course as a whole and of the specific module to which it pertains.

Your introduction should conclude with a concise overview of the sections that will follow and the purpose of each, which will simultaneously serve to outline the process your work has followed. You might, for example, choose wording such as 'The second section, '[title of section]', will explore the extent to which…'. [8]

Throughout your paper or thesis, you should ensure that all information you include is relevant to your argument. The introduction is no exception to this, and indeed it is particularly vital here to avoid clouding the issue and confusing your reader by including irrelevant detail.

2.5.2 Background information (incl. theoretical background)
This part of your paper or thesis locates the research question or specific topic you are investigating within the academic or scientific discourse in your field. In some disciplines, it is usual practice for one section to incorporate both the introduction and the background to the topic/question. The subsections in this section, depending on the scientific emphasis of the piece, will contain an overview of various points of view on the issue, definitions of key terms, approaches to the topic, relevant theories and problems, and/or information on what distinguishes it from related topics, all on the basis of clear, coherent arguments, evidence and proofs, without any unsubstantiated statements.

Your overview of the current state of research in relation to your topic should be more detailed than that given in a Bachelor thesis. It should include references to the relevant

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[8] There are some disciplines in which it is not usual practice to outline how you will proceed in this way. Please make sure you check this with whoever is examining/assessing your work.

seminal scientific/academic literature on the topic and recent and current literature (such as research studies, preferably from peer-reviewed journals). This section should define key terms and explain theories, concepts and/or models that are central to your work.[9]

This outline of extant literature should point to the research gap you intend to fill with your work. This is where you can detail and explain any hypotheses or assumptions you will be working from. It is the key component of the introductory part of your paper/thesis, and sets out clearly the question you will tackle (what, specifically, do I intend to investigate?) and your aim in doing so (why do I want to investigate this? What do I hope to achieve?). It does this in a manner that demonstrates that your proposed work is feasible. If you have more than one research question or hypothesis, it is advisable to always address them in the same order throughout your writing (methods used to investigate question/hypothesis 1, 2, 3; findings on question/hypothesis 1, 2, 3; etc.).

If it is usual practice in your discipline to outline how you will proceed (see above), you do this at this point, concluding the introductory section.

2.5.3 Methods

Your methods section outlines the methodological approach you have taken to the question or topic. [10] Make sure you describe your methods in a comprehensible and replicable manner.

In work reporting on an ***empirical study***, your methods section will include details of the method(s) you have chosen for investigating your topic; the study design (including information on recruitment to the study, inclusion and exclusion criteria); data collection methods; methods of data analysis (statistical methods; software used, such as SPSS version XX or R); and details of the data analysis process. If your research involves human subjects, you will need to state how you are complying with the Declaration of Helsinki (where relevant) or give details of ethics committee approval. When selecting methods, questionnaire items, etc., make sure they are suitable and appropriate for investigating your research question/hypotheses.

The methods section in a write-up of ***literature-based*** work will involve a robust account of the systematic literature research you have conducted. This will need to include, for instance, the literature databases you used; a description of your search strategy, citing the keywords and Boolean operators used, limitations applied, inclusion and exclusion

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[9] In some disciplines, this information will appear in the introduction. Make sure you check with your supervisor(s)/examiner(s) and ensure that you structure these sections in a logical and consistent manner.

[10] See also section 3, 'A brief typology of degree theses' (p. 12).

criteria; the hits returned; and a search flow chart[11] with an outline of and rationale for the sources included.

The methods section details the methods you used in your work, providing a rationale for your choice. Most authors place emphasis on showing that they took care over this choice, by, for instance, referring to literature on scientific methods – which is crucial to demonstrating good scientific/academic practice and also makes sense because you did not 'invent' the methods you use. This is why you should make sure to always reference the sources you drew on. You will not necessarily need to give every detail of these sources.

You should set out the limitations of your research, including issues you encountered with your methodological approach, in the discussion (and not in this section).

2.5.4 Results
The results section details the findings of your (empirical, theoretical or conceptual) paper or thesis. Make sure to present your results in objective terms, that is, without adding your interpretations or placing a particular value on them. Refer back to your research question(s)/hypotheses. If your study was an empirical one, you can use tables or diagrams to report your results or outline them in writing, avoiding unnecessary detail or repetitions. If you use diagrams or tables, you should set out their content in your writing by (for example) outlining key findings, and showing additional detail or comparative data in the tables or figures to which you again refer in the text.

Depending on your research question – if you are investigating differences, correlations or changes, for instance – you will need to supplement your descriptive data with the results of appropriate statistical analysis conducted for the purpose of checking your hypothesis or hypotheses. For qualitative studies, you will need to set out the stages your analysis and interpretation passed through in a clear and comprehensible manner. An example might be an outline of the process that took you from the raw data collected (for instance) in interviews to paraphrasing, generalisation or reduction, or the process of category or subcategory formation using anchor codes and coding rules, etc. Literature reviews can benefit from the presentation of results in an easy-to-read table.[12]

2.5.5 Discussion
The discussion considers the findings/results of your work and the methods by which they came about, referring to relevant literature and the state of research on the topic to date.

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[11] Models for this appear in Moher et al. (2009) and PRISMA, http://prisma-statement.org/PRISMAStatement/Checklist.

[12] You can, for example, use a PICO table (Population –Intervention – Control – Outcome) to supplement your textual overview of your literature (Straus, S. E., Glasziou, P., Richardson, S.W., Haynes, B.R. (2011). Evidence-based medicine: how to practice and teach EBM (4th ed.). Edinburgh: Elsevier Churchill Livingstone, pp. 15-16).

It may entail setting out various points of view, theoretical models, etc. and linking them argumentatively to the question at the centre of your work and to its aims.

Many authors choose to lead in to their discussion by briefly recapping the key findings/results of their research. A discussion should then interpret the results, assess the methods used, and discuss them in the context of the studies you cited in your outline of the current state of research on the topic. You may find it helpful here to consider questions such as: What do my findings/results mean, and how do they fit into the existing research landscape in this area? Was I able to answer my research question? Has my work confirmed my hypotheses, or disproved them? It is important, in your discussion, to relate your results to the extant literature on your topic, referring back to the issues you raised in your introductory sections. For example, if your introduction and background had described a specific theory, you will now need to demonstrate the extent to which your results support this theory or, alternatively, call it into question.

In the next part of the discussion, you should outline the specific contribution that your work makes to research on your topic. (Questions to guide you might include: What has this work achieved, and what are its implications for future research and for practice in the field? Has my research uncovered something new, or have I confirmed or disproved the conclusions of an existing study from an earlier point in time or from another setting?) Where relevant, you may indicate further gaps in the research, that you have identified during the course of your work.[13]

The final part of your discussion of your methods should consider the strengths and limitations of your study/your paper/thesis. You can choose to discuss the limitations of your methods separately from those of your findings. Note any problems that occurred and try to propose potential solutions. Limitations of a particular study often point to issues that will need tackling in future research on the topic.

It may make sense for you to conclude your discussion by giving examples of potential real-world uses or applications for your findings.[14]

2.5.6 Conclusion
You may choose to divide your conclusion into a part where you outline the conclusions you have drawn from your work and a part where you look forward to future research on the topic. Conclusions involve taking a clear position in relation to your research question or the purpose you have pursued with your research. 'Answering your research question'

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[13] In some disciplines, this will typically be part of your conclusion. You should make sure to structure your writing consistently and avoid repeating content. Check with your supervisor(s) whether this should be in your discussion or conclusion.

[14] In some disciplines, this will typically be part of your conclusion. You should make sure to structure your writing consistently and avoid repeating content. Check with your supervisor(s) whether this should be in your discussion or conclusion.

does not mean giving a yes or no answer; instead, you should provide a full and nuanced outline of your conclusions. This will include noting areas where the evidence currently available is insufficient to allow us to draw conclusions, or where further research is needed (when writing, you can ask yourself here: Which gaps have become evident in the current research, including mine?). You can draw conclusions even from research results that have not proved significant in a statistical sense. You may additionally be able to formulate recommendations for the scientific community and/or for real-world work in the field to which your research relates, or provide examples for ways in which your results can be translated into practice (ask yourself: What could I, other academics/scientists, or practitioners do with my findings?).[15]

2.6 References

A list of references is an essential component of every piece of academic or scientific writing. Its purpose is to list all the sources you used when writing a paper, essay or thesis, their authors, and where they were published/where they came from. Make sure all sources are easy to identify and find on the basis of the information that you provide; they should be listed in alphabetical order by last name of author (first/lead author, where there is more than one author). The information in your in-text reference must be consistent with that in your reference list. Make sure that any abbreviations you use (for issuing institutions of sources you refer to, for example) enable your reader to find the relevant source in your reference list (see section 4 of this guide). The details of how you give your references will vary in accordance with the referencing style you use; make sure to be consistent. [16]

2.7 Appendix

An appendix (plural: appendices) contains information that is not publicly available and serves as documentation of your research. This might include, but is not limited to, descriptions of methods of analysis you used; relevant regulations; example calculations; tables (containing data values, for instance); questionnaires; interview guides and transcripts; information letters to prospective participants in your study; ethics committee approval documents; written consent from (for example) managers and works councils at companies and organisations you have worked with; confidentiality agreements (which may be in place, for instance, in the context of third party-funded research projects).

2.8 Declaration that your work is your own

Examination regulations in force at HAW Hamburg, and their legal bases, require students submitting take-home examinations and Master theses to complete a declaration that

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[15] In some disciplines, this will typically be part of your discussion. You should make sure to structure your writing consistently and avoid repeating content. Check with your supervisor(s) whether this should be in your discussion or conclusion.

[16] Conventions on referencing interviews with stakeholders, experts etc. and other, similar material vary from discipline to discipline; check with your examiner(s)/supervisor(s).

their work is entirely their own.[17] This should be included in written form in your thesis, as its final page, and must be signed (an electronic version with a scanned signature is sufficient for take-home exams). You will need to check with your examiner whether they require you to submit a declaration with a seminar paper or similar piece of written work.

2.9 Use of AI-based support tools

The Department of Health Sciences is generally open to new technological developments if (as in the case of AI-generative processes) active engagement with such technologies is encouraged through transparent handling and an open communication and documentation culture. Even beyond questions of technical control options, this speaks in favour of not generally prohibiting the use of AI-generative procedures in coursework and examinations. In principle, AI-generative procedures may therefore be used. However, taking into account the characteristics and requirements of specific coursework and examinations, it is certainly sometimes necessary to restrict or completely prohibit the use of AI by students.[18]

In the latter case, it is necessary to have the non-use confirmed by the student by means of a declaration of independence (template, see at the end of this sub-chapter). In the event of suspected cheating, Section 25 (4) APSO-INGI applies. Teachers should communicate to students at an early stage, usually at the beginning of the respective module, whether and to what extent the use of AI-generative methods is permitted in their examinations and coursework (within the framework of the requirements of the respective examination board). It goes without saying that the use of AI in examinations must not violate the principles of good scientific practice, which are taught and discussed as part of the degree programs.

2.9.1 Documentation requirement

If AI-generative procedures are used in examinations, this must be documented by the candidates so that the examiners can take the use of the AI-tools and aids into account when assessing the examination performance. Use the following table template (Table 1) for the documentation. In addition to subject-specific features, a distinction must be made in the documentation between different variants of the use of AI-generative methods - for example, cases in which passages have been generated by an AI (here, for example, a citation-like marking of the automatically generated passages could be useful) and cases in which AI has been used, for example, to stylistically revise a text section (here, the

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[17] See section 7.6, 'Formal requirements', for the prescribed content of your declaration.

[18] We would like to point out at this point (as of April 2024) that AI tools are subject to the GDPR and therefore their use (e.g. ChatGPT) at the university is only legally permitted under certain conditions. For example, no personal data may be entered into ChatGPT. Further information is available on the MMKH website.

prompts for the use of AI-generative methods must be listed in the appendix of an examination or study performance).[19]

The following table (Table 1) shows the documentation of how, why and at what point in the process of creating the assignment AI tools were used (with examples).

Table 1 Documentation of used AI-tools

KI-Tool	Used for:	What for:	When / Why:	Link
Elicit	To find a start into the topic	To find relevant literature for topic	Literature research	Link attachment
DeepL	Translation of texts in foreign language	Translation of articles and other informations	Literature research; to be able to select relevant articles	Link attachment (translation)
ChatGPT Perplexity.ai	Basics of those topics, which are asked in exam	To clarify questions of understanding; understand the basics	As support for working on the theoretical background / introduction of the written exams	Link attachment (prompt)

2.9.2 Citation of AI-generated texts

AI-generated text sections or even entire passages must be cited according to scientific standards (see guidelines p. 18). At the Department of Health Sciences, the APA citation type (American Psychological Association (APA) for social and natural science subjects is used for citing scientific evidence. If you use AI-generative tools in your written and/or oral examinations, this should be cited as follows[20]:

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT (Mar 14 version) [Large language model] https://chat.openai.com/chat

Cite or reproduce the text created by an AI text-generating tool (e.g. ChatGPT) in your examination performance:

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[19] Our specifications are based on: Riedel, Anja & Mörth, Martina (2023). Redesigning university teaching with artificial intelligence. Online resource of the BZHL. [Accessed on: 12.04.2024]. Available at: hu_empfehlungen_ki-in-pruefungen_20230905.pdf (hu-berlin. de); For the use of AI-generative tools in teaching, the lecturers of the Department of Health Sciences use the UHH orientation framework for dealing with generative AI systems in studies and teaching (online resource of the UHH: 2024-02-23-Orientierungsrahmen-der-UHH-zum-Umgang-mit-generativen-KI.pdf (uni-hamburg.de)) [accessed on: 12.04.2024]

[20] How to cite ChatGPT

The results of a ChatGPT "chat" are not accessible to other readers. Non-retrievable data or quotes are usually cited as personal communications in APA style academic papers. This is not possible with a ChatGPT-generated text, as an AI-generating writing tool is not a communicating person. Citing the ChatGPT text from a chat session is therefore more like sharing the output of an algorithm; therefore, indicate the authorship of the algorithm with an entry in the reference list and the corresponding in-text citation as shown here:

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT (Mar 14 version) [Large language model] https://chat.openai.com/chat

For exams at our department, the full text of long responses from ChatGPT must be included in an appendix of your paper so that examiners have access to the exact text that was generated. It is particularly important to document the exact text as ChatGPT generates a separate response for each chat session, even if the same prompt is given. If you create appendices or supplemental materials, remember to reference them at least once in the text of your paper in APA style.

In response to the follow-up question "What is a more accurate representation?", the text generated by ChatGPT stated that "different brain regions work together to support different cognitive processes" and "the functional specialization of different regions can change in response to experience and environmental factors" (OpenAI, 2023; see Appendix A for the full transcript).

In addition to citing prompts / results from ChatGPT according to APA style (https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt), the person who formulated the prompt (student) must also be specified: <URL of AI> prompted by <first name last name>, <date> (cf. recommendation for Hamburg schools). This documents that the student has created this prompt themselves, just like a search string for a literature search.

2.9.3 Affidavit with AI use

If AI-based support tools are permitted for examinations and/or as part of the MA thesis, use the following affidavit (declaration in lieu of an oath):

"I declare that I have specifically marked all passages in this written student research project that are taken verbatim from other authors, as well as the explanations of my work that are closely based on the ideas of other authors, and that I have cited the corresponding sources. In addition, I assure you that when using AI-supported writing tools, I have listed these tools in full in the section "Overview of tools used" with their product name, my source of supply (e.g. URL) and information on the functions of the software used and the scope of use. Excluded from this are those AI-supported writing tools that were classified as non-notifiable by my responsible examination office up to the time of submission of my thesis ("whitelist"). During the preparation of this student research project, I worked independently throughout and controlled the use of AI-supported writing tools."

(according to Limburg et al.: "Plagiarism in times of artificial intelligence." ZFH 17(3) PP. 91-106: 103)

2.9.4 Affidavit for texts without AI-based support tool

Affidavit (declaration in lieu of an oath), if no AI-based support tool is used:

I hereby declare that I have written this thesis independently and exclusively using the specified resources without the use of a GKI application (such as ChatGPT). All passages taken literally or analogously from published and unpublished writings are marked as such by quotation marks and the work has not yet been part of a study or examination performance in the same or a similar version.

Hamburg, the   (date)

(Please sign when used in exam!)

3. A brief typology of degree theses
This section outlines key characteristics and particular features of some different types of degree thesis, defined primarily in accordance with the methods they use.

3.1. Empirical theses
Empirical theses apply and validate quantitative methods and data collection processes in a scientific, real-world context. Their aim is to generate new knowledge using scientific research methods. In completing an empirical thesis, you will use scientific methods alongside theories and/or models in order to contribute to the sum of knowledge in your field. Empirical research is describable as the practical counterpart to literature-based analysis; it proves or disproves assertions about a real-world matter using methods such as surveys, interviews and observation. We recommend you use the checklist issued by the HAW Hamburg ethics committee to evaluate ethical aspects of your planned research. This self-assessment will help you identify whether your project requires ethics committee approval. If so, once approval has been granted, the committee will issue you with a reference code (consisting of numbers and/or letters) which you will need to quote in your thesis. If you need approval from any other bodies or individuals, such as managers within a company or organisation or works council (*Betriebsrat*/*Personalrat*) representatives, you should mention these in your thesis, giving the date on which approval was issued.

We distinguish between quantitative and qualitative empirical research.

3.1.1 Quantitative empirical theses

If you are writing a quantitative thesis, you should start off with a clearly formulated scientific research question or problem that it is possible and promising to explore using a quantitative approach and is of a scope suitable for a Master thesis. Your research question and the hypotheses you formulate should arise from the theoretical background to the topic. This means that you operationalise the theories and theoretical constructs you have researched in order to formulate your research question and form your hypotheses. If you use theoretical models,[21] you should make sure to explain their context and workings. When you locate your topic in the context of existing research in this area, you show the reader the relationships among all the factors you have explored and indicate the character of the effects you have found. The methods section explains how you will be testing the validity of these relationships and the conditions that determine them. It outlines, in a manner the reader can follow and understand, the process of sample recruitment, the planning of your study, the instruments used for data collection, the statistical tests and methods employed for analysis, and their test variables.

You can either collect your own data or use existing data. Ensure that you agree with your first examiner on the methods of analysis you will use and the size of your data set.[22] Your results section should set out all your findings, using figures, tables and diagrams with detailed headings/captions/legends and descriptions. The discussion should briefly summarise your key findings and engage critically, but constructively, with them and with the methodological approach you used, locating your results in the current research and literature landscape in this area. You may be able to point to gaps in the existing research and areas from whose exploration the field would benefit. The discussion is also the part of your thesis in which you set out and explain the methodological limitations of your research. These considerations will enable you to formulate recommendations for further or follow-up research on the topic or in relation to the sample groups you studied. Your conclusion should provide a summary overview of the new knowledge or insights gained from your work and an answer, as far as possible, to your research question.

3.1.2 Qualitative empirical theses

If you are interested in doing a **qualitative thesis** in the area of **empirical social research**, you will need to think carefully about a number of issues beforehand. Collecting, analysing and writing up your own qualitative research data is a highly time-consuming process, requiring excellent time and workload management skills. All empirical research topics rest on a priori theoretical assumptions, in the form of theories and/or models

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[21] Such models include the transtheoretical model of behaviour change (TTM), the health action process approach (HAPA), the systemic demands-resources model, the stress-strain model (*Belastungs-Beanspruchungsmodell*), the gratification crisis model, salutogenesis, and the transactional model of stress and coping.

[22] You should choose statistical software in which you have gained skills during your degree course (examples are SPSS and R).

which you will need to set out in your 'theoretical background' section. This background is what you derive your research question from. You should always develop your interview guide (for interviews or focus groups) on the basis of theoretical assumptions, and provide a rationale for your approach (your choice of method(s), for example) that draws on the standard literature on qualitative methods. If you collect your own data, you will need to decide on inclusion and exclusion criteria when recruiting subjects, and set these out in your thesis. You will also need to give a detailed description of the methodological process you followed (your study design, data collection and analysis). State why you chose which method of analysis; this should include information on why you decided to use a deductive or inductive method. Make sure you agree your proposed methods of analysis with your first examiner. As a rule, you will use MAXQDA or a comparable software package for data analysis. Make sure to pseudonymise any potentially identifying information on participants (including initials and dates of birth). While conducting interviews or focus groups, you should make notes on the setting and situation, covering matters such as any disruptive factors that arise[23]. You will need these during data analysis.

Qualitative social research typically proceeds in accordance with the principle of openness; this means that there is no minimum or maximum number of interviews (or other data collection procedures) you may conduct. The number of interviews you will conduct or documents you will include in your analysis will depend on the point at which you reach empirical saturation, and you will therefore need to give a scientifically founded rationale for your decisions in this regard.[24]

The discussion considers your empirical findings and relates them to the theoretical assumptions underlying your work. You may be able to point to gaps in the existing research and areas from whose exploration the field would benefit. The discussion is also the part of your thesis in which you set out and consider the methodological limitations of your research. You may conclude, if your research question allows for it, by proposing recommendations for practical action in the relevant area or field.

It is vital to ensure you handle your data with great care, store it securely and ensure it is not vulnerable to security breaches. You must provide all participants with written information on how you will handle their data when they consent to taking part in your research, and ensure that you receive their informed consent to your use and storage of

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[23] Regular research journalling can also help. Here is a useful English-language link on research journalling: Brown, N. (2021, November 4), Keeping a research journal that works for you. LSE impact blog. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2021/11/04/keeping-a-research-journal-that-works-for-you/

[24] This said, you should make sure that the scope and length of your Master thesis is appropriate to the scope of your research question and to the thesis' purpose, which is to show that you are capable of thinking and working scientifically/academically and working independently to investigate a topic of research and find answers to a research question. You should agree upon a maximum number of interviews with your supervisor(s).

their data. Throughout the process of preparing for and conducting data collection, you will need to communicate openly and candidly with your supervisor(s) and work closely with them.

If your work is taking place within a broader research project, such as one being carried out with third-party funding, you will need to ensure that your part in the research is one that you conduct yourself, independently of others. If you are doing secondary analysis of existing data, from another research project or elsewhere, you can develop your own research question to engage with the data. It is an essential part of good scientific/academic practice to comply with any confidentiality agreements in place when involved in third party-funded research; such agreements should be made in written form, to ensure those involved are identifiable.[25]

3.2 Literature-based theses

A literature-based thesis differs from an empirical thesis in that it seeks to explore and answer a research question on the sole basis of existing literature on the topic, such as empirical findings attained by other researchers. The increase in the volume of academic and scientific publications, and therefore in the volume of data available for conducting literature reviews, has brought in its wake a considerable expansion in the range of methods used in completing them[26]. Formats whose complexity and extent are generally suitable for student theses include systematic literature reviews'[27] and scoping reviews.'[28] Choose the method most appropriate to your research question. Key quality criteria for a

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[25] Cf. Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (n. d.). Good Research Practice. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from https://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/principles_dfg_funding/good_scientific_practice/.

[26] See Grant and Booth, 2009, pp. 91–108.

[27] **Systematic literature review (SLR)**: an academic method in its own right, whose purpose is to identify, critically appraise and analyse all relevant literature on a specific topic, following a predefined, stringently systematic approach, and to use the results to draw conclusions on a particular research question. In an SLR, you formulate the aim of your research in advance and define inclusion and exclusion criteria before conducting your literature search. You document all information about and stages of your literature review process in an SLR protocol; this makes your method transparent and your work reproducible.

[28] **Scoping review**: the purpose of this type of literature review is to give a comprehensive overview of the existing literature, and thus the current state of knowledge, on the subject of your research. It is suitable for incipient or developing areas of research, for those about which very little research literature has been published to date, and for theses whose intent is to point to gaps in extant knowledge on a topic. Scoping reviews include the typical peer-reviewed Journals alongside other types of literature, such as grey literature, academic/scientific reports, sometimes newspaper/media articles, etc.

literature review are the degree of new knowledge or insights it contains, the description of the method followed, and the analysis of the literature included.[29]

All literature reviews, regardless of type, involve a systematic and robust methodological approach, planned out in advance, with the central purpose of minimising distortion arising from selective inclusion of literature and increasing the reliability of the selection process and therefore of the data underlying your consideration of the research question. You will need to gain your supervisor's (or supervisors') agreement to your proposed literature search process and give a clear, coherent and detailed account of it in your methods section, to include: 1. the structure of your search strategy, with the search terms/strings and key words used; 2. the sources you used to conduct your search (databases, websites, catalogues, etc.); 3. your approach to narrowing your literature sample, covering the inclusion and exclusion criteria you defined, any filtering for criteria such as language and specific periods of time, and any criteria you employed for assessing the literature's quality (such as its use of specific study designs). Including a clear, coherent and replicable account of how you selected your sample (you could, for instance, use a PRISMA flow diagram[30]) will help you formulate in as systematic and objective a manner as possible the method by which you extracted information from relevant literature to find an answer to your research question (Kleibel & Mayer, 2011).

3.3 Conceptual and practical theses

A conceptual thesis revolves around critiquing, developing and advancing concepts and models for practitioners on the basis of systematic research into academic/scientific theories and knowledge. A practical thesis may entail creating a concept, accompanying or monitoring a project or intervention (examples are implementation research and evaluation), or producing specific materials, such as a brochure, flyer or app, or a risk assessment. You need to make sure that you approach a conceptual thesis with the same academic rigour as you would any other type of thesis, and to appropriately locate your research question or the problem you tackle in a theoretical framework. Similarly, you will need to engage with and cite relevant academic literature at every stage of your work on a practical thesis, while drawing up your plan, providing your rationale for the product or solution you present, and writing up.

4. Working with sources

The statements you make in a piece of academic writing will always draw on and refer to research findings and insights generated by other researchers. You need to engage critically with the current research landscape in your field, referencing the viewpoints, posi-

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[29] In a Master thesis, this will also entail assessing the quality of the literature included using a specific systematic procedure (i.e. a systematic review).

[30] http://prisma-statement.org/PRISMAStatement/Checklist.

tions and insights set out by others and exploring them in your argument and your discussion of your own work. This means you will have to analyse and critique the relevant literature and refer explicitly to it in your own writing, evidencing your own point of view and adding validity and robustness to your argument. As a researcher giving an account of your work, good academic practice requires you to identify clearly the sources on which you have drawn. It is a key property of academic and scientific work that a reader can follow your argument and recognise, without doubt or ambiguity, which ideas, assertions and lines of argument you have taken from other sources, either verbatim or in paraphrased form. The principles of good academic practice[31] and intellectual property and copyright laws require you to indicate clearly and unambiguously wherever you make reference to someone else's words, work or ideas.

The main thing to remember is that you must reference any and every idea you have obtained from someone else, be it by quoting them directly or by giving its content in your own words, and you must do so in such a way that your reader can unambiguously identify and find its source.

Examiners in the Department check all written work submitted by students for plagiarism. They may use software for this purpose.

4.1. Quality of sources

The information you cite in your work is only as reliable and relevant as its source. It is imperative that you take note of the quality and salience of the sources you are using.

4.1.1 Suitability of a source for citation

Among the types of literature and material that are generally suitable for citation in a piece of academic writing are:

Academic/scientific publications, including:
- Articles from scientific/academic journals
- Monographs, including specialist literature and textbooks, doctoral and *Habilitation* theses
- Edited volumes (collections of essays – usually on a specific topic – by various different authors, gathered in one volume by one or more editors)
- Data documentation and reports issued by official bodies, such as official statistics, collections of official statistics released annually (*Statistische Jahrbücher*), health reporting, Health at a Glance

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[31] See the Statute for Safeguarding Good Academic Practice at HAW Hamburg, issued on 14 January 2021, specifically Section 3; available (text in German) at https://www.haw-hamburg.de/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=6839&token=008d9e8c9f23737c4ed5830c08150dafd7232405&download (25.9.2021).

- Laws and legal texts; official documents, such as parliamentary papers and documentation[32]
- Other types of literature, such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias (but see note on Wikipedia below)
- 'Grey literature', such as discussion papers, government reports or statements, research or conference reports, unpublished academic work, and reports issued by working groups; documents of this type are likely to be of reasonable quality, but have not undergone an academic/scientific review process and, as a rule, are not available to purchase.

As a general principle, a source is only credible, and therefore suitable to cite, if your reader is able to understand that it comes from someone else's work and refer to it in order to check it. Examples of such sources are academic/scientific literature, laws and draft legislation, regulations, guidelines, commentaries, parliamentary papers and documentation, published statistics, and reports issued by associations and similar organisations.[33]

Sources that are usually unsuitable for citation include statements made orally,[34] seminar papers by students, lecture notes, publications in non-academic journals or sources, and literary works. You cannot use Wikipedia as a credible source in a piece of academic writing, because a wiki, by its nature, is open to editing by anyone who accesses it, and serves as a repository of collective knowledge whose articles cannot be attributed to any specific individual or source.

4.1.2 Source quality criteria

When assessing a source for citation, ask yourself whether its author(s) is (are) reputable, reliable and neutral. Consider their discipline(s), their qualifications and their academic reputations, and whether the author(s), the journal or the organisation that has issued the source represent or pursue any particular interests.

Check your source's reliability. Just because something is written down, it is not necessarily accurate or true. Critically interrogate information whose credibility you are unsure

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[32] Information on parliamentary papers of the UK parliament: UK Parliament (n. d.) About Parliamentary papers. Retrieved November 24, 2022, from https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/publications/parliamentary/.

Information in English on Bundestag parliamentary papers: Deutscher Bundestag (n. d.) Parliamentary Documentation. Retrieved November 24, 2022, from https://www.bundestag.de/en/documents/parliamentary_documentation/parliamentary_documentation-201880.

[33] There is further useful information on credibility of sources at University of Maryland Global Campus Library (n. d.). Is My Source Credible? Retrieved November 24, 2022, from https://libguides.umgc.edu/credibility.

[34] Oral statements obtained in a data collection process (interviews, focus groups) are, of course, an exception to this rule.

of before you include it in your work. Make it a principle to reference only robust academic/scientific sources (see above). Consider the level of evidence that attaches to a statement or a recommendation.[35]

Pay attention to how current or recent a source is, particularly when citing statistical data such as population figures and health-related information.

4.2 Citing/quoting sources

When you cite and reference sources and literature in your writing, you must treat your sources conscientiously and with accuracy, so your reader will always know where a particular idea comes from and who its originator is. Simply presenting a succession of quotes does not meet academic standards; you need to incorporate others' ideas appropriately into your argument.

Referencing a source may mean quoting it verbatim, or it may entail describing the idea in your own words. Verbatim quotations should be the exception rather than the rule in academic writing in your discipline; use them sparingly and only when it is crucial to include the idea or statement in its original form. Give verbatim quotations in quotation marks. You can indent longer quotations like this[36].

> *The case illustrates how complex situations should force researchers to ethically reflect on and take responsibility for their relationships with vulnerable study participants (Wöhlke & Schicktanz, 2019, p. 426)*

Use three dots within parentheses to signal an ellipsis (where you have removed part of the quotation). Make sure that any ellipses do not distort the quotation's content or message.

> *Communicable diseases do not respect national boundaries and are important challenges to health internationally (…). Outbreaks that affect more than one country show that a systematic comparative analysis of surveillance systems in Europe can help improve disease control (Reintjes, 2016, p. 955).*

If you need to make an editorial addition for grammatical reasons, place it in square brackets. In most cases, you will cite other people's ideas and assertions using your own words. English does not distinguish in the same way as German between the indicative and the subjunctive, so you will need to employ other means to indicate where you are citing the view of another, using wording such as 'In the view of…', 'according to', and

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[35] An overview of the concept of levels of evidence is available at Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine (n. d.) Levels of Evidence. An Introduction. University of Oxford. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from https://www.cebm.ox.ac.uk/resources/levels-of-evidence/levels-of-evidence-introductory-document.

[36] See section 6.10, 'Quotations'.

'she asserts that…'. You should make sure to indicate whether the information you are citing is fact or opinion.

> *Reintjes et al. (2002) state that the National Institute of Public Health of Kosovo identi-fied over 900 suspected cases of tularaemia in the period to 30 June 2000.*

4.3 Referencing literature and sources

You must reference all literature and sources whose content, ideas or assertions you include in your writing, so your readers can refer to the original sources themselves. This means that you will need to include either an in-text reference or a footnote, depending on the referencing style you are using.[37] Written work completed in the Department generally uses in-text references.

> *General practitioners tend to decide by individual choice whether or not they offer screening rather than using an effective strategy. (Ahmad et al., 2016, pp. 52-58).*

References to scientific/academic journals that do not involve verbatim quotations can leave out the page numbers.[38] If you include a verbatim quotation, however, you will need to include the page number or numbers on which the quoted text appears.

> *In-text reference (no verbatim quotation): (Schicktanz, Wiesemann & Wöhlke, 2010).*

> *Reference to a non-verbatim quotation from a journal article: There is a significant effect between school education and Health-related Quality of Life (HrQoL). (Buchcik et al., 2021).*

Note that for in-text references, APA style prescribes the use of first author's name only + 'et al.' where a publication has three or more authors. This means that an in-text reference to the publication referenced in the first example above would look like this: (Schicktanz et al., 2010). If you are writing a journal article, check the journal editors' or publisher's guidance on this.

Multiple citations at the same point (in the same sentence) in a text go within the same parentheses, separated by a semi-colon:

> *(Leinweber & Dockweiler, 2020; Wöhlke & Perry, 2019)*

If you have mentioned the author or authors within the text, the reference includes only the year of publication in parentheses, directly after the author's or authors' name(s); you

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[37] See section 4.5, 'Citation styles; reference management tools'.

[38] This will depend on the discipline you are working in and the context. Make sure you check with your supervisor(s).

do not need to repeat the author's name and date of publication at the end of the sentence.

Terschüren and Darmerau (2020) showed …. (pp. 6-7).

Hungerland, Sonntag and Polenz (2021) have corrected this impression, observing that (…) (p. 16).

Note from the second example above that, while you use ampersands (the '&' sign) in in-text references (see below), you should not use them in the actual text of your writing.

If you are referring to the same work for a second or subsequent time immediately following a previous reference to it (i.e. without referring to any other works in between), you do not have to repeat the author(s) and date; you should use 'ibid.' instead.

Thomson et al. (2014) found that feelings of 'shame' attached to mothers' choices both to breast and to bottle feed. They noted a sense among women of needing to explain themselves to others who witnessed them feeding (ibid.).

Always make sure you cite directly from the source concerned. Indirect citation should be the exception and should only happen when the original source is not available to you and you cannot reasonably access it.[39] If you need to cite indirectly, give both the original source and the one you are citing from, adding 'as cited in' to the latter:

(Corley, 2002, p. 647, as cited in Wöhlke, 2017)

Make sure you include both sources in your reference list.

4.4 References, list of sources

Your reference list comes at the end of your thesis and contains all sources you used in your work (and only those: all sources in your reference list must have appeared in in-text references). You must make sure that the information in your reference list is complete, correct and consistent.[40]

Your reference list gives all the sources you have cited in your writing, in alphabetical order by last name of author or first author; where there is more than one publication by the same author/first author, these are given in chronological order by year of publication,

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[39] A good overview on indirect citation (referring to the sixth edition of APA referencing style) is at APA 6th referencing style. Retrieved November 24, 2022, from https://guides.library.uq.edu.au/referencing/apa6/indirect-citation.

[40] An explanation of the difference between a bibliography and a reference list (in the terms of Harvard referencing style) can be found at University of Birmingham Intranet. (n. d.) Harvard: Reference List and Bibliography. Retrieved November 24, 2022, from https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/referencing/icite/harvard/referencelist.aspx.

with no regard to the type of publication, i.e. whether it is a book, journal article or online source.

If you have used sources which are not, strictly speaking, definable as academic/scientific literature (examples are grey literature and the text of legislation), it may make sense to list these in a separate section of your reference list titled 'other sources'.

Examples:

Reference to a German law: Volume 5, German Social Insurance Code [*SGB V – Sozialgesetzbuch (SGB) Fünftes Buch (V)*].

In-text reference: (SGB V) or (Section 21j paragraph 2 SGB V)[41]

Reference to a UK law: Health and Social Care Act 2012, c. 4, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/7/contents/enacted (retrieved on 30.11.2022).

In-text reference: (Health and Social Care Act, 2012)

Reference to a European regulation: *MDR – Regulation (EU) 2017/745 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2017 on medical devices, amending Directive 2001/83/EC, Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 and Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 and repealing Council Directives 90/385/EEC and 93/42/EEC (Medical Device Regulation), OJEU L 117, p. 1, 5 May 2017, last amended by Regulation (EU) 2020/561 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2020, OJEU 130, p. 18, 24 April 2020.*

In-text reference: *MDR* or *Art. 5 paragraph 5 point c) MDR*

Reference to a German Bundestag parliamentary paper (use the same principles for papers pertaining to other parliamentary bodies): *Committee on Health of the German Bundestag (2021). Beschlussempfehlung des Ausschusses für Gesundheit (14. Ausschuss) zu dem Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung – printed papers 19/26822, 19/27214, 19/28005 Nr. 1 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Weiterentwicklung der Gesundheitsversorgung (Gesundheitsversorgungsweiterentwicklungsgesetz – GVWG), Bundestag printed paper 19/30550, 09 June 2021.*

In-text reference: *[...] the recommended resolution issued by the Bundestag's Committee on Health relating to the Federal Government's draft Bill on developing healthcare (Bundestag printed paper. 19/30550, p. 7)*

Blog posts

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41 It may be helpful to your reader if you include abbreviations used in in-text references, such as this one, in your list of abbreviations.

Marsh, C. (2022, October 26). Period Drama: How to Address Period Poverty in Aotearoa. University of Otago Public Health Expert. https://blogs.otago.ac.nz/pubhealthexpert/period-drama-how-to-address-period-poverty-in-aotearoa/

Internet sources

Not all online sources are websites. You should check whether an online source you intend to cite is actually a website or whether it is in fact a report, an article, a blog post or another type of source published on a website.

The APA Style Manual does not define the term 'website'. It categorises online sources as, among others, blog and forum posts and articles in online encyclopaedias. This makes it particularly important to double-check the entries you make in your reference list that relate to online sources and amend them if required.

The examples below demonstrate the general format for online sources in APA referencing style (cf. *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition*, 2020). The format relates largely to sources with a date of publication, such as blog and forum posts.[42]

[author's last name], [author's first initial(s)]. [(year, month (as a word), day)]. [name of website/title of resource [URL]

Weber-Wulff, D. (2019, March 27). Plagiarism detectors are a crutch, and a problem. Nature 567, 435 (2019). https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-00893-5

APA style requires you to give the date of publication (posting) after the author's or authors' name(s). This is not always practicable when you are citing from a website. If you cannot find a date of publication for the content, we recommend you add '(n. d.)' to the name of the authoring organisation or resource and give the date of last access in the format 'Retrieved [month day, year] from [URL]'. As a general principle, it is advisable to give the date of last access with all sources from web pages whose content is liable to change (blogs, forums, websites of institutions and organisations, online versions of news publications, etc.). If in doubt, give a date of last access.

Always cite the URL of the actual web page you are citing from, not the homepage. Each distinct page/URL within a website must be included as a separate source in your reference list.

If possible, you should only cite those **online/internet sources** which will remain available in the long term. If a persistent identifier (such as a DOI, URN, or handle, etc., or a permalink) is available, you should use this instead of a URL. Permalinks continue to

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[42] Refer to APA Style (October 2021). Blog Post and Blog Comment References. Retrieved November 24, 2022, from https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples/blog-post-references.

work when a blog post or wiki page, for example, has been updated or amended. It is advisable to take screenshots or make printouts of websites you reference in your work so that you can produce your sources if required to. Some reference management tools (e.g. Citavi, Mendeley, Zotero) have screenshotting functions.[43]

AI-tool use citation
AI-generated text sections or even entire passages must be cited according to scientific standards (see respective guidelines p. 18). At the Department of Health Sciences, the APA citation type (American Psychological Association (APA) for social and natural science subjects is used for citing scientific evidence and for AI-generative tools in your written and/or oral examinations as well (see chapter 2.9.2 of this document).

4.5 Referencing styles; reference management tools

There are a number of ***different referencing styles*** that give instructions on how to reference and cite sources (via in-text references or footnotes, for example) and how to format your reference list. Most citation styles pertain to particular disciplines. When you submit a conference paper or a journal article, you will usually be told which referencing style to follow.

The information that follows draws principally, with minor modifications, on APA referencing style.[44] You should make sure to check with your examiner(s) as to which referencing style they expect you to use. If they do not stipulate a particular style, follow the information in this guide.

If you choose to use a ***reference management tool***, you can set it to work to a specific citation style and it will generate in-text and reference list references in the appropriate format. While this makes the task of referencing easier, it does not mean you have no work to do; the references generated by software are never completely error-free, and so you will need to check all references (in-text and reference list) carefully and amend them where required, making sure they are consistent.

5. Using appropriate language

The assessment of your thesis will include an evaluation of its adherence to linguistic rules and conventions and to criteria of academic style. Serious weaknesses in the language of

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[43] The original German text of the subsections on blog posts and internet sources was cited verbatim from the citation guide issued by TUM, https://mediatum.ub.tum.de/node?id=1231945 (pp. 26, 31-32)

[44] You can look up the current version and find additional information at (for example) https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html

your thesis may have a negative impact on your ability to communicate its content clearly, comprehensibly and effectively.

5.1 Academic register

You should write your paper or thesis using appropriate language and academic register ('register' is the type of language you use depending on the situation you are in). This means that you should write factually, mostly keeping your personal perspective out of your writing. You can use the first person ('I' and 'we') in English, but you should use it factually – for example, to describe what your aims are/were and what you did during your research - and not to give subjective, unsupported opinions and views. You should also make sure you are using specialist terminology correctly and choosing your words carefully to say things exactly as you mean them, rather than making vague allusions.

In English-language writing, avoid:

- 'journalese' (writing like a journalist) – one frequently occurring example of this style in English is leaving out the article when describing somebody, as here: *A recent interview with epidemiologist Amanda Kvalsvig discussed the spread of Covid-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand*. You need to write *the epidemiologist* here.
- overly colloquial/spoken register. One major example is the use of contractions (which mostly occur in negative forms, such as 'don't', 'isn't' and 'shouldn't', and in verb forms, such as 'should've' for 'should have'). These are markers of spoken language and are never permissible in formal writing, unless they occur in direct quotations.
- overuse of the passive voice, as in *A study was conducted to establish population-level immunity. Data were collected among vaccinated individuals aged between 18 and 65*. English generally prefers the active, even if this results in use of the first person (see above): *We conducted a study to establish population-level immunity*. If you (or your supervisor(s)) feel uncomfortable with too much use of the first person, you can restructure or reword your sentences to avoid its use while remaining in the active voice: *The sample consisted of vaccinated individuals aged between 18 and 65*.

Do not write poetically.

It is usual to write in the present tense, except where the past tense is appropriate.

5.2 Inclusive language

The language we use represents a reflection of the values and mores that prevail in our society and has a significant role in forming our consciousness. HAW Hamburg 'has set itself the objective of seeking to use gender-inclusive language in written text and forms of all types', to help ensure 'that no group of people is invisible in the language we use [at HAW Hamburg]. In this way, language can help combat discrimination, reduce stereotypes

attributed [to groups of people] by others, and give people, particularly those belonging to groups marginalised in society, acknowledgement and recognition.' [45] We consider the use of inclusive language to be a core component of academic integrity and an expression of care and thoroughness which is appropriate to someone working at an academic level. You should therefore make sure your language is inclusive when writing your degree thesis.

In practice, this can mean:

Avoiding sexist language and the generic masculine. Singular *they* is grammatically acceptable in English, as in *When a parent makes decisions on vaccinating their child, they often seek information from online sources*. (Always use a plural verb with singular *they*). You should pluralise where possible (*When parents make decisions…*). You may wish, instead, to alternate generic feminine and masculine forms; you should advise at the start of your paper or thesis that you are going to do this. Do not use generic masculine or feminine forms of professions and occupations (such as *fireman*, *actress*, *stewardess*). *Midwife* is not a generic feminine term and applies to both female and male midwives.

Avoiding ableism in your language. Do not, under any circumstances, use terms such as *crippled*, *retarded* and *handicapped*. Avoid *the disabled*. Do not describe a disabled individual or a group of people with a disability or health condition as *affected by* or *suffering from* their condition. Do not describe people without disabilities as *healthy* or *normal*. (The term for someone who is not *neurodiverse* – i.e. who does not have autism, ADHD or a related neurodiversity – is *neurotypical*). Someone who uses a wheelchair is a *wheelchair user* and not *confined to a wheelchair* or *wheelchair-bound*. Some people with disabilities prefer 'person-first' language ('people with a disability/disabilities'), while others prefer 'identity-first' language ('a disabled person').[46] The term *deaf* written with a lower-case 'd' is an adjective describing the condition of hearing loss, while *Deaf* with an upper-case 'D' describes the Deaf identity and community.

Avoid stigmatising people with mental health conditions. Use *die by suicide* and not *commit suicide*.

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[45] Information on how HAW Hamburg does this in German is available at HAW Hamburg, Grundsätze zum geschlechtergerechten Formulieren, Präsidiumsbeschluss vom 10.09.2019, https://www.haw-hamburg.de/fileadmin/Gleichstellung/PDF/Gleichstellung/Beschluss_Praesidium_10.9.2019_Grundsaetze_geschlechtergerecht_Formulieren.pdf (26.9.2021).

[46] Cf. Wong, B. (2019, June 14). It's Perfectly OK to Call a Disabled Person 'Disabled,' And Here's Why. HuffPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-to-call-disabled-person_l_5d02c521e4b0304a120c7549

Avoiding ageism in your language. Do not use terms such as *the elderly*. *Older people* or *older adults* is preferable. Avoid giving the adjective *young* an automatically positive and *old* an automatically negative association.[47]

Avoiding racism and xenophobia in your language. Be careful with the use of *migration background* and *migrant background*, which are direct translations of the German *Migrationshintergrund*.[48] The terms' colloquial usage in German may fail to distinguish adequately between ethnicity and personal experience of immigration. You might instead refer to people belonging to *immigrant communities* or members of *ethnic minority* (or *minoritised ethnic*) groups.[49] Be as precise as possible; you can distinguish *first-generation* from *second-generation immigrants* (both of these fall under *Migrationshintergrund* in the German usage).[50] Be cautious when talking about *integration* of immigrants into the majority society; some may read the term as placing an overly one-sided expectation on the immigrant to be the (only) one to adapt and change.[51]

Avoiding classism in your language. Avoid creating an implicit linkage between low socio-economic status and 'trouble'. Do not refer to individuals or groups with low levels of educational attainment as 'uneducated'. Do not refer to areas of high socio-economic deprivation as 'rough' or 'difficult'. Do not refer to standard forms of speech as being 'well-spoken' or 'correct', nor to standard accents as being 'neutral'.

5.3 Spelling and grammar

You should make sure your use of language conforms to general standards for written English, including spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, and the correct use of terms from other languages. If you are not sure about the correct spelling or use of a word, you should look it up using a reputable dictionary, such as Cambridge for British English and

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[47] Bowman, C. & Wenig, M.L. (2021) How to Avoid Ageist Language in Aging Research? An Overview and Guidelines. Activities, Adaptation & Aging, 45:4, 269-275, DOI: 10.1080/01924788.2021.1992712

[48] See Will, A.-K. (2019). The German statistical category 'migration background': Historical roots, revisions and shortcomings, Ethnicities 19:3, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796819833437

[49] Cf., for example, the website https//irco.org (last accessed 24.11.2022).

[50] An example of these terms' use: University of Minnesota, College of Liberal Arts (n. d.). Immigration History Research Center, Immigrant Stories: Second-Generation Experiences. Retrieved November 24, 2022, from https://cla.umn.edu/ihrc/immigrant-stories/story-collections/second-generation-experiences.

[51] Cf. Schinkel, W. (2018). Against 'immigrant integration': for an end to neocolonial knowledge production. Comparative Migration Studies 6, 31 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-018-0095-1.

A useful overview of (British) English terms around ethnicity and minoritised ethnic groups is at The Law Society (2022, February 10). A guide to race and ethnicity terminology and language. https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ethnic-minority-lawyers/a-guide-to-race-and-ethnicity-terminology-and-language.

Merriam-Webster for US English.[52] If there is more than one acceptable way of spelling a word, choose one and use it consistently. The same goes for the variant of English you choose, which you should agree upon with your (first) examiner. The HAW Hamburg English Handbook (2020)[53] contains an overview of key differences between British and US English. This guide is written in British English.

6. Formatting and layout

6.1 Pagination

You must insert consecutive page numbers on all pages of your paper or thesis except the title page. You should number all lists of contents, tables, abbreviations, etc. that are placed ahead of the main text using Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc.). The main text, including any appendices, is numbered with Arabic numerals (1, 2 3 etc.), beginning (usually) with the abstract on page 1. Page numbers should be in the footer of each page, right aligned or, if you are printing out your paper/thesis on both sides of the paper, on the outside margins (mirror/mirrored margins).

6.2 Alignment and justification

As a rule, you should use justified alignment. You can use left alignment where it would make portions of text (such as in bullet point lists) easier to read.

6.3 Automatic hyphenation

You can use automatic hyphenation to avoid excessively large gaps between words and make the text easier and more pleasant to read. You will need to check all hyphenation and amend it where necessary.

6.4 Line spacing

You should format running text with line spacing of 1.5. Your reference list can use single spacing, but larger spacing (e.g. 1.3 each side of the line) should precede and follow headings within your reference list.

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[52] The Cambridge dictionary can be accessed online at https://dictionary.cambridge.org/, and Merriam-Webster at https://www.merriam-webster.com/.

[53] English_Handbook_HAW_Hamburg_2nd_Edition_December_2020.pdf (haw-hamburg.de)

6.5 Font and font size

Recommended fonts and font sizes are Times New Roman (12 pt), Open Sans[54] (11 pt) and Arial (11 pt). Make sure you use the same font throughout your paper/thesis (with the exception of headings – see below).

Emphasise section and subsection headings with a larger font size or by bolding; you can format section and subsection headings differently from one another. Headings are an exception to the rule on consistency in font use – it is permissible to use a different font for these from that used for the rest of the text.

6.6 Margins

Top, bottom and right-hand margins should be 2.5 cm. If you need to submit your work as a hard copy, the left-hand margin should be 4 cm; if you are submitting it in electronic form only, a left-hand margin of 2.5 cm is acceptable.

6.7 Structure, headings and section numbering

All sections and subsections of your thesis or paper – including the main text, lists of tables, abbreviations etc., and appendices - require numbered headings. You should use a decimal numerical system with consecutive numbering, separated by full stops, at each level and sub-level (1, 1.1, 1.1.1, etc.). You should number all subsection headings within a section of the text and format them consistently. Each level of subsectioning should consist of at least two subsections (with headings) (e.g. section 2 must consist of at least 2.1 and 2.2). In most cases, you should not use more than three levels of subsectioning. Do not create too many (overly short) subsections; generally, at least two or three paragraphs of text should follow each subheading. Text introducing a section (e.g. between 2 and 2.1) may be shorter than this.

6.8 Paragraphs

Use of paragraphs makes it easier for readers to follow your writing. Start a new paragraph for a new idea, but not for every new point you make in the course of elaborating that idea. Avoid overly short paragraphs; paragraphs should not consist of only one or two sentences.

6.9 Footnotes

You can use footnotes to give additional information that the reader does not need to read in order to follow your writing, but that you feel is relevant. You should try and limit your use of footnotes to exceptional instances. Some academic disciplines, such as many

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[54] Open Sans is HAW Hamburg's font. Students may download it from https://www.haw-hamburg.de/hochschule/hochschuleinheiten/presse-und-kommunikation/corporate-design/ and use it in their written work.

humanities subjects and law, use footnotes with full bibliographic information for referencing (instead of in-text references). This is not usual practice in the Department of Health Sciences; you should only do this if your examiners agree to you doing so.

Word processing programs separate footnotes from the main body of the text with a short line and format the text of footnotes in single spacing and a smaller font size than the main text.

6.10 Quotations

Refer to section 4.2 above on how to cite/quote sources. We reiterate here that you must reference every citation of someone else's ideas or work. Place verbatim quotations in quotation marks, except those of 40 words or longer; you should indent these with an additional 0.5 cm on each side. Indented quotations (also called block quotations) do not take quotation marks. Quotations within indented quotations should take double quotation marks. Follow indented quotations with the citation of the source in parentheses after the concluding full stop (period) of the quotation. Do not follow the parenthesis with a full stop.

When you cite a source, give the last name(s) of the author(s), the year of the source's publication, and, where applicable, the page number(s), in parentheses, at the end of the sentence in which you cited the source.[55]

Format your reference list in accordance with the citation style you use. If your supervisor(s)/examiner(s) have not requested you use a different style, you can adopt the following guidelines:

Monograph:
Author(s) (last name, initial of first name). (year of publication). *Title of book*.[56] Publisher.

Skern, T. (2011). Writing scientific English: a workbook. Facultas.

Separate the names of two or more authors with a comma. Use an ampersand (&) before the final author's name.[57]

> *Schicktanz, S., Wiesemann, C. & Wöhlke, S. (eds.) (2010). Teaching Ethics in Organ Transplantation and Tissue Donation: Cases and Movies. In Cooperation with Amnon Carmi – UNESCO Chair in Bioethics, Universitätsverlag Göttingen.*

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[55] Make sure you include a full reference to the source in your reference list; see section 4.4 above.

[56] As in this example, give the title of the book in italics.

[57] Your reference list should contain the names of all authors, even where your in-text reference gives the first author only plus 'et al.'

Chapter in an edited volume:
Author(s), (year of publication). Title of chapter. In Author(s) or editor(s)[58] of the volume [for editors, initial of first name comes before last name] (eds.). Title of volume. (pp. first-last page of chapter). Publisher.

Reintjes R, & Zanuzdana A. (2010). Outbreak Investigations. In A. Krämer., M. Kretzschmar, & K. Krickeberg (Eds.). Modern Infectious Disease Epidemiology: Concepts, Methods, Mathematical Models, and Public Health (pp.159-176). Springer.

Journal articles:
Author(s), (year of publication). Title of article. Name of journal[59]. year, (if available) volume, issue number, page numbers without 'pp.' (first-last page of article). DOI.

Buchcik, J., Westenhöfer, J., Fleming, M., & Martin, C.R. (2017). Is Health-Related Quality of Life the same for elderly Polish migrants, Turkish migrants and German natives? Testing the reliability and construct validity of the Sf-36 Health Survey in a cross-sectional comparison. Journal Cogent Psychology. Vol. 4(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2017.1280984.

6.11 Numbers and units of measurement

Use words for numbers up to and including twelve. In the following cases, however, you will usually use numerals:

- Numbers compared or placed in relationship to one another and used within in the same sentence (*2 of the 18 studies*)
- Numbers given with a unit of measurement (*3 kg*. Leave a space between the number and the unit)
- Numbers expressing statistics, mathematical functions, decimal units, percentages, etc. (*3.7% = 3.7 percent*. – Use a decimal point rather than the comma used in German. Do not leave a space before the % sign)
- Numbers expressing times or ages (*6:45 am*; *a 3-year-old child*)
- Numbers expressing samples, population sizes, test values, values on a scale, etc.
- Numbers indicating a position in a numbered sequence, such as sections of books, or tables (*In section 2.3, I will…),*

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[58] Referencing information identifies the editor(s) of a book using (Hrsg.) or (Hg.) in German, and in English (ed.) for one editor or (eds.) for multiple editors. APA style uses a capital E. Organisations as well as people can act as editors.

[59] Referencing information identifies the editor(s) of a book using (Hrsg.) or (Hg.) in German, and in English (ed.) for one editor or (eds.) for multiple editors. APA style uses a capital E. Organisations as well as people can act as editors.

- Numbers within a list of four or more numbers (*excerpts from interviews 2, 3, 4 and 11*)
- Numbers pertaining to legislation (Section 20k paragraph 1 sentence 1 SGB V. Name the specific provision within the law first, and the law itself last)
- Numbers expressing sums of money. Make sure you give the appropriate currency (EUR 325.07 or 325.07 € or 325.07 Euro; USD 325.07 or $325.07 or 325.07 US dollars) Dollar and pound signs go before the amount, the euro sign goes after it.

6.12 Lists/enumeration

Use enumeration where it makes your text more comprehensible and easier to read. If you are enumerating a number of paragraphs, use numbering (1., 2., etc.). If you are enumerating within a paragraph, use letters ((a), (b), etc.).

6.13 Contents page(s)

Your list of contents should include all section and subsection headings plus their numbers, alongside the number of the page where the beginning of each is to be found. Make sure the page numbers in your list of contents are consistent with those in the text.[60] Where an entry in your list of contents covers more than one line, ensure that each of these lines is aligned. Use a line of full stops or dashes between each entry and the corresponding page number; this will make your contents page(s) easier to read.

6.14 Lists of figures and tables

You will need to create lists of all figures (illustrations, diagrams etc.) and tables that appear in your paper or thesis. Number each separately, giving tables a heading (above the table) and figures/illustrations a caption (underneath the figure).[61] These headings and captions should appear in exactly the same form in your list of figures and your list of tables, both of which should precede the main text of your paper or thesis. Where an entry covers more than one line, ensure that each of these lines is aligned. Use a line of full stops or dashes between each entry and the corresponding explanation.

6.15 Abbreviations

The first time you use an abbreviation that is not part of everyday parlance[62] you should write what it stands for in full, followed by the abbreviation. After this, you use only the

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[60] Many word processing programs have automatic functions for creating these lists. You will need to check these, and update them f required, before you submit your work.

[61] Many word processing programs have automatic functions for creating these lists. You will need to check these, and update them f required, before you submit your work.

[62] 'Everyday parlance' means the language people in general use in day-to-day life, that is, not language specific to a particular specialist field. Abbreviations that count as being part of everyday parlance include etc., e.g., i.e., US (for the United States of America), and other colloquially familiar abbreviations.

abbreviation. You will often need to do this with organisations, associations and institutions, scientific methods, etc.

> *World Health Organization (WHO)*

You must precede the main text of your paper/thesis with an alphabetical list of abbreviations that are not part of everyday parlance and their meanings.

> *WHO   World Health Organization*

6.16 References

You can use single line spacing in your reference list. It makes your reference list easier to read if you indent the second and subsequent lines of each reference by 1.0 cm (Indent: Left: 0 cm, Hanging: 1.0 cm). Use the same font as you used in your main text.

6.17 Length of your paper or thesis

Your examiner(s) will tell you the minimum and maximum permitted length of your paper or thesis. They may express this in pages, words or characters. See section 7.6 'Formal requirements' below for requirements relating to Master theses.

6.18 Submitting your work

The format in which you will submit your work is a matter for discussion with your examiner(s). If you are required to submit a hard copy, you will need to make sure that all pages are held securely together by either binding or stapling. When submitting work electronically, you will usually be required to submit it in a text file (such as a Word document and in a non-editable form such as a PDF file. See section 7.6, 'Formal requirements', below for information on submitting Master theses.

6.19 Data protection

When you write any academic paper, essay or thesis, you must comply with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR; in German DSGVO) and specific provisions of data protection laws in areas such as (for example) statutory health insurance and patient data. This includes all matters, obligations and declarations pertaining to confidentiality. You must acquire people's consent to use their personal data. Even with consent, you must only use these data in anonymised form. The inclusion of non-anonymised personal data and other infringements of data protection laws and regulations may mean your examiners cannot pass your paper or thesis.

6.20 Including images and diagrams in your work

If you include images in your work, it is important to give their sources, so your readers can understand where the images come from, and so you are in compliance with copyright provisions and trademark law and respect people's rights over images of themselves.

If you are including an image, diagram or photograph that you did not create yourself, you must clearly and unambiguously name its originator and source, either directly alongside the image/diagram or in a separate list. The originator of the image will determine whether they wish their real name or a pseudonym to be used. You should be aware that you may be liable for licensing/usage fees if you do not exclusively use license-exempt or fee-exempt images (e.g. public domain images).

Trademarks and logos, and potentially fonts and lettering used alongside them, may be legally protected. Ask permission for their use from the trademark/ logo owner (a company, institution, organisation, etc.) before you use them in your work. if you are granted permission, comply with any stipulations for their use, and make sure you include correct versions without any distortions etc. This also goes for the use of HAW Hamburg's logo.[63]

People depicted in photographs have the right to control these images' use; this right is part of their personality rights. You may only include images of individuals in your work if those individuals have given their explicit, informed consent to your doing so. This also means that you may only use pictures of public events if you have received consent from all individuals identifiable in the picture. Parents or carers must give consent on behalf of those under the age of majority.

7. Criteria specific to Master theses

The relevant Course and Examination Regulations[64] make specific provisions relating to Master theses. Please familiarise yourself with, and comply with, the provisions of the General Course and Examination Regulations for Bachelor's and Master's degree courses in engineering, the sciences and health sciences, and computer science/information technology at HAW Hamburg (APSO-INGI) and the relevant course-specific regulations[65].

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[63] If you want to use the HAW Hamburg logo, you must make sure you do so in accordance with the stipulations in HAW Hamburg's corporate design manual: https://www.haw-hamburg.de/hochschule/hochschuleinheiten/presse-und-kommunikation/corporate-design/.

[64] Please refer to https://www.haw-hamburg.de/studium/studienorganisation/ordnungen/pruefungs-und-studienordnungen/. Some of these regulations may not currently be available in English. Only available in German for MHS: https://www.haw-hamburg.de/fileadmin/zentrale_PDF/LS/Pr%C3%BCfungsordnungen/Department_Gesundheitswissenschaften/Master/Master_Health_Sciences_konsekutiv/PSO_MA_Health_Sciences_HA_163_27-2-2021.pdf

[65] For **Master's students**, these are as follows: for students admitted up to and including winter semester 2020/21: Course-specific Course and Examination Regulations for the consecutive Master of Science degree course in Health Sciences at Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW Hamburg), issued on 29 November 2012; for students admitted from summer semester 2021 onward: Course-specific Course and Examination Regulations for the consecutive Master of Science degree course in Health Sciences at Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW Hamburg), issued on 18 February 2021.

7.1 Purpose of a Master thesis

You complete a Master thesis in order to demonstrate that you are able to engage, thoroughly, successfully, independently and within a set timeframe, with an academic/scientific topic, making appropriate use of scientific/academic methods. Your thesis should entail exploring a research question from your scientific/academic discipline or from a related field of application.

7.2 Deadlines

You have six months to complete your Master thesis. This period begins with your official registration of your thesis topic with the relevant Examinations Committee. You may not submit your thesis earlier than four weeks before the end of these six months. Your copy of your topic's official registration will include this earliest permissible submission date. Extensions to the deadline, of a maximum of half the original time permitted for completion of the thesis, will be granted in exceptional cases only, upon application to the Chair of the Examinations Committee. This application must give your reasons for applying for the extension. Your supervising examiner must support your application for an extension.

7.3 Planning; synopsis; supervision and support

Make sure you begin ***planning*** your thesis at an early stage. It is particularly important to ensure you plan sufficient time for writing a synopsis of your envisaged thesis, finding two supervisors and obtaining ethics committee approval where required[66], and for any data collection process.

You are entitled to supervision for your Master thesis, but you are not necessarily entitled to particular examiners, nor, necessarily, to realise your topic in exact accordance with your initial plan. You will need to submit a synopsis of your planned thesis to the examiner(s) of your choice.

The purpose of a ***synopsis*** (refer to glossary) is to help you plan your thesis and interest potential supervisors and examiners in the topic. It should be approximately 5-7 pages long and draw on your own research and considerations, setting out the research question you have in mind, the current state of research on this question, and the methodological approach you envisage.

In German, a synopsis is called *Exposé*, also spelled *Exposee*.

Requirements for a successful synopsis

Writing a **synopsis** helps you gain a clearer, more precise sense of your idea for your own independent research, and is particularly useful and necessary in planning the content, structure and management of your thesis and the work it will entail. Your synopsis should set out the relevance of your topic to the wider field and detail key research questions

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[66] You should allow ten to twelve weeks for this process.

associated with it, central aims of your planned research, and the structure you propose for your thesis, alongside providing a schedule showing when you intend to complete which parts of the work. It also serves to give information on your topic to, and create interest in the thesis among potential supervisors/examiners and to any partner organisations you hope to work with. Potential supervisors will make their decision on supervising you on the basis of your synopsis. If required, they will help you firm up particular aspects of it, and you finalise it. Once your principal supervisor is happy with your synopsis, he or she will approve it and give you permission to register your thesis topic.

A synopsis should draw on academic/scientific literature, so it is imperative that you cite your sources and compile a reference list.

As a rule, your synopsis should contain the following components:

- (if required) Cover page
- (if required) Contents page
- Information on the current state of research on your proposed topic, including references to seminal literature in this area, and an outline of the issue/problem/research gap arising from this
- Information on the relevance of your topic to the wider field
- Your proposed research question(s); possibly a range of suggestions for working titles for the thesis
- Any hypotheses you will investigate; the purpose and aim of your thesis; the methodological approach/specific methods you propose to use
- Any relevant information on the process of conducting your proposed study/collecting the data
- (where required) Considerations on whether your thesis needs ethics committee approval or other written declarations of approval/consent
- Proposed structure of your planned thesis
- Reference list
- Schedule of work (including data collection and an allowance of time for obtaining ethics committee approval/other necessary declarations of approval/consent)
- Information on any preliminary work you have already completed, such as a flowchart for a proposed literature search, a table for a search string, a draft questionnaire.

Depending on how far advanced you are with your planning, your synopsis should be around 5-7 pages long (excluding your reference list and any appendices). It is intended to be the result of your independent study around your proposed topic, the current state of research into it, and potential methods for exploring it. On the basis of your synopsis, you and your first examiner will agree upon the formal **topic**, i.e. the title of your thesis, which needs to be registered with the Examinations Office. During the process of completing your thesis, you should turn to your first examiner with any questions about the

content and methods of your work. Your first examiner is also the person with whom you should discuss any specific stipulations you need to take account of in the case of your thesis, whether you need to apply for ethics committee approval, issues related to the content of your thesis, and issues of coordination with any external organisations you are working with. It is particularly important to agree on the title of your thesis with your first examiner, as you will not be able to change it once it has been approved as part of the thesis topic registration process (see section 7.5 below). Your supervisor will need to approve any questionnaires you are using for data collection and intend to send to participants via your HAW Hamburg email account or HAW Hamburg distribution lists.

While you are working on your thesis, you can make use of HAW Hamburg's advisory and support services and coaching to help you engage successfully in academic work.[67] Please note, however, that they are additional services and not intended to replace regular contact and communication with your supervisor. Your academic advisor in the Department can be a helpful point of contact if difficulties or problems arise.

7.4 Examiners

Any member of the Department of Health Sciences' academic staff may be a first examiner for a Master thesis, provided the proposed topic is relevant to their field (see Section 13 APSO-INGI). Members of the academic staff of another Department may serve as second/further examiners if this would be appropriate given your topic. If your second examiner is a member of HAW Hamburg staff, their involvement is limited to agreeing to your topic and writing the second examiner's assessment of your thesis; they do not serve as a supervisor or provide advice on methods.

If your thesis is on a topic relating to the work of an external organisation, an individual working in that field may serve as second examiner. Their approval for this role will usually be subject to their meeting the following criteria:[68]

- If the highest academic qualification held by the proposed second examiner is higher than the degree you are completing, the proposed second examiner must have at least two years of relevant experience working in the field, OR have at least one year of relevant experience and a relevant scientific/academic achievement completed after and related to their highest academic qualification (such as a peer-reviewed academic publication outside HAW Hamburg)
- If the highest academic qualification held by the proposed second examiner is at the same level as the degree you are completing, they must have achieved it at least three years previously, with a grade of 2.3 (in the German system) or better, and should have at least three years of relevant professional experience

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[67] https://www.haw-hamburg.de/en/university/hochschuleinheiten/student-center/student-counselling-office/; https://www.haw-hamburg.de/workshops-zsb/.

[68] As determined by the Examinations Committee on 15 November 2018.

- The proposed second examiner must not be related to you.

7.5 Registering your thesis topic

You can apply to register a topic for your Master thesis once you have completed a minimum of 90 CP in the Master's degree courses in Health Sciences (60 CP in the degree course and 30 CP in your internship semester) or Master of Public Health.

To register your thesis topic, you fill out an application form online[69] , print it out and sign it; ensure your supervisors/examiners sign it too. If you are applying for an external second examiner, you will need to attach proof of their qualifications and relevant achievements to the application form. You can currently submit the application, along with any attachments, by email to pruefungsausschuss_MA_GW@haw-hamburg.de.

The Chair of the Examinations Committee will assess your proposed title and the suitability of your proposed examiners, determine the earliest and latest possible dates of submission, and forward your application, along with the appropriate form issued by the Examinations Office, to the Faculty Service Office. You will receive a copy of your application, including the earliest and latest permissible dates of submission, by post or email.

Once your topic is registered and approved, you can only change its title if your examiners support the change and the Chair of the Examinations Committee has approved it.

7.6 Formal requirements

In most cases, a Master thesis should be approximately 60 to 100 pages long (excluding cover page, lists of contents, figures, tables and abbreviations, and any appendices). Your examiners may state length requirements/limits in words or characters rather than pages. Particular characteristics of a specific topic may make a longer thesis necessary, - for example, when you are writing an empirical thesis and need to include your data. Make sure you comply with stipulations issued by your examiners and ensure you have agreed on the thesis' length before you begin work; contact your examiners at an early stage if you experience issues.

You must ensure you submit your thesis in triplicate to the Faculty Service Office by the stipulated deadline. You must submit two hard copies, securely bound or held together, and one digital copy stored on an appropriate data storage medium.

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[69] https://www.haw-hamburg.de/hochschule/life-sciences/studium-und-lehre/fakultaetsservice-buero/abschlussarbeiten-und-zeugnisdokumente/.

An abstract should precede the thesis.[70]

Along with your thesis itself, you must submit any **_data used in your thesis_**, such as interview transcripts and survey data, alongside any online sources, saved on a data storage medium.

You must also submit a **_written declaration_** that your work is entirely your own and you have used only the sources and materials you have referenced in your thesis. You can use the form of words below for this.

> *I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work, that I wrote it myself without the assistance of others, and that I have used only the materials and sources declared as such within it. I further declare that I have fully referenced all ideas and verbatim quotations taken from other works. "*

If you have used AI-tools in agreement with your supervisor and first examiner, you must use the declaration as shown in chapter 2.9.

7.7 Grading; repeat attempts

The grade awarded to your thesis will be the average of the grades proposed by your two examiners. This grade is worth 40 % of the overall final grade for your Master's degree. **Your thesis will not be passed if you submit it after the deadline without having applied for an extension and had it approved, or if its title is not identical to the title approved when you registered your topic.**

If your thesis is awarded a grade of '**nicht ausreichend' (unsuccessful),** you may submit a new thesis once only; in exceptional cases, where valid reasons are provided, a further repeat attempt may be permitted. You must apply for a repeat attempt to the Chair of the Examinations Committee within three months of receiving the result of 'unsuccessful'. If the new thesis receives a grade of 'unsuccessful' again, the Chair of the Examinations Committee will inform you of this in writing.

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[70] The information sheet issued by the Faculty Service Office calls for a summary of the thesis, to be placed at its end. You should not submit a summary; you should submit an abstract instead, which is placed at the beginning of your thesis. In this case, the information in this guide takes precedence over the stipulations of the Faculty Service Office information sheet. This may not, however, be the case for other instances of diverging information. Always check these with your supervisors/examiners.

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10. Appendix: Glossary

During your degree course, you will encounter various types of examinations and assessments as well as your thesis. You will read and write a range of different types of academic and scientific pieces. This alphabetical glossary provides brief definitions of those you will need to know about.

Abstract: extremely concise outline of the content of (for example) a scientific/academic thesis or journal article. Its purpose is to give readers information on the theoretical background to the thesis or article (etc.), the research question, the methodological approach used, the findings, their discussion, and brief conclusions drawn by the author(s) from the research.

Essay: a concise exploration of a scientific/academic question, that seeks to consider, explain, and critically reflect on its topic, presenting a line of empirical and/or academic argument the reader can follow and understand. An essay's purpose is to set out an argument to back up your position, and does not need to adhere to the strictly prescribed structure of a written paper of the type you will complete for some modules (*Hausarbeit*).

Synopsis (in German: **Exposee, Exposé)**: serves to aid you in planning a major piece of academic writing, such as your thesis. You write it before you commence your work on the piece it plans. A synopsis outlines the relevance of the proposed topic to the field, the key issues of research with which it will engage, the purpose of the proposed work, and a draft structure and schedule. Academics submit synopses (sometimes referred to by other terms in this context) to funding bodies when seeking grants for research projects. When you are planning your degree thesis (or, later on, a doctoral thesis, for example), you will use your synopsis to provide potential supervisors with information on your plans and gain their interest in your project. You will need to reference academic/scientific literature in your synopsis and adhere to the rules of good academic practice when writing it.

Reading summary: a piece you write to help you ensure you have understood a text you are reading. During the reading process (which will probably involve several re-readings), you systematically summarise the content you have read, following the author's or authors' line of argumentation. Writing a summary can help you understand academic/scientific literature better, locate it within your reading, and refamiliarise yourself quickly with its content later on, when you need it. It is important to formulate the ideas underlying your reading in your own words; you may choose to add your own thoughts or comments on this content. You should also note down all the information you need for referencing the text: author(s), title, (where relevant) edition, year and place of publication, and the location of the content you have read in the text (chapter/section, paragraph number if possible, and page number(s)).

Case study: a description and analysis of a real or fictitious 'case' relating to an individual (client or patient), following topic-related and methodological stipulations. A case study describes processes, situations and events salient to the case in question, outlining the characteristics and circumstances that encapsulate its specific and general significance. You then use relevant literature to locate the case in a broader scientific/academic context relating to the topic, question or problem specified at the outset. If the case relates to a real individual and your engagement with them, you may follow this with reflection on the case and your approach to it.

Handout: supplementary material you distribute when you give an oral presentation, containing a specific, clear overview of relevant information and details. You may wish to define key terms and include tables, illustrations, images, etc. A handout incorporates a large amount of concisely presented information within a small space. You should follow the precepts of good academic practice while compiling your handout and include a reference list. You distribute your handout to your audience before you begin your presentation, so they can use it to follow along and make notes while you speak and refer back to it afterwards.

Assessed written paper (***Hausarbeit***): the purpose of this type of writing is to enable you to demonstrate that you can identify a specific aspect of a given topic and discuss it in a problem-centred manner, and to show your awareness of scientific theories and the current state of research in the relevant field. A *Hausarbeit* has a prescribed structure that may vary in accordance with the approach required and the discipline involved. You write it in accordance with this structure and in response to a specific question or problem. A successful *Hausarbeit* is comprehensible, logically structured and 'makes sense' in terms of its content. As a piece of academic writing, it is required to meet academic standards in terms of the level at which you engage with the topic, adherence to the principles of good academic practice, and formal aspects of its presentation.

Reflective report: you write this to report on specific situations you yourself have experienced and reflect on them and on your observations during that situation. You should

accurately and precisely describe the situation, who was involved, what took place where and when, what the purpose of these events was, how they unfolded, and what the outcome or result was. You will usually have a prescribed question or focus to work from. Readers of your report should be able to gain a comprehensive and comprehensible idea of the situation you describe and of your experience during it, as well as accessing and understanding your reflections on the situation in relation to the question or focus prescribed. You should seek advice on how to structure your reflective report from its examiners; the details will depend on the course you are writing it for and the report's specific purpose. One possible structure might include an introduction to the overall topic followed by a statement of the report's purpose, a description of the situation and of the events that took place (in an appropriate order, such as chronologically or arranged by aspects of the topic), then discussion of and reflection on the situation and the events and, finally, the conclusions you have drawn from them.