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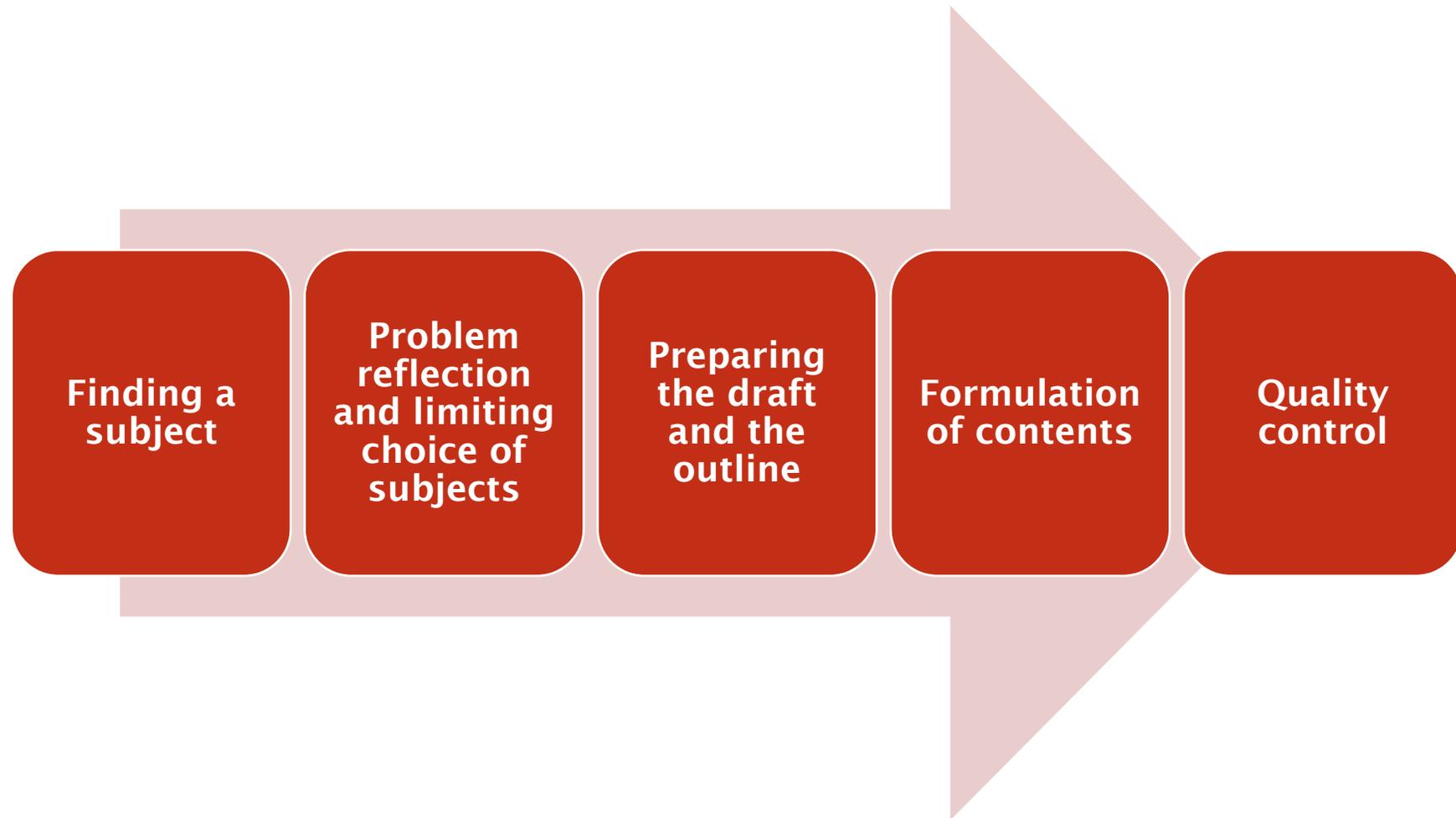
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# Guidelines on Writing Dissertations

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- Mentoring phases of the dissertation
  - Components of a dissertation
  - Guidance on formal presentation
  - Logical structure and style
  - Rating scheme
  - Top 10 Traps

Note: Large sections of this presentation have been taken from “Hinweise und Empfehlungen zu Studien- und Abschlussarbeiten” by Prof. Dr. Karl Heinz Huber

# Supervision phase of dissertation: Overview



- **Phase 1: Finding a subject**
  - This phase is used to determine how the topic of the dissertation. You may choose a given topic or work on an own subject. Overall whilst searching a topic make sure that it has:
    - A contemporary context
    - A concrete problem description
    - The availability of sufficient literature
    - The potential of personal contribution (What makes the subject “new”?)
  - ***Support: Discussion of possible subjects***

- **Phase 2: Problem reflection and limiting choice of subjects**
  - This phase should be devoted to the subject's interpretation and the dissertation's perimeter. The own interpretation (perimeter and focus) plays an important role for the further steps of working. The subject should be rewritten thoroughly and the „puzzle of research“ should be clearly defined. You completed sifting initial literature and you may have already gathered ideas for the structure.
  - ***Support: Limiting subject***

- **Phase 3: Preparing the draft and the outline**
  - You started a structured proceeding of your work. At the end the structure should be thought out but even if not set in stone you should be able to start writing at this point.
    - (1) Cursory reading of literature specific to the topic; ‘critical’ reading; create a card index of the literature; create a folder, note down quotations and ideas; draw up a program. You have an overview which facts were already dealt with in literature so that you finalize the problem definition
    - (2) The candidate should formulate the final problem statement on the basis of the interpretation discussion and knowledge gained through reading (core questions)
    - (3) The candidate should prepare a (rough) structure of the paper based on the problem statement formulated in (2), then apply a strict ‘copy deadline’. Nevertheless corrections and shifts in the structure might be necessary in the course of writing.
  - ***Support: First discussion on structure***

- **Phase 4: Direct formulation**

- Once the literature has been reviewed, the work is put down on paper.
  - **INTRODUCTION:** Approach the reader. Explain why the subject is important and describe the core issues while differentiate your work from the existing literature.
  - **DEFINITIONS:** It is essential to use terms consistently and uniformly. Definitions will aid the comprehension. Don't be afraid to coin your own definitions if they will help you accomplish your task. Good definitions make a real contribution to the topic.
  - **THEMATIC LIMITATIONS** are permitted provided they can be justified. Often the limitations are necessary to guarantee the focus of your work.

- **Phase 4: Direct formulation**
  - HYPOTHESES must be logically deduced. Each statement must be backed up. Nothing is ‘natural’, ‘logical’, ‘self-explanatory’, ‘exclusive’, ‘obvious’, ‘immediately apparent’.
  - RED THREAD: It is essential for a central theme or ‘thread’ to be seen running through the hypothesis. If possible, lengthy excursions should be followed by a restatement of the theme for the reader.
  - CONCLUSION: The conclusion should be used to answer the questions raised in the introduction or to explain why particular issues cannot be tackled. Candidates should also suggest other and overarching contexts, and provide an outline of the practical relevance of the topic.
- ***Support: Second discussion of structure***

- **Phase 5: Quality control**

- Allow enough time for checking your work, and maybe get it proofread by friends and acquaintances.
- The phases and components of mentoring are for guidance only and may differ from those outlined here depending on the degree of difficulty, a candidate's existing knowledge and the particular challenges posed by a dissertation. You can always reach me by *email if you have any questions.*

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- **Title page**
  - **Table of contents:** The contents reflect the logical structure of a scientific paper and represent the central basis for composing the text. It should convey an initial impression of the paper's content to the reader. Caution: A common error is a subdivision of a section that contains just a single bullet point. Section headings should convey a concise and apt impression of the content of the particular section. In scientific papers preference should be given to the use of substantives instead of questions, statements or assertions. For example: "Types of job evaluation"; Not: "What types of job evaluation are there?" (= question); Not: "There is non-analytical and analytical job evaluation." (= statement)

- **List of illustrations/tables**
- **List of abbreviations:** Abbreviations should be used sparingly and not at all in headings. They should be written out in full the first time they appear, followed by the abbreviation in brackets, e.g. Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R). Common abbreviations such as i.e., p., cf., etc., e.g. need not be listed
- **Footnotes:** As well as giving the sources of quotes and citations, footnotes can be used for the author's comments and additions. They are useful if the flow of the main body of the text is enhanced as a result. A footnote is often a good 'home' for comments which are incidental but worth mentioning, references to controversial discussions in the literature and so forth

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- **Reference list:** All the literature sources which you have cited should be listed here in alphabetical order of the author's name. The list should not include works which are not mentioned in the body of the paper. Full references should look like this:
    - **Books:** Olfert, K., Personalwirtschaft, 10th ed., Ludwigshafen 2003.
    - **Edited collections:** v. Rosenstiel, L., Regnet, E., Domsch, M. (Ed.), Führung von Mitarbeitern. Handbuch für erfolgreiches Personalmanagement, 5th ed., Stuttgart 2003.
    - **Articles in collections:** Neuberger, O., Mikropolitik, in: Führung von Mitarbeitern, v. Rosenstiel, L., Regnet, E., Domsch, M., 4th ed., Stuttgart 1999, p. 39-46.

- **Reference list:** All the literature sources which you have cited should be listed here in alphabetical order of the author's name. The list should not include works which are not mentioned in the body of the paper. Full references should look like this:
  - **Articles in journals:** Li, H., Daugherty, T., Biocca, F., Characteristics of Virtual Experience in Electronic Commerce: A Protocol Analysis, in: Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 15, 2001, No. 3, p. 13-30.
  - **Internet sources:** <http://www.uni-stuttgart.de/soz/ib/studium/arbeiten.html>, downloaded on 25.05.2011. (save the sources and append them to the paper if necessary)
  - **Unpublished literature:** Hitec AG, Corporate Principles (unpublished brochure), Nürnberg 1999. (copy the sources and append them to the paper if necessary)
  - **Expert opinions:** Personal interview with Mark Miller of AnyCo in Hamburg on 19.9.2010. (interviews with experts should be documented and appended to the paper if necessary)

- Margins: left 3.5 cm, right 2.5 cm, top 2.5 cm and bottom 2 cm
- Justified text alignment. Use automatic hyphenation with text that appears 'stretched'
- To improve clarity you can insert the title of the current main chapter in the header of the individual pages
- Page numbering starts with the first page of the introduction and appears at the foot of each page
- In dissertations, manually inserted page breaks are only allowed before the start of a new main chapter. Avoid unnecessary page breaks in seminar essays

- Use a sufficient number of clear paragraphs. Logical sections should be visually recognizable
- Listings should be emphasized either by numbering or bullet points
- Use bolding (sparingly) to highlight text
- Place footnotes on the page containing the referenced text
- Course assignments and dissertations should be printed on one side of the page (the proof-reader / marker needs space for comments on the reverse or opposite page), professionally bound and 2 copies submitted
- Please also submit one digital copy

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- **Perhaps the most important mark of a scientific approach is the consistent identifying of other peoples' ideas. This is done by citing:**
  - Every citation (reference) must be verifiable with the help of the reference list
  - **“Citation honesty”** is not just essential in doctoral theses by persons in public life, and candidates must expect to be failed if found guilty of plagiarism
  - In the body of the text, citations are usually indicated by a superscript number at the end of the cited passage with a reference to the literature source in the footnote using the same number. It will generally be sufficient if you underpin the statement made in your text with a source that is as “high-grade” as possible. Additional sources which say the same thing will add nothing new to your arguments and just be ‘padding’

- **Direct and indirect citations**
  - **Direct** = literal quoting from a source within speech marks
  - **Indirect** = paraphrasing the source without speech marks; in this case the reference in the footnote begins with “cf.”)
  - Indirect citations are the rule. These should paraphrase the sense of another author’s arguments. The actual extent of the paraphrasing must be clearly identifiable
    - Example: Drumm points out that it is not self-evident for employees to perform work in business enterprises.<sup>1</sup>
    - The footnote for this example would look like this: <sup>1</sup> Cf. Drumm (2005), p. 459.

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- If you are making a lengthy and uninterrupted reference to one particular source – which should be the exception, not the rule – you should name the author at the beginning of your arguments
    - Example (text): The following statements about the mutual relationship of business objectives are based on Heinen.<sup>1</sup>
    - Footnote. <sup>1</sup> Cf. Heinen (1968), p. 101-106.
  - The exact location of the quote (the page of the work) should also be indicated after each ‘self-contained’ statement by the quoted author
    - Example (continued): The relationship between the objectives can be essentially complementary, competitive or indifferent.<sup>2</sup>
    - Footnote: <sup>2</sup> Cf. Heinen (1968), p. 102.

- The use of literal (direct) citations is advisable when the candidate's own words cannot express the subject matter as aptly as the quoted text (e.g. the particular originality of the statement, the 'authority' of the cited author). Direct citations should be used sparingly and not be too long
- Any emphases (e.g. italics) used in the source text of a literal quote must be repeated as such in the citation. The candidate's own additions, e.g. "author's note", or omissions [...] must also be identifiable. They are usually placed inside square brackets
  - Example of a direct citation. „Naturgemäß liegt es somit im Interesse jedes einzelnen Arbeiters, darauf zu sehen, dass nicht schneller gearbeitet wird als bisher.“<sup>1</sup>
  - Footnote.<sup>1</sup> Taylor (1977), p. 22.

- If you are quoting from more than one work by the same author, then the reference must clearly indicate which work is being quoted. Example:
  - Cf. v. Rosenstiel (2002a), p. 56.
  - If you are referring to the same source several times in sequence, you can use the short form “(Cf.) *ibid.*, p. ...”.

- **Secondary citations:** Sources should always be cited – whether directly or indirectly – using the original text
  - With secondary citations there is always a risk of corruption so they are only allowed in exceptional cases, e.g. if the original source is unavailable. In this case the footnote should first give the original source and then the secondary source with the note “cited after ...”.
  - Example: Um 1800 verteilten sich die insgesamt 2,2 Millionen im gewerblichen Sektor Beschäftigten auf dem Gebiet des Deutschen Reiches wie folgt: 51 % Handwerk, 44 % Verlage, 5 % Manufakturen/ erste Fabriken.<sup>1</sup>
  - Footnote: <sup>1</sup> Cf. Kocka (1983), p. 63 (cited after Staehle (1920), p. 9).

- Any scientific paper must deploy a logic which is specific to the problems being discussed
- Candidates should therefore think carefully about the logical sequence of these problems at an early stage of the process, e.g. when deciding on the structure of their paper: usually the most difficult phase of a dissertation and will only succeed if the author has first gained a thorough overview of the relevant literature
- With large course assignments and especially with dissertations, candidates are advised to consult on the structure of their paper with their supervisor (ask if in doubt)
- A certain progression in the information content of your statements from the beginning to the end of the paper is an advantage

- Avoid placing chapters which are strong on content next to chapters with less content. The proportions of your dissertation must be balanced in terms of both its size and the power of its statements. Major imbalances will suggest weaknesses in the way your paper is structured, and will have to be rectified
- You shouldn't put your conclusions right at the beginning of your paper, but neither should you put off talking about your topic until you are several pages in
- Move gradually from the general to the specific, not the other way round
- Never lose sight of your topic
- Skillful references, summaries, personal interpretations etc. show that the author is in command of his or her topic

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- Especially with theses or dissertations, the internal context of the chapters should always be taken into account and demonstrated to the reader
  - As well as a logical structure, the logic of the author's thinking, reasoning and sentence order is an essential criterion when assessing a scientific paper. Major pitfalls here include:
    - Non sequiturs (statements are not linked logically or harmoniously)
    - Contradictory or inconsistent statements (especially if randomly quoting from different sources)
    - Using undefined terms
    - Using one-sided or extreme definitions even though different opinions exist in the literature
    - Making sweeping claims and assertions without giving due space to alternative views

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- When it comes to your written style, it should above all be reader-friendly
  - Don't follow the example of a lot of printed works which you yourself may have trouble comprehending because of their complicated style of presentation
  - Here are some useful tips:
    - Keep sentences short and succinct. Long sentences can almost always be made easier to understand by being broken down into two or more shorter sentences
    - Use foreign terms and expressions sparingly and then only when you are certain of their meaning
    - Always keep clarity and accessibility in mind when composing lengthy theoretical passages. A small example will often have more impact than pages of theory

- Illustrations are a great aid to the clarity and comprehension of a text. However the text must familiarize the reader with the illustration, and while ‘a picture tells a 1000 words’, an illustration alone can never completely take the place of text, nor can a section consist of an illustration alone. If your illustrations represent other peoples’ ideas, then you must reference the source
- Use abbreviations sparingly (don’t forget to include them in the list of abbreviations) and only when a term is used frequently
- Your written style should be matter-of-fact and business-like (a scientific style)
- Direct citations from English do not generally need to be translated; translations of citations in other languages should be agreed with your supervisor

- The ‘we’ form and where possible the ‘I’ form too should be avoided. Examples: not “In my paper I wish to make the reader aware of problem X” but “The subject of my paper is .....
- A scientific style differs from, say, a journalistic style in that it generally avoids one-sided or biased viewpoints, personal judgements and – above all – polemic. At the same time, all statements must be critically challenged. In science, there are very few things which are ‘self-evident’ or ‘matter-of-fact’
- An unscientific style is typified by the use of terms such as ‘naturally’, ‘evidently’, ‘in any case’, ‘hugely’, ‘totally’, ‘incredibly’, ‘plainly’, ‘therefore’, ‘namely’ etc.

1. **House moves and other 'dual challenges'**. Avoid major projects like moving house while working on your dissertation - they and others, such as learning a foreign language or deciding to give up smoking, will only doom it to failure. You have enough on your hands with the dissertation and any examinations you may have.
2. **Templates**. Create a template before you begin to write your thesis. It will save you a lot of work.
3. **Introductions**. Introductions are a wonderful thing but should be kept in check! As a rule, historical outlines are as uninteresting as irrelevant information. You should therefore compose your introduction not at the beginning of your paper but at the end, and it should provide a brief, concise synopsis of your topic.
4. **Descriptions**. In-depth descriptions of technologies or detailed definitions of terms should be used defensively in seminar projects (check whether definitions haven't already been written by another student) and in theses and dissertations they should be relevant in meaning and moderate in number.
5. **Sourcing literature**. Wirtschaftswoche, Managermagazin and the Financial Times are great publications but their role in scientific dissertations tends to be marginal. You should base your paper on textbooks and scientific publications. Apart from Google, sources include specific search engines which can provide further hints and guidance. There is no law against ordering books or articles which are not available in Regensburg from other libraries. **Wikipedia is no source for scientific treatises!**

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6. **Spelling.** Use Microsoft Word's spelling and grammar check functions! The wavy red and green underlines usually mean something and should be acted on. When planning your dissertation you should also allow sufficient time for proofreading.
  7. **Binding.** Most copy shops are only open until 8 p.m. and usually take a while to bind students' papers decently. Papers should also be left to 'rest' for a while after binding or they become 'crinkly'. If you think about these hints you will realize that you should get your dissertation bound at least one day before you have to hand it in. And don't forget, the Dean's office isn't open 24/7!
  8. **Planning.** Make yourself a schedule before you start work on your dissertation. If you get into difficulty with your timing, talk to me about it. Problems of time can usually be resolved up until half-way through the paper (either a cut off or an extension) but cannot be rescued just a few days or hours ahead of the submission deadline.
  9. **Structure.** Your paper should have a central theme running through it. Use your introduction to make clear to the reader what you actually propose to show in your paper.
  10. **Contact.** Keep in touch with me especially during the early stages of your work, and make use of the suggested dates for meeting with your supervisor. Most papers fail because of a lack of contact with the supervisor, with the paper veering off in a fundamentally wrong direction.
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**Good Luck!**