



LAST UPDATED 25 Jan, 2013

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND IT**  
**Department of Business Administration**

# **Guidelines and grading criteria for thesis projects in business administration**

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# 1. Introduction

Writing a thesis is an exciting, challenging opportunity for students to immerse themselves in an area of particular interest to them. The form of this work is different compared to regular courses, because higher demands are placed on independence and analytical ability. The students are trained in planning, executing and presenting a project during a limited period of time, which is important preparation for a future professional career. Students are expected to work independently, integrate knowledge and skills from previous courses, apply scholarly methods, and present and defend their thesis. Another purpose of the thesis process is to develop critical thinking. Through the thesis process students are given an opportunity to develop their ability to:

- work independently
  - set long-term goals and plan their time
  - gather credible information in order to answer questions
  - analyse results in a reliable manner
  - process information critically and draw conclusions
  - conduct objective investigations
  - express themselves objectively verbally and in writing
  - objectively review their own and others' work and results
- (based freely on Nyberg and Tidström, 2012, p. 34)

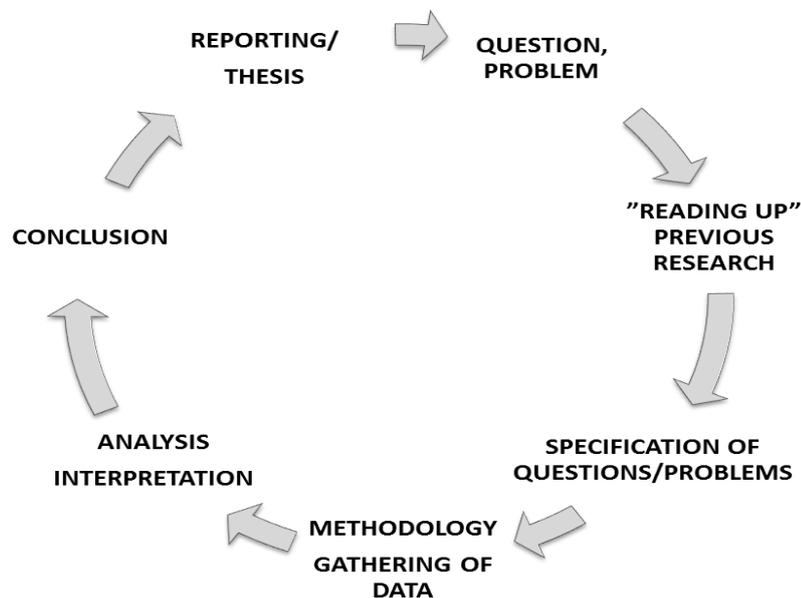
The purpose of education at the university and post-secondary level is to continually practice these abilities, based on a scholarly approach. This is usually done in the form of written reports and papers. Writing is a creative process - a craft that needs to be developed and refined step by step (Lindstedt, 2002). For that reason, make an effort to write as much as possible in every course leading up to the thesis project.

In the scholarly research process there are requirements for *factuality* (the information the author provides should be true and correct), *objectivity* (striving to be objective) and *balance* (giving proper space to what the thesis is about) (Ejvegård, 2009). Furthermore, scholarly texts are a genre with specific characteristics and requirements for *precision* (concepts used shall have a clearly defined meaning), *concentration* (the text shall treat the selected topic as efficiently as possible) and *organisation* (logical structure) (Jarrick and Josephson, 1996).

These thesis instructions are intended as a whole for thesis work at the bachelor's and master's level, but applicable portions apply to any research paper as well as memoranda and project work in business administration. These instructions include information about the process of writing a thesis, rules for advising, advice and guidelines on what the paper should contain and how it should be formatted as well as a basis for grading. For that reason it may be appropriate to read through the instructions on several occasions during the course of the thesis work. Other methodology literature for a particular project will be applied after discussion with the course instructor or advisor.

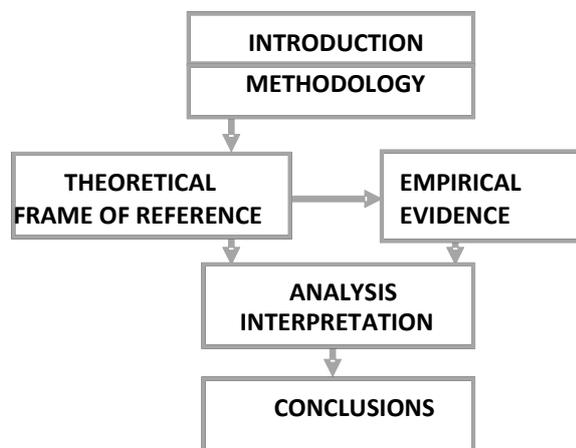
The traditional research process can be described as a circular process with a number of subsidiary stages that often mesh with or overlap each other. The process (see Figure 1) starts with a question or a problem initiated by the author or a client. Then a "reading up"

stage follows where you search and study previous research within the field. Questions and problems are then further specified. Methodology stages encompass gathering of data (empirical evidence), for example through observations, interviews or surveys.



**Figure 1. The wheel of research – an illustration of the traditional research process (revised from Backman, 2008, p. 27 )**

The analysis stage involves organizing and systematizing the data collected. In the interpretation stage the analysis is given meaning and content, i.e., data is interpreted. Reporting entails finally that the results are made available to others. The research process is often iterative, i.e., various stages are repeated, for example when the author, after literature review, advising or opponent seminars, goes back and revises an earlier stage. In scholarly work the author has reformulated and specified the formulation of problems and issues many times, which is often referred to as the hermeneutic spiral (see e.g. Ejvegård, 2009). A traditional research paper contains the following parts, where the arrows show how the various parts are mutually connected:



**Figure 2. Illustration of parts of a research paper (revised from Björklund and Paulsson, 2012, p. 45)**

When you are writing a thesis, it may be helpful to think of the parts of the paper as parts of a car to be assembled. The various parts can be completed to some extent in parallel, but will need to be adjusted to fit together as a whole so the car will function. In other words, writing a thesis is *not* like crocheting a potholder – starting at one end and then stitch by stitch approaching the other end. It would be hard or impossible to edit without tearing the whole thing apart (Jarrick and Josephson, 1996).

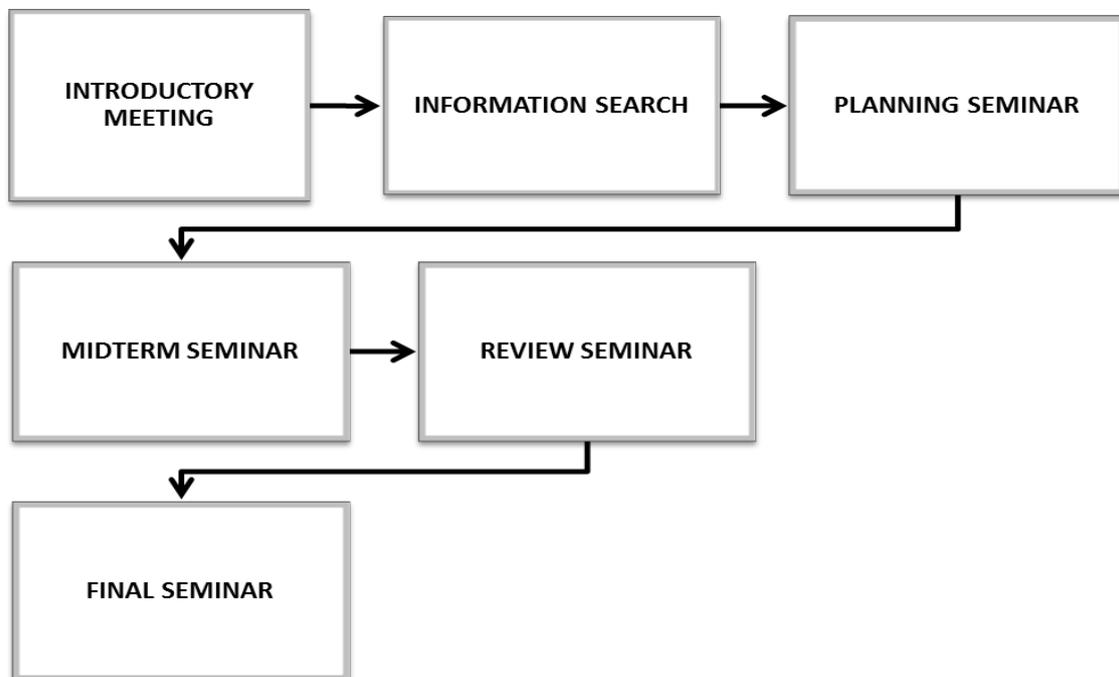
The following general prerequisites apply to the thesis project:

- The thesis is written in groups of two. A thesis group may not have more than two members. Each thesis partner has joint responsibility for the entire thesis. The learning process is often more intensive if you collaborate with someone. Thesis partners can inspire, motivate and learn from each other. When you are writing with someone else you will need to agree on how you will work with respect to e.g. level of ambition, defined work times (every day or week), particular areas of responsibility and other working methods, such as reading each other's drafts and providing constructive feedback (Nyberg and Tidström, 2012, p. 18).
- Each thesis group is assigned an advisor after the planning report is approved.
- The examiner grades the thesis in consultation with the examiner committee.
- When the thesis is approved and is in final form after any revisions, a file copy will be submitted to the examiner for reporting of grade and archiving. The archive copy shall solely consist of loose pages.
- Once both an archive copy of the final thesis version approved by the examiner is submitted to the course administrator and the thesis is presented in PDF format in DiVA (electronic database), the grade on the thesis project will be reported in LADOK. Instructions for publication in DiVA are found on the library website under "Plugga och Skriva"/"E-publicera i DiVA" ["Study and Write"/"E-publish in DiVA"]. Please note that this PDF version of the thesis in DiVA will not include the authors' civic registration numbers.

## 2. Thesis process and sequence

A thesis project at the bachelor's and master's level is worth 15 credits. This corresponds to ten weeks of full-time study, but the thesis is usually completed over a longer time span. This is because the authors need to take their time to consider and formulate a research problem, and the research questions will need time to develop and be clearly formulated. This generally requires allowing time for planning and conducting interviews and other investigations.

The thesis groups meet in a number of seminars together with the advisor or examiner according to Figure 3 (see also Appendix 1). At the start of the respective course the course leader will present the schedule of seminars and applicable deadlines for submissions. Participation in seminars and meeting agreed deadlines for submissions is an important aspect of the thesis process.



**Figure 3. Seminars in the thesis process**

Working with a partner means you are responsible not only for yourself but for the group, and thus you should actively take part in the work of the group. This means that in the planning, midterm, review and final seminar you shall:

- attend, read and actively discuss the ideas and drafts of others
- conduct oppositions according to instructions

The seminars are learning opportunities and by being well informed about other students' research problems and methods you can contribute to a stimulating research environment. You will learn a lot by critically reviewing others' texts as well as by providing constructive criticism (Nyberg and Tidström, 2012).

At the *introductory meeting* the thesis course will be presented and information will be given about how to formulate problems and research questions. A well worked-out discussion of problems will take a lot of work and will be crucial to the thesis authors' possibilities to formulate interesting, feasible questions for the thesis project. The problem discussion shall identify, delimit and formulate the research question. At the seminar for *information search* what characterizes scientifically reviewed text will be presented. Information is given on existing scholarly sources (primarily scholarly journals) within the field of business administration and how the authors can find these in various databases.

The planning report provides a basis for how the investigation will conceivably be conducted, including problem discussion, research question, purpose, theoretical frame of reference and method description (for suggestions for organization of the planning report, see Appendix 3). The planning report is submitted to the examiner according to the schedule. If the planning report is approved by the examiner it will be presented at the *planning seminar*. Next is the *midterm seminar*, which is led by the advisor and in which the thesis groups present their theoretical frame of reference and method. Scope of the project, approach in selection of theory and how the thesis group will apply theory are discussed in this seminar. Choice of method, extent of data collection and alternative choices of theory and method will also be discussed.

Participation in the *review seminar* requires a complete thesis manuscript. The individual advisor will communicate what is required, but often about 80 percent of a completely finished thesis can be seen as a target. The purpose of this more formal seminar is for you to get input at a stage where it is still possible to make proper changes and improvements in the thesis. The seminar is led by the thesis advisor. It is introduced by the respective group's authors having an opportunity to correct any errors that are in the manuscript. The authors then defend their work through comments and discussion of the review by the opponents. A list of galley errors such as spelling mistakes can be submitted to the authors after the seminar. Prior to the review seminar a check in the anti-plagiarism system URKUND will also be conducted according to the course leader's instructions.

The thesis process concludes with a *final seminar* where the completed thesis is reviewed prior to grading. For this reason the seminar is led by the examiner. Like the review seminar, the seminar begins with the respective group's authors having an opportunity to correct any errors there may be in the manuscript. Then the opponent group presents and opposes the thesis according to stated guidelines (see chapter 4). For theses that do not pass at the first final seminar there are two additional occasions in the following term where the thesis group can make a presentation. Thesis advising ends after the first final seminar.

### 3. Rules for thesis supervision

The thesis process is characterized by a high degree of independence. This means that the thesis authors are responsible for the feasibility of the investigation and for the actions they take, including choice of methods, collection of data, analysis of results and making sure the work progresses according to schedule.

The role of the advisor is to be a discussion partner who asks critical questions, points out problems, offers opinions and advice and provides feedback on your writing. The advisor will not provide exact instructions for *what* to do and *how* to do it, as you are the ones who must make choices and decisions and be responsible for them. Besides the university advisor there may be external resource persons, e.g. if you are writing a thesis at the request of an external company.

In order to get the most possible out of advising sessions, you should follow a few simple guidelines:

- come prepared to seminars or individual advising sessions - you should always have done your own thinking and have a written basis to present/discuss, which will enable specific, progress-oriented advising to help you improve your text
- turn in a written basis with clear references to those parts of the text you want to discuss *well in advance* of the advising session
- make contact with the advisor before you start collecting data
- be open and receptive to suggestions
- make careful note of ideas and what has been discussed
- take initiative and schedule time as needed for individual advising beyond what is offered in connection with the seminars and state clearly what you want to discuss (Rienecker and Jørgensen, 2002)

Any advising that is provided over and above the planned seminars shall be because you have a significant problem to discuss, i.e., something you have thought about beforehand and about which you realize that you need an assessment or comment in order to continue. Please note that advising is only offered during the term when you are in the thesis course, i.e., until the final seminar in June.

The advisor cannot state in advance what grade the thesis might conceivably receive, because grading is the task of the examiner. The advisor cannot proofread the thesis either or give guidance on word processing problems. For such issues you can contact the Service Desk or Language and Text Centre instead.

## 4. Opposition and defense of the thesis

Serving as an opponent for someone else's thesis is an opportunity for practice, learning and evaluation. Being an opponent involves critically reviewing with a constructive attitude the submitted thesis and pointing out its strong and weak aspects as well as conducting a dialogue with the authors. Through the opposition you also have an opportunity to show your own expertise in thesis writing. The authors should have an open attitude to the opponents and their comments, as these can contribute to improving the thesis.

The opposition stage is an important part of the thesis writing process and is completed in the thesis course. The requirement here is primarily approved performance. A well conducted opposition may however influence the combined evaluation of students' performance in the course.

### 4.1 Guidelines for opposition

As you prepare the opposition, be sure to structure and organize your perceptions and opinions in a suitable order - almost like a brief lecture. Being an opponent means to judge, to offer resistance and create tension. The opposition exists to provide constructive criticism by trying to show the merits of the thesis and pointing out possibilities for improving and strengthening any weaker portions. Every thesis should be interpreted and assessed on its own terms. The opponent should thus take reasonable consideration of the principles and limitations that the authors of the study have stated, but a certain degree of "if I were you" is allowed.

The opposition shall be written down so that the respondents and advisor/examiner can have access to it after the seminar. Putting the opposition on paper is also beneficial for the opponents because it forces consideration. The opponents have a responsibility through conversation with the authors to contribute to fulfilling the purposes of the particular seminar. These purposes are:

- that each seminar will be a learning opportunity for authors, opponents and listeners in the art of conducting and evaluating scholarly research and investigative work
- that the authors shall receive detailed "feedback" on their work beyond what is given by the advisor.

The opponents shall question choices made and conclusions drawn (*critical thinking*), find and suggest new perspectives on the problem treated (*creative thinking*) and see the strengths and possibilities in the submitted thesis (*positive thinking*). This means that the criticism shall be presented in a dialogue with the authors, where the opponents should focus on reviewing the whole and the parts that according to them have decisive significance for the evaluation. A few commonly occurring mistakes that opponents should avoid include:

- Being positive in overly diffuse terms. This gives the perception that the opponent

has not tried or been capable of comprehending the thesis and thereby not done his/her job.

- Trying to “bash” the thesis. The art is to suggest better alternatives.
- Going through the thesis page by page, i.e., spending time on minor details. This usually leads to too little time being given to reviewing and discussing the analysis and conclusions. A suggestion is to submit a list of formatting errors and other minor errors instead.
- Only formatting errors that make it harder for the reader to understand and assess the thesis should be brought up in the seminar and briefly cited when the combined evaluation is given.

## **4.2 Guidelines for defence**

Being a respondent, i.e., defending your thesis, is not a simple or obvious matter either. Keep in mind that as the author of the thesis you have the most detailed knowledge about the thesis, but at the same time accept that your own work may have deficiencies that are worth criticizing, and keep an open attitude to suggestions for improvement. In seminars it is recommended to ask yourself the following strategic question: How shall I act so that the opposition will be as useful as possible for continued work on the thesis? It is often better to ask the opponents to develop or explain their reasoning than to respond directly. Consider asking the opponents questions when something is unclear, such as: What do you mean by...? What would be your advice? When the opponent makes observations to which the authors do not have a strong defence, it is better to admit that the opponent has a point rather than trying to defend oneself with weak arguments. In an otherwise strong defence it is a strength rather than a weakness to give acknowledgement to the opponent.

## 5. Similarities and differences in various thesis projects

Thesis projects differ from other written application assignments and memoranda that you have written previously during your education, including the time available, requirements of extent and depth/quality and independence. At University West we have two types of thesis projects in business administration. At the basic level we have the bachelor's thesis (also called a "C paper"), which is part of the bachelor's degree. At the advanced level we have the master's thesis (also called a "D paper"), which is part of the master's degree. Both are degree projects that are worth 15 credits, but because they are written at different levels they each have different requirements (see Table 1).

A thesis consists of a title page, a summary in Swedish and English, a table of contents and a suitable number of chapters suitably organized that deal with introduction, problem, purpose, methodology, theoretical frame of reference, account of empirical evidence, analysis, conclusions, reference list and any appendices. The structure and organization of chapters may be different in different thesis projects. Likewise, some authors choose to have more than one methodology chapter, while others may choose to have multiple chapters dealing with theory, empirical evidence and/or analysis. These choices may be completely in order; the important thing is that the structure communicates the content of the thesis clearly, that each chapter is well structured and contains good argumentation, and that the content of the thesis as a whole corresponds to the requirements for a passing grade.

A thesis normally contains collection and processing of empirical data. An alternative that is possible at the master's level is a theoretical thesis (theoretical research), also called a literature review. A purely theoretical thesis normally involves a review of the research situation within a certain field where the authors, through an analysis of developing trends or the like in previous research, contribute new knowledge. The greatest difference between a bachelor's and master's thesis is that the requirements for scholarship and theoretical contribution of knowledge are higher for a master's thesis. At the bachelor's level the requirement to develop new knowledge is somewhat more limited. The master's thesis course is preparation to do research, which means that the requirements for scholarly stringency are higher in this project. This also means that what is often referred to as the "research front" shall be examined. The scholarly weight in the sources of the thesis must be higher where e.g. the contribution of relevant articles from scholarly journals is concerned. Alternative methods shall be discussed and the choice of method justified. Application of theory, analysis, critical review and proposals for further research are other important elements. Higher requirements are also placed on the capacity to make assessments within the main area with respect to relevant scholarly, social and ethical aspects and on the capacity to show awareness of ethical aspects in the research and development process. For a more detailed explanation of the content and requirements for the various parts of the thesis, see chapter 6 and appendices 4-9. Table 1 below describes differences and similarities between a bachelor's and master's thesis.

<b>Content</b>	<b>Bachelor's thesis, 15 credits</b>	<b>Master's thesis, 15 credits</b>
<b>Formulation of problem and purpose</b>	Allowed to be mainly practically motivated. Even if a thesis has a focus on the solution of a problem, the thesis author must however formulate an academically acceptable problem.	The formulation of the problem and purpose shall primarily be aimed at knowledge development. <i>Preferably</i> it shall also be practically motivated.
<b>Literature</b> For all thesis projects capacity to independently search and select relevant literature is required as well as taking a position by means of relatively established and current research within the topic.	The theoretical frame of reference shall primarily be comprised of scholarly articles.	The primary sources shall be scholarly articles, dissertations and books with a clear research orientation. Fulfilling the requirement by showing independent treatment of theories is important.
<b>Application of theory and adherence to scholarly standards</b>	Here it is accepted that the theoretical frame of reference is primarily used to solve a practical problem.	It is required that the conclusions drawn have certain theoretical implications, e.g. existing theories can be tested or developed.
<b>Method and methodological discussions</b> Regardless of type/level of thesis a method discussion is required that is well connected to the current study.	Here requirements are primarily placed on a justified, well formulated choice of methodology based on the problem. The requirement for general applicability/transferability may be reduced somewhat here.	The requirements for methodological awareness also increase in knowledge/theoretical terms. Higher requirements are also placed on the argumentation for choice of method and a stringently conducted and scientifically acceptable investigation and analysis. In addition the requirement for being representative/transferable is heightened here.
<b>Account of results and analysis</b> Here the theoretical principles and empirical results are linked in a systematic, credible and independent way.	A more descriptive account and analysis of results can be approved.	Analysis, report of results and conclusions shall make a contribution of knowledge to the field which in some sense is scientifically accepted.

**Table 1. Comparison of requirements of the content in a bachelor's and master's thesis (freely based on Umeå University, 2012)**

## 6. Evaluation of the thesis

A thesis may be given the grade of failed (U), passed (G) or passed with distinction (VG). An extensive supplementary examination may occur before a thesis gets a grade of G. Thesis projects with a grade of both G and VG may need to remedy certain minor additions of a formal nature. On the other hand it is not possible through a supplementary examination to change a thesis with the grade of “passed” to “passed with distinction”. It is not possible either to get “advance information” about the grade evaluation prior to the final seminar.

For a passing thesis the language and formal appearance of the thesis are absolute requirements (see Appendix 2). Good use of language is decisive so that the content of the thesis is communicated in an acceptable manner. In certain cases copyediting may be required in order to approve the thesis. In addition, as part of the evaluation criteria the *overall assessment* and *quality of argumentation* should also be emphasized in particular. A thesis that lacks completeness cannot be given a passing grade, even if its various parts are ambitiously executed. Vice versa, a thesis that is good overall, but where some parts are less well-developed and executed, cannot achieve a grade of “pass with distinction”.

### 6.1 Basis for evaluation

The criteria that advisors and examiners use as principles for advising, assessment and grading of thesis projects are based on the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education’s national goals for theses in business administration (Högskoleverket, 2012). These goals are compiled in Table 2 below. The table shows the main sections of the thesis, linked to the basis for evaluation, which is also explained. Besides clarifying these goals, the compilation will serve as guidance for what is important to keep in mind as a thesis writer and as instructions for what the thesis should include in order to be approved, i.e., what evaluation criteria apply.

MAIN SECTIONS OF THE THESIS	BASIS FOR EVALUATION	CLARIFICATIONS
<b>Problematisation</b>	Identification and formulation of problem	The problem discussion shall be concise, thought-out and structured. It shall end in a clear, motivated formulation of problems that have been independently identified and created by the author(s).
	Relevance of the problem statement	The choice of problem shall be relevant with respect both to previous knowledge/studies within the field and to its significance for career, social issues and/or development of knowledge. The choice shall be justified and the object of study defined.
	Purpose including limitations	The project shall be specified and limited in such a way that it is executable and possible to understand the results in the end. The purpose shall have general interest beyond the writing of the thesis.

<b>MAIN SECTIONS OF THE THESIS</b>	<b>BASIS FOR EVALUATION</b>	<b>CLARIFICATIONS</b>
<b>Theories and concepts</b>	Familiarity with theoretical thinking	Includes capacity to distinguish between the theoretical and everyday significance of concepts.
	Relevant previous research	Previous important work within the selected problem area shall be identified and the work linked to existing theory and concept formation.
	Analysis model with operationalisation of concepts	Shall show the capacity to choose and as needed adapt an applicable conceptual apparatus that is linked to relevant previous research and which is explicitly used for the treatment of the selected problem. The concepts shall be expressed so that they can be defined and/or observed. Selection of concepts (theory, model, previous studies) shall be made with connection to the problem.
<b>Overall method or approach</b>	Account and motivation for selected design	The choice of method's advantages and disadvantages shall be discussed and limited to aspects relevant to the problem. The execution shall be obvious and controllable for the reader.
	Relevance of the study design with respect to problem, model and data	The selected method shall be motivated and linked to problem, theory and model.
	Account of collection and analysis of material and data	The account of collection and analysis shall be consistent and the author shall demonstrate awareness of how quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis are used depending on the chosen approach.
<b>Account, analysis, result and conclusions</b>	Reporting	Reporting of the empirical material shall be systematic, with connection to the selected model.
	Interpretation and analysis linked to theories, concepts, methods used	The analysis and interpretation of the material shall be analytical.
	Conclusions related to purpose and problem	Results and conclusions shall be comprehensible and discussed with concern for credibility, applicability, relevance and answer how the purpose is fulfilled.
<b>Overall perspective</b>	Formal aspects	The language shall be stringent and correct. Application of figures and tables shall be formally correct. The system of source references and list of sources shall be consistent.
	Connection between problem, purpose, theory, model, method, data and conclusions (the common thread)	The work shall comprise a whole in which formulation of problems, theory, model, selection of method, account of collected and analyzed empirical material as well as conclusions shall be coherent and follow each other logically. The work will have a balanced arrangement, logical delivery and readability as well as common thread.
	Critical approach	Shows capacity to have a critical attitude towards one's own thoughts and those of others, to theoretical and empirical source material and to one's own work related to social, economic and ethical aspects.
	Reflection and creativity	Shows capacity to reflect and have new ideas.
	Credibility in approach, results and conclusions	Account for the approach in a credible, logical and intelligible manner.

**Table 2. Basis for evaluation of bachelor's and master's theses in business administration at University West (Högskoleverket, 2012)**

The majority of students set high objectives for their thesis work and devote considerable time and commitment. For that reason it is important to stress that a passing grade means quality that is satisfactory. In order to achieve “pass with distinction” requires the thesis to be considerably above the normal level in a majority of the important evaluation criteria (see listed grounds for evaluation in Table 2 above).

## **6.2 Grading procedure**

Responsible for assigning grades to thesis projects in business administration is an examiner within the respective discipline, i.e., accounting, organisation and marketing. In order to ensure that the thesis projects are graded in as consistent a manner as possible, she/he has the assistance of an examiner committee. As a basis for evaluations the respective examiner and examiner committee have the thesis version that was presented at the final seminar after any *minor* completions. When the thesis is evaluated as passed, the student group shall submit a printed-out archive copy to the examiner and then register the thesis electronically in DiVA.

Assuming that oppositions and mandatory seminars are conducted with a passing grade, the entire thesis course will be reported as passed in LADOK. If the thesis is not approved at the regular examination session, or at one of the fall term’s two offered occasions for re-examination, the students must prepare a new thesis that will be examined in connection with the following year’s thesis course.

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## APPENDIX 1: Schedule for thesis project Spring 2013

Week	Stage/submission
25/1	Introductory meeting, syllabus (EX)
7/2	Information search, lecture and library practice – accounting and organisation (KA)
8/2	Information search, lecture and library practice - marketing (KA)
Week 9	This week drop-in guidance before submission of the planning report
8/3	Submit planning report via DisCo
Week13	Planning seminar (EX)
11/4	Submit midterm seminar report via DisCo
Week16	Midterm seminar (HL)
7/5	Submit review seminar report via DisCo
Week 20	Review seminar (HL)
22 -27/5	Submit final thesis via DisCo
Week 23	Final seminar (EX)
Week 23	Conclusion seminar with prize award for best thesis
Week 26	Grades set no later than this
12/8	Submit re-examination week 35 via DisCo
Week 35	Re-examination for failed thesis projects (EX)
2/12	Submit re-examination week 51 via DisCo
51	Re-examination for failed theses (EX)

*EX=Examiner KA=Course leader HL=Advisor*

***Note: Submissions after deadline will not be considered***

## APPENDIX 2: Formal requirements for the final thesis report – language and form

This section spells out the requirements for language and formal structure that a thesis in business administration at University West must fulfil. This applies to everything from what shall be included in the work, for example a title page and table of contents, to how references are written. The thesis should give a uniform impression, even if two individuals have written it together. It is important that headings, font and spacing remain the same throughout the thesis. The layout and language of the thesis contribute to “bringing out the message and increasing credibility” (Björklund and Paulsson, 2003, p. 79)

### Language

Correct use of language is a prerequisite for an approved thesis, as language is the author’s tool to communicate the content of the thesis to the reader. Scholarly style is characterized by being precise through the definition of terms and concepts, and by being concentrated. Try to use language that is as simple and clear as possible, as unnecessarily complicated language will make the thesis less accessible. At the same time, try to avoid conversational language and slang. Scholarly style is also characterized by being factual and well organized, i.e., logically arranged. Transitions between the different parts of the thesis explain to the reader how the various parts are connected and facilitate reading.

It is thus important that the final text be well thought out and linguistically correct. Writing a good text requires rewriting a number of times. It is worth continuously devoting time to working on the writing itself during the entire thesis process and especially with final editing and proofreading. Use spell check in the word processing program you use, and a good dictionary as a guide for spelling. If possible ask a friend to proofread and ask the Language and Text Centre for support and help in the writing process.

A scholarly paper often contains specific technical terms and central *concepts*, and these should be defined the first time they occur in the text. The same applies to all *abbreviations*, which is done by writing out the entire word/all the words, followed by the abbreviation in parenthesis. Where common abbreviations are concerned (e.g., etc., et al.), their use should be consistent throughout the thesis; either the words should be written out (“for example”) or the correct abbreviation used (“e.g.”). *Page references* are written using “p.”, e.g. “p. 124”.

Ordinarily papers are written so that the author changes *tense* between present and past. The past tense occurs in summary (what has been done), introduction and theory sections (for example in the review of previous research), and method and results sections (the investigation that has been conducted). Present tense can be used in the discussion section (Backman, 2008, p. 48).

In general the *numerals 0–12* are spelled out in running text. In text where figures are a crucial aspect, such as accounting of scientific results, all figures are written as numerals. Decimals are separated in English with a period (15.4%, 0.48 mm). Thousands are written

with a comma (4,500). Large numbers (over one million) are easier to read if they are spelled out (e.g. “100 million”). Measurement units are written with numerals (1 cm, 10 kg).

## Layout

The thesis shall be written in A4 page format with *font* 12pt Times New Roman, single *line spacing* and justified margins. The top and bottom shall have 2.5 cm *margins*, while the sides should have 3 cm margins. New paragraph is formed by leaving a blank line between two different paragraphs (no indent). A new chapter begins on a new page. The *page numbering* of the thesis normally starts with the introduction section, which then becomes page 1. The title page is not included in the page numbering. The summary and table of contents are either not numbered or Roman numerals are used. Starting with the introduction chapter normal Arabic numerals shall be used. Any appendices are not included in the total page numbering, but are numbered separately.

The thesis chapters are made up of various sections which are subdivided with subheadings and paragraphs. Use three *heading levels* at most (i.e., 1, 1.1, 1.1.1). The heading should reflect the content of the section and be used to make the text easier to read. Recommended heading levels are written in an optional font in bold 22 pt, 12 pt and italic 12pt for level. There are two blank lines between a new heading and the previous paragraph.

Use our school template *Title page* for the thesis project in business administration (see library website). The title page of the thesis shall include the title, authors' names, possible major, advisor, examiner and department in which the thesis is written, the course in which the thesis is a part, semester and year. The title shall be located in the middle of the title page. The title should include the central concepts that have been the object of the authors' interest. It is important to choose a title that on the one hand covers the purpose of your investigation, and on the other hand invites reading. Sometimes it can be useful to have both a main title and a subtitle.

The *abstract* of the thesis is placed immediately after the title page. An abstract is a summary and should be an independent unit in the report and cover one page at most, showing the content of the entire report: title, author(s), course, semester, problem, purpose, method, theory, empirical data, analysis and conclusion. It is important that it can be read independently from the thesis itself and that it also reflects the results of the thesis. (Please note that this summary is not the same as the “abstract” you complete when you enter the thesis in DiVA). The past tense is used for the summary as this is a summary of what has already been done. The text in the summary is always written consecutively without being divided into sections.

The *table of contents* contains up to three heading levels. Summary and table of contents are not listed in the table of contents. Appendices are listed after the table of contents, for example Appendix 1: Question guide, Appendix 2: Survey. If the thesis contains many figures and/or tables, usually there is a list of tables and figures which is placed after the table of contents. These lists present figures and/or tables in numerical order, followed by figure (or table) title and page number. Sometimes there is also a list of abbreviations.

A thesis will often include various forms of *figures* (i.e., illustrations, graphs, diagrams, images and photographs). *Tables* make it possible to present extensive data in a comprehensible manner. When you think about using a figure or table in your thesis, ask yourself — does it add anything? According to Björklund and Paulsson (2003, p. 81) a table or figure should be comprehensible, have a connection to the running text, be numbered and have a caption, make reference and be uniformly designed throughout the thesis. Each figure and table shall be numbered and have a figure/table title. Numbering is consecutive throughout the thesis with Arabic numerals (not capital-based numbering). In the figure/table text placed under the figure/table either the abbreviation Fig. 1 or Figure 1 is written, followed by figure title and source.

If a table is extensive it can be put in an appendix. Reproduction of figures from other sources is regulated by copyright law and reproduction agreements. In order to use the figure, permission must be obtained from the copyright holder(s). You must then report what you will do with the image (the purpose of the use/where publication will occur). See more information about copyright on the library website. If you have elaborated someone else's figure, state this e.g. as “Adapted from Jacobsen and Thorsvik, 2008, p. 106”.

### **Reference citation according to the Harvard system**

University West uses the Harvard system for reference citation. Information about the Harvard system is on the library website. You should study this information BEFORE you write the thesis to avoid unnecessary added work with reference citation. It is important to note that the reference list shall be in alphabetical order in ONE consecutive list regardless of type of source. In other words, do NOT divide up the reference list into different types of sources (articles, books, etc.).

## APPENDIX 3: Content of the planning report

The purpose of the planning report is to show how the authors plan to complete the thesis. The planning report can also be seen as a first draft of the thesis, because the parts of the planning report are also included in the thesis, albeit in a more developed form. The planning report should be 5-6 pages, and the following parts shall be included:

1. **Front page with preliminary title.** The title should be brief and refer to what the thesis project will be about. Also state the authors' names, semester and academic year.

2. **Background, problem discussion and research question.** In this section (which starts on a new page) the authors should explain why they have chosen to study a certain area, and connect this to an area of business administration or line of reasoning. Interesting areas to study may come from the authors' own interests and experience, from previous courses and course readings, from current debate and from external employers, e.g. companies and other organisations.

This section begins with the authors describing the background to what they want to study. The background may be relatively broad and may contain material from newspapers, textbooks, scholarly articles, etc. Then follows a problem discussion, in which the authors narrow the argumentation. By means of what has been brought up in the background, the authors specify what is interesting to investigate more closely and explain why. Finally the problem discussion ends with the authors formulating a research question. The research question should be possible to answer, formulated in one sentence, and simply stated.

3. **Purpose and limitations.** The purpose and limitations follow the research question. In the purpose the authors state what they want to achieve with the thesis, and how it will contribute to increased knowledge in the chosen area. The purpose shall be concretely formulated, and it shall be formulated so that failure is not possible – in the completed thesis the authors will show that they have fulfilled the purpose of the investigation. Limitations follow as needed after the purpose, and the authors will describe here what will not be investigated.

4. **Theoretical frame of reference.** The thesis includes conducting a literature search, primarily by searching for articles in scholarly journals. In this section the authors provide an overview of the literature they plan to use, as well as the search terms used.

5. **Method description and approach.** In this section the authors, based on the research question, shall conduct a discussion about what method is best suited to conduct the investigation. Choice of approach, selection and data collection method should be brought up in this discussion. The planned work procedure shall also be described. Above all the authors shall describe what empirical material they need to collect and how and when this will be done.

6. **Schedule.** The authors will schematically describe here the previously described approach, i.e., when the various parts of the thesis project will be completed during the semester. During the continued thesis work the schedule should be specified, changed and updated as needed.

7. **Arrangement.** The planned layout of the thesis shall be shown in a preliminary table of contents.

## APPENDIX 4: Problematisation

In the planning report the process began by developing background, problem discussion, research question and purpose. This process continues and goes further in the writing of the first chapter of the thesis.

### The purpose of problematisation

The first chapter should describe what area the thesis will investigate, place it in a larger context and clarify and give reasons why it is interesting to investigate. This is done through problematisation of the selected thesis subject: Like in the planning report, the background to the selected problem shall be accounted for, leading up to a problem discussion. The problem discussion then results in the formulation of the research question that will be answered in the thesis. Then follows the formulation of the purpose. This process can be compared to a broad funnel that narrows toward a research question.

### Structure and content of the introductory chapter

The parts that began the planning report also recur in the first chapter of the thesis, which is structured according to the following headings:

- Background
- Problem discussion
- Research question
- Purpose

The **background** should place the selected area of investigation in a larger context. In the background the authors bring up the sort of things that demonstrate the immediacy of the topic, e.g. material from current debate, their own observations and experience or new research findings in scholarly articles. Furthermore, the authors recount briefly (there will be an elaboration in the theory chapter) what research exists in the area and what it has led to as well as pointing out areas that have yet to be investigated.

The **problem discussion** should show why it is relevant to investigate the chosen area. A problem is something that is unresolved, unanswered and/or not yet explained in a sufficiently clear manner. In the problem discussion the following questions should be discussed:

What: What constitutes the problem?

Why: Why is this a problem, and for whom?

How: How can the problem be solved?

If the background shows that the chosen area of investigation is something that at the moment is being debated in the media, if it is something about which the authors themselves have recent experience, and if it has not previously been studied scientifically, the authors have good prospects for giving reasons why the subject is relevant to investigate. The area of investigation should be both practically and theoretically justified.

The **research question** is formulated as a result of the problem discussion. It should be a specific question, formulated in a single sentence. When the research question is formulated, it may be helpful to think about whether the research question is possible according to the following to:

- answer
- investigate scientifically
- connect to previous research
- answer within a reasonable time and with a reasonable amount of work

The **purpose** follows the research question. In the purpose the authors state what they want to achieve with the thesis and how it will contribute to increased knowledge in the chosen area of investigation.

### **Some pointers and things to think about in writing the introductory chapter**

**Work hard:** A fundamental pointer in writing the first chapter is to devote a great deal of time and energy to this chapter in particular. Initiating the thesis process by conducting an extensive literature search will help the authors increase their knowledge of the problem area, which will facilitate the work of problematising and formulating a concrete research question.

**Everything is connected:** Working on the thesis will be significantly easier if the problematisation is carefully executed and the research question is specific and clear — a well-formulated, specific research question is crucial to the quality of the thesis. This is because the problem area and research question will govern what theoretical frame of reference will be used, what empirical material will be collected and what method will be best suited to do this. Besides, it is impossible to analyze and draw conclusions based on the material collected without a clear research question – if it is not clear to the authors what they should do, it will be extremely difficult to do anything at all.

**Continuity:** The presentation of the problem area and research question is the first thing that happens in the thesis. It is crucial in the continued thesis process to stick closely to them in order to create a logical sequence in the subsequent chapters and maintain a “common thread” throughout the thesis. The authors should thus avoid digressions in method and theory that lack connection to the research question. It is a good time to return to the introductory chapter now and then to stick to the original problem area and research question. If the authors have departed from the topic, they must make adjustments so that the common thread is retained.

**Keep the evaluation in the back of your mind:** As mentioned in chapter 6, the thesis will be evaluated according to the National Agency for Higher Education’s standards for quality assessment. The grounds for evaluation that are relevant for the first chapter of the thesis, along with parts of the chapter to which they roughly correspond, are shown in the table below. In the evaluation the examiner will look at how well the problematisation and formulation of the research question have been executed and its anchoring in theory and practice. Creativity and originality in the choice of problem area will also be taken into account.

<b>Basis for evaluation</b>	<b>Clarification</b>	<b>Corresponds approximately to</b>
<b>Identification and formulation of problem</b>	The problem discussion shall be concise, thought-out and structured. It shall end in a clear, motivated research question that has been independently identified and created by the author(s).	Problem discussion and research question.
<b>Relevance of the problematisation</b>	The choice of problem shall be relevant with respect to previous knowledge/studies in the area and to its significance for career, social issues and/or development of knowledge. The choice shall be justified and the object of study defined.	Background and problem discussion
<b>Purpose including limitations</b>	The project shall be specified and limited so that it is executable and possible to understand the results in the end. The purpose shall have a general interest beyond writing of the thesis.	Purpose

**Table 3. Basis for evaluation – introductory chapter**

The **common thread:** As the table shows, the various parts of the chapter overlap one another in the evaluation. For that reason it is important to keep in mind that the various parts shall not be written separately; instead, work on one portion should follow the work on another. Just as the entire thesis must be uniform and follow a logical structure, the various parts of the introductory chapter must be connected: What is brought up in the background must be developed in the problem discussion, then distilled into a research question and finally reflected in the purpose.

## APPENDIX 5: Method

In the planning report the work begins with the method discussion. This process continues and is developed in the writing of the method chapter of the thesis.

### The purpose of method

In the method chapter the authors describe how they have gone about completing the thesis. The purpose of this is to show that the methods selected are suitable with respect to the chosen problem area and the formulated research question as well as enable review of the thesis.

### Structure and content of the method chapter

In the method chapter the following parts shall be discussed and motivated:

- Scholarly approach
- Investigation approach
- Data collection
- Analysis methods
- Source critique
- Reliability/Validity

**Scholarly approach:** In this section the authors describe their fundamental view of how the world is constituted, how they acquire knowledge about it and how this view has affected the choice of approach, method of data collection and analysis of data. A basic requirement is that the authors indicate whether they have a qualitative or quantitative orientation.

**Investigation approach:** In this section the authors describe what approach they have chosen to conduct their investigation, i.e., how they organize the collection of data. A quantitative approach normally leads to the use of a quantitative investigation approach as well, e.g. investigating many units through a survey investigation, while a qualitative approach often means that the authors choose to do an interview study with fewer units.

**Data collection:** Here the authors describe how they conducted data collection, concerning both literature search (secondary data collection) and collection of empirical material (primary data collection). Important points to discuss are the choice of data collection method and the reason for it as well as alternative data collection methods. The sample and its extent shall be discussed and justified, and problems that have arisen in performing data collection shall be reported, as well as a description of how the authors have gone about resolving them.

There are a number of different types of data collection methods for studies in business administration. Depending on the study's object of investigation and what questions will be answered, various data collection methods are more or less suitable. The authors will decide which method works best for answering the research question. The choice of method shall be explained and justified in order to convince the reader that the choice is

reasonable and made consciously (see e.g. Bryman and Bell, 2011).

**Analysis methods:** Here a discussion about data processing and approach in the analysis is recounted, linked to the choice of approach.

**Source critique:** The authors shall discuss the sources that have been used. In part the quality and timeliness of the sources shall be discussed, by who they have been produced and for what reason and for whom.

**Reliability/validity:** In conclusion the authors shall discuss the reliability and validity of the study (if it is a quantitative study) or its reliability and transferability (with a qualitative study).

### **Some pointers and things to think about in writing the method chapter**

**Focus on your own choice of method:** The method chapter should describe the authors' choice of method. In order to avoid transforming the method chapter into a summary of method literature, the authors should start each section in this chapter by describing their own choices and then use method literature as support in the discussion of the reasons for their choices. All choices that are significant for completion of the study must be justified with factual arguments that go beyond the authors' own preferences and perceptions.

**Link to problem area and research question:** The method chapter shall describe how the authors have gone about completing their thesis. Thus in reality this chapter describes how the authors have gone about answering the research question and fulfilling the purpose. For that reason there should be a recurring discussion in this chapter that links the selected methods to the problem area and research question. Then the authors will show that the choice is a consequence of the identified problem and ensure continuity in the thesis.

**For whom is the thesis being done?** With all presentations of work, verbal as well as written, e.g. when the authors make contact for interviews and other forms of data collection, it shall be clear that this concerns a degree project. It shall also be clear if there is any particular employer for the investigation in order to avoid being perceived as misleading.

**Anonymity:** Those who are interviewed or who provide information in some other way for the thesis should be given sufficient information for them to be able to decide whether they want to participate. Investigations shall be conducted and reported so that the participants in a study are not subject to problems through their participation. If the authors are uncertain about what is appropriate, the question should be discussed with the advisor.

Also keep in mind that upon publication in DiVA the approved thesis will become a public document and searchable on the Internet. For that reason it is important that the authors think about what data that can or cannot be presented and about whether the participants should be anonymous. Possible interview subjects shall be informed in connection with their decision of whether to participate in the study that the material will be accessible to the general public.

Where anonymity is concerned it is important to distinguish between a situation where fictional names are used, but where it is possible for the initiated to know what company or

which individuals this concerns, and anonymisation where identification is impossible or very difficult. The Data Inspection Board’s website states what applies to research (see Gustafsson, Hermerén and Pettersson, 2004).

Usually it is possible to guarantee complete anonymity for studied individuals or companies, if that is a prerequisite for the study to be conducted. This means in part that primary material, e.g. individual respondents’ answers, may not be turned over to an employer or others. If anonymity or confidentiality is desired, it may be appropriate to formulate a written agreement. Wishes or demands for anonymity and an agreement on this should always be discussed and approved in advance by the advisor.

A confidential thesis is not allowed, because all degree projects are public documents. It is not allowed to have confidential appendices to a thesis either.

The **evaluation** is important to keep in mind when writing the method chapter. The table shows the basis for evaluation for the method chapter.

<b>Basis for evaluation</b>	<b>Clarification</b>	<b>Seen in the chapter by the fact that</b>
<b>Account and motivation for chosen design</b>	The advantages and disadvantages of the choice of method shall be discussed and limited to aspects relevant to the problem. Implementation shall be obvious and controllable by the reader.	These discussions shall be found throughout the method chapter, i.e., recur in the account of the respective choice of method. All choices shall be justified with factual arguments.
<b>Relevance of the design with respect to the problem, model and data</b>	The chosen method shall be motivated and linked to problem, theory and model.	
<b>Account for collection and analysis of material and data</b>	The account of collection and analysis shall be consistent and the author(s) shall show awareness of how quantitative and qualitative analysis methods are used depending on selected approach.	

**Table 4. Basis for evaluation – method chapter**

Remember to consistently justify and discuss all choices of method. If, for example, the thesis contains two sub-studies, all method choices shall be accounted for each sub-study.

## APPENDIX 6: Theoretical frame of reference

In the planning report the process began with choice of literature, and in the introductory chapter the theoretical principles on which the problem discussion is based are described. In the chapter in which the theoretical frame of reference is presented, these principles will be treated in a more in-depth discussion.

### The purpose of the theoretical frame of reference

In the theoretical frame of reference, previous studies and theory about the selected problem area are presented and discussed in relation to the research question of the thesis. The purpose of this is to show how previous studies and theory may contribute to answering the thesis research question and fulfil its purpose.

Theory means that the authors do not have to do everything from the beginning, because others have already studied the selected problem area in some respect. Theory contributes to providing structure to how the authors think about the problem area and help them distinguish between what is essential to mention and what is not.

### Structure and content of the theory chapter

The following parts shall be included in the theory chapter:

- Choice of collection of literature (i.e., theory), where the following aspects shall be exhaustively described:
  - Completion of the literature search
  - Problems with the literature search
  - Motivation of the extent of the choice of theory
  - Motivation for the choice of theory
- Reference of selected literature/theory (where a division into several sections with subheadings is usually necessary)
- Development of analysis model and associated study questions.

**Collection of literature:** In this section the authors describe and motivate how they have proceeded when searching for relevant previous studies and theory. Any problems that arose during the collection shall be accounted for, as well as how such problems were handled. The extent of the literature search shall be justified, as well as the choice of theory. When the authors explain why they chose certain literature, connection shall be made to the chosen problem area and research question.

The quantity of information and the electronic search possibilities that are available with respect to scholarly literature make it necessary to delimit at an early stage what material is needed and what area shall be studied. If the authors will search in databases, it is crucial to have well defined search terms, otherwise there is major risk of getting lost in large quantities of information.

The literature in which the authors will find theory normally consist of:

- Research that is reported in the form of a dissertation or articles in scholarly journals
- Research surveys and syntheses that review previous research within a certain area
- Studies that in addition to reporting data also discuss connections, etc.

**Reference of selected literature/theory:** In this section the authors will show that they have knowledge of relevant theory and previous studies within the thesis problem area. Referring means that the authors, *in their own words*, based on their own problem discussion and research question, reproduce the content of a text. A suggestion is to first make note of a text's main points and then proceed from those when the reference is written. Main points of a text means key words and expressions that the surrounding text describes or explains the sense of.

**Analysis model:** The reference of relevant theory shall be followed by a discussion about the theory presented, connected to the problem area and research question of the thesis. The discussion shall end in the authors' own analysis model and how this is linked to the continued work.

In this section the authors shall show samples of critical thinking in relation to the presented literature. The authors will argue for and against the presented theories, based on their own research question. Perhaps the authors can use certain aspects of a theory and overlook others; perhaps they can combine several theories or parts of several theories in order to create a tool, i.e., an analysis model, suited to their particular research question. The analysis model can be comprised of a figure or the like that the authors have crated based on the theory, and by the authors developing a number of study questions.

Based on the analysis model the authors specify their need for information, i.e., they establish what they need to find out in order to answer the study questions. Based on the need for information, the authors will then conduct the empirical investigation.

## **Some pointers and things to think about in writing the theory chapter**

**Who says what:** Take care to distinguish between the thesis authors' own opinions and the referenced text. In longer references the reader must be reminded now and then that the text is a reference, which can be done by using reference markers:

With reference: Use reference markers such as *thinks, discusses, argues, maintains*, and so on. In this way the authors signal that it is not their own ideas they are presenting. Use references according to the Harvard system.

With quotes: Use the Harvard system, indicate page number.

**Avoid plagiarism:** Plagiarism can occur unintentionally when the authors are in a hurry and forget to make clear what is a quotation and from where it is taken. It should be clearly evident what the authors' own words and thoughts are and what they have obtained from other sources. Plagiarism is avoided when authors express in their own

words what someone else has written while providing the source in the running text (source reference). Additional source information is given in the reference list. Information about how to write source references and a reference list is on the library website.

The university is obligated to report plagiarism where there is grounded suspicion of cheating to the disciplinary board. A reprimand by the disciplinary board may result in temporary suspension from studies. The school uses a special data-based system, called Urkund, to check whether students' texts, e.g. research papers, contain plagiarism. All thesis projects will be submitted to Urkund before the final seminar (see University West, 2012; Urkund, 2012).

It is important to keep the **evaluation** in mind when writing the theory chapter. The table below shows the basis for evaluation for the theory chapter.

<b>Basis for evaluation</b>	<b>Clarification</b>	<b>Corresponds approximately to</b>
<b>Familiarity with theoretical thinking</b>	Includes ability to distinguish between the theoretical and everyday meaning of concepts.	A justified, considered reference of theory and previous studies.
<b>Previous relevant research</b>	Previous important work within the chosen problem area shall be identified, and the work linked to existing theory and concept formation.	Justified selection of scholarly literature. Reference of theory and previous studies
<b>Analysis model with operationalisation of concepts</b>	Shall show capacity to choose and as needed adapt an applicable conceptual apparatus that is connected to previous relevant research and which is expressly used for the handling of the chosen problem. The concepts shall be expressed such that they can be defined and/or observed. The choice of concept (theory, model, previous studies) shall be done with connection to the problem.	An analysis model that shall be used to structure empirical evidence and analysis.

**Table 5. Basis for evaluation – theory chapter**

Like in the method chapter, it is important to constantly justify and discuss all choices in order to show that the selected theories are relevant for the study's problem area and research question.

## APPENDIX 7: Empirical Evidence

The empirical section is the first chapter that does not occur in any form in the planning report, because it is a result of the planned, and now completed, thesis.

### The purpose of the empirical chapter

The empirical chapter accounts for all data that has been collected to answer the research question and fulfil the purpose, i.e., all data that will constitute the basis for the analysis and conclusions.

### Structure and content of the chapter

Empirical evidence can be presented in various ways, but a few suggestions for headings are:

- Structure of the empirical presentation
- Presentation of empirical data
- Summary of empirical data (summary of chapter)

**Structure of the empirical presentation:** In an introductory section the authors describe how the rest of the chapter is organized. Normally the authors choose to structure the empirical data according to the analysis model presented in the theory chapter. It is important to ensure that the chapter is structured in a way that clearly shows how the research question will be answered and which best agrees with the methodology choices.

**Presentation of empirical data:** All data that constitutes the basis for the analysis shall be accounted for, but the authors must probably also exclude less interesting information from the presentation to maintain focus on what is relevant. It must also be clear where all information comes from: Regardless of what result is emphasized, it is important to describe the observations, interview responses, survey data or other data quantity on which the results are based.

In order to clarify the text, the authors may make use of quotations that add interesting information to the text and tables that emphasize the most important results.

**Summary:** In conclusion the presented empirical data is summarized, with an emphasis on the most important results.

### Some pointers and things to think about in writing the empirical chapter

**Hold that thought:** In the writing of the empirical chapter the authors may come up with a number of interesting ideas and conclusions, but these must be saved for the analysis chapter. In the empirical chapter only collected data shall be presented. A pointer is that every time the authors get new ideas about how data can be analyzed these should be entered in a separate document, which can then be used in writing the analysis chapter.

It is important to keep the **evaluation** in mind when writing the empirical chapter. The table shows the basis for evaluation for the empirical chapter.

<b>Basis for evaluation</b>	<b>Clarification</b>	<b>Seen in the chapter through</b>
<b>Reporting</b>	Reporting of the empirical material should be systematic, with a structural connection to the chosen analysis model.	The presentation is structured in a well thought-out way.

**Table 6. Basis for evaluation – empirical chapter**

In the evaluation whether the empirical presentation is clear and systematic will be reviewed, but also aspects such as whether the quantity of empirical data is sufficient in relation to the problem area and the research question as well as whether the empirical presentation is logical, based on the chosen method.

## APPENDIX 8: Analysis

The analysis section does not occur in any form in the planning report, because like the empirical chapter, it is a result of the planned and now completed thesis.

### **The purpose of the analysis chapter**

In the analysis chapter the authors connect what was presented in the empirical chapter with what was presented in the theory chapter. The purpose of the analysis may be to investigate connections between different factors, identify patterns, compare various interpretations or alternatives, or develop a new theory.

### **Structure and content of the analysis chapter**

Like the empirical chapter, the analysis chapter should be structured according to the analysis model that was presented in the theory chapter. The chapter should clearly show how the research question is answered in a way that best agrees with the chosen method. The analysis should thus be done in a way that is in agreement with the problem area, research question and chosen method. The analysis chapter should not repeat the information from the empirical and theory sections. Instead it should present an interpretation of the results, based on theory and empirical data. This should be done systematically based on the analysis model, and clearly show what is analysis, what is empirical material, and what is theory.

### **Some pointers and things to think about in writing the analysis chapter**

**Dare to take a position:** Many students feel unaccustomed to accounting for their own opinions and viewpoints, but in the analysis chapter they should do that. At this stage in the thesis process the authors are actually those who are most familiar with their particular problem area, and they are fully capable of having well-grounded opinions on the material gathered. The secret is to look for support in theory for your thoughts in the argumentation.

**If it doesn't add up:** If the authors find results that have no basis in theory they should point this out anyway, with a thorough discussion about how this may be possible. Could it be due to the nature of previous studies, to their own choice of method, or that the area has not been researched?

It is important to keep the **evaluation** in mind when writing the analysis chapter. The table shows the basis for evaluation for the analysis chapter.

Basis for evaluation	Clarification	Seen in the chapter through
<b>Interpretation and analysis linked to theories, concepts and methods used</b>	The analysis and interpretation of the material shall be structured and systematic.	The analysis is structured in a well thought-out manner, in accordance with the analysis model and selected method, and linked to theory.

**Table 7. Basis for evaluation – analysis chapter**

In the **evaluation** whether the analysis is reasonable based on the selected problem area, research question and chosen method is reviewed. The review will also include whether the analysis is linked to theory and previous studies and whether data that argues both for and against the existing interpretation is discussed.

## APPENDIX 9: Conclusion

The conclusions do not come up in the planning report, because like the empirical and analysis chapters they are a result of the completed thesis.

### The purpose of the final chapter

In the conclusion the authors reconnect to the research question and purpose of the thesis, to show that they have been answered and fulfilled respectively. The further purpose of the conclusion is to give a quick overview of the content of the thesis and its primary message.

### Structure and content of the conclusion

The conclusion shall include the following parts:

- Conclusion
- Reflection over the realization of the study
- Suggestions for continued studies

**Conclusion:** In this section the authors discuss the results and conclusions they have arrived at and show how the research question has been answered and the purpose fulfilled. Sometimes the conclusions include recommendations, e.g. to a company. These should be separated from the conclusions through a separate heading.

**Reflection over the realization of the study:** In this section the authors make a methodological assessment of the thesis and discuss why they produced a certain result and what limitations and merits there are in the material.

**Suggestions for continued studies:** After the methodological reflection a section follows in which the authors suggest interesting problem areas that are not covered by the thesis, but that deserve to be investigated further.

### Some pointers and things to think about when writing the final chapter

**Expend time and energy:** In many cases the final chapter is written under time pressure at the end of the thesis process. It's a good idea to still try to expend a good deal of time on the conclusions, because often that is all that is read in a thesis. In order for the conclusions to do justice to the rest of the thesis, it may be worth expending a little extra energy on this chapter.

**Stress what is most important:** Even in the conclusions the authors may stress the most important results in a table or the like.

It is important to keep the **evaluation** in mind when writing the final chapter. The table shows the grounds for evaluation for the final chapter.

Basis for evaluation	Clarification	This is seen in the chapter by
<b>Conclusions related to purpose and research question</b>	Results and conclusions shall be intelligible and discussed with consideration for credibility, validity and relevance, and answer how the purpose is fulfilled.	Answering the research question and fulfilling the purpose

**Table 8. Basis for evaluations – conclusion**

In the evaluation whether the research question has been given a reasonable answer, whether conclusions and recommendations are linked to the research question, whether recommendations and proposals for further research come out of the analysis and whether the contribution of the study is described will be reviewed.



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