

Master's Thesis Guidelines & Requirements

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****In 2020-2021, Prof. Frank will only be supervising theses that are written in English.****

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****Laura Rothfritz supervises theses in English and German****

The most up-to-date source of information about thesis guidelines for the Information Management Lehrstuhl can be found in Moodle:

- Information Management Thesis Advising Moodle course page:
 - <https://moodle.hu-berlin.de/course/view.php?id=97462>
 - enrolment key: IBIResearch

Note: the requirements described below may be changed, subject to the approval of both reviewers as well as the student.

Thesis Advising Roles

A thesis is reviewed by two people. The primary advisor is responsible for advising you in the preparation of your thesis, the second reader assesses your work as an independent reader but does not provide assistance or supervision while you are writing.

The decision about who will be able to serve as your primary advisor will depend on both your research topic and your research methods. It is important for supervisors to consider the degree to which we will be able to provide unique advising about your topic and methods, and the type of support that you would receive from another advisor.

Primary Advisor

Guidelines and instructions for theses which are supervised by Prof. Frank or Frau Rothfritz are described in detail below.

Second Reader

The second advisor agrees to follow the process and requirements that you decide upon with your primary advisor. We trust in the expertise of your primary advisor, and any assessment of your thesis will be based upon how well you have carried out the work that you and your advisor agreed upon.

Thesis Process

The following guidelines explain the process that you should expect if Prof. Frank or Frau Rothfritz are your primary thesis advisor.

- Join the Information Management Thesis Advising Moodle course page:
 - <https://moodle.hu-berlin.de/course/view.php?id=97462>
 - enrolment key: IBIResearch
- If your primary thesis advisor is in the Information Management Lehrstuhl, then you will use this Moodle course to submit documents and communicate with your advisor(s) throughout the course of your thesis work.

1. Topic Selection

- If you would like to write a thesis with either Prof. Frank or Frau Rothfritz, the first thing to do is schedule a meeting.
 - To meet with Prof. Frank, you can sign up for office hours here: <https://calendly.com/rebecca-frank/office-hours>
 - To meet with Frau Rothfritz, you can schedule a meeting here: <https://calendly.com/laura-rothfritz/sprechstunde>
- At this meeting, we will discuss your research interests, and agree on a general topic for your thesis.

2. Proposal/Exposé

2.1 Proposal/Exposé Process

- Once we have agreed on a topic for your thesis, you will need to come up with your research questions, your research design, and a timeline for your thesis.
- Before you file your topic, you should prepare a thesis proposal (exposé). This document will be an early outline of your work, and will help guide your writing.
- You will submit this proposal via the Information Management Thesis Advising Moodle course.

- After you submit your proposal via Moodle you should schedule a meeting with your advisor to discuss your plans.
 - At this meeting, your advisor may ask for additional information, or may request that you revise your proposal in some way. The goal of this process is to make sure that you have a solid plan for your thesis before you begin.
- The proposal is a very important part of the research process. Thesis advisors from the Information Management Lehrstuhl will not sign the *Antrag auf Bestätigung der Masterarbeit* until we have approved your research proposal.

2.2 Proposal/Exposé Format

- 3-5 pags (not including references)
- Can be written long-form, or formatted as an outline
- Other formats should be discussed in advance

2.3 Proposal/Exposé Content

Your Thesis Proposal should include the following elements, and can be written as an outline or a narrative:

- **Thesis Title:** in order to register your thesis topic you will need a unique, descriptive title
- **Introduction/overview:** background information about your topic, the context in the information field and in the broader scheme of academic pursuits, and the significance of this topic (i.e., why is this topic important?).
- **Problem Statement:** what is the problem that you want to address with this thesis?
- **Research Question(s):** what is/are your research question(s)?
- **Background/Literature:** include here an annotated list of at least 12-15 articles, books, and/or other sources that are relevant to your topic, and 3-5 sources that are relevant to your research design.
- **Research Design:** describe the research design that you will use for data collection and analysis. This description should include a description of your population/sample, your data collection methods, data analysis methods.
- **Plan of Work:** create a timeline for your project, which includes information about: data collection, data analysis, writing, editing, etc. Be sure to include your deadlines, as well as the times when you will meet with your advisors.

Other elements that you may want to include in your proposal, but which are not required:

- Data Collection Instruments (e.g., survey questionnaire, interview questions, etc.)
- Data Analysis Instruments (e.g., code set, etc.)

3. Thesis

After your proposal has been accepted by your primary advisor, you will submit your thesis topic to the Prüfungsausschuss.

3.1 Meetings

You should plan to meet with your primary advisor approximately once a month during your thesis work. It is important to communicate throughout the different phases of your work (e.g., data collection, data analysis, writing, etc.). Additional consultations may be possible, but are not guaranteed, so please prepare well for each meeting.

You can schedule these meetings by signing up for office hours, or via email.

Your primary advisor can provide feedback on small portions of your work as needed throughout the process, but cannot read and revise your entire thesis before you turn it in.

3.1.1 Forschungskolleg

We strongly recommend participation in the Forschungskolleg, although it is not required. In the Forschungskolleg we discuss topics such as selecting a thesis topic, formulating research questions, designing data collection strategies, writing a literature review, etc. These topics will not be addressed during office hours unless you have additional questions beyond what was covered in the Forschungskolleg.

3.2 Content

All theses should follow a classical empirical research paper structure, unless you and your advisor have agreed upon an alternative format ahead of time.

The thesis should follow APA style, and be approximately 120,000 characters without spaces. This includes all text, including section headings. This count does not include: title page, table of contents, abstract, references, appendices. Footnotes will be counted, as long as they follow the APA style guidelines as specified below.

3.2.1 Required Sections

- Table of Contents
- Abstract (300 words max)
- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Research Methods
- Findings

- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References
- Appendices (if applicable)

3.2.2 Figures, Tables, Etc.

Tables included in the text of your thesis will count toward the number of required characters without spaces.

Each figure and/or image included in your thesis will be counted as 100 characters without spaces.

3.3 Formatting

Your thesis should follow the guidelines described in the APA Style Guide (7th Edition): <https://apastyle.apa.org/>. If you would like to use a different set of guidelines, you must discuss this with your advisor ahead of time.

- Quick reference available here:
 - <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/>
 - <https://apastyle.apa.org/instructional-aids/heading-template-student-paper.pdf>
 - https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html