

MASTER THESIS: Baseline Information

The supervision of the Master thesis by professor Dembinski requires the student to follow, or to have followed, at least one of its courses, if possible on the concerned topic

I OBJECTIVES

- A Master thesis, as well as a seminar dissertation, represents a document in which the student reports about the scientific work he has carried out, by presenting his approach, as well as the highlights and the results of his study
- Such a scientific work provides information about the author's ability to synthesize and master a large volume of knowledge, as well as at the same time to carefully meet the requirements of the scientific method

II THREE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF A SCIENTIFIC WORK

- These three components are: the method, the synthesis, the documentary and empirical basis
- They are absolutely inseparable from one another: the synthesis results from the application of the method to the documentary and empirical basis

A. *The method*

No scientific approach can avoid any logic, which is a method of reasoning allowing to move from the premises to the conclusions. From this common methodological basis, each scientific discipline has gradually put in place "local" paradigms, referring to all proposals (premises) which have been commonly accepted within a scientific discipline.

The starting point of any scientific approach is a question, guiding and shaping the research. The method breaks down the reasoning leading from the question to the conclusion. It must be explicitly mentioned in the work, either in the introduction or in an ad hoc section. The range of research instruments used is large, as they refer to the collection and analysis of multiple lines of evidence: exploration of different types of documents, use of available statistical data, collection of primary data through questionnaires or interviews, etc...

See:

- Fourastié, Jean, *Les conditions de l'esprit scientifique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978.
- Bochenski, I.M., *Die Zeitgenössischen Denkmethode*, Tübingen, Francke, 1986.

- Blaug, Mark, *The methodology of economics, or how economists explain*, Cambridge, London, Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Blaug, Mark, *La méthodologie économique*, Paris, Economica, 1982.
- Popper, Karl R., *La logique de la découverte scientifique*, Paris, Payot, 1988.

B. The synthesis

Scientific work results from the research, and is not the research itself. It must not be confused with reading notes or the transcription of pages from others collected here and there. Through a synthesis effort, the author shows its ability to differentiate between what is necessary for the reader to follow its approach and reasoning, and what is unnecessary for that purpose. Conciseness and precision are thus natural features of the synthesis.

C. The documentary basis

The documentary basis used is chosen according to the subject, the level of the author's initial knowledge, the method and the available resources. On this issue, the requirements are indeed different with those associated with a bachelor thesis and a seminar dissertation undertaken by a first year student.

Whatever the level considered, the documentary basis results from a bibliographic research during which the available research instruments are used. In empirical research, most of the documentation effort is put on building statistical data series, or on collecting data through questionnaires or interviews.

III FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

A. Structure

The **table of contents** presents the structure of the work. It puts forward its main linkages, through chapters, or parts for longer texts.

The **introduction** explains the interest of the subject. The author justifies its choice, presents the structure of his work, describes its method and outlines the documentary basis expected to be used. It is critical to a consistent understanding of the whole work. In the **conclusion**, the author shows the degree of achievement in meeting the objectives of the study and summarizes the obtained results.

B. Length

The recommended length is 40'000 characters for a seminar dissertation at the graduate level (without the annexes), and between 80'000 and 100'000 characters for a Master thesis. Excessive length could lead to non-acceptance of the document.

C. Form

Admitted languages are: French, English, Spanish, German. Express approval is required for any other language.

The text must be well-written (style, spelling). It must undergo a triple proofreading process at the end.

Left and right margins on each page must not be less than 3 cm. Interlining must be at least 1.5.

The first page must contain the following: title, date, contact details, year of study, number of characters associated with the text.

D. Bibliography

The document must contain a REASONED bibliography. It means that the author has to present his readings in a logic order, making comments on each of them through one/two sentences and indicating what he has learned from such readings.

The text must be sprinkled with references and/or quotations (on average, two or three per page), so that the reader could find the basis for the arguments put forward by the author.

E. Presentation of the bibliography

The guide and examples can be accessed at the BCU: Master or Bachelor theses at the University of Fribourg. Names of authors who could be considered as examples are: Sarah Mathis, Alain Thiévent, Emmanuel Chapuis, Yana Ivanova, Francesco Cannizzo, Pablo Cattoni, Comlan Ewe Csonito, Pascale Gianini, El Kadri Dhia Eddine, Taurai Kevin Musa.

IV PROCEDURE

A. First step

Contact a professor and reach an agreement in principle on a subject still loosely defined.

B. Second step

Submit a proposal containing the title, the description of the documentary basis (indicative bibliography), the method and the work plan.

For seminar dissertations: one page of text + one page of bibliography for final agreement.

For a Master thesis, the first version of the proposal must be of 4-5 pages.

Then, work must progress in close interaction with professors.

C. Final text

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