

Düsseldorf Business School

Guidelines for all written assignments and for the master thesis

Experiences from recent assignments and master theses are good reasons for DBS to point out some typically made mistakes and to give some advices for correct procedures.

- The master thesis and all written (homework) assignments are elaborations within academic studies and their curricula. They have to follow standards and requirements concerning the systematical and formal structure and procedures. Sources for these rules and standards can be found on the university homepages of most DBS teachers, in special articles and books as well as on many internet websites. From these published sources candidates will learn e.g. how to structure a thesis, how to quote articles or books and to deal with citations and references, how to handle the table of content etc.
- Candidates should prepare a cover sheet according to the requirements of the examination regulation and office, indicating the demanding information.
- Candidates should stick to the subject of a thesis/assignment, indicated by its title, very closely! Statements exceeding the given subject will not be evaluated or might even cause a lower grading.
- Adhere to the specifications regarding a limited volume (page limit). Quantity does not necessarily correlate with quality!
- Take care of the readability of exhibits, figures, graphic elements etc. Though well-intentioned, colours, hatching, and certain line-graphics might affect or damage readability.
- Within the text of a chapter or paragraph must be no headline or subheading for which there is no identical bullet (point) in the table of content.
- The flow of thoughts and statements is expected to be systematic, structured, logical, and reasoned. An essential precondition for a convincing presentation of ideas and statements is to give reasons, justifications, proofs and verifications for ideas and statements. All arguments and statements should bear evidence, proof or verification!

- Candidates are expected to handle any subject in a critical, weighing manner, deliberative and differentiated, to deal with challenging ideas and to put arguments into question, if necessary - and not to handle it just descriptive, confirmatory, narrative - and or without balancing reasons. You should avoid a narrative style and not refer to yourself as "I" or "me". Also, it is not usual to quote your teachers as e.g. "... as Prof. Börner said ..."

- Descriptions of companies, products, technologies should be kept shortly, concentrated, and focused – if not prescribed differently. Descriptions usually do not contribute too much to excellent evaluations. Avoid unnecessary and redundant annexes / appendixes.

- For any empirical data, including statements of experts, an indication of sources is demanded.

- All written assignments and, of course, the master thesis should contain some backing from literature and published sources and deal with theses and procedures described in textbooks, articles etc.

- Sources and references should never be taken only from the internet! In a master thesis it is expected that standard literature has been reviewed and used by the author, e.g. to show the "state-of-the-art". Important publications as e.g. standard textbooks should be cited and listed in the list of references at the end of the thesis/assignment.

- The formal structure of quotations must meet the standard requirements (see above and, as an example, the advices on the homepages of the DBS teachers). Certainly, it can be helpful to take a look at scientific books, textbooks, and doctoral dissertations. E.g., the location of publishers must be given as well as volume of journals etc.

- All pages of your assignment or thesis should have margins of 2 or 3 cm at the top, bottom, left and right. Avoid unnecessary decoration (bottom or foot lines with the indication of the title or chapter etc.)

- Write the text in 12 point fonts (not smaller, please) and line spacing 1.5 !

- Candidates and authors should never neglect the final review of their elaboration.

- By the way: pages in a master thesis or assignment will be printed one-sided, and a side margin should be reserved for remarks of the supervisors/examiners.