

Bachelor thesis guidelines

WHY...

This paper is among your final tasks to complete your degree, and a chance to use and demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding you have acquired. The point of the bachelor thesis is to demonstrate your ability to:

- work independently
- identify a relevant topic
- review literature about it
- critically analyze it
- write up your findings

A bachelor thesis is more like an extended essay, based upon a literature review and desk study.

WHAT...

The contents

Here are the building blocks of the thesis. Different disciplines have different ways of constructing academic texts, the main difference related to quantitative vs qualitative and social vs natural sciences. Depending on your advisor and topic, you may be asked to do things in a way that differs slightly from this outline. But since Environment and Development Studies at Noragric focus on problematization of issues, this basic structure tends to have relevance for all bachelor theses. (The following are elements, not chapter headings – a skeleton, a format, and not an outline.)

- I. *Introduction*. Briefly introduce the topic, explaining its relevance (e.g. to an academic debate or an important challenge – why should a reader be interested in this topic?). Present a clear **research question**. You can also include a short paragraph on how you intend to answer the question.
- II. *Literature review/conceptual framework*. Briefly present the relevant literature to the conceptual framework, explaining how it addresses the chosen topic. Here you can indicate what **perspectives** in literature are relevant for the topic you will discuss. It can be useful also to present, and define very briefly, some **key concepts** you will use as **analytical tools** in your paper.
- III. *Empirical examples*. Often referred to as “cases”. Unless you discuss a purely theoretical issue, you need to draw on one or more concrete examples of what you are discussing, using them to illustrate your analysis and discussion. These examples can either be taken from academic literature or from other sources (newspapers, internet, etc.). In this part, you present the features of a case, or cases, that are relevant to your topic and analysis.
- IV. *Discussion/analysis*. This is the most central part of the thesis. This is where you make your point(s). You do this by using the concepts you presented in II as analytical tools, to discuss the empirical materials presented in III. You can discuss different concepts and approaches, you can argue for your interpretations, and you can make comparisons.

If you wish, parts III and IV may be braided together, so that you present one aspect of the empirical materials, discuss it, then present the next empirical aspect and discuss it, and so on.

V. *Conclusion*. Summarize the key points you made in IV. What did you find, what have you learned, and how does this relate to the research question of the paper?

VI. *References*. A *complete* list of the references you have used in the text.

HOW...

Those of you who have taken the writing course know how to structure a paper, as you will see from the outline; the “thesis” follows the same structure. You should also follow the same process:

- Choose a topic that relates to the supplied list of perspectives.
- Find literature, read and think, discuss with your supervisor, and develop a research question. As you know, a thesis statement is the core point you want to make in your text. It is the structuring principle. So is a research question, but it formulates what you want to find the answer to.
- Attend the seminars.
- Develop an outline based on the research question and your readings.
- Flesh out the outline into text; make time for a first, a second and preferably a third draft before the finished text (= three revisions).

This means you don't have nearly as much time as you think!!! To avoid pain, start NOW and work systematically and continuously.

SUPERVISION AND EXAMINATION...

Your supervisor is there to help you stay on track. There may be several difficulties in thesis work: your topic or research question may turn out not to be feasible, the literature you find may be of limited relevance or you may have missed some central references, you may get lost in your analysis or your writing. Supervision time is stipulated to 20 hours, including grading (5 hours).

The final submitted thesis is evaluated by two people. Your supervisor is the internal examiner and the department appoints an external examiner.

Dates to remember

20th December – Submit your choice of perspective to the study coordinator

15th February – Submit your signed thesis contract to the study coordinator

15th April – Withdraw or apply for an extension

15th May – Submission in Fronter before 15:00

And...

Use the Noragric library; it is an excellent source for researching information and literature, and help with referencing.

Make use of the Writing Center – they are great at helping you in your writing process. Go to their group meetings. It may seem like extra work but is labor- and frustration-saving.

Read, think, write in a continuous process, little by little, eat the elephant one bite a day.

Try to keep it fun, not just a chore or a source of stress – and lots of luck!

The finished product – formal requirements

The paper must comply with the following:

- The text must be between 7,000 and 10,000 words *including* references
- Line spacing 1.5, font size 12, margins 2.5 cm
- The *cover page* should include *all* and *only* the following:
 - http://www.umb.no/statisk/sit/maler/arkiv/NMBU_omslag_bachelor_ENG.pdf
 - Title of dissertation
 - Name
 - Name of institution (Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of International Environment and Development Studies)
 - Term

Submission:

Submit the file in Fronter by 15:00 on 15th May (the folder is deactivated at 15:00)

Your paper will then be graded by one internal and one external examiner.