GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER

(BACHELOR PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION)
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1. General requirements

The objective of a research paper is the acquisition of skills and initial experience for scientific research and the correct formalisation of the results of research. This includes the skill of formulating and outlining the research problem, setting a clear research goal and the research tasks that arise from this, selecting suitable research methodology and empirical material, working with specialist literature that concerns the topic and finding answers to the research tasks set in the research paper.

The main part of a research paper (the theoretical part and the empirical part) should be about 25-30 pages long, plus the introduction, conclusion, list of references and appendices.

Research papers that meet the following conditions are marked as “passed”:

- the research corresponds to the topic and the research aim and the main research tasks are clearly outlined;
- the structure of the paper meets the requirements set for research papers and all of the mandatory parts of the paper set out in the guidelines are present;
- a complete solution to the problem is presented in the research paper using scientific methodology (description, analysis and generalisation of results);
- the material used for reference creates an adequate theoretical, methodological and/or empirical basis and sources have been referenced as required;
- the technical formalisation of the paper meets the APA guidelines and this document;
- the use of language and terminology is generally correct and any errors that are found are not obstacles for understanding the paper;
- the author’s contribution is outlined in the paper;
- when defending the paper, the author gives an adequate overview of the results of the research and is able to answer relevant questions; and
- the research paper has been prepared and submitted according to valid procedure and by keeping to the deadlines.
The technical formalisation of a research paper should follow the APA guidelines and this document. There are some differences and additions to APA guidelines that are necessary when formulating research paper in the School of Economics and Business Administration:

- there are specific rules for title page and overleaf;
- running head starts from page 2 (it is not provided on title page);
- there is no need for the abstract in research paper;
- the independent and mandatory parts of a research paper are table of contents, introduction, main part (theoretical and empirical part), conclusion, list of references, appendices (if necessary);
- the headings of the chapters should be numbered;
- format of tables and figures is slightly different from APA;
- the sources provided in the list of references should be numbered;
- line spacing in appendices should be “single”.

All of the differences are discussed and demonstrated below in this document.

2. Extended research plan

Writing a research paper should begin by defining a research aim, research tasks and corresponding research plan. The aim of a research paper should give a clear perception of what will be achieved with this research. It should not be presented in terms of activity (avoid phrases like to analyse, to research, to give an overview), but in terms of expected outcomes or results. Research tasks indicate the phases that are necessary to achieve this aim.

Extended research schedule should be composed of the following parts:

- Heading of the research paper;
- Topicality of the subject. It should be explained, why this problem is important for you as researcher, but also for the society;
- The aim and research tasks of the paper;
• Theoretical background and methodology. It should be explained, which theoretical approaches will be used in the research paper and which specialist literature is going to be used;

• Plans for empirical part. It should be explained, which data are necessary to fulfil the objective of the research, are there any problems foreseen with the data deficiency and how to solve it.

• Planned structure of research paper (table of contents)

• List of references, which includes sources used in writing the research plan and sources that the author intends to use in writing research paper.

### 3. Structure of work

The independent parts of research are:

1. Title page (+ overleaf)
2. Table of contents
3. Introduction
4. Theoretical part
5. Empirical part
6. Conclusion
7. List of references (numbered)
8. Appendices

**Table of Contents.** Table of Contents can be created automatically when using headline styles in titles (*Heading1, Heading2 ...*). In order to do that, you have to move the cursor to the page where you want to create the Table of Contents and click on an empty line and then choose: **Insert → Index and Tables → Table of Contents.** Since **Word2003 Insert → Reference → Index and Tables → Table of Contents** and as of **Word 2013 – References – Table of Contents.** Choose **Show Page Numbers** in the dialogue window, align the numbers right (**Right Align Page Numbers**), create dots or other symbols between the numbers and
headline *(Tab Leader)*, format the Table of Contents to *From Template* format. Finally, *Show Levels* to choose how many headlines will be shown in the hierarchy.

An example of table of contents is provided in appendix C.

**Introduction.** Introduction has the following tasks:

1. Arguments for the selection of topic. Argumentation based on the content and not pleading to someone else’s opinion or personal motives for choosing the topic.

2. The aim of research and the boundaries of it: what is the work concerned with and why, what does the research try to find answers to; why such a problem needs to be researched and where might the results of the research be applied and implemented in.

3. Research tasks in order to fulfil the research aim.

4. Short introduction of theoretical background, data and methods. Overview of work done in this area of research before, a few references to the results of more important works.

5. Explanation of the structure of work: what the main part of the research is made of, reasoning for the structure deriving from the purpose of work.

**Main part.** The main part of the work is where the student finds answers to the research problems proposed in the introductory part of the work. It is recommended that the student works their way from the more general and theoretical part (based on synthesis of literature) to a more specific and empirical part of work. If the research is based only on theoretical approach, the author must keep in mind that the work cannot only be limited to a systematic overview of earlier research. They have to propose a reasoned theoretical approach of their own that enables to find answers to the research problems set forth. Writing a research that is based only on theory is usually more difficult than putting together a research with combined theoretical and empirical approach.

The proportion of theoretical and empirical analysis depends on the subject and purpose of research, but it is advised that these should be in balance. Main part of the research should consist of two chapters. It should contain theory and methodology, empirical analysis and synthesis. The synthesising part should propose a solution to the problems considered, give a generalising assessment, propose a prognosis etc. Too many paragraphs and sections that are too long should be avoided. The headings of chapters should be numbered.
It is very important that the student does not limit themselves to reviewing the viewpoints of a single author when discussing a problem, but finds counter-arguments from other authors and analyses whether a seemingly positive process does not nestle negative sides as well (for example in other areas of research the results might be negative) etc. Plagiarism must be avoided; some rules and suggestions are given in a specific section about plagiarism.

Even though the findings of the research are usually not fundamental in economic theory, the work still has to show a personal contribution of the student in addressing the problem. This may include opposing and contradicting opinions of different authors (theory) with a personal viewpoint and opinion; making generalisations, deductions or proposals based on the materials; considering different uses of the theory or model in specific conditions (based on specific data) etc.

**Conclusion.** Goes together with introduction. The questions asked in the introductory part get answered here and possible solutions to the problems and results are shown.

The main tasks of a conclusion are:

1. To present the main results, conclusions, opinions, proposals that the main part of the research showed (based on both, theoretical and empirical parts).
2. To bring out the possibilities for implementing the results and proposals made in the research and the issues that need solving in the future.

The conclusion does not repeat the aim of the research; does not pose new questions, does not present new viewpoints or conclusions that have not been covered earlier. All the parts of work have to be represented equally in the conclusion, but the conclusion is not to be seen as a mechanical putting together of the sections of previous parts of work.

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### 4. Technical formatting

#### 4.1 Title page and order of independent parts

Title page contains the following elements:

- Name of the university, name of the faculty, name of school
- First and last name of the author
4.2 Formation of tables and figures

All the tables should be numbered and have a heading, which gives a clear understanding about the contents of the table, but in a concise way. All the columns of a table should have a heading. It is not advised to create tables, which have only one row or column.

Line spacing within a table should be “single”. The tables and figures should be put into the main part of the paper, close to the text referring to these. If the table is more than one page long, it should be put into appendix.

Under the table, the sources should be provided: if the data is computed by the author, based on some published sources, it should say so.

An example

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>extroversion</td>
<td>48.56</td>
<td>48.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agreeableness</td>
<td>53.47</td>
<td>56.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscientiousness</td>
<td>52.91</td>
<td>55.74*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neuroticism</td>
<td>46.66</td>
<td>43.97*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>openness to experiences</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>54.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. * T-scores are statistically significantly different from Estonian standard sample

Source: Author’s calculations
All the figures and illustrations in a research paper should also be numbered and have a heading, but in case of figures the heading is put below the figure. A source of a figure should be provided after the name of it, or it should be denoted that it is created by the author. All figures must remain clearly readable if printed in grayscale (black and white).

**An example**

![Figure 1](image)

*Figure 1.* Perception of teachers’ level of neuroticism according to the year society members graduated from secondary school (%)  
Source: Author’s calculations

5. **In-text citations and plagiarism**

The main requirement is: sources that the author has actually used have to be referenced. The reference has to be exact. **All original viewpoints, setting up of tasks, quotations, numerical data, charts etc. from other authors used in the contents of the work have to be correctly cited or referenced.** All the sources brought out in the list of sources have to be referenced in the paper. Citing general knowledge does not need to be referenced.

There are various forms of plagiarism and even though not all of them are considered equally severe, they are still considered plagiarism. The understanding that to avoid plagiarism, one simply needs to add a reference, is incorrect.

The following brings out more specific examples which should be avoided.

Original sentence:
First, those groups that do not pay income taxes, i.e. the unemployed, the inactive or the retired, generally see a smaller increase in their real incomes than the employed or self-employed."


Plagiarism is:

- Verbatim (Word-for-word) quotation of the text, including translation, without a reference to the author:

Plagiarism:
First, those groups that do not pay income taxes, i.e. the unemployed, the inactive or the retired, generally see a smaller increase in their real incomes than the employed or self-employed.
Correct referencing:
Change in income is related to employment status, as it is bigger for employed or unemployed than for unemployed, inactive or retired (Ekins, Pollitt, Barton & Blobel 2011).

- Verbatim (Word-for-word) quotation of the text (quoting), including translation, with a reference to the author, but quotation marks have not been used;

Plagiarism:
First, those groups that do not pay income taxes, i.e. the unemployed, the inactive or the retired, generally see a smaller increase in their real incomes than the employed or self-employed (Ekins, Pollitt, Barton & Blobel 2011).
Correct reference:
„First, those groups that do not pay income taxes, i.e. the unemployed, the inactive or the retired, generally see a smaller increase in their real incomes than the employed or self-employed“ (Ekins, Pollitt, Barton & Blobel 2011: 2481).

- Paraphrasing with or without reference, whereby the author’s structure of argument is closely followed, i.e altering a few words or changing their order. The main message of the original text needs to be re-worded by using your own words.
Plagiarism:

These groups that do not pay income taxes like the unemployed, the inactive or the retired, generally see a smaller increase in their incomes than the employed or self-employed (Ekins, Pollitt, Barton & Blobel 2011).

Correct reference:

Change in income is related to employment status, as it is bigger for employed or unemployed than for unemployed, inactive or retired (Ekins, Pollitt, Barton & Blobel 2011).

- You should not include anything in your references or bibliography that you have not actually consulted. If you cannot gain access to a primary source you must make it clear in your citation that your knowledge of the work has been derived from a secondary text (for example, Bradshaw, D. Title of Book, discussed in Wilson, E., Title of Book (London, 2004), p. 189).
- You should not submit material which has been written for you even with the consent of the person who has written it.
- You must clearly acknowledge all assistance which has contributed to the production of your work.
- You must not submit work for assessment that you have already submitted (partially or in full) to fulfil the requirements of another degree course or examination. Where earlier work by you is citable, i.e. it has already been published, you must reference it clearly.

See also University of Oxford guide on plagiarism:

http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism

NB!
When paraphrasing an author applies to only one sentence, the punctuation should be placed after the reference:

(Robbins, 2008).

When paraphrasing an author applies to the whole paragraph, the punctuation should be placed before the reference:

. (Robbins, 2008)
Appendix A. Example of a title page

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Faculty of Social Sciences

School of Economics and Business Administration

Oliver Park

TEAM LEARNING IN A MATRIX ORGANIZATION

Research paper

Supervisor: prof. Urmas Varblane

Tartu 2016
Appendix B. Example of the other side of the title page (overleaf) of a Research paper

This paper conforms to the requirements for a Research paper

.............................................
(signature of the supervisor)

Admitted for defence ....................... (date)

I have written this Research paper independently. Any ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been fully referenced

..........................................................
(signature of the author and date)
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Appendix D. Example of List of References


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