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 aim 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 paper contains no plagiarism;
- the paper follows technical formalisation requirements set out in “Technical formatting of written assignments (Bachelor Programme of Business Administration)”;
- 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 requirements are presented in a separate document “Technical formatting of written assignments (Bachelor Programme of Business Administration)”.

2. Extended research plan

Writing a research paper begins by defining a research aim, research tasks and other relevant aspects of research in a form of extended research plan.

Extended research plan should be composed of the following parts:

- Title page
- Topicality of the subject. It should be explained, why this problem is important for you as researcher, but also for the society.
- Research gap. It should be explained, about which topic or aspect there is missing or insufficient information that your research paper is trying to fulfil or add new insights. For example, research gap might arise due to insufficient, contradictory or biased information from earlier studies.
- The aim of a research paper. 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 of the paper. Research tasks indicate the phases that are necessary to achieve this aim and these also represent the structure of your research. Research tasks should be presented as a bulleted list.
- Theoretical background and methodology. It should be explained, which theoretical approaches will be used in the research paper. Extended research plan should demonstrate that you have already read some pieces of relevant literature. It should contain viewpoints from the main sources you are going to use, and these need to be clearly referenced.
- Plans for empirical part. It should be explained, which method(s) will be used and which data is necessary to fulfil the research aim, 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 extended research plan.

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

Title page contains the following elements:

- Name of the university, name of the faculty, name of school
- First and last name of the author
- Title of the paper
- Type of work (Research Paper)
- Supervisor of the paper (together with position)
- Name of the place where the work is defended and year

   + Overleaf – the other side of the Title page with important signatures and dates

NB! Do not put the running head on the title page, but starting from page 2.

See an example of title page, overleaf and table of contents in appendices.
**Introduction.** Introduction should contain the same parts that you have in extended research plan. The length of introduction should be about 5-10% of the main part of the paper.

**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. Too many paragraphs and sections that are too long should be avoided. The headings of chapters should be numbered. 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.

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. The first part presents theoretical basis of the paper, which is based on literature. 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. Excessive use of single sources must be avoided; it is not acceptable to base a subchapter or several sequential pages on one source.

Plagiarism is not accepted; some rules and suggestions are given in a specific section about plagiarism.

The second part contains empirical research of the author based on selected research method. Empirical part must also contain a description of methodology: how the indicators are defined and measured, what data is used, which analysis methods are applied, etc. Empirical part ends with synthesis, which proposes a solution to the problems considered, gives a generalising assessment, proposes a prognosis etc.

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. Similarly to introduction, the length of conclusion should be 5-10% of the main part.

**4. 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. All the rules for referencing and citing along with examples are presented in the document “Technical formatting of written assignments (Bachelor Programme of Business Administration)”.

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, p. 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
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 2017
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)
### Appendix C. Example of Table of Contents

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