



My thesis (B.Sc., M.Sc.) at the Department of Agricultural Markets at the University of Hohenheim:

How does the supervision work?

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1. Possible supervisors:

Professor Dr. Sebastian Hess heads the department and is the first examiner in any case for formal reasons. The selection of a second examiner is made in coordination with the first examiner. External second examiners from companies or authorities are generally possible. Depending on the degree programme, different academic degrees may have the right to act as second examiners. In case of doubt, the regulations of the respective examination regulations are decisive.

In addition, one of the other academic staff members of the department can be assigned to you as a co-supervisor and contact person for methodological/content-related questions (on our homepage you can get an impression of which thematic and methodological focal points of the possible co-supervisors could fit your interests for a thesis). In any case, the selection and contact must be discussed with Prof. Hess in advance. Together, Mr. Hess and the co-supervisor will then form your support team.

For all questions about the general conditions of the thesis, please refer to the requirements of the respective examination regulations!

2. Schedule of the thesis:

2.1. Topic selection:

- A list of advertised topics can be found on the homepage: <https://marktlehre.uni-hohenheim.de/en/proposed-topics>
- Your own suggestions should be sent by email to Mr. Hess and/or potential co-supervisors.
- As a general rule, we supervise work that aligns with our areas of expertise, depending on our availability. There is no guarantee of supervision from us.
- We do not provide any other topics to choose from apart from the advertised topics.

2.2. Make an appointment for an initial meeting to narrow down the topic

During the lecture period, please contact Prof. Hess during the consultation hours **on Thursdays 14:00-16:00** (see homepage: <https://marktlehre.uni-hohenheim.de/en>); during the lecture-free period, please reach out to us via e-mail. Possible co-supervisors can be reached by e-mail to arrange an appointment (see homepage).

- If you decide to proceed with your thesis at the department after this initial interview, please send your working title and your contact details to our secretariat (Silke Wegst) within two weeks so that we can add you to the list of theses we supervise. In any case, please also include Mr. Hess and, if applicable, your co supervisor in this message.
- Without this confirmation on your part, we consider the topic not yet definitively assigned and may assign it to other interested parties.
- **In general, it is the responsibility of the students to initiate and organize all appointments with Mr. Hess and/or the co-supervisors.**

2.3. (Mini) Exposé or draft structure

Depending on the type of topic, the preparation of an exposé may be recommended. This is a ten-page document in which the work is planned precisely and is mainly used for master's theses. The exposé should be structured as follows:

1. Problem
2. Objective
3. Planned Methodological Approach
4. Material Used (e.g. database)
5. Schedule
6. Key literature

Of course, you are also welcome to write an exposé without being asked, e.g. to propose a topic for your thesis or to present your topic in the context of a cooperation with a company.

Optional, but Encouraged: Presentation and discussion of the exposé in the research seminar (Master): During the lecture period, every Wednesday 15:00-17:00 (only in English). Registration via the secretariat (Ms. Silke Wegst). Advantage: Trial run and provides additional suggestions for the execution of your work. No disadvantages; it is done in consultation with the supervisor.

As an alternative to an exposé, at least a mini-exposé/draft structure with a brief outline of the research project (approx. 1/2 page) and a planned structure of the thesis (bullet-point table of contents) should be written and sent to the supervision team (Mr. Hess & Co-Supervisor). This is then commented on in writing or orally. The draft structure should adhere to our guideline available at <https://marktlehre.uni-hohenheim.de/en/guidelines>. Subsequent deviations from the discussed draft structure may arise after consultation.

2.4. Registration of the thesis:

Once the topic has been determined and can probably be worked on in the desired form (e.g. with regard to data availability, surveys, etc.), the thesis must be registered by the student(s) with the Examination Office. For various reasons, it is not desirable to submit the application well before the end of the processing time, i.e. the time of registration should be made as early as possible in consultation with the supervisor.

2.5. Contact the second examiner

Talk to the supervisor of your thesis at an early stage regarding how you should involve your second examiner in the preparation of the thesis, if necessary.

2.6. Discussion on the planned methodology

You are encouraged to propose a methodological approach. In any case, however, the selection should be discussed with the supervisor.

2.7. If necessary, send a draft questionnaire...

... or code plans to the supervision team; preferably in Word format: The draft questionnaire will be commented on in writing. The code plan and questionnaire should always be discussed with us (possibly a second time). Please do not contact third parties (e.g. sending questionnaires, expert interviews, asking for data, etc.) without prior consultation with the supervision team.

2.8. Feedback on the progress of the empirical part of the thesis:

Unsolicited short and informal feedback (approx. 1-2 times) to the supervision team on the progress of the empirical part of the work; this can be done by e-mail, telephone or during office hours: response rate to the survey, are there difficulties, what steps are planned for evaluation...?

2.9. Submission of a presentation on the central results:

Unsolicited, please send a **preliminary presentation in max. 10 slides** outlining the central results of your work to the supervisor. This should be done early enough for changes to be possible, but late enough to identify reliable results. The presentation is also an important building block for your defence.

Please **do not** send any drafts of the written work to the supervision team ("Is that how it works?")! It is only a matter of discussing the central results on the basis of presentation slides, so that the red thread of the work is preserved. **The written draft is generally not pre-corrected.** The reason for this is as follows: Supervisors should grade the thesis and cannot be co-authors. Feedback on written drafts is difficult to distinguish from co-authorship. It would either be commented on in great detail, which would affect independence, or the comments would be superficial and therefore incomplete, which would ultimately be arbitrary. Therefore: Please do not send in any drafts of the thesis.

2.10. Submission of finished work:

Submit the finished thesis only electronically to the Examination Office. No paper form is desired.

2.11. Appointment for defence:

- Make an appointment for the defence with the secretariat (Ms. Silke Wegst) if the respective examination regulations of the degree programme require a defence. There is usually an appointment for this every month (usually on Fridays).
- Registration for a defence appointment can be made up to one week in advance at the latest. It is best to plan the defence appointment as early as possible, e.g. 1-2 months before submitting the thesis.
- There is no entitlement to a specific date.
- To prepare for your defence, please arrive in good time before **the start and ensure that the technical process runs smoothly independently and without being asked:** A laptop can be borrowed from the secretary's office if required, but this must be announced at least two weeks in advance. If you bring your own laptop, you must bring appropriate adapters (KIM loan possible) and try them out beforehand. It is not foreseen to send the

presentation slides in advance or to discuss the slides with the supervisor.

- Online defence is possible; please contact Ms. Wegst and fill out the appropriate consent form.
- The duration of a Bachelor's defence is a maximum of 30 minutes for presentation and discussion. The presentation should therefore not last longer than 15 minutes.
- The duration of a master defence is a maximum of 45 minutes, so that the presentation should not last longer than 20 minutes. Presentations should be rehearsed by the students beforehand to ensure a smooth and well-structured schedule.

3. Answers to important questions:

3.1. How often should I contact my supervisor?

Experience has shown that the aforementioned meetings provide a good compromise between supervised execution of the work and introduction to independent scientific work. There are no advantages to waiving the aforementioned meetings, as there should be agreement on the procedure from the supervisor's perspective. For minor questions, you can reach out to your co-supervisor at any time. If you have any basic questions, you should consult directly with both Mr. Hess and the co-supervisor, ideally in the context of a three-person meeting.

3.2. How is the grade for the written paper determined?

Note: Not all aspects apply to every work. Bachelor's theses may also involve solely literature review; in exceptional cases, this may also apply to a Master's thesis.

- How well are the research question, hypotheses, methods, results and conclusions connected?
- How demanding is the method used and/or the theory on which it is based?
- How concise and accurate is the empirical evaluation, for example measured against the quality of figures or tables developed by the author?
- How well does the cited literature fit the topic of the work?
- What is the diversity and quality of the cited sources?
- How innovative was the approach overall?
- What is the formal quality of the thesis in terms of spelling and grammar? Note: Arrange a proofreading of your thesis at least 1-2 weeks before submission. We must also evaluate minor formal errors accordingly.

A very good thesis is above average in most of the criteria mentioned and formally impeccable.

A good thesis is above average in some of the criteria mentioned. A satisfactory job is average overall in the criteria mentioned.

Sufficient work is below average in some aspects.

Common reasons for failing the thesis: plagiarism; too superficial treatment of the topic; serious errors in the implementation.

3.3. Is there a plagiarism check?

Supervised students agree that their work is checked for plagiarism using software. If plagiarism is detected, the thesis will not be accepted, and a defence no longer takes place.

3.4. How is the grade for the presentation calculated?

- A successful defence has the following characteristics:
- Fluent and engaging presentation that elaborates on the scientific and social significance of the research question.
- The objective of the work should be clear.
- Own research / important own results are presented as the result of a scientific approach.
- High quality of graphical illustrations and tables, correct notation of equations, etc.
- Conclusions based on the results and objectives.
- Outlook on future research based on the state of research
- If necessary, references to literature also in the presentation (e.g. "Use of the method according to XX (Xy, 2018)").
- Precise answers to the questions during the discussion.

3.5. "How long should the work be?"

- There are no set maximum or minimum lengths. The structure is decisive: Write everything that is necessary to address the research question and understand your approach, but nothing more.
- Document questionnaires, programming code, transcripts or additional results in an attachment to the work.
- Experience has shown that bachelor's theses result in about 25-40 pages of text (without attachments) and master's theses 50-80 pages. However, this is only a guideline!
- Some students write lengthy and detailed in the first chapters of the thesis by gathering a particularly large number of facts on the topic, and sometimes run the risk of losing the focus. Therefore, keep in mind that the focus should be on your own work on the research question and always ask yourself whether the information provided is directly related to your research question. The focus of your work should be the description of your methodology and an informative but compact presentation of your results and their interpretation/discussion. Plan enough space for these chapters and review on your methodology comprehensively, e.g. by consulting textbooks.

3.6. Writer's block

"I haven't made any progress in my work for a long time or haven't been able to work on it. Do I have to report to the supervisor?"

The schedule is entirely up to the students. They do not need to give us an account. As long as we do not hear from you, we assume that you are satisfied with the progress. However, if you have any difficulties or need advice or feedback, we will of course be happy to help you.

"I somehow can't manage to write my thesis, even though I have ideas."

You are not alone. The causes can be manifold. Often, but not always, it can help to deal with the phenomenon of procrastination:

<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/procrastination/>

<https://www.thephdproofreaders.com/increase-your-productivity/phd-thesis-procrastination/>

Challenges in organizing and carrying out one's own work are just as much a part of a thesis as the actual content. Therefore, involve your support team in these questions if necessary and get tips or make arrangements for regular feedback.

Sometimes it is helpful to remind yourself of your own objectives: What do you want to find out?

When planning and carrying out the work, consider using mind maps if possible. Break down the overall project "thesis" into the smallest possible steps. It is better to work on your work for a short time every day than at too long intervals!

3.7. Literature research

"There seems to be no literature on my topic."

If someone had already written your thesis, we wouldn't assign the topic. The search for suitable literature should first be carried out broadly and generally.

Example: Your topic is "Agriculture on the Moon". Your search in the university library's catalog for "agriculture AND moon" may have yielded zero hits, which should come as no surprise. Instead, you should search for "life on the moon", "settlement of hostile environment", "agriculture under glass", etc.

Save interesting literature and possibly work with a program for managing references (Citavi, Zotero, Endnote, etc.).

You can find tips in our guide and on the website under "Effective Literature Research":

<https://marktlehre.uni-hohenheim.de/en/guidelines>

