

# B15-NOR Bachelor Thesis Guidelines

## WHY...

This paper is required in order to complete your degree. It is a chance to use and demonstrate some of the knowledge, skills and understanding that you have acquired during your studies. The point of the bachelor paper is to demonstrate your ability to:

- work independently
- identify a relevant issue/topic
- source relevant literature (theory as well as empirical data)
- critically analyze your topic and present your findings

A bachelor thesis is similar to an extended essay/term paper, based upon a literature and desk study.

## WHAT...

### The contents

Different disciplines have varying ways of constructing academic texts, with the main differences relating to quantitative vs qualitative, and social vs natural sciences. Depending on your supervisor and topic, you may be asked to do things in a way that differs slightly from this outline. Since development studies at Noragric focus on the problematisation of issues, this basic structure has relevance for all bachelor theses. (N.b. The following are elements of the thesis, not chapter headings.)

- 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 (theoretical) literature, 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 also be useful to present, and briefly define, some **key concepts** that will be used 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/or discussion. These examples can either be taken from academic literature or from other sources (newspapers, internet, etc.). Features of case(s) that are relevant to your topic and analysis are presented.
- IV. *Discussion/analysis*. This is the central part of the thesis where you argue your main point(s). This is done using the concepts presented in II as analytical tools, to discuss the empirical materials presented in III. Different concepts, interpretations, approaches and comparisons may be discussed.

Parts III and IV can be merged, such that one aspect of the empirical materials is presented and discussed, followed by the next empirical aspect, and so on.

- V. *Conclusion*. Summarize the key points made in IV. How do your findings relate to the objective (research question) of the paper?

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

Refer to the [NMBU Library guide](http://www.nmbu.no/en/about-nmbu/library/endnote-refman-refworks/citing-literature-and-making-reference-lists)<sup>1</sup> on citing literature and making reference lists.

## **The finished product: formal requirements**

### **The paper must comply with the following:**

- The text must be between 7000 and 10 000 words *including* references
- Line spacing 1.5, font size 12, margins 2.5 cm
- The cover page should include *all* of and *only* the following:
  - Title of dissertation
  - Name of author
  - Name of institution (Noragric/NMBU)
  - Term (Spring/Autumn + year)

The NMBU cover and back page templates are available for [download](#)<sup>2</sup>.

### **Submission:**

Your thesis must be posted in Fronter by 15 May or 15 December, depending on which semester you are signed up for delivery. Your paper will then be graded by one internal and one external examiner.

## **HOW...**

Those students who took the writing course will know how to structure a paper; the thesis follows the same structure:

- Choose a topic from the supplied list of '*perspectives*'.
- Contact your allocated supervisor. Note that it is your responsibility to make contact with your supervisor.
- Source and read relevant literature. Discuss with your supervisor, and develop a research question. The thesis statement is the core point you want to make in your text. The research question specifies exactly which issue you are addressing.
- Develop an outline based on the research question and your readings.
- Develop this outline into the body of your thesis.

## **SUPERVISION AND EXAMINATION...**

The supervisor is there to help you stay on track with your thesis. There are several common pitfalls in thesis-writing: your topic or research question may turn out to be unfeasible, the literature you find may be of limited relevance or you may have missed central references; you may lose focus in your analysis or your writing. Supervision time is stipulated to 15 hours, plus grading (5 hours).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nmbu.no/en/about-nmbu/library/endnote-refman-refworks/citing-literature-and-making-reference-lists>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nmbu.no/en/students/sit/forms>

## **Deadlines**

February / September – Deadline for handing in supervision contract

1 April / 1 November – Deadline for withdrawal

15 May / 15 December – Submission in Fronter

## **And...**

Use the Noragric library - it is an excellent source of information and literature, and of help with referencing.

Use the writing center – it can be a great help with the writing process. Go to their group meetings. It may seem like extra work but can save a lot of labour and frustration.

Read, think and write in a continuous process, little by little. Try to keep it fun, not just a chore or a source of stress. Good luck!