

Syllabus – Master Thesis Seminar (Last Update: September 2024)

Code	995MATSMTSS19 (284.002) (summer term) 990THESMTSS21 (284.003) (winter term)
Title	Master Thesis Seminar
Type	SE
Lecturer(s)	Univ.-Prof. Dr. Robert Breitenecker , Institute of Innovation Management, robert.breitenecker@jku.at , +43 732 2468 4430
Weekly hours	2
Number of ECTS credits	1

Course Content including Goals

The seminar is designed to provide theoretical and methodological support to students developing and writing their Master's thesis. The subject domains of the seminar focus on management phenomena that are of particular interest to students and relate to different aspects of management taught in the program (methodological and theoretical).

The course teaches students important research and writing skills and supports them in the development of their Master's thesis based on detailed feedback from the course instructor and fellow students. The basic aim is to define the topic of the Master's thesis and to find a suitable supervisor as well as to clarify specific questions about the formalities of the Master's thesis.

The Master's thesis should demonstrate that the graduate is able to carry out scientific work systematically and independently. The Master's thesis should therefore be an independent piece of research with a scientific approach that uses theoretical foundations, takes up current theoretical debates, solves relevant practical problems, and ideally conducts empirical research. It follows the usual academic pattern of identifying a topic arising from a gap in the literature or a relevant practical business problem and selecting an empirical methodology to investigate this area in depth. Students thus hone their research skills - and the 'meta-skills' to better understand research articles and academic projects and to be able to assess their quality.

Course Objectives

This course aims to:

- Enable students to develop a robust line of argumentation
- Equip students with academic writing skills
- Introduce complex academic content to students
- Enhance and strengthen students' skills to craft a literature review
- Direct students to identify and discuss appropriate theories related to the phenomenon under study
- Qualify students to derive a conceptual framework based on theories and literature
- Empower students to develop and justify a methodology applicable to investigate the phenomenon
- Facilitate students with appropriate qualitative and quantitative analysis methods
- Capacitate students to distill key implications of the key findings for theory and practice
- Enable students to critically reflect on the limitations of the research process and develop an agenda for further research
- Enable students to give constructive and critical research-related feedback to peers

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this course, the students will be able to:

- LO1: Critically analyze, evaluate, and conduct original management-related research. [subject knowledge – intellectual skills – cognitive and transferable skills]
- LO2: Demonstrate the ability to select, define, and focus upon a management issue at an appropriate level. [subject knowledge – cognitive and transferable skills]
- LO3: Develop and apply relevant and sound methodologies within their research. [subject knowledge – cognitive and transferable skills]
- LO4: Analyze qualitative and quantitative data (for empirical thesis only) [subject knowledge – cognitive and transferable skills]
- LO5: Develop managerial recommendations and logical conclusions based on their research findings. [subject knowledge – practical skills]
- LO6: Identify and demonstrate limitations of their undertaken research work. [subject knowledge – intellectual skills – cognitive and transferable skills]
- LO7: Demonstrate and discuss any ethical dilemmas that arise in their research. [subject knowledge – cognitive and transferable skills]
- LO8: Utilize and enhance their analytical skills as future management professionals. [subject knowledge – practical skills]

Methods of Teaching and Learning

The course follows an application-based pedagogical approach by including:

- Interaction
- Individual presentations
- Group discussions
- Feedback.

The teaching and learning strategy is designed to develop the student's ability to conduct and report independent research. Students will learn by presenting their research topics, discussing research approaches, and giving and receiving constructive feedback from other students in the seminar. The course design encourages self-reflection and critical thinking among students by offering a trusting and open environment that promotes open and critical discussions about research content theoretical reasoning and research methodology. From a subject point of view, it builds on the other management modules in the program, allowing students to gain experience in applying some of the principles and methods learned by following strong ethical conduct.

Presentations and discussions on aspects of academic writing and good and bad practices of scientific research based on students' presentations are the main teaching concepts applied in this course. Discussions on current challenges in the writing and research process help students proceed with their Master's thesis.

By presenting the Master's thesis in short presentations, students are forced to focus on the core aspects of their work. Students are expected to prepare two presentations:

- **Concept presentation** (max. 10 minutes, no more than 5 slides): The first presentation deals with the initial idea of the Master's thesis project. The student will explain the research-based motivation for the topic, the first results from their literature search, and the ideas about the empirical methodology. In addition, they have to present an expected time plan.
- **Results presentation** (max. 15 minutes): Students present the key results of their Master's thesis project. The presentation should be scheduled in the later stages of the research process.

The thesis has not to be completed but the main results should be ready to present. The focus of this presentation is on the findings from literature research and empirical research as well as methodology, conclusion, implications, and limitations.

Students are expected to participate actively in the discussions:

- **Receiving feedback:** After each presentation, an open discussion about structure, theoretical framework, literature base, research methods planned/applied, (preliminary) findings, conclusion, limitation, and implications will take place. Students receive feedback from the course instructors and peers and are encouraged to answer and respond to questions and critical points professionally.

Students are expected to integrate feedback from the discussions into their thesis drafts. In addition, they are expected to be in close contact with their respective supervisors to report and discuss the received feedback.

- **Giving feedback:** Students listening to other students' presentations are encouraged to raise questions and give positive and critical feedback to their peers.

Assessment Strategy

The assessment focuses on the two oral presentations reflecting different stages of the writing and research process and the overall performance in the discussions during the seminar. Students must complete three assignments in this seminar:

- **Master's thesis concept presentation (30%):** An oral presentation of the master thesis concept including the topic (working title of your thesis), the motivation and problem statement (why is the topic important?), the research question(s) (what is the goal/expected outcome?), the theoretical framework (what is already known about the problem? Which literature is appropriate? What are the key references?), the planned methodological approach (which empirical approaches apply to sample, to collect, and to analyze data?), the structure of the thesis (table of contents) and the expected timeline of conducting the master thesis.
- **Master's thesis result presentation (60%):** An oral presentation of the nearly finalized master thesis including the topic (title of your thesis), the structure of the thesis (table of contents), the research-based motivation, and problem statement (why is the topic important?), the research question(s) (what is the goal/expected outcome?), the theoretical framework (what is already known about the problem? Which literature is appropriate? What are the key findings from the literature research?), the chosen methodological approach (which empirical approaches to sample, to collect, and to analyze data?), and the core findings/results from the empirical part discussed against the background of the literature review.
- **Giving Feedback (10%):** Each presentation is followed by a group discussion and constructive feedback. The performance in the discussions (active and constructive participation during the seminar) will be integrated into the final grade).

Units of assessments or combinations of those can include the following:

Presentation on

- The research topic and questions, including their practical relevance, research gap, literature review
- Theoretical underpinning, research model/hypotheses/propositions, proposed methodology
- (Empirical) results, discussion, theoretical and practical implications, outlook, and limitations

A combined (weighted) grade will be assigned (scale 1-5). Failure to complete either assignment will result in a failing grade for the entire course.

Study and Reading Material

This course is primarily focused on the development of the master thesis. There is no core reading for this seminar as each Master's thesis topic is an individual research project. The instructor will provide or refer to appropriate literature to assist students in their writing process and research activities during seminar sessions. However, students will find supporting material and literature on scientific writing and empirical research in the related Moodle course.

Themes / Timeline

Please check our Moodle page for the current dates. All courses take place online without exception. You will also find the corresponding Zoom link on Moodle.

**For quality assurance and improvement purposes, please participate in all
JKU course evaluations and surveys!**