

Guidelines for Students regarding academic theses and papers (i.e., Seminar Paper, Bachelor's Thesis, Master's Thesis) at the Chair of Information Systems II (Prof. Dr. Jens Förderer)

Version: November, 2025

This document outlines the guidelines for students regarding academic theses and papers (i.e., seminar paper, bachelor's thesis, master's thesis) at the Chair of Information Systems II (Prof. Dr. Jens Förderer).

Written reports

Written reports, such as theses or papers, are a central form of scientific communication. They should document the research problem, related literature, describe the method, outline the results, and discuss the findings. Moreover, they should present a coherent argument and original insight, all within the conventions of scientific writing.

You must use the Microsoft Word template provided by the Chair for preparing your thesis. Violations of the formatting requirements will result in grade deductions.

The thesis must be written in English.

The word count for a seminar paper must be between 6.000 – 8.000 words; for a bachelor thesis between 10.000 – 12.000 words; for a master thesis between 20.000 – 22.000 words. The word count does not include the bibliography, tables, the cover page, the affidavit, and the table of contents.

Presentations

Presentations are an important form of communication for scientific work. They should demonstrate understanding of the topic and the ability to communicate research effectively within a limited time frame.

You are required to use the Microsoft PowerPoint template provided by the Chair for preparing your presentation. Violations of the formatting requirements will result in grade deductions. Ensure that your presentation includes a title slide, agenda, and is organized logically.

Presentations should be delivered freely – avoid reading from scripts or slides.

Seminar papers must be presented on the seminar's presentation day. The date of the presentation day is communicated to seminar participants at the start of the course.

Bachelor's and master's theses students are required to give an intermediate presentation. Date for the intermediate presentation is available in the corresponding ILIAS group.

Citations and bibliography

The thesis and presentation must make unambiguously clear which parts are your own ideas and which parts repeat ideas of others. Ideas of others must be indicated through citation in-text and every citation must be verifiable. Only general knowledge or commonly accepted facts are exempted from this requirement. Violations (i.e., plagiarism) will result in grade deductions or failing the thesis, depending on the extent. All theses are subject to automated plagiarism checks.

In-text citations must be indicated by the author's last name and year of publication, e.g., (Schneider 1977) or Schneider (1977).

The bibliography must contain the bibliographical information for all in-text citations. The bibliographical information must adhere to the [INFORMS reference style](#).

The bibliography must be arranged alphabetically by author name. If several works by the same author are used, they are sorted according to the year of publication, starting with the oldest work. If several works by the same author from the same year are used, lower-case letters starting with "a" are inserted after the year.

Figures and tables require attribution of authorship. Figures and tables developed by the author should be labeled with the addition "own presentation". Do not copy and paste figures from the Internet without ensuring you have the legal right to use them. Many images online are protected by copyright law. If figures and tables are presented in a modified form, the original source must be highlighted by adding the phrase "based on".

Footnotes are not to be used for referencing literature. They are only supposed to provide additional information. Footnotes are placed at the bottom of each page (not at the end of the thesis).

Replication package

A fundamental component of the scientific method is replication, namely that the validity of the results can be reproduced by other researchers. Any quantitative empirical thesis must provide a replication package that contains the data, programs or scripts, and documentation sufficient to permit replication. In particular, the replication package should contain the full dataset as well as the code (e.g., R or Stata) to reproduce all tables and figures in the thesis. The code must be sufficiently documented to permit replication. The documentation must include a data dictionary, which defines the variables listed in the dataset, and an explanation for what part of the code

relates to which table. Qualitative theses must submit the transcripts of the interviews and the questionnaire.

Use of AI assistants (e.g., ChatGPT)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) assistants for text generation (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft 365 Copilot or comparable tools) – in the following referred to as AI assistants – can significantly aid in scientific work. However, their use in a university setting is subject to specific conditions.

The use of AI assistants is subject to the following conditions:

- **Responsibility**: You are accountable for the content you submit, regardless if this content was provided by an AI assistant or not.
- **Reference**: AI assistants cannot serve as scientific reference or source, nor be cited. Any claim in your work must be backed by credible scientific sources.
- **Original work**: Pasting content from AI assistants directly into your thesis is prohibited. AI assistants are a good starting point for idea generation and to aid in understanding topics, but they cannot serve as a source of original ideas. Note that pasting and rephrasing considerable amounts of text from an AI assistant violates the *independent thinking and reasoning* requirement for seminar papers and theses, and is therefore not permitted. Your work must demonstrate independent thinking and reasoning.
- **Disclosure**: You must declare AI assistant use in your work. This requirement is now included in the statutory declaration for academic work. If you used AI tools for your work, your thesis must declare which assistant(s) was used, for what purpose, and in which sections.
- **Academic Misconduct**: Failure to adhere to these guidelines will be considered academic misconduct, which is subject to sanctions under the examination regulations.

Please note that any AI assistant use must be compliant with the regulations of the University of Mannheim as well as the law (e.g., General Data Protection Regulation).

Submission

Your submission must include the thesis (PDF) and the signed declaration of authorship form. In addition, you must submit an anonymized version of your thesis as a Microsoft Word file. In case of an empirical thesis, you must submit a replication package (see corresponding section in this document).

- 1) Send your submission to is2@bwl.uni-mannheim.de. Your submission must be received by the Chair of Information Systems II before the submission deadline. We will confirm the receipt of the thesis within one business day.
- 2) Your thesis must also be submitted in printed form directly to the chair before the deadline (one-sided; adhesive binding ("Klebebindung") either as softcover or hardcover). Please refer to your respective examination regulations for the number of copies to be submitted.

— Failure to meet this requirement may result in your thesis not being accepted.