

# MBA THESIS GUIDELINES



**SSM**  
*Swiss School of Management*

# SSM MBA THESIS GUIDELINE

## I. Introduction

Congratulations! You are almost through your MBA Program. The last part of the MBA program is concerned with your Business Plan / thesis. That is a written thesis of approximately **12,000** words which provides details of individual research into an agreed management argument.

Your thesis will need to contain an **abstract** which is an executive summary as well as more detailed information relating to the study undertaken.

The thesis will enable you to undertake an enquiry in an area of your choice. It will require you to **identify an appropriate management issue, undertake adequate background research, apply theoretical knowledge in a practical situation and propose realistic solutions to the problems identified.**

If you have opted to write a business plan rather than a thesis is must meet the following guidelines:

A business plan can be for a Start up or a Scale up

Must clearly state and in complete details; explains the following:

- what is the business all about (industry)
- what are the goals of the business
- how will these goals be achieved and what tools will be used
- environment scan (competition, location, pricing structure etc)
- sound financial plan (Cash Flow, Balance Sheet, Projected ROI, Income Statement etc)
- integrated marketing communication/ plan
- complete and sound financial plan
- exit plan

3. Must use Business Canvas, Lean Canvas etc.

Must present a management or marketing theory that fits the business

Will be defended just like a theoretical MBA thesis

The thesis/business plan requirement provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and competencies that you acquired during the course, to identify management/business problems, formulate and evaluate solutions and produce realistic, acceptable recommendations for actions.

## Learning objectives

The thesis provides an opportunity for you to:

- Demonstrate the application of conceptual knowledge to solve problems in different workplace scenarios
- Explain the correlation between theoretical and operational frameworks
- Demonstrate ability to carry our independent academic work
- Asses the strengths and weaknesses of your own research work
- Deliver an effective thesis presentation to a panel of experts

## Most Frequently asked Questions:

1. **Q: What is the projected word count of my thesis / business plan?**  
A: About 12,000 words +/- 10%.
2. **Q: Does my thesis / business plan need to be an original piece of work?**  
A: YES. See your course handbook for further details on academic honesty.
3. **Q: Must my thesis / business plan include new empirical research?**  
A: No, not necessarily. If you wish you may reassess previous research data on your chosen topic.
4. **Q: What subjects are allowed?**  
A: Broadly any area related to your chosen specialization.
5. **Q: Do I need to identify a topic of my thesis by myself?**  
A: Yes, or ask for help from your professors.
7. **Q: What happens if I fail?**  
A: Depending upon the circumstances the faculty board may give you an opportunity to resubmit an improved version of the thesis.

## II. Your research

The MBA research requires **analysis** including **explanations, relationships, comparisons, predictions, generalizations and if possible, theory formulations**. An appropriate research question needs to be formulated first followed by the examination of existing theories, concepts and literature, the use of appropriate methodology for useful information gathering.

### Your research topic

In choosing an appropriate topic you need to consider identifying a subject that is specifically interesting to you and relevant to the development of your skills as a manager.

You also need to decide what your career goal is after you graduate. Then decide which topics might give you a comparative advantage in getting your ideal career and proceed to research them (Library, the Internet, with faculty, with contacts etc.) If you already have a job and just need a project to graduate ask your new employer what interesting questions there are and decide what you are good at - e.g. statistical analysis, interviewing, etc.

However before selecting the topic you should take into consideration:

- The availability of information
- Your time
- Your capabilities and interests
- The deadline for the submission

Once you have found your general area of interest and have done preliminary investigation of the subject you need to formulate a **specific research question**.

## **Your research objectives**

Your research objectives should be derived from the overall research question. They need to address the **specific** areas of the research question that you will explore based on your understanding of the theory and the access to an organization if you have chosen one as a case study.

## **III. Phases in writing the thesis**

- ABSTRACT
- ACKNOWLEDGMENT
- LIST OF FIGURES
- LIST OF GRAPHS

MBA Thesis Format

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF GRAPHS

## **III. Chapter Guidelines:**

### **Chapter I : INTRODUCTION**

1. Background of the study
  2. Rationale
  3. Definition of Concepts
  4. Hypotheses
  5. Statement of the problem
  6. Objectives
  7. Scope and Limitation
  8. Significance of the Study
- Chapter Synthesis

### **Chapter II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Topic

Sub Topic 1

Sub Topic 2

Topic 2

Sub topic 1

Sub Topic 2

Chapter Synthesis

### **Chapter III: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

1. Theoretical Framework
2. Operational Framework
3. Definition of Terms

Chapter Synthesis

### **Chapter IV: METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

1. Research Design
2. Data Gathering Procedure
3. Data Analysis Guide

Chapter Synthesis

### **Chapter V: DATA PRESENTATION**

Topic 1:

Sub Topic 1

Sub Topic 2  
Topic 2  
Sub Topic 1  
Sub Topic 2  
Chapter Synthesis

## **Chapter VI: FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS**

1. Specific Findings  
2. Hypothesis  
3. Research Objectives  
4. General Findings  
Chapter Synthesis

## **\*Chapter VII: RECOMMENDATIONS**

Chapter Synthesis

## **\*Chapter VIII: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Chapter Synthesis  
Bibliography  
Appendices

\* Can be merge into one chapter

## **IV. Format of the thesis**

The thesis **must** be typed using **Times New Roman no 12, line spacing of 2** should be used except for quotations where single spacing is recommended, all pages must be (centrally) numbered, and it has to be bound. Plain paper A4 size (210x297mm) of good quality and of sufficient opacity must be used. Margins at the binding edge must NOT BE LESS than 40 mm (1.5 in) and all other margins NOT LESS than 25 mm (1 in).

### **1. Spelling**

Spelling in accordance with either the Oxford English Dictionary or American usage can be used as long as use of one or other source is consistent throughout the thesis.

### **2. Punctuation and abbreviations**

Punctuation should be used according to conventional orthography and strictly according to sense. Single rather than double quotation marks should be used. Commas should not be used in numerical quantities. The decimal point should always be indicated by a stop rather than comma. Abbreviations should be avoided except where their usage is common (e.g. UK, USA, etc.). Where their entry is unavoidable or even desirable, the first appearance should be spelt out in full and in parenthesis as thus:.....' such recommendations having been suggested by the World Health Organization (WHO)' Commonly used abbreviations such as 'e.g. and 'n.b' should always appear in the lower case.

### **3. Tables and Figures**

Tables and figures should appear as soon as possible after they are first mentioned in the text and should be numbered consecutively. Tables should not be designated as figures and they should be numbered quite separately from other illustrative material. Only horizontal rules will normally be necessary and these should be typed. The title of the table should be typed with initial capitals and lower case lettering ABOVE the tables, like so:

Table 6: Sensitivity of costs of variation in discount rate.

## V. Style

### 1. Mathematics

Mathematical expressions should be clearly separated from each other and from the preceding and following text. They may be numbered for reference by figures in parenthesis, typed flush with the right-hand margin. Great care must be taken in the typing or writing of mathematical equations, particularly in the correct positioning of subscripts and superscripts and in the alignment of the various parts of an expression. Letters used as mathematical symbols may be typed in italic facilities are available, Greek letters may also be typed if facilities are available, otherwise they should be written by hand using black ink, matched as closely as possible to the usual printed version.

### 2. Quantities

The commas should not be used in numerical quantities. If there are four digits, they should be typed close up: where there are more than four, space should be left between each set of three i.e. 3000 not 3,000; 3 000 000 not 3,000,000. Show the decimal point as a full point, and not a comma. Unless accompanied by a unit, numbers from one to ten are usually spelt out in full.

### 3. Use of Capital Letters

The use of capital letters in the text should be kept to the absolute minimum, restricted to identification of proper nouns and trade names or in use of common abbreviations. They should also be used when referring to figures and tables in the text, e.g. Fig 1., Tab 1., Tab 2.

### 4. Headings

Main chapters should be numbered from 1 onwards. Subheadings should follow the same order, e.g. 1.1,1.2.

### 5. References

The references should list all works consulted by the student in alphabetical order by name of principal or first name author. Thereafter, the work shall be identified by the year of publication, title, edition (if relevant),place of publication, publisher, volume number and page references.

#### Examples:

##### Books:

Naresh, K. M. and Birks, D. F. (2003) Marketing Research: An Applied Approach. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited.

##### Journals:

Niedermeier, P. L. (2003) 'The New Marketing Model', Journal of Services Marketing. Vol 8, No 3, pp 178-201.

### 6. Appendices

Lengthy derivations, experimental results, computer programs, exhibits etc. should be placed in appendices identified in serial order by Roman numerals, e.g. Appendix I, Appendix II, Appendix X.

**VI. Structure of the thesis**  
**OFFICIAL TITLE PAGE**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Business Administration

Presented to the

**Swiss School of Management**



“Title of Final Paper“

by

**John Smith**

Supervisor:     Name, Name  
Reviewer:       Name, Name  
Reviewer:       Name, Name

Month Year, City

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City, 2021

John Smith

## **LAST PAGE OF THE MANUSCRIPT**

### **Declaration of Authorship**

I, (name of author), hereby declare that this dissertation/thesis entitled: “title of the thesis”

and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I declare that I have authored this thesis independently, that I have not used other than the declared sources/resources, and that I have explicitly marked all material which has been quoted either literally or by content from the used sources. According to my knowledge, the content or parts of this thesis have not been presented to any other examination authority and have not been published. Where any part of this dissertation has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this university or any other institution, this has been clearly stated. Where I have used or consulted the published work



of others, this is always clearly attributed. Where I have quoted from the works of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this dissertation is entirely my own work.

Place, Date:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

