

# Bachelor Thesis in International Trade

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## 1 Rules of the game

Would you like to write your Bachelor Thesis in the field of International Trade? Please follow the **central ILIAS registration procedure**, giving us preference no. 1. For more information about this procedure, click here. Once you are allocated to the International Trade Group, we survey your previous knowledge and skills, and ask you about your preferences regarding broad topic areas as well as the starting date. We then invite you to a personal meeting to clarify the remaining questions and to provide you with the topic (including a short description, key references, and relevant data sets). Note that the date of this meeting is the starting date of your Bachelor Thesis, so bring the registration form to this meeting (click here).

The completion time for the Bachelor Thesis is 8 weeks. We expect about **40 pages** of text ( $\pm 10\%$ ), including tables and graphs, as a PDF (no hard copy required), as well as a **replication package** with data and structured and commented code.

General information about duration, title changes, registration, submitting, etc. can be found under <https://www.uni-hohenheim.de/en/examinations-office-final-thesis>.

## 2 Overall Goals of a Bachelor Thesis

A Bachelor thesis is an academic project that aims to:

- **Demonstrate independent research skills:** Show your ability to research, analyze, and critically evaluate a specific topic within your field.
- **Develop analytical thinking:** The thesis encourages you to think critically and logically, developing a coherent argument supported by data and evidence. You show your ability to understand complex issues and present them in a comprehensible way.
- **Apply theoretical knowledge:** It offers the opportunity to apply the concepts, theories, and frameworks you've learned during your studies to a practical research question.
- **Contribute to the field:** While a Bachelor thesis does not have to present groundbreaking research, it should add value by exploring a topic in-depth and offering new insights or perspectives.
- **Prepare for professional life:** Through the process, you develop important skills such as project management, time organization, academic writing, and data analysis, which are valuable in both academic and professional settings.

### 3 Specific Goals of a Bachelor Thesis in International Trade

A Bachelor Thesis in International Trade is based on

- Concepts, theories, and frameworks explained in the course **International Trade**,
- Your skills in setting up a small academic project in the area of International Trade and your academic writing skills developed in the **Project Seminar Topics in International Economics**, and, ideally,
- Empirical tools to describe and interpret trade patterns in a theory-consistent way practiced in the course **Empirical Trade Data Analysis** (Module: Science and Research Practice). If you write your Bachelor Thesis in the summer term, you may want to attend a couple of sessions of this course first and then to start with your thesis.

We expect you to

- Understand and refer to **1-2 academic papers** we provide in the topic description,
- Manage trade **data sets using R or Stata**, and to
- **Describe and interpret trade patterns** in a **theory-consistent** and **reproducible** way.

What are the benefits of empirical skills in the analysis of trade data:

- They are important to inform decision makers in **internationally operating companies** or **industry associations**, as well as inform decision makers at **national** and **supranational** levels.
- They also form the basis for more sophisticated methods conveyed in a **Master's program**.

**Note:** We also supervise Bachelor Theses in the area of General Economics (“Allgemeine Volkswirtschaftslehre”). In this case, we do not expect you to link your empirical results to the concepts, theories, and frameworks explained in the course International Trade, but only to the concept of comparative advantage as explained in the course Introduction to Business Administration and Economics (“Einführung in die Wirtschaftswissenschaften”).

## 4 Guidelines to Academic Writing

For a guide on academic writing, we refer you to Writing a Research Paper with Citavi (although we don't expect you to manage your references).

You may want to use generative AI systems (e.g., for writing and coding), but you are responsible for what you deliver, and you have to declare its use (in addition to the declaration of originality); see <https://www.uni-hohenheim.de/en/use-of-generative-ai-in-exams>.

### 4.1 Editing and style

This document contains the guidelines for writing a Bachelor thesis under our supervision. It is not exhaustive, but sums up the general rules and points out the most important issues.

- **Text processing**

You can use any text editing software. Make sure, however, that mathematical terms appear in an appealing manner. If you work with Word, use the formula editor. Suggestion: Font size: 12pt, Alignment: justified, Line spacing: 1.5.

- **Language**

Students have to make sure that their linguistic skills are sufficient to convey the messages of their thesis. Please always use the spell checks offered by your software.

- **Length**

The thesis has to contain a comprehensive treatment of all relevant issues.

We expect 40 pages  $\pm$  10% (first page of the intro to the last page of the conclusion).

#### Useful suggestions

**Do's:**

- Make sure that the appearance of your thesis is similar to a scientific article.
- Use consistent style and formatting throughout your thesis.
- Present your arguments in a logical order. Each step should build on the previous one.
- Avoid abbreviations. In any case, introduce abbreviations when you **use them the first time**.
- Orthography, grammar, and style are taken into account.
- Produce notes for all figures and tables that contain the data source(s) and explain the variables and abbreviations displayed.

**Don'ts**

- Do not use too many footnotes (reduce to a minimum).
- Do not assume that your reader knows the context
- Do not bother the reader with anything s/he does not need to know to understand the main result, before you present the main results.
- Do not show too many figures, but try to visualize your message with few graphs.

A good grade crucially hinges on the overall impression of the grading team that you have understood the economics of the argument!

## 4.2 The structure of your thesis

- **Title & Abstract**

- Title: Concise, topic-relevant summary.
- Abstract: The abstract is a stand-alone concise summary that is used as a screening device for researchers and/or as a preview for readers. Usually it has roughly 100 words summarizing the research problem, methods, and main conclusion.  
Keep it as simple as possible and focus on your central result! Avoid citations, acronyms or equations and don't repeat the title.

- **Table of contents**

Number headings in the Table of Contents and the Text identically. Use Arabic numbers to number sections.

- **Table of tables**

List all Tables (if more than 3) with number and heading. Use Arabic numbers to number Tables.

- **Table of figures**

List all Figures (if more than 3) with number and heading. Use Arabic numbers to number Figures. Try to show your results **compactly** with figures!

- **Introduction**

At best, start with what you do: The one central novel contribution. Motivate your research question briefly and describe your research design (briefly), summarize your main findings (briefly), also briefly and critically review the literature (summarize 'what we know'). Do **not** make subsections. The last paragraph of the introduction typically explains the structure of the thesis, like a roadmap.

- **Methodology**

- Research design: State and explain what you do. Which descriptive tools do you implement? Which model do you use? Do you use an estimation model? What are your assumptions?
- Data: Describe the name of the datasets, sources, unit of observations, structure! How do you define your estimation sample(s)? What are the variables of primary interest? Discuss limitations of data! Provide descriptive statistics (maybe in Appendix).
- Formulas: Show the formulas correctly and try to apply them on your topic. Explain **all** the variables and the most important mechanisms.

Number important equations and use these numbers to indicate cross-references for the reader. For analytical results, clearly state the economic intuition / mechanism.

- **Results**

Present findings using text, tables, or graphs. What are your main results? Compare them to the existing literature!

- **Discussion and/or Conclusion**

Interpret results, compare them with existing studies, and mention limitations. Summarize findings, state implications, and suggest areas for future research.

- **References**

- List all (but not more) publications that are cited in your paper alphabetically (all journal articles, books, and working papers in one list). Here are some examples for journal articles, books and working papers:

**Journal article:**

Grossman, G. M., and E. Rossi-Hansberg (2008). Trading Tasks: A Simple Theory of Offshoring. *American Economic Review* 98(5): 1978–1997.

**Book contribution:**

Docquier, F., and A. Marfouk (2006). International Migration by Education Attainment, 1990–2000. In: C. Ozden and M. Schiff (eds). *International Migration, Brain Drain and Remittances*. 151–199. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

### Discussion paper:

Davis, L. W., and M. E. Kahn (2008). International Trade in Used Durable Goods: The Environmental Consequences of NAFTA. *NBER Working Paper No. 14565*.

- **(Possibly) Appendix**  
Provide additional results or detailed derivations in an appendix.
- **Declarations**  
(i) Declaration of origin and (ii) declaration of AI use  
(<https://www.uni-hohenheim.de/en/use-of-generative-ai-in-exams>)

## 4.3 How to quote in the text (APA-style)

For a general reference: (Author, Year), i.e.:

- Paraphrasing:
  - According to Smith (2020), the study indicates a significant correlation between X and Y.
  - Research shows a strong relationship between X and Y (Smith, 2020).
- Direct Quote:
  - Smith (2020) stated, "The results were consistent with previous findings" (p. 15).
  - "The results were consistent with previous findings" (Smith, 2020, p. 15).
- If you refer to your own work, say something like "in this thesis".
- Data sources:
  - Typically when using a database, you will find a hint on how to cite the source, e.g. on the website or in the ReadMe file.
  - Example: "OECD (2023). OECD Inter-Country Input-Output Tables, <http://oe.cd/icio>"

## 4.4 Replication package

Replicability is very important in academic work. Submit a replication package with your thesis (to the examination office). Organize your program code as lean as possible. The package should contain a clear and sufficiently (but not overly) detailed **readme file**, describing the files and file types included in the replication package: for example, raw data, processed data, scripts to manage the data, and scripts to produce figures, tables, or estimates. Moreover, it should indicate the order in which the scripts are to be run, as well as a list where the different tables and figures found in your thesis are generated and stored. Finally, a list of software and software packages (as well as the dependent packages on which they rely) and the operating system used to produce results in the thesis is required.

**File names** should be easy to understand and provide information about the file content. This is particularly important for replication materials that include multiple scripts and data files. If multiple scripts are to be run in a certain order, then including the order in the file name is useful (e.g., "1\_DataProcessing", "2\_Estimation"). Alternatively, you can create a master file that calls on the different scripts.

The **scripts** should include a short description of what the code does (e.g., "data recoding"), what dependencies it has, which package(s) it requires, and what the outputs are. Avoid scripts that include several pages of commands with little or no indication of what each line (or group of lines) is doing. Code should be annotated where necessary to indicate the purpose of each line or group of lines. This facilitates identification of specific parts of the data-management or estimation process and also helps to identify potential issues or mistakes. Organize your scripts well by avoiding interspersing data management and recoding with estimations, unless absolutely necessary for the analysis.

Replication scripts should have tables and figures as a clearly identified **output** (i.e., either a file or an object in the statistical software) exactly as they appear in the thesis (to the greatest extent possible). There are many ways to achieve this. For example, for tables with several models estimated in Stata, they can use a combination of ESTSTO and ESTTAB, among many other commands available. In R, authors can use STARGAZER. For tables that are more ad hoc, they can store the outputs of multiple commands in an object (typically a matrix) in the statistical software that can be printed to a file.

## 5 Use of AI

You are allowed to use generative AI tools. However, you are responsible for your thesis. In your AI declaration you will declare that

- you actively informed yourself about the capabilities and limitations of the AI systems you have used (e.g., notice that they don't function as a search engine for academic literature),
- you have marked the passages created or adjusted by AI systems which you have incorporated into the thesis,
- you have verified that the content generated by the above-mentioned AI systems and adopted by you is factually correct,
- you are aware that you as the author of the thesis bear the responsibility for the statements and assertions made in it.

We have observed that generate AI systems often link statements to the literature, but (i) that they are bad at recognizing the original and key publications in the field, and (ii) that the statements made in the text are at best peripherally related to the references cited. A good starting point for your literature review are top journals that show up in the 2015 Journal ranking of the Handelsblatt with a score of 0.2 or higher; see [https://vyzc.pef.mendelu.cz/wcd/w-pef-vyzc/handelsblatt-liste\\_2015.pdf](https://vyzc.pef.mendelu.cz/wcd/w-pef-vyzc/handelsblatt-liste_2015.pdf).