

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES OF THE BACHELOR/DISSERTATION THESIS PREPARATION, DEFENSE AND EVALUATION

According to REG 26, the bachelor exam includes two tests: Test 1, which evaluates fundamental and specialized knowledge, and Test 2, which involves presenting and defending the bachelor's thesis. The dissertation exam comprises a single examination, which is the presentation and defense of the thesis dissertation¹.

Therefore, the bachelor/dissertation thesis plays a particularly important role in completing each of the two university study cycles (bachelor's and master's).

The current methodology outlines specific guidelines for the steps to be undertaken in writing a bachelor's or dissertation thesis, along with the formatting and content requirements that need to be adhered to by students at the Faculty of Economics.

1. Selecting the scientific coordinator and deciding on the bachelor's or dissertation topic

The bachelor's or dissertation thesis is a scientific work developed under the guidance of a scientific supervisor with a PhD. Working closely with the supervising professor directly impacts the quality of the thesis and, consequently, the final result obtained by the student during the thesis defense. When collaborating with the supervising teacher, the student has several responsibilities, such as²:

- Collaborate with the supervising professor to choose the most suitable topic.
- Establish together with the supervising professor the plan of the thesis and a calendar for its elaboration.
- Select the methodology for the thesis in agreement with the thesis supervisor to demonstrate the practical values required for a bachelor's or dissertation thesis.
- Take into account the guidelines of the supervising professor.
- Submit the final version of the thesis to the teacher for approval, grading, and preparation of a report for the oral defense in front of the examination committee.

When choosing a bachelor's or dissertation topic, students can select from a list of suggested topics provided by the teaching staff. Alternatively, they can propose their own topics related to their specialization, subject to mutual agreement with the academic supervisor.

In choosing a theme for their bachelor's or dissertation thesis, students must consider various criteria such as:

- The student's interest in the respective topic.
- The practical experience previously acquired by the student concerning the respective topic.

¹Valahia University of Targoviste, Regulation on the organization and conduct of the bachelor and disertation exam, REG 26, 30.04.2024.

² Ristea A.L., Franc V.I, Popescu C., Metodica în cercetarea științifică, Expert, București, 2017, pp. 119-120.

- The access to enough information sources to document the thesis.
- The student's ability to put into practice the research methodology required by the respective topic.
- The specific calendar for the realization of a particular topic.

After choosing the scientific coordinator and the bachelor/dissertation topic, the student must complete a standard form (F035.2010.Ed.2, Application regarding the elaboration of the bachelor/dissertation thesis).

2. Establishing the work plan and the structure of the thesis

The work plan is developed through mutual agreement with the coordinating teacher and aims to guide the student in completing the thesis. It includes a (provisional) title and (provisional) content of the paper, which can be modified as the student progresses in applying the chosen methodology.

In this instance, it is essential to clarify the desired objectives of the bachelor's or dissertation thesis (including the topics that will be covered and those that will be excluded due to the vastness of the subject area), as well as the research methodology (specifically, the methods and tools that the student will utilize). Please take note of the following text:

- Table of Contents
- Introduction
- Theoretical part (1-2 chapters)
- Practical part (1-2 chapters)
- Final part (proposals, recommendations)
- Conclusions
- Bibliography
- Appendices

The theoretical section of the paper serves as a platform for students to demonstrate the depth of their understanding about the existing theoretical knowledge about the topic under consideration. It also justifies the utilization of specific research methodologies. This part offers a chance for students to exhibit the theoretical insights gained throughout their university studies and the comprehensive understanding acquired from various bibliographic sources. The weightage given to the theoretical section may fluctuate based on the specific nature of the chosen theme.

The practical part enables the student to demonstrate the ability to apply research methods learned during university studies. Depending on the nature and objectives of the chosen topic, the student can choose a qualitative or quantitative method. When determining the size of the chapters, it is recommended to ensure a certain balance so that there are no substantial differences between them (for example, one chapter is seven pages, and another is 30 pages).

In the concluding section, the student has the opportunity to demonstrate their professional expertise as a university graduate. This part of the paper allows for an in-depth analysis of the chosen topic, where the student can articulate various proposals and recommendations. These suggestions are designed to complement the overarching conclusions drawn from the research, showcasing the student's ability to synthesize information and provide insightful contributions to their field of study.

The appendices typically include details about the supporting materials used, such as statistical data, research instruments like questionnaires and interview guides, detailed results of field investigations, summaries of viewpoints from specialists, and excerpts from texts or laws. Each appendix will cite the source of the included information. In the paper's

main text, specific references will be made to the appendices by indicating their respective numbers.

3. Layout of the bachelor/dissertation thesis

The bachelor/dissertation thesis is written in *A4 format* (21 x 29,7 cm), *with margins of 2,5 cm (top, bottom, right) and 3 cm (left* – this margin being larger to allow binding the paper without affecting the text or appearance of the work).

The recommended font for writing the paper is *Times New Roman*, and the font size is *12 points*. *Text alignment is done on both sides* (left-right, corresponding to the *Justify* command in English). Chapter and subchapter headings may be aligned, justified or centered, provided the chosen formatting is consistently applied throughout the thesis.

The structure of the thesis, which is made up of chapters and subchapters, must be highlighted in the paper. As a result, each chapter (as well as the bibliography and appendices) must start on a new page. It should be avoided that the last page of a chapter contains only a few lines (for example, 3-4 lines), and the rest remains empty. In a thesis, the text is divided into paragraphs, parts of a subchapter that express specific themes the author addresses. Each section contains multiple *indents* that highlight the author's ideas.

The *spacing* between lines in the document should be 1.5 points. There should also be a 1.5-point spacing between indents or paragraphs. There should be no additional spaces before or after the respective text.

Page numbering is preferably done at the bottom of the page with Arabic numerals. All pages are numbered, even if the number will not be visible on all. The bibliography and appendices are numbered in continuation of the pages of the body text of the paper, respecting the requirement that they start on a new page. When printing, it will be considered that the first page of the paper (the cover) does not have the page number visible.

The recommended *size* of the bachelor thesis is *about 50 pages*, and the dissertation is *about 40 pages* (excluding appendices).

Cover and title page

The first page (cover) will include the following information: the name of the university, the name of the faculty, the study program, the type of paper (Bachelor Thesis or Dissertation Thesis), the name and surname of the student, the teaching degree, the name and surname of the scientific coordinator, the month and year of submission.

The title page will include the following information: the name of the university, the name of the faculty, the study program, the full title of the paper, the name and surname of the student, the teaching degree, the name and surname of the scientific coordinator, the month and year of submission.

4. Writing the bachelor/dissertation thesis

The process of writing a bachelor's or dissertation thesis requires adherence to a set of established formal and content-related guidelines. Content requirements focus on accurately applying concepts, methodologies, and scientific information, ensuring that the research presented is valid and relevant. On the other hand, formal requirements are crucial for enhancing the readability and clarity of the document, facilitating a smooth flow of ideas and coherence throughout the paper. Additionally, these requirements help maintain *grammatical accuracy*, which involves following the rules of morphology and syntax to ensure that the expression is clear and professional. Overall, mastering both aspects is

essential for producing a *high-quality academic thesis* that effectively communicates the researcher's findings and insights.

The thesis text is written in the form „*black on white*”. The use of other colors is not recommended in the text, and highlighting of specific keywords or ideas can be done using italics, bold, or a combination of bold and italics.

When organizing your document, it is advisable to structure the numbering of *chapters and subchapters* using a maximum of three levels. This can be achieved by following one of two formats: the decimal system (1, 1.1, 1.1.1) or the alphanumeric system (I, A, 1.). Using this hierarchical approach helps maintain clarity and ensures that readers can easily navigate through the content.

Tables and figures must be numbered and have the title mentioned above and the source below the image, being written in the same font as the rest of the paper.

Citing the sources:

There are two ways to cite sources in the paper:

a) The "author-date" citation system, commonly known as the "Harvard system", is widely used for referencing bibliographic sources within academic writing. This method requires that citations be integrated directly into the text, allowing readers to locate the original sources easily. When using this system, you should include the author's last name, followed by the year of publication in parentheses. If specific information is referenced, it is also important to include the relevant page number when applicable. For example, a typical in-text citation might look like this: (Smith, 2020, p. 15). This approach ensures clarity and provides immediate context for the reader regarding the source of the information. Furthermore, it is essential that these citations be formatted in the same font size as the surrounding text, specifically using Times New Roman at a size of 12 points, to maintain consistency and readability throughout the document.

b) The numerical citation system is a method in which sources referenced in a text are indicated with a numerical superscript, directing readers to corresponding footnotes at the bottom of the page. In these footnotes, the full citation for the source is provided, allowing for a clearer presentation of information within the main text. To maintain a clean and professional appearance, the footnote text is typically formatted in a smaller font size, ideally set to Times New Roman size 10. This approach ensures that the main content remains unobstructed while still giving readers easy access to detailed source information.

Example of citing sources:

On the page no. 1 of this document, two bibliographic sources are cited, both in the numerical system, as footnotes.

If, instead of the numerical system, we had opted for the author-date system, then the sources would have been included in the text, as follows:

- "According to the REG 26, the bachelor exam consists of respectively the presentation and defense of the dissertation" (VUT, 2024).
- "In collaboration with the coordinating teacher, the student has a series of duties, such as" (Ristea A.L., Franc V.I, Popescu C., 2017, pp. 119-120).

To avoid repeating data on the same bibliographic source, the following notations can be used:

- Op. Cit. – when the paper was previously cited
 - Ex.: M.Popescu, op. cit., page 153.
- Idem – when all the elements of a paper cited immediately before correspond
 - Ex.: Idem

- Ibidem – when all elements correspond to a paper cited immediately before, only the page being different
 - Ex.: Ibidem, page 12.

Diacritics: *Only* the bachelor/dissertation thesis in Romanian must be written with diacritics.

The bibliography is compiled in alphabetical order of the authors (by the authors' names), respectively by the first author's name if a paper has several authors. In the case of collective papers (where the names of the authors are not mentioned), statistical yearbooks, laws, etc. the alphabetical order will be made according to the first letter of the title of the bibliographic source, the space usually affected by the author's name being marked with distinct signs (***)).

In the case of books, the following information must be specified in order: name and surname of the authors), book title, edition number (if there were several editions), publisher, place where the book was published, year of publication and total number of pages.

In the case of journal articles should be indicated the name and surname of the author, the title of the article, the name of the journal, the volume and number of the journal, the month and year of publication, and the pages on which the article is located.

In the case of online sources, which can be books, book chapters, articles from journals, articles from online platforms, information from websites or social networks, in addition to the information specific to a book/article, their full URL address will be indicated and the date of the last access by the student. When the cited online source does not have an identified author, its name will be replaced by three asterisks (***), and sources without an author will be indicated after exhausting sources with a known author.

5. Requirements regarding originality

To enroll for the bachelor/dissertation exam, the thesis must be accompanied by a **declaration** of responsibility from the candidate **regarding the originality** of the thesis (form F 038.2010.Ed.2). This declaration, available on the faculty's website, is completed by the candidate, signed and bound together with the paper.

Also, in order to register for the bachelor / dissertation exam, it is mandatory that the thesis pass **the anti-plagiarism check**. For this verification, the candidate sends the final form of the thesis to the teaching coordinator who, in turn, forwards it to the person in charge of anti-plagiarism verification at the faculty.

The similarity report resulting from the anti-plagiarism check allows the evaluation of the originality of the analyzed paper, respectively the extent to which the text was compiled or copied. In this report, the similarity coefficients 1 (which takes into account all the phrases discovered by the verification system in other documents) and 2 (which calculates the percentage of the text containing similar fragments exceeding 25 words) are indicated. The accepted thresholds for the checked papers are 50% (coefficient 1) and 20% (coefficient 2) in the case of the bachelor thesis and 40% (coefficient 1) and 10% (coefficient 2) in the case of the dissertation thesis³.

For undergraduate students pursuing a bachelor's degree, the institution provides the opportunity for two complimentary **plagiarism checks** to assist them in maintaining academic integrity and ensuring the originality of their work. In contrast, graduate students

³ Valahia University of Târgoviște, Operation anti-plagiarism verification procedure, PO 07.27, 27.04.2017.

enrolled in master's programs are eligible for only one free plagiarism check, which is designed to help them uphold similar standards of originality in their more advanced academic writing. Any subsequent plagiarism checks for both bachelor and master students may incur a fee.

6. Assessment of the bachelor/dissertation thesis before submission

Self-assessment by the student

Before handing in the paper, the student can proceed to a self-assessment of the quality of his paper in terms of form and content. Among the criteria that he can consider we mention:

- a) To evaluate the content:
 - The content of the paper corresponds to the stated title;
 - The paper respects the recommended structure;
 - Theoretical aspects, notions and concepts are presented clearly;
 - There is a clear connection between the theoretical part and the practical part of the paper;
 - The chosen methodology is clearly explained;
 - The bibliographic sources are rich and well indicated in the paper and in the bibliography;
 - The data presented are current and relevant for the chosen topic;
 - The formulated ideas are accompanied by appropriate evidence and examples;
 - The novelty and usefulness of the views expressed and the significant personal contribution of the author.
- b) For form assessment:
 - Page layout is respected;
 - The formal requirements for drafting the paper are respected;
 - Grammatical rules are respected;
 - The bibliography is correctly drawn up;
 - The general appearance is neat, the paper is easy to follow.

If the self-assessment is carried out in sufficient time before the thesis submission, it can be an opportunity to improve the final form of the thesis.

An important role belongs to the ***assessment carried out by the coordinating teacher***, which has as a reference a standard form at the faculty level (Form F 328.2011.Ed.2). The criteria considered by the coordinating teacher are the originality, the rigor, and the theoretical and applied significance of the paper; they form the basis of the grade that the coordinating teacher proposes to the examination committee of the bachelor/dissertation thesis.

7. Oral defense of the bachelor/dissertation thesis

The defense of the bachelor/dissertation thesis is public.

On the occasion of the defense of the bachelor or dissertation thesis, the candidate has the option to utilize a PowerPoint presentation to enhance their oral defense. The bachelor or dissertation committee will establish the specific duration of this presentation, ensuring that it aligns with the overall schedule and requirements of the defense process. When preparing a ***visual presentation using PowerPoint***, the candidate should pay careful attention to several critical criteria that will contribute to the effectiveness of their

communication. These criteria include clarity, which involves presenting information straightforwardly and understandably; readability, which emphasizes the importance of using legible fonts and appropriate color contrasts that make the text easily viewable by all audience members; and scientific correctness, which requires that all information presented is accurate, well-researched, and properly cited according to academic standards. Adhering to these guidelines will help the candidate convey their findings effectively and professionally.

In the structure, the visual presentation must include a presentation plan (which does not mean taking over ad literam the content of the bachelor/dissertation thesis), the presentation of the methodology used, the results obtained, the proposals and conclusions of the author. The first page of the visual presentation must contain the name and surname of the author and the coordinating teacher, the paper's title, the date of submission, the institution and the study program followed by the candidate.

From an aesthetic point of view, the candidate can use a color combination consistent with the presented theme, ensuring good contrast, visibility of information from a distance, and not overloading the presentation. Using graphs, images, and statistical data allows the candidate to highlight better the research activity carried out and the results obtained.

The evaluation of a candidate's oral defense depends, in addition to the scientific content of the paper, on the extent to which the candidate knows how to present his paper, respects the assigned time and answers the committee's questions.

8. Sources that can be consulted regarding the bachelor/dissertation exam and the elaboration of the thesis

- Gruba Paul, Zobel Justin, How to write your first thesis, Springer, 2017.
- Lipson Charles, How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper, 2nd edition, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2018.
- Ristea A.L., Franc V.I, Popescu C., Metodică în cercetarea științifică, Expert, București, 2017.
- Valahia University of Târgoviște:
 - Regulation on the organization and conduct of the bachelor and dissertation exam, Valahia University of Târgoviște REG 26, 30.04.2024.
 - Regulation regarding the organization and conduct of the bachelor / dissertation exam, Faculty of Economics, REG 26, 29.05.2024.
 - Operation anti-plagiarism verification procedure, Faculty of Economics PO 07.27, 27.04.2017.