

BSc Thesis and Seminar

Introduction and overview of course

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Photo by Roope Kiviranta



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Agenda for today

- ▶ Seminar practices
- ▶ Expectations for a Bachelor's thesis
- ▶ Choosing the topic
- ▶ Finding relevant literature
- ▶ Research plan
- ▶ Writing
- ▶ Presenting and acting as an opponent
- ▶ Course and thesis assessment and grading.

Timeline for course and work on the thesis

1. Choosing a topic (12.9) and finding literature (meeting 14.9).
2. Presenting your research plan This is done in a classroom presentation (28.9 and 5.10.) Feedback at this stage can help you focus and narrow down you research focus, find relevant literature, and more. Separate meetings for English and Finnish groups.
3. Independent work on and writing of the thesis
4. optional classroom meeting in November for Q&A about writing and final draft presentation
5. Presenting a final draft This is done in a classroom presentation either 23.11 or 30.11. You will need to submit your draft online a few days before the presentation so that opponents and readers can read it. Each student will be the opponent on one other thesis draft and an additional reader on two other thesis drafts. The opponent also talks during the seminar.
6. Submission of the thesis 29.12. This is a hard deadline!

Guide on BSc thesis writing in Economics

A PDF guide for the work with the thesis has been added to the Mycourses [course page](#) in the section Materials. The guide has been developed by the seminar teachers of this class over the past years. It includes concrete instructions for every step of the writing process, with details on recommended outline and citing and referencing practices, as well as short notes on the classroom presentations.

Expectations

- ▶ A Bachelor's thesis is not a research project.
- ▶ Rather, a survey into a topic of interest.
- ▶ Often the thesis = a literature survey.
- ▶ Theoretical framework often valuable.
- ▶ Could contain an empirical part (with data), but this is not necessary.

Remember: this is a thesis in the field of *Economics*.

Choosing a topic

- ▶ Which topics and questions are you interested in, in general? Social, financial, political, policy, science, psychology, medicine, sports ... etc?
- ▶ Which sub-field of economics / which applications are you most interested in?
- ▶ Search for ideas from your courses, text books, economics-related news, surveys, ...
- ▶ What literature is already available on the topic?
- ▶ Narrow vs. broad topic?
- ▶ Well studied vs. novel topic?

Some sources for inspiration for research topic: NBER working paper series, voxeu.org, voxdev.org, the Economist (available via [Aalto library](#))

Finding literature

- ▶ References in text books
- ▶ Review articles/survey articles
- ▶ Influential journal articles
- ▶ Citing patterns by google scholar
- ▶ A separate meeting on finding literature will be held on September 14 and will include:
 - ▶ A practical part about searching for literature, e.g. using the library's sources
 - ▶ A part more focused on finding and identifying literature in economics.

Research plan and presentation

The research plan should be submitted as a two page document, and presented orally to the group at a classroom meeting on 28.9 or 5.10. You should be able to motivate and explain succinctly your:

- ▶ Topic
- ▶ Research question
- ▶ Approach (method of analysis)
- ▶ At least some relevant literature

Each group (English/Finnish) submits their research plans on their own groups' webpage under Research plan/Kirjallinen tutkimussuunnitelma.

Writing of the thesis

Pay attention to:

- ▶ Structure
- ▶ Rigorous argumentation
- ▶ Scientific style
- ▶ Definition of key concepts
- ▶ Appropriate citing practice
- ▶ Can an outsider follow your arguments?
- ▶ Language

Use of AI in text production

▶ [Link](#) to "guidance for the use of Artificial intelligence in teaching and learning at Aalto university"

- 5 The student is always responsible for the content of their submitted work.** For example, language models can be used for formatting or ideation of the text produced, unless otherwise instructed by the teacher. However, AI-generated text cannot be presented as is as the student's own written response. The student is obligated to follow academic writing practices. Upon the teacher's request, the student is obligated to describe how, what and/or why AI-based technology has been used to do the learning task.
- 6 Utilizing AI in a learning task contrary to the teacher's instructions will be considered cheating and will be handled in accordance with the current procedures.**
- 7 Situations where the use of language models is not allowed: maturity test.**

Use of AI in text production

Note that entering any of the following into systems external to Aalto is not allowed due to data privacy regulation/copyright reasons.

- ▶ other students' answers
- ▶ other people's text (e.g. text or papers written by others than yourself)
- ▶ anyone's personal information

Using generative AI tools as a help when writing the thesis is allowed, but do so with caution and be sure fact check the information you gain from using such tools.

Presenting in the seminar

Practising and demonstrating your ability to present ideas orally in front of an audience is one of the learning goals of this course. The presentations are also an opportunity for us to test how well you understand your material. Your participation in the seminars also affect the course grade.

Aalto University has created and collected resources to support students with presenting in public.

- ▶ Tips on what to think about before and during a presentation:

▶ [Link to video in English](#)

▶ [Link to video in Finnish](#)

- ▶ Tips and thoughts on anxiety and stage fright:

▶ [Link to video in English](#)

▶ [Link to video in Finnish](#)

Some additional resources and links will be posted on Mycourses under the *Presentations* section.

Final draft presentation

In your presentation, make sure to:

- ▶ Explain why your topic is interesting and relevant.
- ▶ Focus on key points in your thesis and arguments.
- ▶ Explain what you do and why in a clear way: an outsider to your particular topic should be able to understand.
- ▶ Explain properly your method of analysis/theoretical framework.

As an opponent:

- ▶ Be critical, but try to suggest ways to improve.
- ▶ Point out strengths as well as weaknesses.
- ▶ Be constructive: how can the draft be improved?

Assessment and Grading

Criteria for assessment:

- ▶ Choice of topic and research question
- ▶ Choice and use of literature
- ▶ Analysis and interpretation (literature survey / theory / empirics)
- ▶ Writing (academic style, language, readability)
- ▶ Consistency and coherence of the thesis
- ▶ Clarity, consistency and preparedness during oral presentation.

You can see the Grading rubric on the mycourses page under Materials.

NOTE: The seminar grade is now part of the thesis grade. This has changed recently - earlier, the thesis was graded separately and worth 8 credits while the seminar was worth 2 credits.

Course pages in Mycourses

The English page will be used for general overview for both groups:

[Link to English course page](#)

Nelli will post material specific to the Finnish group (e.g. second advisor allocation, presentation schedules) on the course page for that group, and the Finnish group will submit their Research plans and Final drafts in the Finnish group.

[Link to Finnish group page](#)

Group Activity

- ▶ The current crisis of the construction sector in Finland
- ▶ Language requirements for immigrants (in order to get citizenship or permanent residency)
- ▶ Finland's worsening PISA-score and wider gaps in scores between subgroups of children
- ▶ The ongoing threat of bird flu

Make sure everyone is on the same page with the topic (know what it's about).

Discuss and suggest ways to approach the topic in Economics.