

**University of Bern, Institute of Geography  
Social and Cultural Geography Group  
Regulations for writing BA and MA theses**

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**A BA or MA in the CG group**

Choose a topic from the group's offerings or your own topic and write a **concept paper of** half a page to one page with an idea for a BA or MA thesis of four parts:

- 1) What topic am I interested in?
- 2) What do I want to study?
- 3) How could I research this topic?
- 4) What journal articles/books have I read so far related to my research paper idea (BA thesis min. 3 sources, MA thesis min. 5 sources).

Send this concept paper before the first colloquium meeting in the semester to a member of the group you would like to be supervised by or to the group leader ([carolin.schurr@unibe.ch](mailto:carolin.schurr@unibe.ch)). Further procedure will be discussed in the first colloquium meeting of the semester. Attendance at this first meeting in the semester is mandatory. A Bachelor and Master thesis can always be started at the beginning of the semester (spring or autumn).

**Regular attendance at** the Colloquium in Cultural Geography during one semester for BA students and during two semesters for MA students is required for graduation.

All students have the opportunity to discuss the BA and MA (topic and research questions, theory and method, results) in at least **3 sessions with the supervisor**.

All students must present the work process at least 1 time per semester in the colloquium (ungraded). All students must defend the BA thesis (in the colloquium) and the MA thesis (presentation dates by the directorate of studies). The defense is graded and is part of the final grade.

**How do I have to design the work? - Formalia**

Font: uniform

Font size: min. 11

Line spacing: 1.5

Justification: Justified (use automatic hyphenation)

- Do not insert additional line spacing or free lines or blank lines.
- Do not create breaks in the text, formulate text as continuous text.
- Divide text into paragraphs.
- Mention authors by their first names the first time they are mentioned in the body text (not in a citation in parentheses).
- Adapt scientific language to theoretical and methodological concepts.
- No possibility form (shall, could).
- Make tense consistent (past or present or perfect tense).
- Please refer to the checklist non-fiction texts (Ilias)

Cover page: Title of thesis, name/address/matriculation number of student, date of submission, name of supervisor, name of co-supervisor, name of University, Faculty, Department, Unit

## How long can the work be?

BA: **15,000-20,000 words** with literature, excluding appendices (data collection instruments e.g. guidelines, evaluation scheme and transcripts have to be attached) Submission: two printed versions to the supervisor **plus** pdf by mail.  
Please do not print the appendix, only the pdf version; send a pdf of the BA thesis to Brigitt Reverdin.

MA: (60 ECTS): **30,000-40,000 words** with literature, without appendix (data collection instruments, e.g., guides, analysis scheme, and transcripts must be appended).  
Submission: two printed versions to the supervisor **plus** pdf by mail **plus** one printed version to the library; please do not print the appendix, only include it in the pdf version; a pdf of the MA thesis to Brigitt Reverdin.

MA: (30 ECTS): **20,000-30,000 words** with literature, without appendix (data collection instruments e.g. guidelines, evaluation scheme and transcripts must be attached).  
Submission: two printed versions to the supervisor **plus a** pdf by mail **plus** one printed version to the library.      printed version to the library; please do not print the appendix, only include it in the pdf version      ; one pdf of the MA thesis to Brigitt Reverdin.

Note: This form of Master's thesis is only possible with a topic related to Switzerland or nearby foreign countries. In addition, the method must correspond to the amount of work. For example, an analysis can be done on already existing material.

Four weeks before submitting your BA or MA thesis, you have the opportunity to hand in a chapter selected by you to your supervisor for review. Feedback on the text will be given promptly and must be transferred independently to the other chapters of the thesis.

## What should be considered in the structure of the work? - Structure

Do not structure content across the 2nd level

Example: 1.  
    1.1  
    1.2  
    1.3

Avoid "empty" titles like "Introduction" or "Theory". Instead, formulate content-rich titles such as "Identity as differentiation - an introduction" or "Exploring foreignness - methodological ways".

Note that a text is divided into paragraphs and a paragraph includes a thought, the arguments belonging to it as well as their explanations and the conclusion. New thoughts/additions etc. as well as their arguments, explanations and conclusions are taken up in a new paragraph.

The work must use scientific language. For this purpose, courses or exercises were offered within the regular curriculum. In addition, there is an extensive literature on scientific writing, which you should definitely consult.

## What goes into an introduction?

Hook - introductory example, prelude to topic; state theory, method; clarify relevance of work to science and society; structure work according to chapter sequence.

Note further guidance on the content of the chapters in the evaluation form.

## How do I have to quote?

References and sources are given in Harvard citation style. For further information, please refer to Baade/Gertel/Schlottmann (2010).

### What helps me write a scientific paper?

Baade, Jussi/Holger Gertel/Antje Schlotmann (2010): Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten: A guide for students of geography. Bern: UTB.

Gröbner, Valentin (2012): Wissenschaftssprache - eine Gebrauchsanweisung. Konstanz: Konstanz University Press.

### How do I have to design the presentation?

You will have 30 min (15 min presentation, 15 min discussion) to present your BA results in the group colloquium. Please note:

- Time management
- Presentation of research interest, theoretical perspective, methodological approach, results, and critical aspects of the research process.
- Support your arguments and conclusions with their empirical data (interview material, ethnographic notes, visual material, textual material).
- Show how they arrived at their results
- Free speech is desired

For the presentation of the MA thesis results, please refer to the instructions of the study director.

Overall, we would like to point out the following points: The presentations must present the research results in a comprehensible and stringent manner. For this purpose, it is useful to pick representative examples from the empirical data material in order to be able to present the results contextually. This also makes the interpretation and analysis recognizable.

### Workplace

The Department of Geography has a limited number of workstations available. If you are interested in a place, ask your supervisor if this is possible for the period of the BA or MA thesis.

### Field expenses

Master students who are not financed by external funds and not by the Graduate School have a maximum of CHF 800 at their disposal. Under the following link the documents for the application for field expenses can be found:

[https://www.geography.unibe.ch/studies/study\\_programs\\_forms\\_leaflets/forms/index\\_eng.html](https://www.geography.unibe.ch/studies/study_programs_forms_leaflets/forms/index_eng.html)

### Notes for (final) presentation(s)

- 1 Selection of the topic: How do I justify the selection of the topic?
  - Personal reasons (e.g., personal interests / skills, existing contacts)
  - Social reasons (e.g. topicality / practical contribution)
  - Scientific reasons (e.g., research gap/need for new perspective, need for a differentiating discourse)
- 2 Research questions: What do I want to understand? (Reduce diversity of the research field)
  - General questions
  - Specific questions
- 3 Theoretical / Conceptual Embedding: From which theoretical / conceptual perspective do I look at my research topic / research questions?
  - General theories / general explanation

- specific theories / concepts
  - Experiential knowledge (own experience / expert experience)
- 4 Research operationalization: how do I specifically go about conducting my investigation?
- Which case study?
  - Which survey methods?
  - Which evaluation methods?
- 5 Evaluation Objective/Interpretation of Research Results:
- Dense description or type formation?
  - Embedding in larger framework literature?
  - Social and scientific significance of the results?