

## Expectations from students doing their theses in our research group and general formatting guidelines

**Note: some of the below-listed points only apply to BSc or MSc students; these are indicated in brackets. Points without any additional indication apply to all students.**

### 1. Find a suitable topic

- Posted topic: for topics posted in print or on our homepage, email the contact person
- Check out the topics of current group members as well as of alumni on our homepage
- Own topic: identify a research question and/or hypothesis that thematically fits the research topics of our group; to do so, check the group's current research projects and publications; final questions/hypotheses can then be identified with the supervisor
- In general: contact suitable Professors, Postdocs, PhD students to discuss topics
- For questions on the registration of the thesis, extension and supervision, refer to <https://www.uni-hohenheim.de/pruefung>

### 2. Before starting your research

- Independent literature research according to predefined criteria
- Preparation of a research proposal (approx. 2 pages plus literature) with introduction, research question, methods, time schedule and literature
- Independent assessment of prerequisites to carry out the topic (e.g., physical fitness, previous knowledge in *R*, visa for stay abroad, etc.).
- Determination of the second examiner in consultation with the supervisor (MSc)
- Independent registration for the final thesis
- **Only start and register the thesis after successful review of the proposal by the supervisor!**

### 3. Execution

- Before you begin, arrange all necessary general and topic-specific safety briefings. No work in the laboratory, offices, greenhouses or other university spaces is allowed before this.
- Arrangement of the time schedule with supervisor
- Learning the methodology with the supervisor
- Independent execution of the methodology
- Agreement on the statistical analysis with the supervisor
- Learning of necessary statistical methods
- Independent execution of the statistical analysis (MSc) / analysis with assistance of supervisor (BSc)
- Independent writing of the paper. Your supervisor comments on draft versions, but does not correct them; examples of former theses and papers can be requested from the supervisor
- Before handing in the work, the workplace, laboratory, greenhouse and other spaces must be cleaned (if used); any specimens must be well labeled and archived in consultation with the supervisor (e.g., insects needled and labeled in insect boxes)
- During the execution of the work, we welcome active participation of all students in the active scientific life of the faculty:
  - Participation in seminars:  
Ecology Colloquium (Tuesdays, 4:00 pm) and 490efg seminar (Tuesdays, 9:00 am)
  - Presentation of thesis findings in group meetings (after final data analysis)

### 4. Submission of the thesis

- **With the submission of the thesis, a PDF-copy of the thesis, all raw data, derived data and R-scripts have to be deposited with the supervisor. In addition, all equipment used and keys to facilities of the group must be returned.**
- **The work will not be graded until all samples and data have been archived according to the specifications!**

## What can students expect from us as thesis supervisors?

### 1. Find a topic

- Announcement of topics for BSc and MSc theses, regular updating
- Advice on topics by suitable Profs, Postdocs, PhDs
- In case of own topic: concretization of the research question and adequate supervision if the topic fits to the research scope of the professorship or the supervisor

### 2. Before starting the work

- Assessment of the feasibility of the topic based on the proposal
- Support in determining the second reviewer (MSc)
- Advice on suitable literature
- Advice on suitable statistical methods

### 3. Realization

- Support for realistic time schedule
- Teaching of the methodology
- Discussion of the analysis (teaching of statistical analysis methods)
- If desired by students, commenting on the thesis (at least two weeks before submission)

### 4. Submission of the thesis

- Checking the completeness of all documents to be handed in
- Review within the time frame set by the examination office

## General formatting guidelines

Although there are no strict rules on formatting of your thesis, the following guidelines shall give you some advice on how to avoid common pitfalls

- Choose a common font and adequate font size (Calibri, Times New Roman; size 11 or 12)
- Page margins (bottom, left, top, right): 2.0 cm, 2.5 cm, 2.5 cm, 2.5 cm
- Text should be in block format (exceptions may apply to figure and table legends)
- Line spacing is often best with 1.15 (1.5 may also work but can be too much, 1.0 too few)
- Your thesis should contain a cover page (including your name, title of the thesis, name of supervisor(s), date of delivery, etc.) and a table of contents
- Typical chapters are:  
Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, References, Appendix
- Use color sparingly; color is almost never needed in the text, and also figures should only be colorized if needed to indicate e.g., groupings, specific data points, etc.
- All figures have a figure legend below the figure, all tables have a table header above the table
- Latin genus and species names must be in italics
- Avoid abbreviations. Only use them if they are repeated at least 5 times.
- Cite figures and tables from the text using their numberings (e.g., Figure 1; Table 1).
- If you have a figure/table, it must be also cited in the text (and vice versa); this also applies to figures/tables in the appendix
- Contain the most important and interesting figures and tables in the main text; move all else to the appendix (or delete them, if not needed for the story)
- If you do not need to refer to a result in the discussion, then you also do not need to have it in the results. Vice versa, results that are shown but not discussed need to be discussed or removed

## Formatting of citations and references

Use a consistent style of formatting for your references. The following guidelines are taken from the ecological journal "Oecologia", which has a very simple way of reference formatting. We also recommend the use of a reference management software like Citavi, Mendeley or Zotero. You can find more information about this on the KIM website.

- **Literature citations in the text** should be ordered chronologically and indicate the author's surname with the year of publication in parentheses, e.g. Carlin (1992); Brooks and Carlin (1992). If there are more than two authors, only the first author should be named, followed by "et al." For example, "Carlin (1992), Brooks and Carlin (2004, 2005), Jones et al. (2007) demonstrated..." OR "... well studied (Carlin 1992; Brooks and Carlin 2004, 2005; Jones et al. 2007)".
- **References at the end of the paper** should be listed in alphabetical order by the first author's name. If there is more than one work by the same author or team of authors in the same year, a, b, etc. is added to the year both in the text and in the list of references. References should only include works that are cited in the text and that have been published or accepted for publication. Personal communications and unpublished works should only be mentioned in the text. Alphabetize the list of references by the last names of the first author of each work.

Examples:

*Journal papers:* name(s) and initial(s) of all authors; year; full title; journal title abbreviated in accordance with international practice; volume number; first and last page numbers

Savidge WB, Blair NE (2004) Patterns of intramolecular carbon isotopic heterogeneity within amino acids of autotrophs and heterotrophs. *Oecologia* 139:178-189

*Chapter in a book:* name(s) and initial(s) of all authors; year; title of article; editor(s); title of book; edition; volume number; publisher; place of publication; page numbers

Hobson KA (2003) Making migratory connections with stable isotopes. In: Berthold P, Gwinner E, Sonnenschein E (eds) *Avian migration*. Springer, Berlin, pp 379-391

*Book:* name and initial(s) of all authors; year; title; edition; publisher; place of publication

Körner C (2003) *Alpine plant life*, 2nd edn. Springer, Berlin