



Università Commerciale
Luigi Bocconi

GUIDE TO WRITING THE FINAL PAPER BACHELOR PROGRAMS

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GUIDE TO WRITING THE FINAL PAPER BACHELOR PROGRAMS

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1. Aim of this Guide

The aim of this guide is to support the students of Università Bocconi in all matters relating to the writing of their final paper for Bachelor Programs. However, for each specific Programme there may be additional suggestions linked to the peculiarity of the subjects. If so, these will be provided by the responsible professors and will arise through the interaction between students and supervisors (tutor professors) during the drafting of the final paper.

2. Final Paper Contents

The final paper is the concluding activity in a Bachelor Program and it is the means by which students demonstrate their maturity and ability to co-ordinate the concepts and ideas they have assimilated during their three years of study.

Writing the final paper requires a great deal of effort. Therefore adequate time must be dedicated to it.

The resulting work must constitute a personal contribution and particular attention should be paid to citing references and quotations. Nothing must be copied from other sources. For this reason, the University has been equipped with a software to recognise any “copying” or improper use of source material.

Should copying of the work be discovered, the student will be reported to the Disciplinary Board and appropriate measures will be taken.

The final papers are classified in two ways:

- **Descriptive:** relating to an economic phenomenon, one or more theories, or indeed a current economic topic with wider implications for the business, economic or financial sectors etc. In such cases it is appropriate to describe the subject from more than one point of view and include comparisons of different approaches. The paper should also be enhanced by references that supplement matters studied during the Bachelor Program.
- **Empirical:** in this case, the paper is intended to analyze and verify the foundations of a hypothesis through statistical analysis and the examination of one or more business cases.

3. Subject Areas

To help students choose the subject area of their final paper, the list of the subject areas corresponding to the disciplinary fields of the Departments, with the name of the professor of reference by area, is available on the Undergraduate School site – Current Students section – Bachelor Programs – links: Final Paper.

4. Pinpointing the topic

After choosing the subject area, you must pinpoint the specific topic.

The problem is not finding a *topic* to write about (“*what do I want to talk about in my Final Paper?*”). With very few exceptions, every topic addressed in your program can be used to write an interesting final paper. The topic can be pinpointed taking advantage of your internship experience, studies abroad, participating in events organized by the Bachelor Program or by the University in general (seminars, congresses, etc.), by observing the world around you, by reading newspapers.



The problem is preparing one or more interesting *research questions* in order to answer and to understand the reasons underlying the work. It is always useful to ask these two questions:

- 1) why is it important to study what I am proposing? (if the topic is not relevant then it is not worth the Final Paper);
- 2) what do I want to demonstrate with my work?

Keeping this in mind, even a topic which at first may appear “traditional” can prove to be innovative.

Formulating one or more research questions related to the chosen topic means:

- accurately defining the limits of the chosen topic;
- pinpointing those aspects of the topic on which you wish to concentrate;
- asking yourself the significance, in theoretical and applicative terms, of the chosen topic.

It is generally advisable to avoid topics that are:

- too generic for example:
 - NO: “the private equity” YES: “the choice of subsidiary companies in the area of private equity”
 - NO: “the MIFID directive”; YES: “The impact of the MIFID directive on the segmentation process of the clientele”
 - NO: “the client’s behavior”; YES: consumer behavior in financial services or consumer behavior: the case of the y generation; YES: it is possible to link end-user satisfaction with the number of tickets sold to said end-user
- too specific (often in this case data or supporting documents which can help us develop our idea are missing) .

5. The Supervisor (Tutor Professor)

The Supervisor (Tutor Professor) can be a professor with whom you did an exam or another professor from any Department who is carrying out research on topics related to the subject area of your final paper.

Once you have made an appointment, it is important to give reasons for your topic choice and the alternatives you have considered, to obtain further advice and ideas. Avoid statements like “I haven’t got any ideas so I am coming to you for some suggestions....”

Frequent interaction with the is important to check on the progress of the work and for additional advice.

Avoid contacting the professor only once at the beginning and once at the end of the work.

The supervisor-student relationship is one between adults. The student must be a responsible person: s/he is the one who keeps track of time and the work program, therefore students should avoid situations where they submit the final work to be corrected just a few days (if not a few hours) before the deadline to hand in the work.

6. Gathering of material



Once you have selected one or more relevant topics for the final paper you must structure a “work plan”. In particular, you must concentrate on the following:

- what information is available to answer my research question? Books? Articles? Data from internet websites?
- What sort of analysis has been carried out on the topic I have chosen? What data was used? What sources do they come from?

It is important:

1. to consult the material available in the Library, besides books we might suggest:
 - printed journals and in electronic format (since selecting the journals is essential to write a good research bibliography, it is a good idea to check the quality with your supervisor);
 - data bases (some of which contain a number of journals)
 - Working Papers, both printed and in electronic format;
 - documents on floppy disk and cd-rom;
 - statistics.

Appendix 1 illustrates in a nutshell the resources and services available in the Library for your bibliographic research for the final paper.

2. Arrange the detailed reference bibliography in writing. An example: **Amihud, Y., Lev, B., and Travlos, N., 1990.** *Corporate control and the choice of investment financing: the case of corporate acquisition.* Journal of Finance 45, pp. 603-616

Greene, W., 2003. *Econometric analysis, 5th Edition.* Prentice-Hall

Appendix 2 illustrates the guidelines to write the bibliography and citing the works in the text

3. Hand in your research material to your Supervisor (Tutor Professor).

7. Planning the outline

After gathering the data it is advisable to prepare a 2-3 page outline including also the reference bibliography

In particular, the outline must include: :

- Aim of the final paper: you must clarify why would it be interesting to develop a specific research question. Its importance may be due to its topical interest, its importance, its national or global scale, its novelty (no one has ever researched the topic)
- Research Question: what do you wish to prove with your work?
- Method: descriptive analysis? Descriptive analysis and company case? What does the case wish to prove? How and with which reference sources? Empirical analysis? With which data base? With which variables? What results are expected?
- Results of the work: what are the conclusions? How do I show the results I wish to achieve?

8. Final draft

A possible outline of the final paper – to adapt to the specific needs of your Final Paper and to the instructions of the Supervisor (Tutor Professor) – might be the following:



- *Table of contents.*
- *Abstract* (summary, usually 100-200 words of your final paper topic, objective of the “research questions”, the method used and the main conclusions and contributions that emerged)
- *Introduction* (paragraph including the final paper topic, the criteria for gathering of material, the aim, the “research questions”)
- *Method:*
 - **descriptive:** Review of the relevant literature and the reference theories
 - **empiric:** empiric area where the research was carried out, data collection criteria, data analysis criteria.
- *Development :*
 - **descriptive:** comments and reasoning on the existing theory with links and comparisons with other situations
 - **empiric:** analysis of the data collected and the information that has emerged
- *Conclusions* (giving the answers to the “research question”, the limits of the work carried out, the implications for the theory and, if necessary, for putting it into practice).
- *Bibliography.*

The material written by the student may be made available outside university premises. The student is therefore urged to use appropriate, professional language even in acknowledgements to family and friends..

Format specifications of the final paper, further details on assignment procedures, submission and assessment of the final paper are available on

- “Guide to the University” section Bachelor Programs >“Final Paper” published on the website at www.unibocconi.eu/studentguide



APPENDIX 1: BOCCONI LIBRARY RESOURCES TO WRITING THE FINAL PAPER

The Bocconi Library makes available a wide range of resources, searchable through the online catalogue (<http://lib.unibocconi.it>). In addition to the print resources (books and journals), there are many electronic resources (specialized databases, e-journals, working papers, statistics, floppy disks and CD-ROMs) focused on various subjects, such as economics, law and social sciences. More information is available on the Library web pages.

Especially relevant electronic resources are:

• Databases

Business Source Complete (management, business, ...), *EconLit* (economics, finance, economic theory, ...), *Factiva* (financial-economic information and news), *LexisNexis* (legal and financial-economic information), *ISI Web of Science* (social sciences, sciences, ...), *MathSciNet* (mathematics), *CIS Extended Database* (statistical sciences), *Il Foro italiano and InfoLEGES.it*, (law), *Historical Abstracts* (history). For many articles the full text is available. Financial and economic data (quotations, equities, indexes, bonds, balance sheets, macroeconomic data, ...) can be retrieved from databases such as *Aida*, *Amadeus*, *Bankscope*, *Datastream*, *Bondware*, and similar.

• E-journals

Multidisciplinary collections: *EbscoHost EJS*, *Elsevier/Kluwer*, *Jstor*; specialistic collections: *Bepress Journals* (economics), *Emerald* (management), *Kluwer Law International* (law), *Il Mulino Rivisteweb* (social sciences). Electronic journals allow to retrieve the full text of articles published generally after the middle of the 1990s, except *Jstor*, the main resource for articles published in international academic journals between the end of the 1800s until the 1970s and 1980s.

• Working papers

Working papers produced by single academic institutions or research centres (e.g. NBER, CEPR) as well as working paperarchives, such as *EconPapers* (<http://econpapers.repec.org/>) and *Social Science Research Network – SSRN* (<http://www.ssrn.com>).

• Statistics

The Library's Electronic Resources Service has selected statistical resources produced by Italian and international statistical agencies and freely accessible on the web. In addition to these, a remarkable amount of statistics on subscription (e.g. *SourceOECD*, *World Development Indicators*, *UN Contrade*) is available for the Bocconi users only in order to offer a single access point to multiple sources to facilitate socio-economic



research. Worth a note is ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research), a vast archive of socio-economic data available to members of ICPSR consortium, which Bocconi is part of.

The Library offers also several services to support research and studying: borrowing (20 books for final year Bachelor program students), interlibrary loan, reference, support in selecting the appropriate resources, as well as help and assistance in using the electronic resources effectively. Courses on library and bibliographic instruction are also offered as educational integrative activity to all students aimed at enabling them to utilize library resources efficiently for course assignments and theses. Special emphasis is given to the use of the electronic resources and the web, as well as to the evaluation and selection of appropriate information.

APPENDIX 2: GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY AND QUOTING THE WORKS IN THE TEXT

A) Writing the bibliography

Scientific journals:

- Surname and author initials (if more than one author, the last one is separated by “and”)
- Year of publication (in parenthesis, followed by “a”, “b” etc. if there are several works by the same author/year)
- Title of the article
- Title of the journal (in italics)
- Volume (in italics)
- Number (in parenthesis)
- First and last page of the article.

Examples :

Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989a). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4): 532-550.

Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989b). Making fast strategic decisions in high-velocity environments. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32(3): 543-576.

Books

- Surname and author initials (if more than one author, the last one is separated by “and”)
- Year of publication (in parenthesis)
- Title and subtitle of the book (in italics)
- Edition
- Indication of the edition in the original language, if required (optional; in parenthesis)
- Place of publication



- Publishing house

Example:

Bailey, K.D. (1995). *Metodi della ricerca sociale*. 2nd Italian edition (Original edition: *Methods of social research*, New York, The Free Press, 1982). Bologna: Il Mulino.

Chapters in books edited by other authors

- Surname and initials of the author/s of the chapter (if more than one author, the last one is separated by “and”)
- Year of publication (in parenthesis)
- Title of the chapter
- Surname and name of the book editor/s (if more than one author, the last one is separated by “and”)
- Indication “Ed.” or “Ed.s” (in parenthesis)
- Title of the book (in italics)
- Edition
- Place of publication
- Publishing house
- Number of pages in the chapter

Example:

Bickman, L., Rog, D.J., and Hedrick, T.E. (1998). Applied research design: A practical approach. In L. Bickman, and D.J. Rog (ed.) *Handbook of applied social research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 5-37.

Working Paper

- Surname, author/s initials (if more than one author, the last one is separated by “and”)
- Year of publication (in parenthesis)
- Title and subtitle of the WP (in italics)
- (if required) title of the WP collection and WP number
- Editor/place of publication

Examples:

Easton, G. (2004). *One case study is enough*. Working Paper. Lancaster University, UK.

Han, S-K., and Moen, P. (1998). Clocking out: Multiplex time in retirement. BLCC Working Paper n.98-3, Cornell University.

B) Quotation of works in the text

The quotation of works in the text of the Final Paper may follow two criteria:



- quotation of the work in a *footnote*, indicated by a number in the text;
- *parenthetical quotation*, where the reference to the quoted text is indicated in the text itself, in parenthesis.

The choice between the two criteria is based on personal preference and on the conventions adopted in the discipline the student is working on (regarding this last aspect, to help students decide they can consult the reference bibliography or discuss it with the supervisor).

The simplest most common criteria used – above all in rather limited works such as articles in journals and working papers – in marginal disciplines and financial ones is the parenthetical quotation. This means writing only the author's surname and year of publication in the text itself in parenthesis, separated by a comma. If the author's name is already in the text, indicate only the year of publication in parenthesis. If the concept expressed in the text refers to more than one author, insert all the references in parenthesis, in alphabetical order separated by a semicolon. Should the authors of the concept referred to be many, and for simplicity's sake you wish only to cite only a few, their names are preceded by "for example,".

"The concept of 'grounded theory building' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is a comparative methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data generated from case studies".

"Popular examples of research based on case studies include Selznick's (1949) TVA study or Allison's (1971) Cuban Missile Crisis study".

"The case studies may deal with one or more cases and at different levels of analysis (e.g., Eisenhardt, 1989a; Yin, 1984)".

Should the citation include in the quotation marks a part of the text cited, you must add to "surname/date" also the page number or numbers where the cited text can be found:

"With reference to Bettenhausen and Murnighan (1986, p.352-3): 'we observed the results of an experiment analyzing the decision-making processes and coalition formation of groups...'"

If the authors are 3 or more, all their names must be included the first time the work is cited. Afterwards it is sufficient to include the surname of the first author followed by "et al.", in italics (which stands for "et alia" = and others). The example of a book chapter above will be cited the first time as "... (Bickman, Rog and Hedrick, 1998) ...", while the second time and thereafter it will be cited as "... (Bickman et al., 1998) ...".