

Dissertations and dissertation print of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences,
Vienna
Module 1: dissertations

“Frequently asked questions”

Guthmann-Peterson, 28.7.2004

What is the purpose of uniformly structured dissertations?

Dissertations are publications of the university that are impacted by outside sources to an enormous extent not only because they are filed nationally and internationally, but also because they are disseminated through the exchange of written works by the university library. As a general rule, it usually takes several years for the interested public to take notice of dissertations, unless they are featured in popular journals or the mass media. This makes it necessary to structure dissertations not only in terms of their content, but also formally to where – as intended by the authors and the university – they create a large impact.

What is the purpose of specifications for the composition of dissertations?

The template and manual for writing dissertations correspond with the most recent scientific literature and help ensure that your manuscript will be easy to read and will meet all formal requirements. The manual also addresses general questions concerning scientific works, operating the PC and working with word processing software. Guthmann-Peterson publishers worked in conjunction with the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna, the Vice-rector for Research, the library and computer center in developing the template and manual for writing dissertations.

Why should I work with this template?

The template and the manual are supposed to provide a formal and technical guideline for writing your dissertation. Following these guidelines will make it easier to reproduce your dissertation on different computers and platforms once it is saved as a PDF document. This in turn simplifies printing and binding of copies for submission and facilitates electronic archiving.

Am I allowed to use another program for writing my dissertation?

Our main concern is to make the formal composition of your dissertation easier for you. The use of Microsoft Word is not required. You may use any application with which you are comfortable. You will be still able to use the template as a sample and to “reconstruct” it to guarantee that your work will comply with the formal criteria of the University for Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna. However, as a general rule we advise against writing your work in a spreadsheet application, such as Microsoft Excel (we have had this situation before, note of publisher Guthmann-Peterson), or with “exotic” software because the resulting file format may not be readable by the publisher. Also, assistance with problems you encounter may be less available. If you would prefer to write and create the layout of your work using another application it will be best to find out in advance about the specifications of different applications and versions and also ask the computer center of the university about their experiences with using your application of choice.

Am I allowed to write my dissertations with a graphics software?

In general, scientific texts are written with word processing software. However, if the work contains many illustrations, many authors may write and make up their manuscripts with graphics programs such as QuarkXPress.

Unfortunately, the file format created with graphics software is difficult to file and index without additional manipulation. The software extensions to Quark XPress that enable such manipulation (manage notes, larger tables, etc.) also add significant cost (300–600 Euro per feature). Additionally, many such extensions are limited to the Apple Macintosh platform. Ventura Publisher presents an attractive feature set for the dissertation writer but is not in much use, being available only in an English version.

Why is the template for dissertations (currently) only available for Word?

The template and the manual were thus far only created for and with Word due to its popularity when creating documents. Nonetheless, we are aware of the disadvantages of Word and address specific problems also in our manual and how to counteract them. Additionally, the University is due to high costs not able to purchase licenses for all available programs. Unfortunately, other word processing programs such as WordPerfect, that had been used by the Guthmann-Peterson publishing house for almost 12 years, or Word Pro, have other weaknesses as well and score even worse when compared with Word, and therefore we do not recommend them either and have decided to continue working with Word. The template and manual were created using Word and with Word in mind as an enormously popular software for creating documents. Nonetheless, the manual addresses some of Word’s limitations and offers solutions to specific problems.

Will templates be available for other word processing programs in the future?

By Fall 2004 the computer center hopes to launch a template for StarOffice 7. In a comparative analysis made Spring 2004, StarOffice 7/OpenOffice 1.1 scored very well compared to Word and other word processing software. It has proven very reliable with large documents, enables the inclusion and processing of images, automatically generates indexes, allows the creation of PDF files directly from the application, etc. If you need other versions, such as for LaTeX, please contact our representative for dissertation prints Univ.-Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Dr. Dr. h. c. mult. Winfried E. H. Blum. The University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna will attempt to develop other versions if there is demand for it.

What is the difference between dissertations and dissertations published as books?

Formatting requirements and page settings of the document template are modeled to the format A4 and the standard composition requirements for dissertations. In contrast, dissertations published as books are published in a smaller format and are structured differently than dissertations or purely scientific texts. However, the predefined formats facilitate converting of the text into a book format, given that the authors follow the specifications and clearly highlight their individual variations. Whenever dissertations of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna are supposed to be published as a book version, the publisher will consult the authors on how to adapt their approved dissertations to a book format. The publisher will provide a sample layout based on the dissertation that will be used by the authors to develop the final print version. The degree of adherence to the specifications of the publisher based on their previous experience will determine how easy it will be to convert the dissertation to a book format. This consultation will also address linguistic and stylistic issues and subsequently yield recommendations for the composition of the dissertation in terms of format and content that are jointly developed with the authors in accordance with the requirements of the university. Dissertations and other works that have not been composed with this template will of course also be able to be published as a book version, however this will involve more work and higher costs.

Which dissertations are accepted for publishing and is following the template for dissertations a prerequisite for publishing my dissertation as a book version by Guthmann-Peterson publishers?

Generally speaking, all dissertations that are completed at the University for Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna and that are expected to be of interest to a broader audience are acceptable for publishing as part of the series “Dissertations of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna” when approved by the dissertation supervisor. Funding is not available for dissertations that are not part of this series. Specifically, sponsoring for printing costs on part of the university will not be granted for publications in other publication organs. Because of the new direction of the University for Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna and the launching of a new dissertation series with a new publisher we seek to facilitate the design of innovative dissertations that nevertheless conform to university specifications, and also to assist authors in their work. With this in mind, the recommended layout not only helps the University but the authors in particular. Writing dissertations that adhere to template specifications is also an important prerequisite for university sponsorship of printing costs. Sponsorship is currently intended for about 10% of all dissertations, but adherence to the specification is recommended for dissertations that have not yet been printed.

What do I have to do in order to publish my dissertation as a book?

Authors of dissertations whose publications are sponsored by the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna should first consult the publisher before submitting their manuscripts along with a deposit of Euro 600,00 for up to 150 pages and EUR 800,00 plus VAT for any works longer than 150 pages printing cost allowance. If interested in publishing your dissertation, please contact the university representative for dissertation prints Univ.-Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Dr. Dr. h. c. mult. Winfried E. H. Blum, Department of Forest and Soil Sciences, Gregor Mendel-Strasse 33, 1180 Vienna, phone: 01/47654-3100, E-Mail: winfried.blum@boku.ac.at.

Are collective dissertations written and are they accepted?

Collective dissertations are generally no problem and are rather welcomed by the head of the university. It is important to compose the individual texts in a uniform manner and to maintain the format throughout the entire work. The manual provides assistance for inserting individual parts into a new document and facilitates the adaptation of paragraphs and tables through its pre-formatting. Printing of collective dissertations in a book version will only be funded if all of the manuscripts are unpublished. The University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna is not able to cover the costs for previously published works.

How will I ensure the uniformity of the texts of collective dissertations?

Simply create a new document based on the template and copy all texts and articles that you wish to include in your dissertation into this new document. For the subsequent process of standardizing all documents use a text that can be regarded as the largest common denominator for all documents and adapt all pertaining articles accordingly.

For collective dissertations it is not only essential that the entire document be either in German or English but that the work is written in a uniform language and style, also in respect to citations. This is especially important if quoting articles from many different sources, as specifications for manuscripts vary among different publications.

Is it possible to write dissertations in a foreign language?

Yes, as long as the legal requirements are fulfilled. Please obtain the necessary information from your supervisors or the rector of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna. However, dissertations in English and those written in other languages should be composed according to the formal criteria of the document template due to the aforementioned reasons, and furthermore the composition of the text, the citation rules etc. should be adapted to the usage of the Anglo-Saxon academic activity.

Is it possible to diverge from the template?

As a general rule, divergence from the template is possible whenever the nature of the work calls for such a measure and provided that the variations are maintained uniformly throughout the entire dissertation. Maintaining uniform notation of names, terms, abbreviations, etc. is more important than consistent punctuation.

Why do all chapters begin on the page?

From an ecological perspective it would make sense to not always begin each main chapter of the dissertation on a new page on the right hand side. In the context of the generation of the template it was however assumed that in most cases the authors use various Word- routines and operate with different master- and sub-documents. If you prefer not to divide your work into chapters structured with Word- routines or your content requires you not to, it will be to have all chapters begin on the right page. This will make it easier for you to connect your chapters without having to worry about producing twice the same page number where two distinct pages “break.”

Do I have to follow the structure?

The proposed structure adheres to recently-completed scientific works at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna to relevant specifications of the DIN. This guarantees dissertations will meet Austrian and international standards as well. For example, most sample dissertations referenced do not separate results and discussion into different chapters. However, separating results and discussion may be advisable with significantly long dissertations.

Point 4 of the manual, “Composition of the dissertation,” illustrates how dissertations in the social sciences, for example, may deviate from the default structure. We felt the template’s versatility obviated the need for creating a separate template for dissertations of this type.

I have more than three structuring levels in my work!

In general we advise you to structure your writing on three levels. Word enables continuous restructuring of chapters, but this causes problems as the structure of your document becomes increasingly more complex.

Even if you intend to publish your dissertation as a book we recommend you keep your structure simple and clear.

Why am I supposed to specify keywords?

The keywords that you select will facilitate the filing process and easier retrieval of your work later on. If your dissertation is to be published as a book later the specified keywords will be included in the Verzeichnis Lieferbarer Bücher (VLB- *index of available books*) and the Catalogue in Publication (CIP). Your keywords, together with a description of the book up to 200 characters in length, are particularly useful to search engines on the Internet.

May I modify the title page?

Whether you dislike the format of the title page or feel the need to add further comments to it: the title page must meet all specified requirements and retain a style identical to all dissertations of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna. The default style corresponds with these academic requirements in its current format, and we urge you not to modify it. You also risk spending an inordinate amount of time making changes to the fonts, for instance. If you are interested in obtaining your own copies and binding of your dissertation, the company Facultas Digitaldruck will adapt the manuscript to your specifications then. If an unusual circumstance suggests it, e.g., the length of a title, you are certainly allowed to reduce the font. However, you should discuss with your supervisors and the Vice-rector for Research any changes pertaining to content in advance .

Do I have to include indexes for figures, tables and abbreviations?

Whether you include indexes for figures and tables will largely depend on the number of figures and tables you intend to include with your text. If you only insert a few, you are not obliged to include an index. In this case you will only have to delete the chapter title(s) in your text and in the course of the automatic generation of the index this entry will be deleted from the index. The same rule goes for abbreviations and an index of abbreviations. We advise against the excessive use of abbreviations, as they are time-consuming to have to look up.

Am I allowed to alter the margins and the position of the page numbers?

The margins may be changed if needed from the standard 2,5 cm and 2 cm (bottom margin) to e.g. 1.5 cm or 2 cm. Remember to leave enough space for the binding perforations along the left side. Publication as a book at a later time would require uniform margins along both sides of the page. Unfortunately Word does not allow an exact specification of the space between the page number and the bottom of the last line of a page. In terms of work economy it will make more sense to not alter paragraphs and format too much. A rather loose page break will make corrections and changes easier later on.

Am I allowed to insert headers and footnotes?

Generally speaking, the formatting of headers and footnotes is possible, but we suggest you insert the page number directly into the header.

However, Word will cause reoccurring problems when managing master and subdocuments particularly for comprehensive dissertations and so we refrained from using headers to spare you from extensive manual correction.

Am I allowed to alter the space between the paragraphs?

The space between paragraphs was defined as 6 points. If you have selected the page layout of the document with “vertical center justification” Word will adjust all paragraphs to the specified page height. Therefore, it is important that the function for “vertical center justification” not be activated, because this would result in inconsistent spacing between the bottom of the last line and the page number and also lead to problems with text widows and orphans.

Am I required to write my document left-justified?

It is possible for authors to format their text left-justified or fully-justified. We recommend left-justified formatting for several reasons: (a) Word has trouble with hyphenation with longer documents. In some cases automatic hyphenation randomly fails, causing unnecessary text wraps to occur. (b) With full justification words are sometimes stretched to fit an entire line, which can cause blanks in lines with long words. (c) Authors sometimes try to counteract this problem by manually forcing hyphenation in order to make for visually appealing text flow. However, subsequent edits to the content would require extensive manual editing of the forced hyphens.

Am I allowed to make the font in the text larger or smaller?

The Corporate Identity (CI) of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Science, Vienna specifies Arial as its standard font. This font may cause problems at larger font sizes because of inconsistent character spacing. It is also possible that a user did not install Arial on his/her PC. As an alternative you may use Helvetica, for example, rather than spend too much time experimenting with different font families. The question whether the font size should exceed 11 point depends largely on the resulting number of pages. A larger font size implies a larger volume and thus more effort in preparing the document.

I would like to distinguish parts (words) of my text...

Distinguishing text

In general, it is best to refrain from overusing emphasis devices such as bold, italic and underline. Choosing one type of emphasis is a good idea, especially for manuscripts that may come to be republished in book form in the future. In these cases we recommend italics.

Distinguishing titles

Titles occur in bold in the standard template, to distinguish them from normal text. These formatting rules correspond with that of the paragraph template and are adapted by the index, which is automatically generated. It is important that this formatting is not manually altered as this would change the font of the index and affect the highly sensitive indexing process in Word.

I do not want to include spaces between words or numbers and measurements as this may result in word-wraps between word or numbers and measurements.

The idea to write 50m instead of 50 m or 50km instead of 50 km probably stems from concerns of unintended word-wraps due to features such as full-justification. One way to circumvent this problem involves using a “hard” space instead of a regular space (Word: Shift+Ctrl+space bar, Lotus WordPro: Ctrl+space bar). We encourage you to include the space between measurement and unit in deference to German grammar. German grammar rules specify that every character “counts” and that an abbreviation stands for an entire word. Omitting the space would be tantamount to creating a new word, such as “fiftykilomenters” for 50km and “seventykilometers” for 70km which is, of course, nonsensical.

Am I allowed to change the font size of the text in the tables?

The font size of the titles of tables and the font in the cells corresponds to general standards. In general the font size of table and figure titles and for the text inside each table cell should be smaller by one or two font sizes (reference size) than the main font (reading size) of the document. This is the reason why we chose 10 point for the font inside the tables except for the table on page 17, table 2, where the font is only 9 point to enable the insertion of larger tables onto a single page. The font inside a table can also be larger if that becomes necessary. Such formatting should not be performed manually. You should use a paragraph-based stylesheet instead, as subsequent editing of manually-applied styles are rather complicated. You should consider that in case of future printing of your dissertation the tables will have to be adjusted to the smaller book format. In such a case it might not be possible to reduce the tables further as the text would become illegible.

Do I have to follow the specifications for tables?

The column width of tables was specified with a maximum of 15.5 cm to ensure that the tables won't exceed the print space. The tables may vary with respect to cells and columns according to need and may be full- or left-justified. You may also depict larger tables on one separate page in a landscape format (as described in the manual and as shown in a wide sample table in the template). It is important that your formatting makes sense also at a later time. It does not make much sense to format in one table 15 different texts with 15 different styles.

The citing rules do not correspond with my requirements

The citation rules were developed in accordance with Dr. Hainz-Sator and Mr. Heller from the university library and allow for a certain degree of individual variation. It is particularly important to us that the citations within one work are uniform and that they do not greatly interfere with the reading of the text when the dissertation is available in a book version. This will also make it easier for you to create a list of references.

Footnotes

In the process of evaluating the template and the manual for composing dissertations it was considered whether a distinction should be made between social scientific and scientific dissertations in terms of citation requirements. Generally speaking, footnotes are more common in social scientific dissertations but occur with less frequency in scientific works. However, Mr. Heller found in the course of his investigation that citations with footnotes, characteristic for social scientific works, were only used by a very small percentage of approved dissertations of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna, and only within certain fields of expertise. Based on this information we suggest you refrain from using footnotes.

How shall I handle images that are larger than A 4?

Larger illustrations and photographs often cause problems when composing texts. You may try to scan large illustrations and insert them into the document at a reduced size as the template permits it. Large-format diagrams (e.g., blueprints) should be (transversely) photocopied and folded down to the dissertation's size, since reducing their size to DIN A 4 format is likely to render them illegible. In some cases it may also be possible to scan over-sized images and to include them in a CD-ROM inserted into the dissertation. In such cases you are advised to consult your supervisors and obtain information from the multimedia user room of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna or from the computer center.