WRITING-UP A THESIS
What to consider?

Workshop for HRM honours students
Lecturer - Dr. Eva Bilhuber B360 Expert
Discussion Points

1. How do you think about your mini thesis?
   Some words for introduction

2. How to go about the main parts of your mini thesis?
   The problem, your findings and critical discussion thereof

3. How to write?
   Writing style & some hints for organizing your writing

4. Your questions?
   Happy to help find answers

5. What to expect from your endeavour?
   Some words for conclusion

Most parts of this presentation are based on: Andy Field (2016) Writing up research. In: Discovering statistics
1. How do you think about your mini thesis?
How do you think about your mini thesis?
How do you think about your mini thesis?

Research has to do with «search» - You are an adventurer embarking an endeavor trip

Example:
How can we raise graduate employability in Namibia?
How do you think about your mini thesis?

You are an adventurer embarking an endeavor trip

Possible ways to come to answers:
- Ask my colleagues
- Ask a teacher or expert
- Ask the internet
- Trial & Error (experiment)
- Introspection: Answer myself
- ..... 

Scientific way to come to answer
- Investigate with a scientific methodology approach (qualitative, quantitative, mixed)

Quality of answer
subjective (opinion) and not generalizable answer

Quality of answer
generalizable answer
How do you think about your mini thesis?

You are an adventurer embarking an endeavor trip

Problem Question

With your thesis you show that you can find answers by applying a scientific research approach

Generalizable Answer
How do you think about your mini thesis?

Chose an accepted scientific methodology to come to a generalizable answer (not comprehensive)

**QUANTITATIVE METHODS**

Quantitative methods help explaining the how and why of phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics).
- Surveys
- Experiments
- Business Simulations
- Official archival data bases (e.g. annual reports, etc.)

**QUALITATIVE METHODS**

Qualitative methods seek to answer questions about why and how people behave in the way that they do. It provides in-depth information about human behavior.
- Case studies
- Archival narratives (e.g. protocols)
- Narrative Interviews / Observations
- Field/Action Research
- Focus Groups

**MIXED**

Case Studies
How do you think about your mini thesis?

In sum: You write a story about your endeavor trip

Existing Answers
LITERATURE REVIEW

Route
METHODOLOGY

Observations
RESULTS / FINDINGS

Evaluate Results
DISCUSSION

Insight for others
CONCLUSION

Source: Müller-Stewens (2014) unpublished
2. How to go about the main parts of your mini thesis?
Main structure

An international standard in academic writing
Main structure of your mini thesis

Mini thesis in Human Resources Management at NUST:

- Introduction & Background of Study
- Literature Review
- Research Design / Methodology
- Presentation of results / findings
- Discussion of results
- Conclusion and recommendations
Introduction

- **What is the problem?**
  Problem Statement

- **Why this problem is important?**
  Context and practical significance of the Problem. Who do you want to inform with your insights?

- **What is the research gap?**
  You might find that previous research findings are inconsistent, ambiguous or not addressing sufficiently the issue - what research gap do you try to close?

- **What is your research objective?**

- **What is your research question?**

- **What is the scope of the research?**

- **Outline of thesis**
Introduction

What is the problem?

Example:

*How to raise graduate employability in Namibia?*

- e.g. facts about graduate employability in Namibia – wish to increase
e.g.: for employers (HRM), universities, politics: to keep talent in country to prosper economy and decrease inequality etc.
e.g.: there are high investments in higher education programs, such as WIL – effects on employability not sufficiently examined.
e.g.: contribute to better design of programs
e.g.: what factor of WIL-Program does impact most the graduate employability out of the retrospective view of graduates?
e.g.: Ex-NUST students in HRM, graduated 2015

Why this problem is important?

What is the research gap?

What is your research objective?

What is your research question?

What is the scope of the research?
Introduction

- What is the problem?  
  Problem Statement

- Why this problem is important?  
  Context and practical significance of the Problem. Who do you want to inform with your insights?

- What is the research gap?  
  You might find that previous research findings are inconsistent, ambiguous or not addressing sufficiently the issue - what research gap do you try to close?

- What is your research objective

- What is your research question?

- What is the scope of the research?

- Outline of thesis

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**Introduction:**
Re-write your introduction after you have finished the whole thesis

In the first chapter, clearly state what the purpose of the study is and explain the study’s significance.

The significance is addressed by discussing how the study adds to the theoretical body of knowledge in the field and the study’s practical significance for professionals in the field being examined.

Ph.D. students also must explain how their research makes an original contribution to the body of knowledge in their discipline.
Evaluation criteria of mini thesis

Honours mini thesis in HRM - INTRODUCTION

- What is the mini-thesis going to do and why? This must be captured in the context of problem statement.
- Has the mini-thesis been placed in the wider context?
- Are the objectives clearly identified and stated.
- Research question clearly stated.
- Same for the significance of the study and is the mini-thesis properly scoped.
Main structure of your mini thesis

Mini thesis in Human Resources Management at NUST:

- Introduction & Background of Study
- Literature Review
- Research Design / Methodology
- Presentation of results / findings
- Discussion of results
- Conclusion and recommendations
In this chapter you discuss recent the relevant research and literature underlying your research question in focus

- Build your argumentation from the generic to the specific
- Focus on latest research and research gaps
- End with your research gap you intend to close and your predictions (hypothesis).

Example – Research Question:
What factor of WIL-Program does impact most the graduate employability out of the retrospective view of graduates?

End with research gap and prediction what you think you will find: e.g. most relevant factor out of view of students is the internship experience in WIL
The literature review thus describes and analyzes previous research on the topic. This chapter, however, should not merely string together what other researchers have found. Rather, you should discuss and analyze the body of knowledge with the ultimate goal of determining what is known and is not known about the topic. This determination leads to your research questions (the gap you intend to close) and/or hypotheses. In some cases, of course, you may determine that replicating previous research is needed.
Example – Research Question:
What factor of WIL-Program does impact most the GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY out of the retrospective view of graduates?

Latest Research
International & Regional Academic Journals

Ground Concepts
Theory Books

Actual Facts
Practice Journals & Day-to-day Press

List of Journals:
Make a search among the leading HRM Journals latest articles first—internationally as well as in South Africa Take one core article and search for citations
Literatur Review

Browse the latest Issues, read (1) titles, (2) abstracts and (3) discussion/conclusion -> decide if important for you

- Workplace bullying and absenteeism: The mediating roles of poor health and work engagement (pages 319–334)
  Christopher Magee, Ross Gordon, Laura Robinson, Peter Caputi and Lindsay Oades
  Version of Record online: 30 May 2017 | DOI: 10.1111/1748-8583.12156
  Abstract | Article | PDF (1210K) | References | Request Permissions

- “Handle with care”: The mediating role of schedule i-deals in the relationship between supervisors’ own caregiving responsibilities and employee outcomes (pages 335–349)
  Mirela Las Heras, Beatrice I.J.M. Van der Heijden, Jeroen De Jong and Yasin Rofcanin
  Version of Record online: 5 Jul 2017 | DOI: 10.1111/1748-8583.12160
  Abstract | Article | PDF (865K) | References | Request Permissions

- The effect of applicant political skill on the race dissimilarity-recruiter recommendation relationship (pages 350–365)
  Jacob W. Breland, Stephanie R. Seitz, Darren C. Treadway, Kathi J. Love, Brooke A. Gazdag
  Version of Record online: 5 Jul 2017 | DOI: 10.1111/1748-8583.12157
  Abstract | Article | PDF (796K) | References | Request Permissions

**ABSTRACT**

The organizational impact of leadership development practices is still not fully understood. Research confirms that in some cases effects can be found and in others not. Most of these attempts search for contribution to a company’s human capital. A contribution to social capital development remains an unexplored source of variance in understanding how leadership development impacts organizational performance. This paper therefore explores— from a strategic management perspective—how leadership development practices may contribute to social capital development. We chose the strategic context of a large multinational firm in which social capital across business units play an important role for competitive advantage. The exploratory case study reveals that: 1) Social capital differs regarding its intensity and develops through stages characterized by contact, assimilation, and identification experiences. 2) Leadership development practices differ in their potential contribution to social capital development stages and should therefore be designed accordingly.

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Evaluation criteria of mini thesis

Honours mini thesis in HRM – LITERATURE REVIEW

- Summary of findings from previous research, including a discussion of omissions and contradictions, include similarities, development of arguments and the researchers’ viewpoints.

- Evidence of extensive research (breadth and depth) uses a range of appropriate and up-to-date sources including books, journals, reports the Internet and trade press (where appropriate).

- Evidence of evaluation and selectivity in the material presented. Identifies and develops concepts from analogous applications in other areas to underpin the work. Able to identify themes, structure ideas and present convincing argument.
Main structure of your mini thesis

Mini thesis in Human Resources Management at NUST:

- Introduction & Background of Study
- Literature Review
- **Research Design / Methodology**
- Presentation of results / findings
- Discussion of results
- Conclusion and recommendations
Research Design / Methodology

This is the description of your «Route» - How were the data gathered? This section should be written so that someone else can repeat the research (your journey) just by reading your method section.
Research Design / Methodology

Example – Research Question:
What factor of WIL-Program does impact most the GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY out of the retrospective view of graduates?

WIL-Factor
- Internship
- Application Support by University
- Mentorship

Graduate Employability
- Employed today

Quantitative Survey-Approach
- Design a questionnaire
- Send to 20-50 HRM students graduated in 2015
- Analysis of response

Qualitative Approach
- Design an interview guide
- Interview 5 students
- Analysis of interview narratives

Archival Data
- Try to get data from Graduate Exit survey and analyse it

Example – Research Question:
What factor of WIL-Program does impact most the GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY out of the retrospective view of graduates?
Research Design / Methodology

- Description of research approach
- Description of the research design
- Instruments or methods used (or development thereof), such as e.g., question guide, categories for content analysis
- Description of the research process / project
- Description of population and description of and justification for type of sample used or method for selecting units of observation
- administration of instrument or method for making observations (e.g., interviews, observation, content analysis)
- Description of data analysis process (e.g. coding of data)
- Statistical analysis and tests you performed
- Evtl. Pre-tests or piloting experiences
Evaluation criteria of mini thesis

Honours mini thesis in HRM – RESEARCH APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

- Specify the methodology and the process for the research with justification for choice.
- Evidence (of how does design (research plan) link to the statement of the problem, objectives, research questions and literature?)
- Evidence of coherence and rigour, appropriateness of methods of data collection and analysis, and clear evidence of effective organizing and sequencing of work.
Main structure of your mini thesis

Mini thesis in Human Resources Management at NUST:
- Introduction & Background of Study
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Results

This chapter addresses the results from your data analysis only. This chapter does NOT include discussing other research literature or the implications of your findings.

- What did you find? It should be a summary of your findings
- Begin with description of the analysis and data
- Report the findings in sentence form
- Generally one reports descriptive statistics and then inferential statistics (e.g. any descriptive or exploratory/confirmatory analyses (e.g., reliability tests, factor analysis) that were conducted. You next address the results of the tests of hypotheses. You then discuss any ex post facto analysis.)
- It may be helpful to provide a table or figure to aid in presenting the results from specific analyses.
- Finally ask yourself, if the graphs and table are not there, can the reader still understand the results?

Example – Prediction: Most important factor of WIL-Program was internship experience. -> found or not
Results

For qualitative and historical research, this chapter usually is organized by the themes or categories uncovered in your research. If you have conducted focus groups or interviews, it is often appropriate to provide a brief descriptive (e.g., demographic) profile of the participants first. Direct quotation and paraphrasing of data from focus groups, interviews, or historical artifacts then are used to support the generalizations made. In some cases, this analysis also includes information from field notes or other interpretative data (e.g., life history information).
Honours mini thesis in HRM – RESULTS

- Are the research questions answered and objectives met?
- The relevance of the data collected.
- The standard and format of presentation of the results, succinct description of results and an appreciation of the limitations of the data.
- An ability to discover, understand and analyse the data.
Main structure of your mini thesis

Mini thesis in Human Resources Management at NUST:

- Introduction & Background of Study
- Literature Review
- Research Design / Methodology
- Presentation of results / findings
- **Discussion of results**
- Conclusion and recommendations
Discussion

- You start to broaden up again your thesis and reconnect your specific study findings back to existing research.
- Start your discussion by summarizing your findings.
- Begin by discussing your findings in relation to the theoretical framework introduced in the literature review. In some cases, you may need to introduce new literature (particularly with qualitative research).
- Then relate these findings back to your original predictions and in turn what this means in terms of the question you were originally trying to answer. That are the theoretical implications of your findings?
- The purpose of this chapter is not just to reiterate what you found but rather to discuss what your findings mean in relation to the theoretical body of knowledge on the topic and your profession. Typically, students skimp on this chapter even though it may be the most important one because it answers the "So what?" question.

Example – Your prediction:

- Was not approved: It could not be approved that the most important factor for graduate employability is the internship.
  The reasons could be that it depends on the superior at workplace. (study x). It could also be an error of retrospective data collection.

- Was approved: It confirms that internships are the most important ingredient of employability. This is in line with other studies that have not included a students view.
Honours mini thesis in HRM – DISCUSSION

- How does the data integrate with, and question, the issues raised in the literature review.
- How does the primary/secondary data relate to the literature?
- Where appropriate, justification for the choice of statistical techniques employed.
- An ability to bring together information and ideas and to evaluate them. Is there integration with issues raised in the literature review? Are the results supporting or opposing the literature?
Main structure of your mini thesis

Mini thesis in Human Resources Management at NUST:
- Introduction & Background of Study
- Literature Review
- Research Design / Methodology
- Presentation of results / findings
- Discussion of results
- Conclusion and recommendations
Conclusion

- This chapter **starts with an overall summary** of the study, findings and answers found.
- This chapter also should address what your findings mean for professionals in the field being examined. In other words, what are the study's **practical implications and recommendations**?
- It next outlines the limitations of the study. **What are the weaknesses of your own study?** Are there any factors that could be improved?
- Based on this **areas for future research** then are proposed.
- Obviously, the thesis or dissertation ends with a brief conclusion that provides closure. **A strong final sentence should be written.**

search for a new problem? In conclusion sections of recent articles you find research problems for your next endeavour!!!
Honours mini thesis in HRM – CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reviews findings within the context of original research objectives.
- Draws together the findings of primary research and literature review to develop conclusions about the subject and the contribution of the thesis to knowledge in the subject area.
- Extends material into new areas, ideas and/or applications.
- Develops clear recommendations for the industry and possibly the development of theory from the analysis of data. There is a critical evaluation of the application of the study findings. Identifies opportunities for further research.
3. How to write?
Writing style

- Typically, scholarly writing has an objective stance - the writer’s voice is normally the passive voice (no subject).
- It is clearly the goal to seek for evidence for your arguments and answers (generalizability!). Either from your data or from existing literature.
- The source you have your argument from needs to be indicated, to make clear what are your own thoughts and what are those of others.
- In some disciplines you find as well the singular I/me/my/mine, or the plural we/us/our/ours form is allowed (particularly when several authors and a research project).
- Clearly states the significance of the topic, and is organized with adequate detail so that other scholars may try to replicate the results.
- Strong papers are not overly general and correctly utilize formal academic rhetoric.

How to reference – 3 possibilities:
1. Evidence suggests that …. (Legless, 1994).
2. Studies by Lengless (1994, 1987) indicate that …. 
3. Largerlout (1987) found that …. 

Based on: Lynch, T. (2014) Write up your PhD
Writing style

- **Word-Processing:** Thesis should be word-processed with a size 12 serif font (such as courier or Times new roman) with no handwriting.

- **Use of Colour:** Use colour only when absolutely necessary – most figures and graphs in APA publications are clear enough without the use of colour.

- **Abbreviations:** Give the full title of abbreviations on their first usage; do not overuse abbreviations and acronyms. You should only use abbreviations sparingly and only if it helps to understand the paper.

- **Emphasis:** A general rule of thumb is to use italics and other marks of emphasis (i.e. such things as quote marks, dashes to separate words, and capitalized letters) sparingly.

- **Quotations:** Short quotations (fewer than 40 words) should be incorporated in the text and longer quotes in freestanding, indented blocks of lines (double spaced), without quotation marks.
Evaluation criteria of mini thesis

Honours mini thesis in HRM – WRITING STYLE

- The layout is as specified in the regulations with appropriate use of language, spelling, grammar, diagrams, tables, citations and references (APA House Style), and appendices.
How to write well

Checklist – The MUSTs

- **Never turn in a first draft.** The secret of good writing is re-writing. Review and edit your paper – several times if necessary – to achieve your best work. The quality of your grade will depend on the quality of your work.

- **Never write your paper the night before (or day) it is due.** Write your paper and then walk away for 1-2 days from it. You will be surprised at the mistakes and improvements you will discover when you re-visit it.

- **Every paper is too long.** A good paper is direct, to the point, and economical. A good exercise is to a) write your paper, b) wait a couple of days, and then c) rewrite your paper cutting the length by one third.

- **Always proofread your paper.** Nothing makes a bad impression on a tutor like a paper that contains obvious typographical, spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.

- **Work from an (story-)outline.** It does not matter if you have all the facts if the reader has to work to make sense of your paper. Content is not enough. It has to be well-organized and each chapter should be linked to the other and build upon. Any lack of organization will result in not making.

Source: Andy Field (2016) Writing up research. In: Discovering statistics
How to write well

Checklist – The NICE

- Make it an interesting story. Remember that someone is going to read your paper, so make it interesting. No one likes a flat, monotonous, colourless recitation on a topic.

- Make sense. Give your report to a non-expert in your field. If they can understand it, then you have probably written clearly.
First, pick something that interests you deeply. Your interest is what carries you through the long days and nights of concentrated effort.

Find a special place to write. Make it a place where you can spread out papers and get messy. Get everybody to agree that you don't have to clean it up until the thesis is done.

Segment the writing of the whole thesis into small chunks. Tackle just one at a time. Avoid fixating on doing the entire thesis all at once. Instead, focus clearly on just one small piece at a time.

One way to begin to segment is to write a detailed subject outline of the thesis. Get right down to the subsection level – the part that takes only a page or two. First make a topic outline for the entire work. Then make a thesis outline; tell what your thesis (argument) will be for each subsection. Don't worry now about being totally and perfectly accurate in the outline. Certainly the structure will change a bit as you move along through the thesis. But having the detailed outline will prove a great help to finishing the thesis – especially when combined with scheduling and rewarding.
Make it less painful and more satisfying (2/2)

- **Schedule** your thesis writing for three days a week. (The days don't have to be consecutive.) Plan on completing one small subsection each day. After finishing the writing each day, research those nagging minor points that cropped up while you were writing – find the exact spelling of a name, for example, when it's been cited differently by your sources, or check out the correct pages numbers for an article.
  
  On the fourth day of the week, rewrite the three sections you finished most recently. Make sure that you have polished each chapter to a shimmering brilliance before copying it for supervisory committee members.
  
  On the fifth day, deliver thesis chapters to committee members, make appointments for consultation with experts whose help you need, and take care of all those other time-consuming chores.

- **Reward yourself.** Find something that gives you pleasure. Make it small, easy, inexpensive. Then, at the end of each day's writing, treat yourself! Tell yourself that you've done well! Acknowledge your progress to yourself! Feel good about it all! Some treats: M&M candies. Soaking in the tub. A phone chat with a friend. A donut. A five-mile run. Find something you enjoy. It'll help.

5. What to expect from your endeavor?
It’s a Journey

You are an adventurer to embark for an endeavor trip

- Curiosity
- Surprises
- Dedication
- Fun
- Exhausting
- Hard work
- Pride
- Frustration
- Persistence
- Rewarding
- Joy
- New Insights and horizons
It’s a Job

You will be rewarded
You are not alone

Ask colleagues, consult books, internet community, supervisors…

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Until 17 August 2017
Good Luck!