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Göttingen, 01.09.2021

Ihre Nachricht vom

Meine Nachricht vom

Ihr Zeichen

Mein Zeichen

**Guidance to formal aspects of bachelor and master thesis
in Forest Inventory and Remote Sensing
at the Faculty of Forest Sciences and Forest Ecology, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen**

The Chair of Forest Inventory and Remote Sensing does not make fixed and binding prescriptions for the format of bachelor and master thesis. As with forest inventory designs – there are so many good and very good approaches that it simply does not make sense to artificially define a „best practice“.

However, some guiding principles shall be observed:

- Consistency in all formatting issues throughout the text.
- Appealing format that supports easy reading and easy understanding. Avoid half empty pages – unless before the main chapters. If a graph or table is big, try to accommodate the text such that half empty pages are avoided.
- Adherence to international standards in citing, captions, list of references. Be consistent in the format you choose.
- The structure shall follow a clear scheme as common in empirical and data driven research. Other structures are possible, but need well to be justified.

The standard structure is as follows:

1. Introduction:

Gives the background to the topic, and analyses of literature: what have others already done in that field. This description may ideally be formulated such that it leads at the end to the specific questions covered in the thesis. The reader shall clearly see that the topic has a good justification.

Commonly the introduction ends with a sub-chapter specifying the objectives. A general objective may be formulated followed by a list of technical objectives or research questions. If hypotheses can be formulated, this should also come here.

2. Materials and methods

Here, all materials, data, maps, study sites, ... are described with all details that are relevant in the context of the thesis; not more. A lengthy blabla on all types of information not relevant for the specific study should be avoided here; it is boring for the reader.

Please pay attention that the description of methods must not make reference to the results. When writing the methods' section you assume that the results are unknown and are still to be produced!

3. Results

Here the results are given without further interpretations and discussion (such discussion is reserved for the next chapter). It is sometimes necessary, though, to point to particularities in the data and results – but never start making a full discussion in the results' section.

Commonly in our field, the results section has many graphs and tables. Pay attention that you are not overly redundant. If one and the same result is given in a table, then in a graph and is then lengthily described in the text – that is simply too much. Focus on what is best for the understanding of the results.

4. Discussion

Please restrict yourself to true discussion issues, not crafting another summary of methods and results!

5. Conclusions

Same as for „Discussion“: please restrict yourself to true conclusions, not crafting another summary of methods and results. It is normal that some discussion issues are taken up in the conclusions. Usually, the Conclusions section is quite short.

It follows an (unsystematic and certainly incomplete) list of typical errors / inconsistencies found in bachelor and master thesis – for illustration of examples that might be avoided:

1. A frequent error is writing a paragraph without chapter title. If, for example, Chapter 2 is subdivided in 2.1 and 2.2 and 2.3, there should not be any text between the title for Chapter 2 and the title for subchapter 2.1. Such text would simply be „free floating“ and cannot be referenced.
2. Don't forget acknowledgements to those who helped you – be it in field work, or getting permissions, or data analyses or intro to some software.
It is a matter of course to acknowledge that help – and it is not good practice to ignore it and leave it un-mentioned. At the end, you sign a statement in your thesis that you have only worked with the tools / information mentioned in the text.
3. Follow a logic sequence in your text and always have the reader in mind who has not worked for several months on the topic such as you.
4. When using abbreviations, write them out upon the first mentioning. If you use many acronyms, produce a list of acronyms at the beginning of the text.
5. Literal citations need to be clearly marked as such with the reference unmistakably given. Anything else would be appear as “plagiarism”. We advise you to make a final plagiarism-check with the software that GWDG makes available. By that you can identify literal citations where you might have missed / forgotten to properly give the reference. Please observe that the evaluators are authorized to do such checks on our electronic thesis. According to the Faculty's regulations, any plagiarism will need to lead to the grade 5.0 “not passed”. That is unpleasant – and can easily be avoided.