

Course Guide BSc Thesis Management and Consumer Studies

Code: YSS- 81812 (Thesis Management Studies)

YSS-82312 (Thesis Consumer Studies)

Credits: 12 ECTS

Contact Person: Ir. E.P. (Edwin) Kroese

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Department of Social Sciences Social Sciences (YSS) Leeuwenborch Hollandseweg 1 Building 201 6706 KN Wageningen

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1. Nature and learning outcomes of the BSc thesis

1.1 What is a thesis?

The BSc thesis is an **individual** assessment of your **competency** in different **academic research skills**, applied to your own **field of study** and resulting in a report that concludes the Major of the Bachelor Management and Consumer Studies (BBC). The thesis will result in a written report and is a **compulsory** part of the study programme.

1.2 Learning outcomes

The BSc thesis is based on independent **research**. The thesis allows you to demonstrate your knowledge in your field of study; to show that you can apply and integrate knowledge and research methods.

The learning outcomes of the BSc thesis, which can be found can be found in the Study Handbook¹ are:

After successful completion of this course you are expected to be able to:

- a) formulate a scientific research problem;
- b) find and access relevant literature;
- c) collect, review and structure relevant data (literature);
- d) critically analyse and interpret collected data;
- e) plan and carry out work within the available time;
- f) write a concise, clear and understandable report;
- g) orally present and defend the results of your research.

1.3 Nature of the thesis

The BSc thesis is usually a **literature study**. Depending on the aim of the research, theses can be divided into different types of literature studies:

- A literature review;
- An overview of recent developments;
- A critical analysis of existing theories;
- A critical analysis of inconsistencies in an author's work or discrepancies between several authors;
- A comparison between different research outcomes or theoretical findings;
- A historical-analytical reflection;
- Testing literature, theories, concepts, and ideas against the empirical world or empirical representations (existing datasets).

It is also possible to do (limited) **empirical or experimental research**. In this case the focus of the research will be on generating (not testing) a hypothesis. The possibility to do this within the available time/ECTS is very limited. It is important that the **scope and type** of research matches the amount of credits (11 ECTS).

¹ Major Management Studies: https://ssc.wur.nl/Handbook/Course/YSS-81812
Major Consumer Studies: https://ssc.wur.nl/Handbook/Course/YSS-82312

The thesis must be written **individually** due to the aim of the thesis (examination of individual knowledge and skills). Therefore, it is important that you have your own (research) assignment and work independently on that assignment.

However, two students each working on their **own thesis** can still collaborate. It is possible that two or more research topics can be defined within the same research theme.

1.4 The differences between a BSc thesis and an MSc thesis

Naturally the BSc thesis **differs** from an MSc thesis. A BSc thesis is often – but not always – a literature study, whilst a MSc thesis usually contains a substantial part of empirical data collection, an experimental or design phase. Furthermore, the analytical component in a MSc thesis is substantially larger. Moreover, during a BSc thesis a student will receive more guidance than during a MSc thesis.

The most important differences between a BSc and an MSc thesis are clearly shown in the table below:

	BSc thesis	MSc thesis
Problem statement	Student is given a (somewhat) predefined assignment.	Student defines own assignment.
Theoretical	Student discusses and applies a number of theories.	Student independently considers, selects and links theories.
Methodological	Student is assisted in choosing and applying (a) research method(s).	Student chooses the research method(s) and reflects on the use of these methods.

1.5 Language

The thesis may be written in English or in Dutch. The choice of language does not affect the assessment of the thesis. However, writing the thesis in English gives you the opportunity to further develop your English writing skills and have these skills assessed.

1.6 Colloquium

An oral presentation (colloquium) is a compulsory part of the BSc thesis. Each student is allowed 20 minutes in total: 10-15 minutes for the presentation and 5-10 minutes for questions and discussion. You must agree with your thesis supervisor when you will present your research (results).

If you feel that your presentation skills need improving, you can contact Stefan Nortier (chair group ECS). You can discuss with Stefan Nortier what the best way is to improve and train your presentation skills.

You may invite people to attend your oral presentation (naturally your supervisor and examiner should be present). In previous years students have, for example, invited parents or friends to attend their presentation.

1.7 Course code BSc thesis and number of credits

The course code for the BSc thesis is:

Management major: YSS-81812Consumer major: YSS-82312

Courses YSS-81812 and YSS-82312 consist of 11 ECTS for the thesis and 1 ECTS for the Bachelor Assessment. You will receive all 12 ECTS for the entire course after you have completed the thesis **and** the Bachelor Assessment.

1.8 Requirements before starting the thesis

You have met all requirements for admission to the thesis if you have:

- passed all first year courses;
- obtained a minimum of 42 ECTS in the second year, including the preparatory courses needed to
 write the thesis at your chosen chair group (see appendix 1 for thesis preparatory courses per
 chair group);
- have passed the Bachelor Assessment.

To get permission to start your thesis you must contact your study advisor. He or she will check that you have passed all necessary courses to start your thesis. If you meet the requirements your study advisor will sign the BSc Thesis Contract. Only <u>after</u> you have received this signature are you entitled to supervision.

1.9 Recommended literature about writing a thesis

There are various books and websites that provide helpful information about writing a thesis. They can provide information about, for example, solving problems that may arise and how to avoid common pitfalls. Listed below are a few (Dutch) literature suggestions you may find useful when writing your thesis:

- Eco, U. (2000). Hoe schrijf ik een scriptie? Amsterdam: Uitgave Ooievaar, 2nd edition.
- Feijen, E. & P. Trietsch (2007). Snel afstuderen. Stap voor stap naar een geslaagde scriptie. Bussum: Coutinho, 1st edition.
- Miranda, M.J.A. & E. Wardenaar (1988). Scriptieproblemen. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 2nd edition.
- Oosterbaan, W. (1995). Het schrijven van een leesbare scriptie. Rotterdam: Uitgave NRC Handelsblad.
- Verschuren, P. & H. Doorewaard (1995). Het ontwerpen van een onderzoek. Utrecht: Uitgeverij LEMMA BV.
- Internet: http://educatie-en-school.infonu.nl/diversen/3239-hoe-schrijf-je-een-scriptie.html
- Internet: http://owl.english.purdue.edu
- Internet: http://www.studietips.leidenuniv.nl/scriptie.html

2. Thesis supervision

2.1. How to find a thesis supervisor and a research topic?

The thesis has to be related to your major in BBC; therefore your thesis needs to be supervised by a chair group **directly** involved in the major. For the Major Management Studies the chair groups you can choose from are: BEC, INF, MCB, MST, ORL, FQD/SCH (Consumer Technology). For the Major Consumer Studies the chair groups are: CPT, ECH, MCB, SCH, or FQD. Supervision by one of the constitutive chair groups guaranties the disciplinary depth and quality of the thesis.

The selected chair group (professor and teaching staff; a second supervisor can be from another chair group) is responsible for supervising and assessing your thesis. Therefore, you need to choose a topic that relates to your field of study (see 'Profile' as described in the Study Handbook under BBC Management and Consumer Studies) <u>but also</u> relates to the chair group of your choice.

It is advisable to explore different thesis possibilities as early as possible. **Appendix 2** lists the websites of the chair groups you can do your thesis with. To ensure that you can start your thesis on time it is important to make an appointment with the thesis coordinator of the chair group about **two months** in advance to discuss (possible) topics and obtain supervision.

Before you make an appointment with a thesis coordinator, you should have completed the Bachelor Assessment and chosen your free choice courses. It is compulsory to discuss the free choice motivation form with your study advisor <u>before</u> you contact a chair group about your thesis.

The chair group's thesis coordinator will refer you to a lecturer who can act as supervisor. It is also possible to approach a professor or a lecturer of your chosen chair group directly.

2.2 Supervision

The supervision of a BSc thesis involves different parties. **Appendix 3** provides an overview of the responsibilities of the parties involved in the thesis. The most important responsibilities of the supervisor and the student are explained below.

Advice on topic choice

The thesis supervisor gives advice about the chosen topic and can also suggest other possible research topics. You can ask your supervisor for literature to start a preliminary orientation into a topic. The eventual choice of the thesis topic is made by the student and should be based on the background information you have collected and reviewed.

Look at previous theses on the WUR library website for inspiration and ideas: bit.ly/BBCthesis. You can also find examples of bachelor theses per chair group on the BBC team site: https://portal2.wur.nl/sites/BBC/default.aspx

(To access the list click on 'studiebegeleiding' in the menu on the left, then on 'bachelor scriptie', after that click on 'Documenten' and finally on 'voorbeelden thesis per leerstoelgroep'.

Drawing up the BSc Thesis Contract

After the thesis supervisor and the student agree on the thesis assignment, the standard BSc Thesis Contract is drawn up (**appendix 4**). The BSc Thesis Contract formalises agreements between the student and the thesis supervisor. Furthermore, it secures the rights and obligations of the student and the thesis supervisor. For the thesis supervisor an obligation towards a student is, for example, to provide feedback at previously agreed dates. For the student an obligation is, for example, submitting drafts on previously agreed dates. The Thesis Contract is useful if, for example, there is no satisfactory thesis within the agreed timeframe.

Advice about defining the topic and structuring the thesis

Often it is necessary to narrow down the topic and limit the relevant literature you consult. This is first of all the student's responsibility. The student is expected to relate his or her ideas to the thesis supervisor. The thesis supervisor checks that the student's plans are realistic and can be executed within the time available.

The student is expected to write a proposal for the design of the thesis before starting. This proposal should focus on formulating specific research questions and give a general indication of the thesis chapters. The student and supervisor agree on eventual size of the thesis, such as the number of words or amount of pages (excluding references, citations, and illustrations).

Progress meetings

The student and thesis supervisor will have regular meetings about the progress of the thesis. The supervisor will also monitor the student's progress in achieving the learning outcomes. The supervisor can evaluate if the student is on track or if changes need to be made to the thesis process. The student and supervisor agree on the frequency of these progress meetings and put this in the Thesis Contract.

Feedback on draft versions

Before the final version of the thesis is submitted for assessment, the student is given the opportunity to submit and receive feedback on drafts. The supervisor is expected to provide critical feedback on these draft versions. The student can use the feedback to improve the thesis and then submit the final version for assessment (**chapter 3**).

The BSc Thesis Contract (appendix 4) should stipulate the amount of times a student can submit a draft version of the thesis and what kind of supervision the student can expect. For example, feedback on the text, the content, the design, use of literature, structure etcetera.

3. Thesis assessment

3.1. Submission requirements and procedures

After the digital version of your thesis has been approved, you are expected to submit **three** hardcopies of your thesis to **your supervisor**. One copy is for your supervisor, the second is for the examiner (or second reviewer) and the third is a 'clean' copy for the chair group.

The expenses for printing these three copies of your final thesis can be submitted to the chair group for reimbursement. Discuss this with your supervisor first and remember to also submit the receipt. (See 2013-2014 Student Charter: Regulation Wageningen University; payment of student's expenses, implementation, Copy and Printing Expenses, p2). If the student decides to spend more than is absolutely necessary, for example to improve the appearance of the report, the student must pay these additional expenses.

After the final examination, send a copy of your thesis (PDF file) and a copy of the completed assessment form to your study advisor. A copy of your thesis will be made available to the WUR library.

3.2 Assessment procedure

The thesis supervisor and the examiner (or second reviewer) jointly assess the thesis. The entire process that led to the final thesis (proposal, data collection and writing) is assessed, not just the final report. The examiner (or second reviewer) is primarily involved in the assessment of your final report. You do not need to arrange the examiner (or second reviewer); your supervisor is responsible for this.

See **appendix 5** for an overview of the assessment criteria in the standard BSc Thesis Assessment Form. The assessment form consists of four clusters of assessment criteria which all have a relative weight in the final grade. The four criteria are:

- 1) The research competences of a student. This evaluation is based on the experience of the supervisor with the student during the process of doing research and writing the thesis report;
- 2) The thesis report. The examiner is the best person to assess this report, in consultation with your supervisor. Ideally this is a staff member that assesses all the theses within the chair group since he or she has a general impression of the standard;
- 3) The colloquium (oral presentation of your thesis), is mandatory for BBC students. This is assessed by your supervisor/ examiner.
- 4) Final examination. This will be done by the supervisor in consultation with the examiner.

The relative weight of the four assessment criteria is determined by the chair groups. Therefore, the relative weight of these criteria may vary between chair groups. However, there are restrictions for determining the minimum and maximum relative weight of each criteria. To conclude the thesis process successfully a student must obtain at least 5.5 for each criteria; if one criteria scores lower than 5.5 the final result will be "fail" regardless of the total score (see **appendix 5**).

If desired, specific assessment criteria that are relevant for the final examination can be added to the BSc thesis assessment form. The chair group will keep the completed assessment form and the 'clean' copy of the thesis. The student will receive a copy of the completed assessment form.

3.3 Plagiarism

All research is directly or indirectly based on and related to the intellectual work of others, on their theories, their models or their research findings. We live in anera in which 'cut and paste' possibilities are overwhelming. However, using someone else's work from books, articles or the internet, in theses or assignments without a proper reference is considered plagiarism and considered theft of intellectual property.

You are expected to be familiar with proper referencing techniques. Wageningen University insists on documenting sources correctly. In order to avoid plagiarism, staff is expected to screen students' written work carefully and the University has made scanning software available to teaching staff for this purpose (Turnitin).

In the scientific world and in academic education it is the norm to reference an author's thoughts, ideas and findings, in both the body of the text and in the reference list. If text is literally quoted it needs to be unmistakably clear what part of the text is the citation of the author's work (for example, by using quotation marks).

It is important that you choose one referencing style and use the referencing techniques consequently, just like you learned in the first year of your bachelor programme.

The amount of quoted literature and the entire size of the thesis should be in proportion. In other words, a thesis that mainly consists of quoted literature (with the correct citations and references) is not considered acceptable.

The WUR library has developed a number of online tutorials on citing and referencing: http://library.wur.nl/infoboard/module_3/ and http://library.wur.nl/infoboard/module_3/ and http://library.wur.nl/infoboard/module_3/ and http://library.wur.nl/infoboard/module_3/ and http://library.wur.nl/infoboard/module_3/ and http://library.wur.nl/infoboard/7 citing/

Other sites:

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml http://monash.edu/library/skills/resources/tutorials/citing/index.html

Appendix 1. Chair groups and thesis preparatory courses

Major Management Studies		Major Consumer Studies				
Chair group	Thesis preparatory courses:		Chair group	Thesis preparatory courses:		
BEC	BEC-22806 and BEC-20806 or BEC-22306 (choose one)		CPT	CPT-23306		
INF	INF-20806 and ORL 30306		ECH	ECH 22306 and ECH-31306		
MCB	MST-21306		MCB	MCB-30306		
MST	MST-21306 and MST-24806 or MST-32306 (dependant on your thesis topic)		FQD	FQD-23306		
ORL	ORL-20306 and ORL-30306		SCH	SCH-20806		
FQD	FQD-23306					

Contact the thesis coordinator of the chair group (appendix 2) if you want to start your thesis, but have not yet completed all of the thesis preparatory courses.

Appendix 2. Chair groups, websites and thesis coordinators

Major Managen	nent Studies	
Chair Group	Website	Educational coordinator
BEC	http://www.bec.wur.nl/UK/education/MSc+thesis/	Monique Mourits
INF		Maarten Zijp
	http://www.inf.wur.nl/UK/Education/Internship+and+Thesis/	
MCB	http://www.mcb.wur.nl/UK/education/Theses/	Frans Verhees
MST	http://www.mst.wur.nl/UK/education/BSc+Thesis/	Onno Omta
ORL	http://www.orl.wur.nl/UK/Education/Internship+and+Thesis/	Frits Claassen
FQD	http://www.fqd.wur.nl/UK/education/	Bea Steenbekkers

Major Consumer	Studies	
Chair Group	Website	Educational
		coordinator
CPT	http://www.com.wur.nl/UK/Education/Bachelor+thesis/	Mieke Muijres
ECH	http://www.ech.wur.nl/UK/education/	Gerrit Antonides
MCB	http://www.mcb.wur.nl/UK/education/Theses/	Frans Verhees
FQD	http://www.ctp.wur.nl/UK/education/	Bea Steenbekkers/Carja
		Butijn
SCH	http://www.sch.wur.nl/UK/education/	Hilje van der Horst

You can attend master colloquia to familiarize yourself with topics researched by the chair groups.

The following website provides information about when these colloquia will take place: https://teamsites.wur.nl/sites/colloquia/SitePages/Home.aspx

You can always attend a colloquium and you do not need to register before attending.

Appendix 3. Responsibilities of parties involved in the thesis

1. Responsibilities student

To start your thesis you must have passed all the first year courses and obtained a minimum of 42 ECTS in second year courses (including thesis preparatory courses, see **appendix 1**). If you meet these requirements, go to your study advisor who will admit you to the thesis by signing the BSc Thesis Contract.

Fill in the name of your supervisor and examiner on the BSc Thesis Contract. Also include the topic and a planning for the different stages of your thesis (proposal, draft version, final thesis, and oral presentation, etc.).

The BSc Thesis Assessment Form (which is used by all social science bachelor programmes) is included in this course guide as **appendix 5**. Your thesis and the (research) process leading up to the final report will be evaluated and graded using this form.

2. Responsibilities study advisor

The study advisor declares in the Thesis Contract (see **appendix 4**) that you have met all requirements mentioned above. The study advisor can refer you to a suitable staff member for your topic or to the thesis coordinator of the chair group.

3. Responsibilities thesis coordinator

The thesis coordinator of your chosen chair group will refer you to a suitable staff member to act as supervisor. Every chair group keeps all assessment forms, thesis contracts, and theses on file.

4. Responsibilities thesis supervisor

The BSc thesis supervisor is first of all responsible for checking the thesis contact. A supervisor may only start supervision after the study advisor has admitted a student to the thesis. Students are not permitted to start their thesis without the approval of their study advisor. The thesis supervisor is responsible for overseeing the content of the thesis.

Together, student and supervisor, formalise their agreements in the BSc Thesis Contract. The student must send a copy of the signed contract to the study advisor. The supervisor is responsible for finding a examiner, either within or outside the chair group, to participate in the final assessment of the thesis.

5. Responsibilities examiner / second reviewer

The examiner (or second reviewer) of the BSc thesis is responsible for the assessment and grading of the final thesis in consultation with the supervisor. The examiner assesses the thesis using the BSc Thesis Assessment Form (see **appendix 5**).

6. Responsibilities Examining board

The Examining board sees to it that assessments are carried out uniformly and correctly.

Appendix 4. BSc Thesis Contract

Student Information	1:	
Name:		Reg. no.:
Address:		Programme and major:
Tel. no.:		
Statement Study Ac	lvisor:	
	arting the BSc thesis and agrees that th	, states that the student has met all e student may start thesis work.
Date:		Signature:
·	supervisor: rvisor and chair group:	
examiner or second Name of examiner a		
Arrangements of th	e BSc thesis:	
1. Topic		
2. ECTS and Course	Code	
3. Planning:	 Starting date: Submission date draft proposal: Discuss draft proposal: 	
	 4. Submission date draft version thesis 5. Discuss draft version: 6. Submission date final version thesis 7. Oral presentation² 	S:
Other agreements:		
Signature: Thesis supervisor :	S	tudent:
. .		

Status of the Thesis Contract

The BSc Thesis Contract serves to formalise agreements regarding the BSc thesis between a bachelor student and a chair group. The agreement registers rights and duties of both parties and is a further supplement and etablogs tion of the Higher Folusation and Examining Regulations and the Student Charter.

Completing and signing the agreement

- This form has to be completed for each BSc thesis by the student and a representative of the chair group before the start of the thesis activities.
- Student and chair group sign two copies of the form. Both receive a signed copy. A third copy is sent to the study advisor.
- When the agreement is modified the student will receive a copy of the adjusted form.

Problems and complaints

For complaints with regard to the supervision or assessment the student can appeal to:

- his or her programme director;

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Appendix 5. BSc Thesis Assessment Form

Assessment Form B					n oniv	ersity		
	BSc programn							
Complete the green fields boxed with a single line.	Use a point as o	decimal si	gn; the default	anguage is En	glish (Ul	()		
Name chair group (three letter code)	Chair Group	_			E a a m		hair ara	
Name chair group (three letter code)	Criair Group	Y				ercentage per cl	nair gro	
Name student					Chair	-	_	100,00%
Registration number						plicable	~	0,009
BSc programme					Select	if BBC/BEB Thesi	s: ▼	0.00%
Major / Specialisation								
Course code BSc thesis	Select BSc The	sis Code:				▼		
Short title thesis						_		
Date examination						Signatu	re	
Supervisor chair group								
Second supervisor (in case of BC W)								
BSc thesis examiner / second reviewer								
ASSESSMENT CRITERIA				Grading		Relative	Che	ck
				Mark 1-10		weight *		-
Research competence (30-40%) *						<u> </u>		
1 Initiative, pro-activity and creativity								
2 Commitment and perseverance								
3 Time management						0,00	Fail	
4 Critical and self reflective capacity							_	
5 Handling supervisor's comments					7/			
6 Analysis and processing of (literature) data								
Thesis report (50-65%) *								
1 Problem definition & research set-up								
2 Theoretical underpinning and use of literature	е							
3 Description of methods and analysis (literatu	re) data					0,00	Fail	
4 Clarity of argumentation and conclusions					- ///		_	
5 Critical discussion					7/			
6 Writing skills incl. correct quoting								
Colloquium (0-5%)	(Not applicable	o to BCW	and BIN)					
1 Presentation (use of graphics, etc.)								
2 Verbal and non-verbal presentation						0,00	Che	ck weight
Final Discussion (5%) *								
1 Defence of the thesis								
2 Knowledge of study domain						0,00	Fail	
j ,			Sui	n of relativ	e weig	hts is not 1	00	
		TOTAL	not rounded			0,000		
	1							
	FINAL GRA	DE				0	,0 Fail	
* Please choose weights for your own chair group								
and BSc Programmo such that thoir sum is 100					+			
					++			

Comments by supervisor. (Please use ALT+ENTER to open a new line)	
Comments by 2nd reviewer/examiner. (Please use ALT+ENTER to open a new line)	
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