Term Paper- & Master Thesis-Guidelines

Marko Mlikota

https://markomlikota.github.io

marko.mlikota@graduateinstitute.ch

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Contents

1 Introductory Remarks

This document provides guidance for students writing

- a term paper and proposal for the course *Topics in Econometrics (EI137)* (Section 2),[1]
- a term paper for the course *Advanced Quantitative Methods (MINT009)* (Section 3), or
- a Master thesis under my supervision (Section 4).

Its contents are, however, useful more generally, as they provide advice on how to

- write effectively in academic environments (term paper, Master thesis, and also e.g. chapters of PhD dissertation) and more generally (Section 5),
- write a paper/analysis with a particular focus on quantitative methodology (Section 2.1 and Section 3), and
- write a proposal to pitch a research idea to a potential supervisor or collaborator (Section 2.2).

The guidelines in this document apply to methodological and empirical papers in economics and (to a lesser extent) adjacent fields.

[1] A version of this course appeared in the past also as *Topics in Structural Econometrics and Impact Evaluation (EI139)*.

2 Term Paper in "Topics in Econometrics" (EI137)

2.1 Term Paper

Purpose The idea of the term paper is that you apply a method of your choice that was discussed in the courses *Econometrics I* (EI035), *Econometrics II* (EI062) or *Topics in Econometrics* (EI137) to a topic of your choice. It can form the first draft of (the methodological aspects of) your Master thesis.

Paper Contents

- Title page (title, your name, date, university, course, semester, prof.'s name, ...)
- Main part (introduction, intermediate sections ("body part"), conclusion)
- References/Bibliography
- Appendix

Formalities

- The paper needs to be submitted individually.
- The deadline to submit the paper is indicated on Moodle.
- The formal writing requirements from Section 6 apply.
- Your title page must contain (at least; see above) the title, your name and the date. The main part (see above) must be no longer than 8 pages, whereby the introduction and conclusion together should not exceed 2 pages.
- Save your paper as a pdf and label it in the format `2026Fall_PaperTiE_Lastname(s)Firstname(s).pdf`.[2]
  Along with the term paper itself, send me all codes and data as a .zip-folder (or make them accessible via Dropbox, Google Drive or another such cloud-storage-provider).[3]
  The .zip-folder must be named in the format
  `2026Fall_PaperTiE_Lastname(s)Firstname(s)`.
  Submit these two items (pdf + .zip-file) by email to
  `marko.mlikota@graduateinstitute.ch`.
  The subject line should be
  `Paper TiE - Lastname(s) Firstname(s)`.

[2] Of course, you should adjust the year and semester (Fall/Spring) as appropriate.
[3] Exceptions (e.g. confidential data) need to be discussed with me well before the submission deadline.

- You may use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, etc. as long as you acknowledge that in your paper with a short statement on how/where you used these tools.

Grading Scheme I use the following grading scheme to to guide my assessment of a paper. Note that it applies a rather harsh punishment of up to 20% of the score for formality issues. In line with the purpose of the term paper and the focus of this course, methodological aspects account for 50% of the score. Within each criterion, I decide how many points to award based on my comments below and in Section 5.

Criterion	**Points**
Satisfies formalities	2
Clear motivation (methodological and/or economic) and literature synthesis with relative positioning of paper	1
Discussion of data/DGP	1
Methodology	
All objects clearly defined, statistics (e.g. estimator) used in results fully derived, algorithms fully stated	2
Discussion of assumptions, applicability of method, advantages/disadvantages, relation to alternatives	1
Clear link between derived estimators and obtained results (incl. practical implementation in case of numerical approaches)	1
Clear and concise discussion of results	1
Clear and concise writing	1
Total	**10**

Comments I strongly encourage you to consult my general advice for writing research papers in Section 5. In addition to (and possibly in contrast to) these general comments, for the purposes of this particular term paper, note the following:

- I encourage you to think about your research question and possible data sources throughout the semester! You can bring up any questions you may have during office hours.
- You may choose to write a methodological paper, where you "simply" take a method you're interested in and analyze its performance in simulations under different Data Generating Processes (DGPs). (Generally, any method's performance is affected by its environment, i.e. sample size, number of parameters, etc.) The DGPs should, however,

be intended to capture potentially interesting behavior, rather than an obvious pattern such as increasing precision with sample size.

- If you decide to write an empirical paper and if your data is not yet ready, you can use simulated data. In this case, briefly mention your desired data, say it is not ready yet, and describe in greater detail the DGP you use to construct simulated data (with the properties of your desired data in mind). Note that it is always a good idea to make sure your method works well by applying it first to simulated data where you know "the truth" before applying it to an empirical question to find out "the truth".

- You should describe in detail every step of the methodology you apply, regardless whether you chose to write a methodological or an empirical paper. All major points of the derivation/explanation of the methodology should be in the main text. The Appendix can contain tables and figures of minor importance, data construction details and algebraic manipulations that lead you from "result A" to "result B", both of which are stated in the main text. The reader should understand what you do without having to consult the Appendix. Therefore, don't put the derivation of an estimator or a bias in the Appendix!

- Use the language of math. For example, if you say "The country-level index is constructed by taking a simple average for the value of this variable for each region j in country i", then also show the math: $V_i = \frac{1}{N_i} \sum_{j=1}^{N_i} v_{ij}$. This is less prone to misunderstandings than verbal explanations are. It is oftentimes also more concise, as you don't need to accompany every formula with (lots of) text.

2.2 Term Paper Proposal

Purpose The proposal is not graded, yet I strongly suggest that you submit one. It allows me to give you feedback early on, before you delve deeper into your analysis and the process of writing the term paper. It also allows me to validate the scope of your term paper and thereby warn you both of research plans that are too complex to execute well in the available time as well as research plans that are too trivial to implement (e.g. you cannot simply run a bunch of standard linear regressions), either of which would affect your grade negatively. You can deviate from your submitted proposal without consulting me, provided that these deviations do not completely overturn your paper.

Formalities

- The proposal needs to be submitted individually.
- The deadline to submit the proposal is indicated on Moodle.
- The formal writing requirements from Section 6 apply.
- The proposal should indicate your name and the date. It should be no longer than two pages (excluding any potential bibliography; see below).
- Save your proposal as a pdf and label it in the following format:
  `2026Fall_ProposalTiE_Lastname(s)Firstname(s).pdf`.[4]
  Submit the proposal by email to
  `marko.mlikota@graduateinstitute.ch`.
  The subject line should be
  `Proposal TiE - Lastname(s) Firstname(s)`.

Contents On the first (roughly) 1.5 pages:

- briefly motivate the empirical or methodological research question,
- state the specific method(s) to be applied,
- mention the data to be used or outline the simulation study to be conducted, and
- identify the results to be generated for answering the research question.

On the remaining (roughly) 0.5 pages: show a planned to-do list with dates until which each of the milestones should be reached (e.g. collect data, derive estimator, write code, etc.).

Comments Choose a narrow research question that you can then treat elaborately and answer precisely. You can mention a more general, even somewhat abstract motivation, but your research question must be precise and scientifically answerable. Avoid vague statements. Be specific.

[4]Of course, you should adjust the year and semester (Fall/Spring) as appropriate.

3 Term Paper in "Advanced Quantitative Methods" (MINT009)

Purpose The idea of the term paper is that you analyze a topic of your choice using a method discussed in the course (variants of linear regressions). It can form the first draft of (the methodological aspects of) your Master thesis or an applied research paper more generally.

Paper Contents

- Title page (title, your name, date, university, course, semester, prof.'s name, ...)
- Main part (introduction, intermediate sections ("body part"), conclusion), where the body part should include: section on data, section on methodology, section on results+discussion
- References/Bibliography
- Appendix

Formalities

- The paper needs to be submitted individually.
- The deadline to submit the paper is indicated on Moodle.
- The formal writing requirements from Section 6 apply.
- Your title page must contain (at least) the title, your name and the date. The main part (see above) must be no longer than 6 pages, whereby the introduction and conclusion together should not exceed 2 pages.
- Save your paper as a pdf and label it in the format `2026Spring_PaperAQM_Lastname(s)Firstname(s).pdf`.[5]
  Along with the term paper itself, send me all codes and data as a .zip-folder (or make them accessible via Dropbox, Google Drive or another such cloud-storage-provider).[6]
  The .zip-folder must be named in the format
  `2026Spring_PaperAQM_Lastname(s)Firstname(s)`.
  Submit these two items (pdf + .zip-file) by email to
  `marko.mlikota@graduateinstitute.ch`.

[5] Of course, you should adjust the year and semester (Fall/Spring) as appropriate.

[6] Exceptions (e.g. confidential data) need to be discussed with me well before the submission deadline. In case you use Stata, your .zip-file should contain: a single .do-file (that performs the analysis), a single .dta-file (that contains the data you used), a single .smcl-file (that shows the output of your .do-file).

The subject line should be
`Paper AQM - Lastname(s) Firstname(s).`

- You may use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, etc. as long as you acknowledge that in your paper with a short statement on how/where you used these tools.

Grading Scheme I use the following grading scheme to to guide my assessment of a paper. Note that it applies a rather harsh punishment of up to 20% of the score for formality issues. Within each criterion, I decide how many points to award based on my comments below and in Section 5.

Criterion	**Points**
Satisfies formalities	2.00
Introduction: motivation and statement of research question	1.25
Data: discussion of origins and main variables	1.25
Methodology:	
transformation research question into regressions + hypotheses	1.25
discussion of assumptions and suitability of chosen specification(s)s	0.75
Results Discussion:	
interpretation of coefficients, standard errors	1.25
hypothesis test	0.75
discussion of shortcomings, issues, etc.	0.75
Conclusion: well-defined outlook for completing thesis/article	0.75
Total	**10.00**

Comments I strongly encourage you to consult my general advice for writing research papers in Section 5. In addition to (and possibly in contrast to) these general comments, for the purposes of this particular term paper, note the following:

- I encourage you to think about your research question and possible data sources throughout the semester! You can bring up any questions you may have during office hours. A general Q&A session will be held at the end of the semester, after the final exam.

- You should define a single, clear research question that can be answered quantitatively (with a regression model). Once you define your regression model(s), you should state

your research question in terms of the parameters of your model(s).

- In this course, we treat linear regressions as devices to (try to) uncover causal relationships. Hence, simply decomposing a dependent variable Y in terms of various explanatory variables X is not permissible. You must state at least one hypothesis.
- It is very likely that you will not be able to answer your question satisfactorily in the short time you have available, not least because you may not (yet) have your ideal dataset at hand. Focus on what's feasible. You may mention what you would do differently if you had the right data, even before a more general research outlook (departing from your research question) in the conclusion.
- In this short paper, I strongly encourage you to use the structure I suggest above: divide the body part into three sections, one on data, one on methodology, and one on results+discussion.
  - In the data section, discuss the source of your data, how it was collected and the properties of the most important variables you will use (what they measure, how they measure it (units/scale)). Given that you have only about three months to submit your term paper, I do not expect you to assemble an extensive dataset yourself. Rather, try to find readily available data that can answer your research question. (Possibly, you have to adjust your research question a bit so that it can be answered with the data you have.)
  - In the methodology section, clearly state the regression(s) you use, motivate them, and state your hypothesis in terms of the regression parameters. You may also just state your baseline regression in this section (the one with which you'll start the next section) and briefly mention that you will run additional regressions as robustness analyses. The latter you can then motivate and discuss in more detail in the next section, once you get to them.
  - In the results section, actually show the output of your regressions in tables (and figures) and discuss your findings (given the length of the paper, 1-2 tables are enough). In particular, discuss the size of your main coefficient of interest and its standard error, perform your hypothesis test and discuss its implications, discuss potential issues (omitted variables, mismeasurement, outliers, etc.). Statistically insignificant or economically small effects are very fine. Those are results, too. You can still interpret them, and discuss potential reasons for their insignificance/small size.

4 Master Thesis

General Comments I'm happy to supervise Master theses that fall broadly within my fields of expertise. Before I accept to supervise a thesis, I point interested students to my grading scheme and my comments on the advising process below. Also, I strongly encourage students to consult my general advice for writing research papers in Section 5.

Grading Scheme I use the following grading scheme to to guide my assessment of a thesis. Within each criterion, I decide how many points to award based on my comments below and in Section 5. The key requirement for a Master thesis is to synthesize well the existing literature on a topic and make a clear contribution relative to it, much more so than for the term papers in my methodological courses (see Sections 2 and 3). The first two points (satisfactory proposal, independent work) concern the advising process, as discussed below.

Criterion	**Points**
Sent satisfactory proposal on-time	1.00
Worked independently on thesis	1.00
Precise and well-motivated research question	1.00
Novelty and ambition of research question	0.50
Clear literature synthesis and relative positioning of paper	1.50
Suitable and well-justified approach (data, methodology, assumptions)	2.00
Rigorous analysis (reasoning, derivations/estimation, results, robustness)	1.50
Clear abstract (essence of paper stated concisely) and conclusion (contribution, shortcomings, outlook)	0.50
Clear and concise writing	1.00
Total	**10.00**

Advising Process Students interested in writing a Master thesis with me should contact me well before the deadline for choosing a supervisor (at least two, three weeks before, preferably much earlier). This can be by e-mail or in a meeting (in person/online, e.g. during office hours), though ultimately students should secure a written confirmation that I will supervise their thesis. At this stage, I just expect students to articulate a rough research idea. I am happy to give some comments and advice that you can use to refine the idea, but the idea should come from you.

Roughly five months before the submission deadline (e.g. by the end of the year for a deadline in May), you should send me a precise research question that you want to investigate, along with a provisional structure of the thesis and an outline of the research process (a to-do list). This is roughly in line with to the term paper proposal discussed in Section 2.2. I will give feedback on this research question, thesis structure and to-do plan.

Apart from this, I expect students to work independently on their thesis. I see my role as supervisor as being readily available to provide advice when needed. When seeking my advice, students should formulate specific questions, e.g. "I was thinking of doing A or B. What do you think is better?" or "I would like to achieve X. Is Y the right approach for this?". I cannot answer general questions that would require me to go through the whole paper (or large parts of it) before submission, e.g. "Is it necessary to add further models?" or "Should I include some parts of my results discussion into the Appendix?" Whenever you need my advice, send an e-mail with your questions. I typically respond by e-mail to short, specific questions. For more substantial issues, we can arrange a meeting. In either case, writing down your questions and sending them by e-mail will help you see precisely what the issue is.

My grading criteria above mostly concern the Master thesis itself. Two (out of 10) points, however, concern the advising process. I award them in full if the student submits on time a good-quality proposal as mentioned above and works rather independently on their thesis, avoiding to seek advice for points that are rather trivial or mentioned in Section 5.

5 General Guidelines for Applied Research Papers

5.1 Types of Applied Papers

There are two types of applied papers – i.e. non-theoretical papers – you can write:

(a) **Methodological paper** Primary focus (research question/message of your paper) is on a particular method you analyze and, ideally, develop further (e.g. its theoretical properties or performance in simulations). The empirical economic question to which you apply the method is secondary; you discuss them only to the extent that they help you convey your methodological message. There might not even be a particular application at all, but instead you use simulated data that has certain properties you deem relevant for the point you want to make.

(b) **Empirical paper** Primary focus (research question/message of your paper) is on a particular empirical economic question. The method you use to answer your question is secondary; you discuss it only to the extent necessary to understand and lend credibility to your empirical findings.

Of course, many papers fall in-between those two categories. However, to start it's useful to consider these two as mutually exclusive categories and choose where your paper belongs.

5.2 Content/Structure

Abstract It gives a brief summary of your paper on a separate page right after the title page. It should include a few (1-3) sentences on each of the following: scientific question and its relevance, methods used, most important results. Write it last, once you wrote the whole body part, the introduction and the conclusion.

Introduction It motivates the paper, briefly discusses what exactly the paper does and its results, and it puts the paper in perspective by relating it to the relevant literature.

- Come to the point quickly. Tell us what you do, not what others did! Start with a "short and sweet" motivation that grabs the reader's attention ("the hook"; see below) and shows the importance of your work without discussing the wider literature or details of your research question. At the latest at the end of the first page – but ideally much earlier – you should start discussing your contribution in light of the preceding motivation, followed by a short description of what exactly you do (i.e. details) and the results you obtain.

  - In case of a methodological paper, the "hook" should be some methodological issue. For example, there might be a set of empirical settings for which current methods do not work well or are not applicable at all. There might also be a more theoretical issue with some method that you investigate.
  - In case of an empirical paper, the "hook" should be given by the empirical economic question itself. Clearly describe it and its relevance. It might be that the question is not explored at all (rare) or not in the context you consider (new place, new time, new angle, ...).
- Put the literature review as the second part of the introduction. It should be clearly structured by the ways you contribute to the literature and/or by the different literature strands you contribute to. You are allowed and even encouraged to summarize the relevant literature strands and individual studies in your own words, rather than going over paper after paper and stating what these papers do. Any strands of studies you discuss should be part of a bigger story that helps us understand why your work is important, how you contribute to the literature, or why you approach things in a particular way out of all possible options. We only care about other literature insofar as it allows us to understand what exactly you do and how what you do matters!

Intermediate Sections ("Body Part") Here, you explain in detail what you do, following up on the brief preview you gave in the introduction (and abstract).

- This part should be structured in sections (Data, Methodology, etc.). Choose this structure wisely in order to convey your message in the best possible way. The arrangement of sections, subsections, subsubsections and paragraphs is an integral part of the paper and should follow a logical structure with a clear guiding thread ("roter Faden" in German or "fil conducteur" in French). Without it, the reader can quickly be lost![7]
- To make it easier for readers to follow your argument, make sure that the reader knows the purpose of each section and its link to the preceding (and subsequent) sections. For this purpose, in longer papers it may be useful to have a short introductory sentence at the start and a short concluding sentence at the end of a section, though this can seem too repetitive in shorter papers.

[7]Subordinate parts on the same level need to have the same overarching theme; e.g. subsubsections 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 all treat the theme of subsection 2.2. Each section or subsection should be followed by none or at least two sub-parts (subsection and subsubsections, respectively); e.g. section 2.2 must have either no subsection or at least two subsections. A single separate sub-theme can instead be separated using paragraphs (`\paragraph*{}` in Latex).

- When discussing data, mention the source and discuss the main properties of your data that are relevant to understand your results and, possibly, the limitation of your approach.
- Keep the results discussion focussed. Your goal is to make the reader remember one or a few main takeaways. For this purpose, structure your results discussion clearly and state the main takeaways in your own words before corroborating them with particular, technical results (e.g. particular coefficients in particular regressions). Don't dilute your main message(s) by discussing every single result (every figure in a table (e.g. every single regression coefficient and its standard error) or every aspect of a graph). Put details in the Appendix.
- Note that your analysis might very well give puzzling results (say a significant effect in the opposite direction than expected). Discuss these too, but emphasize what might have gone wrong and potential remedies rather than discussing in detail how your estimates vary across specifications and what their broader implications are.

Conclusion First, restate very briefly (roughly as briefly as the abstract) what you do (did) in the paper. Then, discuss the broader relevance of your contribution, state some of its shortcomings, and/or give an outlook on what future studies could explore differently than you did or on top of what you did.

Appendix It contains all the details that you don't want to have in the main part of the paper so as to not distract from the main thread. It can be quite tricky to decide what belongs into the main part and what should be delegated to the Appendix. This will crucially depend on the audience for whom you write. In the term paper for "Topics in Econometrics", for example, the focus is on the methodology. Therefore, any derivations should be put in the main part, with the exception of purely algebraic manipulations (devoid of any assumptions, combinations of model ingredients, etc.). When turning such a term paper into a Master thesis, you may want to delegate some of these derivations to the Appendix, even more so if your paper is empirical rather than methodological.

5.3 Research Process

To come up with a creative and novel research question, you should avoid conducting a detailed literature analysis too early. Rather, given some introductory analyses of high-level treatments (textbooks, overview essays, newspaper articles, etc.), think thoroughly through your subject from a "meta" point of view and let your mind wander through various "what if"-scenarios. Only once you know roughly your research question should you consult specific literature that does related things. Otherwise you'll be primed with what has been done and it becomes harder to think outside the box.

Once you defined your research question, it is advisable to start the exploration of related literature by going from general to specific treatments (first overview essays and surveys, then papers that treat specific research questions) and from newer to older papers. The citations in these papers will help guide you through the literature relevant for your paper.

Thereby, it is very important to remember that you cannot possibly read all papers that contain something possibly relevant to your analysis. Each paper has its own, rather unique focus. When reading other papers, you should keep in mind the focus of your own paper and avoid getting carried away by the focus of the paper you read (unless it is directly relevant to your analysis). When confronted with a possibly relevant paper (selected based on its title or mention in another paper), proceed as follows:

- First, read only read the abstract. Based on it, decide whether to read on. Is that paper really relevant at all for your analysis?
- If you still think the paper is (potentially) relevant, then read the introduction (and conclusion) in order to understand a bit better what it does and how it matters to you.
- If a particular aspect of their work mentioned in the introduction or conclusion has grabbed your attention, read also the relevant parts (sections) of the body part or appendix in order to investigate that aspect in more detail: e.g. where do the authors get their data from, how do they define some variables, what do they assume in the structural model, how do they implement the methodology, etc.

Good places to start searching for interesting datasets are:

- https://www.imf.org/en/data
- https://fred.stlouisfed.org/
- https://data.bis.org/
- https://data.worldbank.org/

- https://esoc.princeton.edu/
- https://catalog.ihsn.org/index.php/catalog
- https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/harvard

5.4 Writing

- Paper length is not an attribute of quality. The more concisely you can describe a given content, the better. There are amazing papers written on about 20 pages! A good Master thesis or chapter of the PhD thesis should be between 15 and 35 pages long. Avoid filling up space by repeating yourself too often, by discussing every single result or by including a too lengthy discussion of other studies without relating them to yours.
- In all parts of your paper, get to the point quickly, i.e. first state your main point, then fill in details. Think of the reader as having a very limited attention span.
  - For example, when discussing two contributions of yours in the introduction, first state them both briefly, then explain the first in more detail, then the second. This way it is much easier to follow your argument and remember your contributions than when you state and immediately explain thoroughly the first contribution, followed by a thorough explanation of the second.[8]
  - Similarly, when discussing results, first state the main point you want to make (without reference to a particular estimate or figure), then go over the particular results that corroborate your point, and – in case of a more lengthy corroborating discussion – restate your main point. This is preferred to boring the reader e.g. with particular coefficient estimates from numerous regressions with different controls and concluding only in the end that the effect of interest is significant/large/small in all/none of them or depends on the inclusion of a particular other variable.
- A paper can be read at different depths (see Section 5.3), and you should write it accordingly. To accommodate these different levels of interest, you should make sure that your abstract is short, but informative. Then, your introduction (and conclusion) should be self-contained and give the reader a very good idea of what you do and why it matters. Ideally, it should also show the reader how the "body part" of your analysis (and the accompanying Appendix) is structured so that they know where to find information on a particular aspect of your analysis (data, methodology, etc.) that they are interested in.

[8] In short, do "A. B. Details of A. Details of B." rather than "A in detail. B in detail.".

- It is a good idea to write first the body part of your thesis, including the Appendix, given that this is the deepest level of your analysis. Once this is written, you can rather easily write the introduction and conclusion, at least the parts of them that discuss what you do. You can write these by summarizing the main points from your body part. Additional work may be needed to write a compelling motivation, a coherent literature discussion and an informative big picture and outlook, though you should have had a rough idea of all of these before you even started analyzing a particular issue. Finally, you can write the abstract by summarizing what you wrote in the introduction, i.e. by stripping it down to its essentials: a sentence or two on the motivation, a sentence or two on what you do, a sentence or two on your results, a sentence or two on why this matters.
- Treat each argument according to its importance:
  - Primary points comprise the main motivation for your analysis and the main results (the answers to your research question). They should be highlighted clearly and whole sections should be structured so as to convey them in the most effective way. They can and should be repeated throughout the paper (in the main part, but also abstract, introduction and possibly conclusion).
  - Secondary points (secondary motivation and results, e.g. side-results, robustness checks) should be stated and illustrated in tables/figures without going into too much detail. They should be repeated little or not at all, and they should not be stated individually in the abstract, introduction or conclusion (in the intro, you can write a brief, summarizing statement like "Robustness analyses with ... confirm this result.").
  - Tertiary points belong to the Appendix. In the body part, you should state that they exist and refer the reader to the appendix, without analyzing them in much detail. Such results would typically not even be mentioned in the introduction, let alone abstract or conclusion.
- Besides using the Appendix, you can also put details in footnotes in the main part. Again, the purpose is to get rid of important details in the main text in order to maintain a common thread and make it easier to follow your argument (e.g. non-essential references to some literature or to other parts of your analysis). However, avoid using footnotes to include various "nice-to-know" stuff that is irrelevant to the message of your paper.
- Before you start writing the body part of your paper, you should structure it into sections, subsections, etc., and know the purpose of each. Then, before you write out

your arguments in any of these parts, it is adviseable to – similarly – start from a list of bullet points that outline what you'd like to say here.

- To make sure the structure of your body part is logical and devotes space to each section in line with its importance, it is useful to create and occasionally look at the table of contents during the process of writing, even if you may delete it in the end.
- Avoid vague language. Every sentence you write should have a clear purpose and meaning. Make sure the reader understands exactly what you have in mind. If you struggle to express it well, then likely you haven't yourself fully understood whatever you're talking about. I find that a big part of progress on a research question lies precisely in the attempts to express it ever more precisely.
- It is all right to write a single-authored paper using "I", "me" and "my". Whether you choose this approach or use "we", "us" and "our" is a question of style. With multiple authors, the latter approach should be used.

5.5 Other Advice

- Make sure your results are reproducible. This regards not only the econometric analysis of your data, but it starts from the treatment of raw data, where no undocumented editing of original data (publicly or privately available) is permissible. The codes used to generate your results, the raw data (even if publicly available) and a short document outlining how your codes can be used to replicate the results from your paper should all be compressed into a zip-file or put on a file-sharing platform like Github. Special rules apply if the data is confidential.
- I strongly encourage you to write the paper with Latex, in particular if there are non-trivial methodological and/or theoretical treatments. It facilitates formatting and the use of mathematical notation. It also simplifies reference-management and the creation of a bibliography; references are stored in a `.bib`-file, whereby reference-entries can easily be generated using a software like Zotero or Mendeley and Latex takes care of correct citation (provided that all information on a reference is added, either manually or by entering the DOI-link into your reference manager software).[9]
- Use abbreviations for lengthy notions that are repeatedly used. Define them when you write out the full notion for the first time. For example: "I consider Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimation. [...] The OLS estimator ...". This can greatly facilitate reading.
- Clearly define all symbols used in mathematical formulas the first time you use them.

[9] Zotero can also be linked to Word.

Center all major formulas and all longer formulas in separate lines rather than writing them in-line with text. Number only the equations to which you actually refer in the main text.

- Link your arguments in the main text to the relevant equations, tables, figures and paper-parts (sections, subsections, etc.). In Latex, you can do that easily by labeling these objects using the command `\label{}` and referring to labeled objects using the command `\cref{}` from the package `cleverref`.
- Use short and clear titles for tables and figures. Add descriptions and details below the table/figure using footnote-sized font. The analysis and interpretation of the table/figure should be in the main text. The description below a table/figure should allow the reader to understand what the table/figure shows without resorting to the analysis in the text.
- In tables, use sensible column- and row-names, subtitles (no variable names like *educ_male*) and numbers of digits (as few as possible, as many as needed; if dealing with particularly large or small numbers, consider reporting all numbers e.g. in thousands or as multiples of 1e-6).

5.6 Further Resources

Essential:

- *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr.
- *The Elements of Rhetoric* by Ryan N. S. Topping
- *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser

Highly recommended:

- *What is this thing called Science?* by Alan F. Chalmers
- *The Rhetoric of Economics* by Deirdre N. McCloskey

Further:

- *A Guide for the Young Economist* by William Thomson

6 Formalities

- Use a commonly used font in size 12pt (as in this document).
- Use at least 1.2 line spacing (as in this document).
- Use DIN A4 or US letter size paper with 3cm margins on all sides (as in this document).
- Number the pages with arabic numbers, starting from the first page of the introduction (title page is unnumbered, other pages before introduction (abstract, table of contents, list of tables/figures/abbreviations, etc.) are numbered with roman numbers in lowercase letters (i,ii, etc.), pages of appendix may or may not be numbered separately from main text (e.g. as A.1, A.2, etc.)).
- Cite other work in the text (rather than in footnotes or using numbers whose corresponding papers are listed in the bibliography) and use an APA-style bibliography.
- Enumerate footnotes, tables and figures (all continuously numbered throughout the paper) using arabic numbers.

In case some of these requirements conflict with official university requirements (for a Master thesis, say), the latter take precedence.