

# Research Group for Social Stratification

## Requirements and guidelines for the preparation of final theses

### 1. General Information

With your thesis (Bachelor's or Master's thesis), you are expected to demonstrate your ability to conduct scholarly work. This means that you should be able to independently apply the scientific and methodological tools learned in your studies (e.g. literature review, theory-guided empirical research, writing scientific texts and citation) to a self-selected research question, critically reflect on your approach, and develop further ideas regarding the research subject, theory, or methodology.

### 2. Requirements

We are pleased to support you in writing your thesis. In the Research Group for Social Stratification, we prefer to supervise empirical bachelor's or master's theses (especially for single-subject bachelor's or master's degrees) that are closely related thematically and methodologically to the courses offered by the research group. Therefore, it is recommended that you have taken courses offered by the research group or related fields. At the same time, you should have gained appropriate knowledge of empirical social research during your studies, which you can independently apply to a specific research question through a self-conducted multivariate empirical analysis in your thesis. Access to data with special user contracts (e.g., SOEP, NEPS, or pairfam) is generally possible through the research group. For bachelor's theses in double-subject bachelor's degrees, there is also the possibility of a comprehensive literature review that discusses the specific research question based on published scientific literature and critically engages with the empirical design and data foundation of previous studies. Supervision requires that you:

- meet the admission requirements specified in the examination regulations,
- adhere to the schedule (see below) and the rules specified in these documents for writing a thesis,
- actively participate in the colloquium and regularly present your progress, and
- (for single-subject bachelor's or master's degrees) have specific knowledge of multivariate data analysis methods that you want to apply or discuss in your thesis.

### 3. Schedule

Please independently verify that you meet all the necessary formal admission requirements of the applicable examination regulations before registering your final thesis. If you are unsure about the required number of credit points and outstanding courses, please contact the student advisory service.

#### 3.1. Find a Topic

Topics for thesis will not be assigned. Please refer to the topics covered in our research or those in previously offered courses and develop a research question based on those contents. In general, works are preferred that involve an independent theoretical (empirical) analysis of a self-chosen question. The following questions can help you in choosing a topic:

- *Which topics/questions interest me that can be empirically analyzed?*
- *Do I have theoretical/methodological knowledge that I can build on to develop a new/advanced question for the thesis?*
- *Where are my personal strengths? In which field of research on social stratification and social inequalities? Which data analysis methods am I theoretically and/or practically familiar with?*

After finding a topic, it is important to clearly define your specific research question and formulate it as precisely as possible. Avoid broad and unspecific questions that focus only on consequences (e.g. What are the consequences of x?) or causes (e.g. What are the causes of Y?). Examples of possible (small) research gaps could be a) insufficiently studied factors that mediate or change a causal relationship, b) insufficiently studied group or country differences, or c) changed framework conditions (reforms, Covid crisis, etc.).

### **3.2. Exposé and confirmation of supervision**

To ensure thematic alignment of supervision for your thesis and to secure a place in the colloquium, please prepare a short exposé outlining your proposed topic (further information on the required content is provided below). This **exposé serves as the basis for coordinating your topic and for confirming supervision.**

- a. You are welcome to submit your exposé before the start of the semester as a PDF via email to [gundula.zoch@uni-oldenburg.de](mailto:gundula.zoch@uni-oldenburg.de). You will then receive timely feedback on the extent to which your research question aligns with the research focus of the group and can be supervised accordingly. Early submission allows for clarification of thematic fit prior to the beginning of the semester. On this basis, you can participate in the appropriate colloquium from the start of the lecture period and will know whether supervision of your thesis can be confirmed. Both the topic and supervision can thus be agreed upon in a binding manner.
- b. Alternatively, your exposé should be submitted no later than the third week of lectures. In this case, the content will be discussed and coordinated within the colloquium. Please note that thematic fit may then only become clear during the course of the semester. If sufficient alignment cannot be established, a change of supervisor and participation in a different research group's colloquium may be required.

All exposés will be discussed and further developed collectively during the course of the colloquium.

**The exposé should briefly and concisely outline the following aspects:**

1. The planned research question and its relevance, your independent contribution to existing research (especially for master's theses), initial theoretical considerations and hypotheses, and your planned methodological approach (including the dataset, method, and operationalization if applicable). It is important to try to clearly and precisely define your specific research question, so that it can be addressed within the given time frame and scope.
2. An initial outline of your work, which clearly shows the content structure of your paper (max. 1/2 page).
3. A brief timeline for dividing the most important work steps (e.g. planned submission date, registration, and rough time periods for research, empirical work, writing, and revision/correction) (max. 1/2 page).

4. A list of relevant courses you have taken in your area of study or in adjacent fields (e.g. empirical social research, statistics, etc.), which are relevant for your thesis (course title, instructor, and semester) (max. 1/2 page).
5. A proposal for the second supervisor, if already available.

For the design and formatting of the exposé, the same formal guidelines apply as for the thesis (see below). If you meet the requirements, you can participate in the colloquium of the research group, where the specific research question and general approach (theories, research design) will be determined based on your initial exposé draft, and the rough timeline will be discussed. If necessary, you may be asked to revise your exposé promptly.

### **3.3. Colloquium**

The supervision of your thesis is designed as a process support, which means that the main focus of the supervision is to accompany you in the process of theoretical work, data analysis, and writing, and to structure these processes through clear procedures and defined milestones. In this way, you will be supported and accompanied in solving problems independently.

For the accompanying supervision and regular mutual exchange, a weekly colloquium is offered during the lecture period. Supervision by the Chair for Social Stratification presupposes that you actively participate in the colloquium from the beginning of the semester. Reading preparatory materials, regularly presenting your own work progress, and actively participating are prerequisites for successful participation in the event.

In addition to the regular presentation of your own work progress, the bi-weekly colloquium sessions include supplementary content on the following topics:

1. Feedback on research question and work plan
2. Organization and time management
3. Research and literature review
4. Theory and hypothesis building
5. Research design
6. Discussion and presentation of empirical results
7. First aid for the writing process

Please note that enrollment in the Stud.IP course for the colloquium without sending and receiving feedback on the exposé does not constitute a supervision commitment. Please also note that no additional individual appointments for discussing ongoing theses will be offered during the lecture period— please make use of the scheduled in-person sessions during the semester.

## 4. Use of Secondary Data

For the research of smaller archived survey projects, you can use the [infrastructure provided by GESIS](#). Below you will find a selection of established secondary datasets that are relevant and particularly suitable for questions related to social inequality research.

### Individual data

- [AID:A](#): The study "Growing up in Germany: Everyday Worlds" examines the changes in childhood, youth, and family. For this purpose, in a first wave in 2009, target persons between 0 and 55 years of age (or for minors, their parents) were surveyed. A second survey followed in 2013/2014 - but was limited to persons aged 0-32 years. Accordingly, the design allows for longitudinal analyses only for a small part of the sample.
- [DEAS](#): The German Aging Survey (DEAS) is a nationwide cross-sectional and longitudinal survey of individuals who are 40 years and older. The surveys were conducted at irregular intervals: in 1996, 2002, 2008, 2011, and 2014. The focus is on occupational status and retirement, societal participation and post-retirement activities, economic situation and housing, family and other social contacts, as well as on health, well-being, and life goals.
- [NEPS](#): The National Educational Panel Study (NEPS) examines educational processes and the development of competencies, as well as the consequences of educational inequality in Germany from early childhood to adulthood. For this purpose, the following six starting cohorts have been surveyed annually since 2008: newborns (or their parents), kindergarten children (or their parents), fifth graders, ninth graders, students, and adults. The data includes information on the anchor person, their partner(s), and - in the case of children - their parents and teachers/educators. The NEPS has been supplemented by corresponding COVID-19 surveys during the pandemic. You can find essential contents of the study in the [NEPSplorer](#).
- [Pairfam](#): The Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (pairfam) examines partnership and family forms in Germany. For this purpose, approximately 12,000 individuals from three birth cohorts, as well as their partners, parents, and children, are surveyed annually. An oversampling of East Germans allows for targeted comparisons between the western and eastern federal states based on sufficiently large samples. Pairfam has been supplemented by corresponding COVID-19 surveys during the pandemic. You can find essential contents of the study at [pan-eldata.org](#).
- [SHARE & SHARELIFE](#): The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) is a multidisciplinary panel study conducted in various European countries since 2004. It collects data on the health, socio-economic status, and family and social networks of people aged 50 and over. Additionally, the SHARELIFE study retrospectively collects life histories of approximately 30,000 individuals aged 50+ from several countries. The focus is on family, employment, and health.
- [SOEP](#): The Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) is a representative longitudinal survey that has been conducted annually since 1984 with around 30,000 respondents in nearly 11,000 German households. The data provides information on income, employment, education, and health for all members of a household, among other things. The SOEP was supplemented with corresponding COVID-19 surveys during the pandemic period. Essential content of the study can be found at [pan-eldata.org](#).
- [TwinLife](#): TwinLife has been collecting information since 2014 on over 4,000 pairs of twins and their families in Germany. The focus is on education and educational success, career and success

in the labor market, integration and participation in social, cultural, and political life, quality of life and perceived opportunities for action, mental and physical health, as well as behavioral problems and deviant behavior. Essential contents of the study can be found at [paneldata.org](http://paneldata.org).

### Macro data

- [eurostat](http://eurostat) (European Commission data portal)
- [INKAR](http://INKAR) (Online atlas of the Federal Institute for Building, Urban and Spatial Research on regional indicators at federal state, district and municipal level)
- [OECD](http://OECD) (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)
- [Statistisches Bundesamt DESTATIS](http://Statistisches_Bundesamt_DESTATIS)

## 5. Formal instructions for the design and formatting of the thesis

Please note the following guidelines for the design and formatting of your paper:

<i>Paper format:</i>	DIN A4, single-sided
<i>Page margins:</i>	standard setting (left 2.5 cm, right 2.5 cm, top 2.5 cm, bottom 2 cm)
<i>Font/typeface and size:</i>	common (serif) font (e.g. Calibri, Times New Roman, Garamond, or Cambria) / 12pt; in footnotes, figures, and tables, a minimum font size of 10pt is required.
<i>Paragraph settings:</i>	1.5 line spacing, justified alignment. Footnotes, figures, tables, and reference lists can be formatted with single line spacing.
<i>Text formatting:</i>	sparing use of italics for emphasis, no underlining or bolding
<i>Citation literature:</i>	Harvard citation style with short citations in parentheses in the main text
<i>Citation style:</i>	Citation management software (e.g. Citavi, Endnote, Zotero) is strongly recommended to ensure consistent citation styles, such as those used in well-known sociological journals (e.g. European Sociological Review, Journal of Marriage and Family).
<i>Binding:</i>	A cheaper adhesive binding with a transparent cover sheet may be chosen instead of a hardcover binding.
<i>Length:</i>	For Bachelor theses, the length should be between 25 and 30 pages, and for Master theses, the length should be between 25 and 40 pages. Justified exceptions, such as empirical studies in article form, can only be made after consultation with the supervising professor. The length includes all pages except for the title page, table of contents, list of figures and tables, reference list, declaration, and appendix. The appendix should not exceed 10 pages.

*Example of the structure of an empirical study (without subsections):*

- Title page (see the instructions of the Institute for Social Sciences)
- Table of contents (optionally, list of tables and figures)
- 1. Introduction
- 2. Literature review
- 3. Theory and hypotheses
- 4. Data and methods
- 5. Results

## Research Group for Social Stratification– Requirements and notes on theses

6. Discussion

7. Conclusion

Reference list

Appendix

Declaration of authenticity + signature

R-/Stata-Syntax (digital submission is sufficient)

Further formal guidelines for writing academic papers and for registering Bachelor theses can be found on the [website of the Institute for Social Sciences](#). The guidelines for Bachelor theses apply, unless otherwise agreed with the research group, to Master theses as well.

## 6. FAQ for the thesis (BA or MA)

### [FAQ of the Academic Examination Office](#)

#### FAQ Collection of the Working Group on Social Inequalities

**Submission:** What do I have to consider when submitting my thesis?

*Answer: You are asked to provide a digital copy in PDF format to the two assessors. In addition, the work must be sent in PDF format via email to the Academic Examination Office of the Faculty, [pamt.fk1.fk2.dez3@uni-oldenburg.de](mailto:pamt.fk1.fk2.dez3@uni-oldenburg.de), with the assessors CC'd in the email. The email should include information about the attached work, its title, and the student's matriculation number. The R- or Stata-syntax should also be sent to both assessors via email.*

**Registration, when:** Do I have to register my thesis at the beginning of the semester?

*Answer: No, we will first discuss your plans in the first session of the colloquium, so that you can register for the work later in the semester once the question, approach and work plan have been agreed upon. The work should be registered with a working title by the middle of the current semester at the latest.*

**Registration, process:** How do I register the work? Are there any special features to consider?

*Answer: If supervision by the first and second examiner has been discussed and agreed, fill out the current form "Application for admission to the final thesis" from the Academic Examination Office in full - do not forget your name and matriculation number on page 2. Please note that the proposed topic is a working title, i.e. it is not binding for the wording of the final title of the work. Send me the completed PDF by email - I will forward the application to the Academic Examination Office. After a few days you will receive a confirmation of your registration by e-mail.*

*In addition, register for the exam in Stud.IP (colloquium) so that your grade can be recorded by the examination office. Please note: If your submission is postponed to the coming semester, you will have to register again for the colloquium of the current semester.*

**Academic writing:** I struggle with academic writing? Where do I get help?

*Answer: The [Learning Workshop of the Central Student and Career Counseling Center](#) assists students of all disciplines with questions related to academic work and writing, offering individual writing consultations, academic writing groups, as well as workshops on topics such as the writing process and time management.*

**Affidavit:** What is that?

*Please include an affidavit in your thesis and sign it (digital or scanned signature in the digital version). You can find a template on the [institute's website](#) under the guidelines for academic writing. Don't forget to declare any tools used in this statement (reference management, analysis software, other supporting (AI) software (e.g. Grammarly, Writefull, etc.).*

**Colloquium:** Is participation compulsory?

*Participation in the accompanying course "Colloquium" (e.g., BA-LV, examination number 8120) is a prerequisite for supervision of your thesis within the Social Structure Analysis research group. Accordingly, the course constitutes a component of the BAM (Bachelor's thesis module) and is credited with 3 ECTS. Please note that attendance is mandatory: students who attend **fewer than half of the sessions** cannot receive confirmation of participation.*

**Literature management:** I have never used a literature management program before.

*Answer: No problem. The use of a program is recommended. You can choose between open-source programs (e.g. Zotero) or software with a university license (Citavi, EndNote). Corresponding materials and training can be found in the area of the [library and information system](#).*

**Research:** I have little experience with literature research in journal databases and subject catalogs. Where can I find help?

*Answer: The library generally offers subject-specific training on literature research and information for the field of social sciences once per semester (as part of extracurricular offerings). We recommend taking advantage of this opportunity, ideally at the beginning or during your studies.*

**Syntax:** Do I have to submit the code of my R-/Stata data recoding and their calculations?

*Answer: Yes, please submit it digital or via email to me. Your work should be completely replicable after changing the path information.*

**Certificate:** When will my certificate be issued?

*Answer: If a total of 180 credit points have been earned, you have attended the colloquium for final theses, and your participation has been confirmed by the study group through Stud.IP (see registration, Stud.IP), the examination office will review all requirements and prepare your certificate documents. Please contact the examination office for further questions.*

**Second Supervisor:** I want to write my thesis in the area of social inequalities, but I do not have a second supervisor yet.

*Answer: No problem. However, please address the second supervisor promptly at the beginning of the semester and not just before submission.*