

# BACHELOR'S THESIS GUIDELINES FOR THE DEGREES OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (TECHNOLOGY) AND BACHE- LOR OF ARTS (ART AND DESIGN)

## Introduction

These guidelines on the bachelor's theses for the School of Arts, Design and Architecture (hereinafter Aalto ARTS) were approved by the Academic Committee for Arts, Design and Architecture 13 December 2017 and updated on 24 May 2023.

The guidelines will enter into force on 1 August 2023 and be applied to all theses started on or after 1 August 2023. For theses started before 1 August 2023, the previous major-specific evaluation criteria will apply until 31 December 2023. As of 1 January 2024, these guidelines and the related evaluation criteria provided as an appendix (APPENDIX 1) will be applied to all bachelor's theses at Aalto ARTS.

These guidelines contain the shared bachelor's thesis requirements for all ARTS majors as well as general instructions on the thesis process. More detailed instructions may be issued by programmes as necessary.

The thesis is a required part of the bachelor's degree.<sup>1</sup> The thesis is regarded as a study attainment and as such, all the regulations pertaining to study attainments and students' rights apply to it.

## 1. Before starting the thesis work

### Aim of the thesis

In the thesis written for the bachelor's degree, the student shall demonstrate:

- command of the field of the major and the capacity for applying the acquired knowledge and skills
- the knowledge and skills needed for artistic, scientific or applied research and for scientific working methods and
- adequate language and communication skills for duties in their own field.

### Scope and schedule of the thesis

The combined scope of the bachelor's thesis and the related seminar is 10 credits, which corresponds to a nominal workload of 270 hours. In the field of technology, the thesis and the related seminar (10 credits combined) include the studies in the student's language of primary and secondary education (Finnish or Swedish). The thesis is usually written during one academic term. The student agrees on the detailed schedule of the thesis with the teacher-in-charge of the bachelor's thesis seminar.

### Form of the thesis

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<sup>1</sup> Government Decree on University Degrees (1039/2013)

The bachelor's thesis at the School of Arts, Design and Architecture is, depending on the practices of the major, either a written thesis or a work consisting of a written component and production component. The recommended extent of the written component is 15–30 pages of text (30 000 – 60 000 characters with spaces), depending on the extent of the possible production component. The thesis includes an abstract written in the language of the thesis.

### **Language of the thesis**

In a bachelor's programme taught in Finnish, the written part of the bachelor's thesis shall be written in either Finnish or Swedish. On reasonable grounds, the thesis may be written in English upon the approval of the teacher-in-charge. In English-taught programmes, the written component is written in English. Students who study in English-medium degree programmes have the right to write their thesis in either of the national languages of Finland (Finnish or Swedish). In such cases, the national language used will be marked as the language of degree in their degree certificate (Aalto University guidelines on the languages of degree and instruction, 2021). The language of the thesis must be polished and comply with practices of the field.

### **Doing the bachelor's thesis as teamwork**

When approved by the teacher-in-charge, the bachelor's thesis may be completed as teamwork with two or more students involved. The key is that each student's independent contribution can be demonstrated for the purposes of evaluation. The reporting practices for a thesis done as teamwork are agreed upon with the teacher-in-charge.

## **2. Working on the thesis**

### **Thesis process and advising**

The thesis is done independently. Students learn about the thesis process during the bachelor's thesis seminar and may additionally consult their teacher-in-charge or thesis advisor when needed. The thesis process begins when the student registers for the bachelor's thesis seminar. The seminar has one or more teachers-in-charge and each student is assigned a teacher-in-charge. Additionally, the student may be assigned a thesis advisor. The programme will give further instructions on the assignment of the teacher-in-charge and possible thesis advisor.

Thesis advising is designed to help the student in the following: make progress in the thesis process; choosing the topic and defining the scope and methodology of the thesis; determining the weighting of the different content areas in the thesis; and learning academic writing and referencing.

### **Obtaining approval for the thesis topic and scope**

The student must obtain approval for the thesis topic and scope, and may be asked to write a thesis plan to that end. The purpose of the thesis plan is to make the thesis aims and objectives, contents, structure, and process clear to the student and visible to the teacher-in-charge and thesis advisor and the other students participating in the bachelor's thesis seminar.

Based on the plan presented by the student, the teacher-in-charge will approve the topic and scope of the thesis.

### **Processing of confidential information**

All approved theses are public documents. They cannot contain any confidential information. For instance, if confidential information is processed for a commissioned thesis, such information has to be excluded from the evaluated version of the thesis. Any confidential material must either be treated as background material for the thesis or worked on separately from the thesis to be evaluated. If there is a need to discuss confidential information in the thesis, the student must agree on its use in advance with the teacher-in-charge.

### **Thesis formatting**

The title page of the thesis must include: the student name, thesis title, type of thesis (field of arts: thesis for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Art and Design) or field of technology: thesis for the degree of Bachelor of Science (Technology)), name of programme and major, school, university, and year of thesis publication.

**Responsible conduct of research and good artistic practices**

The thesis shall comply with the Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling Violations Thereof and the Aalto University Visual Resources Centre's guidelines on using images in theses.

Ensuring correct citing and referencing is part of thesis advising. Well in advance of submitting the thesis for evaluation, the student submits the thesis to a university-provided electronic system to run an originality check on it. The student and teacher-in-charge go through the report produced by the system and review any problem areas in citing and referencing that the student may have.

**3. Language proficiency, workshops for oral and written communication and the maturity essay**

The bachelor's thesis includes a maturity essay. The maturity essay required for bachelor's degrees in art and design as well as in technology serves to demonstrate the student's conversance with the thesis topic and their proficiency in their language of primary and secondary education (Finnish or Swedish).<sup>2</sup> The maturity essay is completed in the language of primary and secondary education of the student.<sup>3</sup> Students who have received their primary and secondary education in a language other than Finnish or Swedish complete the maturity essay in the language of their thesis. In their case, completing the maturity essay only entails the teacher checking their command of the thesis topic, not their language proficiency.

**Workshops for oral and written communication**

As part of the bachelor's thesis seminar for Finnish-taught bachelor's programmes, students attend a written communication workshop (*tekstipaja*) (field of arts) or both a written and oral communication workshop (*puhepaja*) (field of technology). In the written communication workshops, students do exercises and read through various sample texts, process text samples, and get personal feedback and support from the workshop leader. In the field of technology, students are required to attend both lectures and workshops in written and oral communication to complete the required studies in the language of primary and secondary education.

The maturity essay is evaluated in terms of two areas: language proficiency and the student's conversance with their field of study. In Finnish-medium bachelor's programmes, demonstrating language proficiency requires that the student takes part in the written communication workshop, processes their own text and has a text sample approved. The conversance with the thesis topic is checked by the teacher-in-charge when they examine the final thesis.

Students whose language of primary or secondary education is Finnish or Swedish and who study in an English-medium bachelor's programme complete the language proficiency element of their maturity essay by having their thesis abstract, which is written in their language of primary or secondary education, language checked as instructed by the Language Centre. Their conversance with the thesis topic is checked by the teacher-in-charge when they examine the final thesis. Students whose language of primary and secondary education is not Finnish or Swedish, complete the maturity essay when their conversance with the thesis topic is checked when the final thesis is examined.

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<sup>2</sup> The language proficiency requirements of degrees are based on the Government Decree on University Degrees (794/2004, section 6, Language proficiency). Under the Government Decree (481/2003), a person's language of primary and secondary education is the language for which the person has received the certificate awarded for the studies referred to in the Basic Education Act (628/1998) or the Act on General Upper Secondary Education (714/2018), or studies corresponding to them, containing a passing grade in the subject of mother tongue and literature in either Finnish or Swedish.

<sup>3</sup> The language of primary and secondary education is determined on the basis of the person's primary and secondary education. The language of primary and secondary education is Finnish or Swedish if the student has received comprehensive school and/or high school education in that language in Finland. If the student's language of primary and secondary education is other than Finnish or Swedish, the maturity essay is usually written in Finnish or Swedish, depending on the choice of the student.

Students whose language of primary and secondary education is not Finnish or Swedish but who write their maturity essay in either of the above languages may have the language of their maturity essay mentioned in the degree certificate.

Passing the maturity essay is a precondition for getting your bachelor's thesis approved.

#### **Other support for academic writing and specialist support**

The studies in the mother tongue included in the bachelor's degree support the thesis writing process. Students who need support in academic writing can also attend other courses and writing clinics offered by the Aalto University Language Centre. The Language Centre publishes details of its course offering annually.

Students who feel they need specialist support for writing the thesis may contact the accessibility contact person to find out about possible support measures.

## **4. When the thesis is complete**

### **Thesis presentation session and evaluation**

The thesis author presents their final thesis in a thesis presentation session. Before the session, the thesis is submitted for evaluation as instructed in the thesis seminar guidelines. Any other components belonging to the thesis must be submitted for evaluation as agreed with the teacher-in-charge. In the thesis presentation session, the author presents the thesis, its objectives and results. The thesis advisor and/or teacher-in-charge evaluate the thesis verbally and the thesis author will have an opportunity to respond to the evaluation and any questions posed. The presentation session may include one or two seminar participants acting as opponents for the thesis. The student will have one week to finalise their thesis based on the feedback given in the presentation session.

The finalised thesis is submitted as a PDF/A file as instructed by the student's major. When submitting the final thesis for evaluation, the student also deposits the work to the publication archive of Aalto University.

The grade for the bachelor's thesis is decided by the teacher-in-charge. If a thesis advisor has been assigned for the thesis, they can propose a grade for the thesis. If the seminar has several teachers-in-charge, they may collaborate on the thesis evaluation. However, the final responsibility for the grade rests with the teacher-in-charge assigned to the student. When the written part of the thesis is evaluated, it is also submitted for an originality check, if needed.

The thesis is evaluated on a scale of 0–5. The thesis is always evaluated as a whole, with all the components of the thesis considered in the evaluation. The thesis is evaluated in accordance with the criteria specified in Appendix 1. Emphasis may be put on those criteria that are relevant for the thesis. The thesis may be failed if it does not meet the requirements set for a bachelor's thesis or if any dishonest means, such as plagiarism, have been used in the process.

The majors will specify the schedules for bachelor's thesis examination.

### **Depositing the thesis in the publication archive**

The student will save the data of their thesis and an electronic version of the thesis in the Aalto University publication archive. The thesis is saved as a PDF/A file, and it may include, in addition to the written component, e.g. images, as an attached file. The school has the right to publish information regarding the theses approved by it in the publication archive (e.g. title and language of thesis, keywords and thesis advisor). The thesis must be deposited in the publication archive before it has been approved, as the deposit is a required part of the thesis process.

### **Lodging a rectification request (appealing to the university against an admission decision)**

#### ***Submitting an appeal to the teacher***



Students dissatisfied with the grading of a study attainment may appeal against it either orally or in writing to the teacher in charge of the evaluation. The appeal against the grade shall be filed within 14 days of the date on which the student was offered the opportunity to see the results and the evaluation criteria that was applied to the attainment.

The decision of the teacher concerning the appeal shall be submitted to the student in writing and supplemented with instructions for appealing against the decision to the Academic Appeals Board.

***Appealing against the decision of the teacher***

Students dissatisfied with the decision made by the teacher may appeal against the decision in writing to the Aalto University Academic Appeals Board within 14 days of receiving notice of the decision. The date on which the notice was received is not included in the 14-day period. The appeal must arrive at the university by the closing time of the Registry (15.00) on the deadline.

If the student is notified of the decision by an electronic message (by e-mail), the notification is deemed to have been received by the student on the third (3) day after mailing, unless proven otherwise.

If the student is notified of the decision by mail, the notification is deemed to have been received by the student on the seventh (7) day after mailing unless proven otherwise.

Address to the Aalto University Academic Appeals Board:

Aalto University Academic Appeals Board  
Registry  
P.O. BOX 11000  
FI-00076 AALTO  
kirjaamo@aalto.fi

The appeal must specify the following:

- 1) student name and contact information (address, email address and telephone number)
- 2) date of student receiving notification of the decision
- 3) decision (incl. name of the course and its teacher)
- 4) the change sought with the appeal
- 5) grounds for the appeal (copies of documents on which the student bases their appeal if not already submitted to Aalto University).

**General instructions on graduation**

The student must check well in advance of the planned graduation date that they have all completed all the requisite study attainments and that their personal study plan is up-to-date. The student may apply for graduation when all the requisite studies apart from the thesis have been registered into the student information system, the thesis has been submitted for evaluation and deposited in the publication archive, and the maturity essay has been completed.

The evaluation criteria below apply to the bachelor's theses of the School of Arts, Design and Architecture. The final grade is given for the thesis as a whole using those evaluation criteria which are relevant for the thesis. The grade is not an average grade based on the grades given for the individual areas evaluated: emphasis may be put on those criteria that are most relevant for the thesis, while criteria that are not applicable to the thesis may be ignored. The bachelor's thesis is evaluated on a grading scale of 0 (fail)/1 (passable)/2 (satisfactory)/3 (good)/4 (very good)/5 (excellent) where 5 is the highest grade (Aalto University Degree Regulations for Bachelor's and Master's Degrees, 2021, section 7) in the grades 3–5 of the chart, the previous standard of quality is included in the next.

Fail	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The thesis shall not be passed if it has several major shortcomings, contains plagiarised material or otherwise fails to meet the minimum requirements for an approved thesis.</b>					
<b>1 Thesis aim and definition of the topic</b> - Definition of the topic - Definition of the research problem and thesis objectives - Definition of the research questions	The definition of the topic is vague.  The choice of topic is poorly justified and the objective of the thesis is unclear.  The research question or problem is poorly described and the choices are poorly justified.	The scope and objectives of the thesis are inadequately defined.  The topic is relevant to the field from an artistic, professional or research viewpoint. However, the viewpoints presented are inadequately discussed.  The research question or problem has been described and justified to a satisfactory extent.	The topic has been defined but the objectives are not crystallised.  The topic is relevant to the field and the thesis looks at it from a perspective that is central to the field. The thesis demonstrates that the author has a broad knowledge of the practices of the field.  The research question or problem is well-justified and well-described.	The thesis has a clearly defined objective and scope.  The topic is essential for the field and the viewpoints presented are well-justified. The thesis opens up new perspectives on the topic for potential future research.  The research question or problem is well-formulated and leads to knowledge acquisition that benefits the field of study.	The thesis scope is clearly defined. Thesis goals and research questions demonstrate mature thinking.  The topic has significance for the field and the thesis author has generated new knowledge on it.  The research question or problem is of interest to the field of study and leads to results that benefit the field of study.
<b>2 Production component of the thesis</b> - Quality of the production (artistic /professional) - Creativity and problem-solving skills in the artistic or productive process - Documentation of the production	The production is poor and lacks originality. There are major shortcomings in the execution of the production.  The thesis demonstrates a low level of creativity or poor problem-solving skills.  The process has been documented but there are major shortcomings in the documentation.	The production is satisfactory but lacks originality.  The thesis demonstrates some creativity or problem-solving skills.  There are notable shortcomings in the documentation of the process.	The production is good but not particularly original.  The thesis demonstrates adequate creativity or problem-solving skills. The whole process is well-executed.  The process has been duly documented.	The production is very good and original.  Creativity and problem-solving skills evident in the work.  The process has been documented clearly and informatively.	The production meets the requirements of an excellent bachelor's thesis production and adopts an original approach to the topic.  The description of the process demonstrates the student's notable creativity and problem-solving skills during the process.  The process has been documented clearly and in a manner that supports the topic excellently.
<b>3 Methodology and processing of research data</b> - Command of research methods and techniques - Data collection and processing	Major shortcomings in the command of the selected methods or techniques have affected the results.  The data is inadequate or poorly related to the topic. There are major shortcomings in processing the data.	The choice and command of methods and techniques support the attainment of the goals in a satisfactory manner.  The data is limited or one-sided or relates to the topic only to a satisfactory extent.	The choice of methods or techniques supports the discussion of the topic. The thesis demonstrates good command of the methods and techniques.  There is an adequate amount of purposeful data. There may be some shortcomings in the data.	The thesis demonstrates very good command of the methods or techniques and excellent skills in applying them.  The data is purposeful for the thesis objectives and research questions.	The student applies and critically evaluates the selected methods or techniques.  The data is comprehensive and purposeful and supports the research objectives well. The data collection has been executed excellently.
<b>4 Discussion and command of the topic</b> - Conceptualisation of the topic and linking it to a broader context. - References	The student has poor command of the topic and its framework. The thesis repeats what the author has learnt or is written beside the point.  The sources cited are very few or poorly connected to the discussion of the topic.	The topic is identified and described correctly but the thesis does not progress to discuss the connections between phenomena or concepts.  The sources cited are few or one-sided or relate to the topic to a satisfactory extent.	The thesis demonstrates the student's command of the topic. The thesis contains precise definitions and synthesis. The thesis is descriptive and repetitive.  An adequate number of relevant sources cited	The student has a good command of the topic and the background material. The thesis explores and discusses the reasons underlying the topic and related concepts. The thesis draws parallels, makes comparisons or assessments concerning the connections or differences between the discussed topics and concepts.  A wide range of relevant sources are cited.	The thesis demonstrates the student's broad-based knowledge of the background material and the topic. The argumentation is solid. The topic is examined comprehensively and critically, while indicating the inherent characteristics of the topic and its links to a broader context. The thesis demonstrates profound learning and insight.  A comprehensive body of information has been collected from reliable sources (source evaluation). A wide range of relevant sources are cited.
<b>5 Results and conclusions</b> - Conclusions and interpretation - Student's reflection on their own work and description of follow-up measures	The results and conclusions of the thesis remain unclear and are poorly presented.	The results and conclusions are not presented in a polished manner.	The results and conclusions are clearly presented, but the student's reflection on them is lacking.	The results and conclusions are clearly presented. The student has reflected on the results. The thesis clearly answers the research question(s).	The results and conclusions are presented clearly and insightfully. The research question(s) have been answered comprehensively.
<b>6 Language and presentation</b> - Writing style and presentation of the thesis - Oral presentation - Formatting of the thesis - Citing and referencing, list of references - Structure of the thesis	The thesis is poorly written.  The student has prepared for the oral presentation poorly, and there are shortcomings in the contents, presentation skills and/or time management.  The thesis layout is confusing, difficult to read and does not facilitate understanding of the topic.  The list of references or in-text references have a significant number of errors. The student lacks the skill to compile a list of references or cite sources. Some sources have been omitted (from either the list of references or in the text).  The thesis is structured incoherently or resembles a list.	There are spelling mistakes and difficult sentence structures.  The student has prepared for the oral presentation inadequately, and there are shortcomings in the contents, presentation skills and/or time management.  The formatting and/or overall appearance of the thesis needs improvement. The visual material is of poor quality or inadequate for the purpose.  There are several different types of errors in list of references and in-text references.  There are some structural inconsistencies in the thesis.	The language is mostly clear, but there are some shortcomings in fluency and correctness. The abstract is compliant with the guidelines.  The student has prepared for the oral presentation adequately. The presentation is illustrative and the delivery easy to follow. There may be shortcomings in the contents, presentation skills or time management.  The formatting is purposeful and carefully considered but it may have some shortcomings.  The list of references and in-text references are mostly correct.  The thesis is purposefully and logically structured and the topic is discussed coherently.	The language is fluent and the style is appropriate for the topic. There are only minor spelling mistakes.  The oral presentation is well prepared and the delivery is easy to follow. The student demonstrates some skills in interaction and receiving feedback.  The thesis is well-structured and easily readable. The formatting is purposeful.  There may be a few errors in the list of references or in-text references.  The thesis is purposefully and logically structured and the topic is discussed with insight and cohesion.	The language of the thesis is clear and correct and the language facilitates the understanding of the topic. Sentence structure is varied.  The oral presentation is insightful and well prepared. The delivery is easy to follow and keeps to the schedule. The student demonstrates skills in receiving feedback and engages the audience with ease.  The thesis is polished, illustrative and excellent visually and artistically. The visual material is particularly illustrative; the text and pictures support each other exceptionally well.  The list of references and in-text references are flawless.  The structure of the thesis is clear and logical. The thesis is a coherent whole, and the structure supports the reading experience and understanding the contents.
<b>7 Thesis process</b> - Management of the thesis process and keeping to the schedule - Work during the seminar and acting as an opponent (in accordance with the seminar structure of the programme)	There are major shortcomings in the thesis process management, e.g. the student has not accepted the help offered to a sufficient degree or has submitted the thesis late (incl. late submission), the student has failed to respond in time when the thesis advisor has contacted them.  The student is not prepared for their task as the opponent.	There are shortcomings in the thesis process management (assignment(s) submitted late, thesis submitted late)  The student is ill-prepared for their task as the opponent.	For the most part, the process was well managed.  The student is prepared for their task as the opponent.	The process was managed very well. The student is able to manage time and work independently. The student works on their own initiative. There may be minor shortcomings in these areas.  The student is well-prepared for their task as the opponent. The commenting is purposeful.	The process was seen through in a professional manner. The student has excellent time management skills, works independently and on their own initiative.  The student is well-prepared for their task as the opponent, the comments are critical and encouraging and contain concrete examples.