



**Date** 30. May 2018  
**Fileholders** Tudor Maxim; Christof Bischofberger  
**Contact** [maxim.fsr.feb@gmail.com](mailto:maxim.fsr.feb@gmail.com); [christof.fsr.feb@gmail.com](mailto:christof.fsr.feb@gmail.com)  
**Recipients** prof. dr. H.G. van Dissel; prof. dr. P.J. van Baalen; Programme Directors; Course Coordinators

## Advice – BSc Thesis

Dear prof. dr. H.G. van Dissel,

Dear prof. dr. P.J. van Baalen,

Dear Programme Directors,

Dear Course Coordinators,

The Faculty Student Council (henceforth referred to as “FSR”) at the Faculty of Economics and Business (henceforth referred to as “FEB”) is writing this letter to draw your attention to irregularities in the process of writing the bachelor thesis and more importantly, to make suggestions as to how our faculty can improve its BSc thesis structure.

The bachelor thesis is the culmination of three years of knowledge accumulation and the FSR believes it is one of/if not the most important part of the bachelor. Therefore, we would like to point out some potential improvements. Firstly, students find it difficult to find a topic and are sometimes forced to write proposals on uninteresting topics due of the lack of time. The FSR would propose that a **plenary lecture** should be held before the start of the thesis seminar which would provide basic research ideas, data mining techniques, stata basics, suggested papers, important contacts and deadlines. This solution would follow the structure from the FEB Master programmes and could add benefits such as the reduction of students that delay writing their thesis, a problem FEB bachelors are struggling with.

Secondly, in assigning a supervisor, there is a gap of more than 10 to 12 days in which students cannot start writing on their thesis after submitting their proposal because they have no input from supervisors. The FSR proposes a **preliminary allocation of supervisors** after students had submitted their draft proposal. This would be done by the thesis coordinator when reviewing the preliminary proposal. In this way students can communicate with a supervisor at all times. The process would then be similar as the allocation of supervisors in the FEB Masters. A different approach for this would be



to provide students with certain **guidelines** on how to continue writing the thesis until they are allocated the final supervisor.

Thirdly, the FSR believes that the current format in which students present their final proposal and they give and receive feedback on proposals could be improved. Students conveyed that they find this process tedious and it does not add value to their proposal. Because these classes are at a very early stage in writing the thesis, students cannot relate their problems/potential problems and end up not learning in class. Instead, **smaller discussions** should be facilitated between students and teachers/supervisors. Thus, the classes in which students present their proposals could be replaced by open hours of supervisors/ seminar teachers. More specifically, the 3 classes of 2 hours each could be replaced by open hours of supervisors/teachers to respond to any questions related to proposals.

Fourthly, students have expressed their dissatisfaction with the process of resitting the thesis. The problem arises due to late feedback from the supervisor in the case of a failing grade. Because of this, students do not have enough time to implement the feedback for the resit. The FSR proposes a **pass/fail indication** in maximum 5 days after submitting the thesis. In this way, supervisors could focus on giving the necessary feedback for the resit and postpone giving feedback to students who have passed the thesis with their first submission. Alternatively, pushing the **resit deadline** to a month instead of 2 weeks after the thesis submission, could solve this issue. Related to this is the time in which students receive feedback after submitting the draft version of the thesis. A maximum of 5 days should be allowed until students receive feedback from their supervisors.

Fifthly, the FSR believes that each thesis should be read by more than one reader. We understand that as things stand, the second supervisor does not have to read the thesis thoroughly, but just skip through the paper. This allows for a lot of subjectivity in the grading of the first supervisor. We believe that in order to have a fair and unbiased grading, the second supervisor should objectively grade the thesis. We would like to see funds being allocated to ensure the quality of thesis grading.

Lastly, and most importantly in the view of the FSR, the quality of supervisors and the **quality of relationships** between supervisors and students is subpar. Students have complained numerous times about supervisors being allocated on a wrongful basis (qualitative research expert for a quantitative



thesis topic). Moreover, there are instances of supervisors not answering emails for more than 7 days or supervisors not giving any or hardly any feedback. The FSR would like to express our concerns regarding this topic and would propose that more attention is paid to the thesis evaluation forms and that the management team and the thesis coordinators work continually in ensuring the quality of thesis supervision. What is more, the FSR would like to ask all thesis coordinators to implement a system in which **supervisors approach the students** and not the other way around - as it currently stands in the master programmes. The students should have a **clear overview** of what is expected from them and more importantly of what they should expect from the supervisors (nr. of meetings, schedule of meetings, total number of hours, feedback depth, etc.). Supervisors should outlay this overview in an introductory email/meeting no later than 3 days after being assigned supervisees. Another approach to solve this problem, as advised by the FEB study advisers, would be to introduce a **thesis supervision card** in order to ensure supervisors provide students with a sufficient number of contact hours. We believe that in the current format (see appendix), the supervision card is too rigid. However, a more user - friendly version could bring benefits in developing the student - supervisor relationship. We are open to hearing your suggestions or comments on improving this issue.

All in all, the FSR believe there is room for improvement in the bachelor thesis seminars and the supervision process at the FEB. We have hereby outlined our proposals to improve the thesis structure in our BSc programmes and are excited to discuss these ideas with you.

On behalf of the Faculty Student Council,



Tudor Maxim

*Committee Member, Education & Research*



Christof Bischofberger

*Chairman, Education & Research*



**Appendix:**

**Thesis Supervision Card**

<b>UvA Economics and Business Thesis Supervision Card</b>	
Supervisor name	
Student Name	
Thesis title	

<b>Progress</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Submis- sion date</b>	<b>Signature supervisor</b>	<b>Signature student</b>	<b>Comments</b>
First meeting/ Introduction chapter					
Literature review					
Data collection / Meeting about analysis					
Data analysis					
Conclusion / Discussion					

This card is a guideline to when expected and specific parts of the thesis should be done. Meeting the targeted dates allow you to be able to finish the thesis within the available supervising hours. Moreover, it also is an indication of the quality of the thesis writing process (not the quality of the thesis itself). The quality of this writing process is taken in regard when determining the final grade. Please note that you only have limited supervision after the first grade.

***Bring this card to every meeting with your supervisor***

