



The Scientific Seminar

MSc. Students' Guide for a Successful Thesis

The Scientific Seminar

The Diploma Thesis (DT) is the culmination of the two years MSc. programme. It must be original research carried out independently by the student under the supervision of an academic member of FTA within their research teams. **The Department of Economics and Development (DED)** follows the vision of FTA and encourages students to be creative and rigorous in choosing their topic and conducting their research.

Research is a vital part of your MSc. Degree. It provides a real opportunity for you to demonstrate independence, originality and inspiration. Moreover, you will learn to plan and organise your thesis project over a long period, and to put into practice some of the research methods and techniques you have learned throughout the course of your studies.

Your thesis should be the most satisfying piece of work in your degree. Therefore, it is important that you select a topic that matches your interests, skills and means, and a supervisor with whom you can communicate effectively. You need to make sure that you have the proper support and set your expectations appropriately.

This guide is prepared to help students of the **International Development and Agricultural Economics (IDAE)** MSc programme conduct their research efficiently so they can successfully defend their DT.

Contacts

Your Scientific Seminar Guarantors:

Associate Prof. Miroslava Bavorová

Email: bavorova@ftz.czu.cz; Office: 325.

Office hours: by appointment.

Dr. Jiří Hejkrlik

Email: hejkrlik@ftz.czu.cz; Office: 409.

Office hours: Click **HERE** to schedule a meeting.

Dr. Petra Chaloupková

Email: chaloupkova@ftz.czu.cz; Office: 413.

Office hours: by appointment.

Dr. Vladimír Verner

Email: vernerv@ftz.czu.cz; Office: 327.

Office hours: by appointment.

Class basic information

Scientific seminars are held during the first teaching block of each semester except for the first semester (*please refer to the course outline on [page 4](#) of this guide*). Each week, you will have one 2-hour-session where academic staff will guide you through the major steps of research process depending on the stage you are in.

The course consists of seminars only, in which theoretical background and practical tasks are combined. It is an interactive course, which means that it requires the active participation of students in every seminar.

In order to be "pass-eligible," students must participate in contact teaching. If the student misses more than **20%** of classes without accountable reason, s/he is not eligible for the credit till s/he complies with the additional tasks announced by teachers.

Also, please be aware that you might be required to perform some tasks and pass some tests in order to obtain the seminar credit. By fulfilling the requirements in the scientific seminar, you will be awarded 1 ECTS by **the seminar guarantor** (*please refer to the scientific seminar agenda on [page 4](#) of this guide.*)

IMPORTANT TO NOTE...

Scientific seminars **DO NOT REPLACE** your work with your supervisor throughout the semester!!!

Your DT supervisor is your main contact with whom you are working on developing your research. By the end of each semester, **your progress in your thesis will be evaluated by your supervisor, and consequently, s/he will give you ECTS assigned for that stage** (*please refer to the requirements table on [page 5](#) of this guideline.*)

About your thesis

- Credits: **25 ECTS** of the 120 ECTS you need to acquire throughout your studies.
- Length: about 40-50 pages.

MSc Writing Resources

The methodical manual for writing MSc thesis:

<https://www.ftz.czu.cz/dl/84533?lang=en>

The MSc thesis template:

<https://www.ftz.czu.cz/dl/84532?lang=en>

FTA citation rules:

<https://www.ftz.czu.cz/dl/41914?lang=en>

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to abide by the University rules governing academic conduct, as discussed in the **Code of Ethics** <https://www.czu.cz/dl/51678?lang=en> :

“...students shall not plagiarize, and when fulfilling their duties during their studies, they shall not cheat or provide others with the opportunity to cheat. They shall not pass the work of others as their own. They shall not discredit the results of their work, or the work of their teachers and others.”

Useful sources of information

As an MSc student, you can find all the information you might need on our faculty website: <https://www.ftz.czu.cz/en/r-9420-study/r-10785-students>.

FTA provides its students with support services through study and psychological counselling in addition to a peer-support system that is dedicated especially for international students to help them navigate in the new study environment. More details are found on this web page <https://www.ftz.czu.cz/en/r-9420-study/r-9506-information-for-students/r-10815-study-counselling>.

Also, students with special needs are provided with consultations and assistance by CZU Prague, please check this web page in case you need special assistance: <https://www.ftz.czu.cz/en/r-9420-study/r-9506-information-for-students/r-10817-students-with-special-needs>.

Recommended Readings

Bavorová M, ed. 2021. Survey Design. Prague: Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague. ***

Creswell JW. 2008. Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. SAGE Publications, Inc. pp. 296

Glastthorn AA. 1998. Writing the Winning Dissertation: A Step-by-Step Guide. Corwin Press. pp.240

Kumar R. 2010. Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners. SAGE Publications Ltd. pp. 440

Wallwork A. 2011. English for Writing Research Papers. Springer. pp. 325

Walters D. 1999. The Readable Thesis A Guide to Clear and Effective Writing. Avocus Pub.

***** This book is available to purchase at FTA. For further information on how to get your copy of this book, please contact Marie Straková at: netopilova@ftz.czu.cz.**

Calendar

Year		Year 1		Year 2	
Semester		Semester I	Semester II	Semester III	Semester IV
ECTS <i>(by the seminar guarantor)</i>		1	1	1	1
Block	Week	Theme: Introduction to Agricultural Research Guarantor: Dr. Jiří Hejkrlik	Theme: Research Design & Layout Principles Guarantor: Dr. Vladimír Verner	Theme: Data Processing & Visualisation Guarantor: Assoc. Prof. Miroslava Bavorová	Theme: Presentation skills Guarantor: Dr. Petra Chaloupková
First	1	Introduction to the Scientific seminars and research process	Introduction to thesis structure and cooperation with supervisor	Introduction to data processing	Introduction to thesis defence procedure and evaluation
	2	Presentation of study programme IDEA: FAQs and discussion	Thesis writing Do's & Don'ts: Tips	Data visualisation standards - figures and tables	Presentations Do's & Don'ts: Tips
	3	Finding relevant information, available databases at CZU	From topic to research question(s)	Data management – entering, coding, cleaning	MSc theses presentation by students
	4	Critical evaluation of information	Literature review (State of Art)	Checking data and choice of suitable methods	MSc theses presentation by students
	5	Organizing and citing information resources	MScs theses presentation by students (topics, supervisor and expectations)	MSc theses presentation by students	MSc theses presentation by students
	6	Presentation of new topics for MSc students	Quality, ethics and plagiarism	MSc theses presentation by students	MSc theses presentation by students
Second	7	Formulation of the research problem			
	8	Building theoretical knowledge			
	9	Citation manager Mendeley			
	10	Scientific methods			
	11	Objectives of the research			
	12	Structure of the research report Open-book test in Moodle			

Requirements/ Tasks (by students and their supervisors)

Semester	Student	Supervisor	ECTS <i>(by DT Supervisor)</i>
Semester I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact a supervisor as early as you wish, but no later than the end of the first semester. Please bear in mind that the potential supervisor has to agree to supervise your thesis. She or he might decline. Topics must be selected by January 31st. - Students who would not succeed to find a supervisor till March 31st of a current academic year, will not have a chance to benefit from integral financial resources of the faculty to partly cover their travel and stay cost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To present their topics to IDAE students. - Upload all topics in the UIS* by 30. 11. - If satisfied, to grant credit for topic selection in the UIS. 	2
Semester II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work on the research design of your thesis: conceptual framework, objectives, hypotheses, and methodology (study site, sample, questionnaire and data collection plan). - After the supervisor's approval, you must upload the research plan to the UIS to obtain the thesis assignment. The deadline for filling the assignment form is 31st March. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To approve the thesis assignment in UIS (31.3.) - If satisfied, to grant credit for research design in the UIS. 	3
Semester III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proceed with data analysis and prepare your results. - Actively participate in discussion and evaluation over the presentation of research results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To check the progress. - If satisfied, to grant credit for data analysis in the UIS. 	5
Semester IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finalise DT: follow the FTA guidelines and the supervisor's and teachers' suggestions from the scientific seminars. - Present your final results of the thesis in front of classmates during seminars. - Upload the final electronic version of your DT in UIS. - Thesis would be then evaluated by the supervisor and an opponent (reviewer). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If satisfied, to grant credit for submission in the UIS. - To select the opponent (usually a holder of a PhD) from outside the FTA. The designation of the opponent must be completed 4 weeks before the defence date. The dissertation supervisor enters the name, position and affiliation of a chosen opponent in the UIS. - The opponent and supervisor's evaluation will be entered in UIS one week before the defence. 	15

* UIS: University Information System (<https://is.czu.cz/>)

Meet your supervisors

Miroslava Bavorová

Dr. Bavorová is an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Economics and Development at the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences. She is a scientific coordinator of the MSc study programme “International Development and Agricultural Economics”. She holds a PhD degree from the Georg-August University in Goettingen, Germany, and she passed through habilitation procedure at the Martin-Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg (2017), Germany and the Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague (2019). Since 2006, she has been a lecturer of several courses at the Martin-Luther-University and the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, i.e. Agricultural Policy, Applied Research Methods, Management in Agribusiness, Development Economics and Consumer Behaviour Studies. She was guest lecturer at the universities in Perugia (Italy), Barnaul (Russia), Sumy, Biela Tserkva and Charkiv (Ukraine), Mostar (Bosna and Herzegovina) and Monga (Zambia). She has been supervisor of bachelor, master and PhD students.

She has been involved in a number of international research projects financed by the EU, German Research Foundation, German Ministry of Education and Research, FAO as well as she participates at development projects implementation in tropical and less developed regions worldwide. Her research priorities are analyses of factors that affect behaviour of the actors in the agri-food sector. She established the research group “Behavioural studies in agri-food sector”. Her research is interdisciplinary and mainly based on economic, sociologic, and psychologic theories. For the empirical research, she uses standard quantitative and qualitative research methods. She is interested in analysing various actors’ behaviour regarding environment including farmers’ climate change adaptation and sustainable agricultural practices adoption, food safety and security, migration and willingness to work in agriculture as well as consumer behaviour.

[Research Gate](#) | [ORCID](#) | [Google Scholar](#) | [BESTA research team](#)

Jiří Hejkrlík

Dr. Hejkrlík graduated with a doctorate from the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU) and is currently serving as Vice-dean at the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences (FTA). He is an active researcher in the Department of Economics and Development, focusing on agricultural value chains, ethical trading, rural institutions, collective action, and small farmers’ cooperatives. He has also been a manager and evaluator of international agricultural projects in Eastern Europe (Georgia, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ukraine), Central Asia (Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan) and Africa (Angola, Ethiopia and Kenya). In several of these countries, he also delivered guest lectures at partner universities. He is a member of the Cooperative Research Group of FTA/CZU and a member of the board of the Fairtrade Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the Czech Evaluation Society.

[Research Gate](#) | [ORCID](#) | [Google Scholar](#) | [COOPER research team](#)

Petra Chaloupková

Dr. Chaloupková is an academic staff at the Department of Economics and Development, the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences (FTA, CZU) and Vice-dean for the International Relations. Since 2007, she is responsible for project management (Erasmus+, Erasmus Mundus, development cooperation etc.) and international cooperation. She was the main coordinator of Erasmus Mundus/Erasmus+ projects (EURASIA2, ALFABET, ASK Asia and SIMPLE) and a project expert in Erasmus+ projects (PISAI, ESCAPAdE).

She has a long-term experience as the project manager of development projects implemented in Angola, Cambodia and Vietnam. Her both pedagogical and research activities focus on international cooperation, management in international development, project monitoring and evaluation, capacity building, agricultural development, consumer behaviour, particularly in the tropical and subtropical countries. She supervised more than 40 master's and bachelor's degree theses (mostly focusing on consumer behaviour, impact assessment, socio-economic evaluations). She established the research group COBE "Consumers behaviour and Capacity Building", which is focused on capacity building and strengthening the skills of people to respond to the main international challenges addressed to the well-being of the next generations: agriculture, food safety and security, technologies in life sciences, balanced management of the natural resources and sustainable rural development. She is a Vice President of the international association AGRINATURA (agrinateureu.eu) and a member of Czech Evaluation Society (CES) - independent association of professional evaluators.

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Vladimír Verner

Dr. Vladimír Verner currently holds the position of professor assistant at the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Czechia. He obtained his Ph.D. degree in agricultural economics in 2007 and has become the leader of the research group TRACE (Tropical Farming Systems & Ecological Economics) in 2015. Between 2012 and 2020, he held the position of head of department of economics and development. His specialization is resource and process economics, evaluating investments for agricultural development, promotion of value chains and the efficiency of poverty alleviation strategies. His research is of interdisciplinary character, combining economic and social theories with agroecological approaches. Since 2011 he has provided consultancy on the commercial transformation of subsistence farming systems, land use dynamics and sustainable agricultural production for FAO, UNDP, IFAD and the EC, and launched cooperation with the CGIAR system. As invited professor, he delivered lectures at the universities in Belgium (Ghent), Ethiopia (Hawassa), Germany (Hohenheim, Stuttgart), Indonesia (Palu, Central Sulawesi), Mongolia (MULS, Ulaanbaatar) or Vietnam (Hue). He has been also involved in development-oriented research funded by the European Commission (H2020), German government (BMBF), the United Nation system (FAO), the Czech Science Foundation (GACR) or Czech ODA with major focus on South-East Asia (Indonesia, Vietnam), Central Asia and Eastern Europe (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia), Sub-Saharan Africa (Cameroon, Ethiopia, Zambia), Amazon (Peru) and the Pacific Islands (Samoa).

[Research Gate](#) | [ORCID](#) | [WOS research profile](#) | [Google Scholar](#) | [TRACE research team](#)

You may check the previous master theses supervised by the DED/FTA academic staff in UIS and see their scientific publications in Research Gate or Google Scholar.

Tips for a smooth supervision experience

1. Think about what topic you would like to work with: what motivates you to conduct your DT research? Which of the topics presented by DED academic members appeal to you? And are you able to conduct the research given your skills and means?

2. As early as you can, check the profile of potential supervisor and arrange an appointment to discuss further DT details. During the discussion with a supervisor, you will develop a topic that relates to the interests of both of you. When the main outline of the topic is raised, fill the assignment form in the UIS under the supervisor guidance and ask for his/her approval. Do not forget to always check in which stage your assignment is approved also by other authorities (Head of department, Programme guarantor, and the Dean).

3. During your first meeting with your supervisor, you need to have a clear and honest discussion with her/him. You need to ask about the following aspects:

- When particularly, while you are writing your thesis, will you need to receive supervision?
- How much of a contribution do you expect of each other?
- When can you meet? and how frequently you expect to hold meetings with your supervisor? In some cases, it can be a fixed arrangement 'every month.' In other cases, you can decide upon a more open arrangement through email exchanges.
- How many pages can you send before each supervision meeting?

4. As a student, you are the driving force in the supervision process. You send drafts and formulate an agenda before all supervision meetings. Give your supervisor at least one week of time to work through your/the documents prior to the meeting. This will give your supervisor the time s/he needs to read about your current progress and will be able to point out what you are missing; and give you some feedback on your writing.

5. Make sure that you are always well prepared for your supervision meetings. When you send your text to your supervisor, you should always include explanatory text. Do not forget to follow FTA citation rules and try to omit all typos and formatting errors even at this stage. It is not sufficient to write: "I look forward to hearing your opinion of my text." You should write a well-planned explanatory text for your email considering the following:

- What are you sending? Where does it belong in your thesis?
- What should your supervisor's comments focus on? Which are the most pressing questions?
- How well are you keeping up with the workplan you have arranged?
- What are you doing now, and what will you be doing next?

6. Always remember that writing your DT is a process. It is not an assignment/homework that you're done with upon submission. It needs a lot of work and refinement upon your supervisor's feedback, so expect to have multiple iterations of writing. You need to put that in mind and plan your time wisely.

7. Do not forget to combine your thesis with other optional courses and the internship. It is also very common to present your thesis at the international conference (literature review, preliminary results, final version). Look up for these conferences and discuss your potential participation with your supervisor.

8. Last but not least, to do a good research costs money. Thus, do not rely on faculty support or your supervisors projects. Do actively search for external funds, for which you can earn not just financial resources but also ECTS.

This report is prepared by
Department of Economics and Development

Cover Photos: Field Research Around the World
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FTA, CZU Prague (2022)