

**AGRICULTURE ACADEMY OF
VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF BIOECONOMY DEVELOPMENT**

**METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE
PREPARATION OF THE STUDIES FINAL PROJECT**

For students of the second-cycle MBA study programme “Customs Process Management”

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INTRODUCTION

If you registered for the academic Master's Study Programme (MBA) “Customs Process Management”, you must write Studies Final Project. **The Studies Final Project is an individual study work for students to apply theoretical knowledge for analysis and solutions to solve a specific practical problem.**

Writing and submission of the Studies Final Project follow the deadlines indicated in the study programme, which are published in the Moodle class of course and on the faculty's website (<https://zua.vdu.lt/en/faculties/faculty-of-bioeconomy-development/studies/information-for-students/>).

You can choose the theme of the Studies Final Project from the lists offered by the study programme committee and available on the faculty's website. You are also welcome to propose your own theme that must be discussed with and approved by your potential advisor.

Keep in mind that choosing a theme is simply the first stage. To turn a theme into a Studies Final Project you have to think of problems or issues which you wish to address.

After signing for the theme, you must arrange to see your advisor in a week's time and agree upon the time of your regular meetings. **After choosing the theme, you must identify your topic and discuss the terms of reference of the studies final project (Annex 4) with the advisor and submit it to the chair of the study program committee.** Remember, it is not your advisor's work that is being assessed but yours. It is your responsibility to plan your work, find information, organize the text according to the conventions and edit it. Use the word processor spell-checker if necessary. Read through your work very carefully before submitting it. Always keep a copy of everything you submit.

Plagiarism occurs when you take someone else's work, thoughts, or words and present them as your own. To prevent plagiarism, follow proper techniques like quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, and citing sources correctly. Quoting involves using the precise words of the original author or speaker while paraphrasing entails expressing the concepts and language from a source using your own words. Please take attention to the legislation of VMU. When preparing and designing the project, it is necessary to follow:

- Academic paper writing for students of social sciences: general methodological guidelines for students of the faculty of Bioeconomy development;
- Code of ethics of Vytautas Magnus University.

The aim of the Studies Final Project is to develop students' ability to apply modern research methods in innovative and knowledge-integrating practices, to develop a

methodology for implementing innovation in customs, taxation, and international trade in an organization, and to demonstrate its application in a chosen organization.

The following **objectives of the Studies Final Project** are set to achieve the aim:

1. An identified problem based on the suitability of the innovation in the organization.
2. Analysis of the level of research of the research problem and completeness of the scientific discussion.
3. Novelty and sufficiency of scientific literature sources.
4. Consistency, completeness of the prepared research methodology, compliance with the requirements of the research methodologies and connection with the research problem.
5. Appropriateness of research methods to solve the problem.
6. Validity, specificity and clarity of the formulated conclusions.

1. STUDIES FINAL PROJECT STRUCTURE

1.1. Length of the term paper

Students use subject-related and scientific literature (monographs, science studies, research articles referred in international databases), legislative acts, statistical and empirical data as well as other information sources for their Studies Final Project. The list of references of the Studies Final Project shall be comprised of at least 20 sources, and at least half of the scientific literature analysed during the master's studies shall be scientific literature.

Recommended length of the Studies Final Project is 20–25 pages (excluding annexes). You should be careful not to write too much and become irrelevant. Remember your mark may be lowered for producing an exceedingly long Studies Final Project.

1.2. Structure of the term paper

The Studies Final Project that does not meet the formal requirements of the structure and scope of the work cannot be defended in the Studies Final Project Evaluation Committee.

Studies Final Project consists of the following parts:

- Title page (Annex 1);
- Composition of the Commission for Studies Final Project (continuation of Annex 2);
- Contents (Annex 4-5);
- A summary of 1 pages in English language (Annex 6);
- Glossary of key concepts (Annex 7), which is intended to provide the student with basic concepts to guide research and preparation of the final thesis (concepts may be of other authors and formed by the student oneself);
- Introduction, presenting the practical problem (Table 1) and all the main parameters of the research described: object, objectives, aim, etc.;
- The main components of the Studies Final Project: situation analysis, methodology, including theoretical aspects, as well as result/project results (Table 1);
- Conclusions and recommendations;
- List of references and other sources of information (Annex 8);
- Annexes.

The Studies Final Project is comprised of the following components: introduction, analytical, methodological, results parts, and conclusions (Table 1).

Structural parts	Content requirements
Introduction	The introduction must indicate the reasons for the choice of the problem and topic, present the problem of the applied nature, the object of the research, the aim and objectives of the research and the statements to be defended, the research methods, the research period. The favourable and unfavourable circumstances encountered by the author in preparing the report are described. If you analyze statistical or financial data, then it is recommended that the period under analysis shall be at least 3-5 years.
Analytical part	This part thoroughly examines the practical problem, its essence, context, and extent of expression in practice. Analysis and synthesis of written and visual documents, Content analysis, quantitative analysis of secondary data by statistical methods, case study method to illustrate the expression of a practical problem and other methods may be used to assess the situation. The student should also emphasize his / her own attitude to the essence and expression of the practical problem.
Methodological part	In this part, scientific approaches to the practical problem, its determinants, links with other simultaneously occurring problems, methods of empirical research and solutions to the problem are revealed. Results of published research and methodological literature of social research are analysed. With regard to the results of scientific and methodological literature analysis, empirical research methodology is developed and substantiated to investigate the factors of practical problem and justification of solutions. The rationale for the methodology should include a description of the logical consistency of the study (a logical study design), the reasonableness, adequacy, and representativeness of the data sources chosen.
The result part	In this section, the results of empirical research are described and economically, socially and environmentally validated solutions to a practical problem are prepared. Assumptions and limitations of the solutions found must also be defined.
Conclusions and recommendations	Conclusions must directly relate to the aim of the research and the solution of the practical problem, reflect the results of the solution of each objective and reveal the practical significance of the research. Where possible, recommendations are addressed to specific addressees.

All structural parts of the thesis must be interconnected. It is recommended to divide the main parts (chapters/sections) of the project into sub-chapters. A short summary of the results must be provided at the end of every chapter and sub-chapter.

2. RECOMMENDATION OF STUDIES FINAL PROJECT PREPARATION

2.1. Introduction part

Ensuring the success of the entire project is dependent on a well-crafted introduction. The introduction encompasses the subsequent details:

- Expressing the practical problem's statement and emphasizing the theme's significance (around 250-300 words).
- Defining the specific aim of the research paper (remember that the aim should be concrete, not broad).
- Outlining the enabling objectives that lead to achieving the research aim:
 - By refining and identifying a practical problem that requires innovation and finding a solution.
 - Analysing the relevant theory and research methods related to the research problem.
 - Applying the research method to address the research question.
 - Executing essential research activities (e.g., data collection, questionnaire, planned interviews).
- Describing the research methods:
 - Theoretical (involving studying and contrasting relevant theories, making analogies, drawing conclusions, etc.).
 - Empirical (using self-reporting techniques, pilot teaching, test administration, etc.).
 - Detailing the data collection techniques or tools (tailored to the theme).
- Discuss the research period and/or sample.

2.2. Analytical part

A description of the organization/country/region/industry in which the innovation will take place in relation to customs, taxation, and international trade, its experience in the field of activity, innovation, characteristics, problem identification, assessment of the suitability of the innovation in the organization and the proposed innovation plan.

First, reveal and introduce the main information:

- If you have chosen a specific organization, discuss the establishment of the organization, the directions of its activities, organization of activities, organizational structure, economic/financial, or other indicators.
- If you have chosen a country/region/industry (not a specific organization), reveal the features of the country/region/industry, differences from other countries/regions/industry, and discuss the most important static data and their changes in the researched topic.

Second, discuss the practical problems involved in the chosen subject. When discussing practical problems, provide subject information, compare it with other subjects, and refer to the scientific literature on the subject.

Third, provide insights into possible solutions to the identified problem. Summarize your analysis at the end of the chapter.

All structural parts of the Studies Final Project must be distributed proportionally. It is recommended to allocate 4-6 pages of text for the first chapter of the work.

2.3. Methodological part

This part includes the development of a research methodology to solve the identified practical problem.

First, based on the scientific literature investigating phenomena in your topic, identify and discuss research methods that can be applied to the identified practical problem.

Second, after choosing the right research method for your research, detail the steps of empirical research you will use. Discuss what software you will use, and what data you need to collect (time period, variables, etc.).

All structural parts of the Studies Final Project must be distributed proportionally. It is recommended to allocate 6-10 pages of text for the second chapter of the work.

2.4. Results part

Depending on the topic, the results part may involve a description of the participants, data collection tools and/or collected data, a set of activities piloted, a discussion of the results, etc.

Provide the following information:

- Research period.
- Research sample (year, number of respondents, etc.).

- Descriptive statistics (if needed).
- The results of your research, their discussion, and interpretation.

All structural parts of the Studies Final Project must be distributed proportionally. However, the obtained research results are the most important chapter in your Studies Final Project, therefore, is recommended to allocate 6-10 pages of text for the second chapter of the work.

2.5. Conclusions and Recommendations part

This section briefly summarizes the main theoretical and empirical findings of your research, as well as outlines practical implications, limitations of the research, and directions for future investigations.

Conclusions must respond to the stated objectives (in introduction part), be specific, and not too broad.

3. PREPARATION FOR PRESENTATION AND DEFENSE

No later than 10 days before the public defense of the studies final project, the students who received permission from the Defense Commission to defend their studies final project shall submit the completed final electronic version (PDF) to the specific place in Moodle environment.

Students must publish at least 1 article in a scientific or popular science publication. A presentation at a scientific or practical conference must also be made. It is recommended that articles and presentations at conferences be the subject of the thesis. Submit a copy of the article or certificate together with the studies final project to the specific place in Moodle environment.

No later than 10 days before the start of the public defense of the studies final project, students must submit the electronic version to the CRIS repository (<https://vdu.lt/cris>), in accordance with the description of the procedure of the collection and storage of the electronic documents of VMU final theses, doctoral dissertations and their abstracts (ETDs). The students who do not present the final theses before the established deadline shall forfeit the right to defend them.

The supervisors shall prepare feedback in the prescribed format which shall provide assessments whether formulate a proposal on whether it should be assessed positively or negatively (without indicating a specific grade). The studies final project supervisor shall present the feedback (Annex 9) to the commission's secretary. The supervisor's participation in the public defense of the studies final project is desirable.

The student prepares slides for the defense in accordance with "Academic paper writing for students of social sciences: general methodological guidelines for students of the faculty of Bioeconomy development".

The presentation of the studies final project shall take place during the meeting of the Defense Commission in the following sequence:

- The student shall briefly (in up to 10 minutes) introduce the practical problem, the object of the research, the aim, the goals, and their implementation, providing justification in the form of the achieved research results and the applied research methods, and shall present the conclusions and recommendations in the end regarding the methods and measures for solving the problem and the conditions for their application.

- The supervisor shall read their feedback and the assessments indicated in it. If the supervisor is not attending the meeting, his feedback shall be read by the secretary of the commission member. The student shall be provided the opportunity to explain the remarks or drawbacks noted in the feedback.
- Members of the Defense Commission shall present questions and make remarks to the student that are related to the studies final project and shall listen to the student's responses.

After the defense of all studies final projects, a discussion of the Defense Commission meeting shall be organised behind closed doors, which is attended only by the members of the Commission. Each member of the Commission shall evaluate the studies final project and its defense separately. The Commission shall also take into account the assessments specified in the feedback from the supervisor. The overall assessment of the studies final project shall equal to the arithmetic mean of the assessments by all members of the Commission rounded to the nearest whole number. In the cases when a Commission member is the supervisor of the studies final project, his/her assessment shall not be included in the calculation of the arithmetic mean.

ANNEXES



VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

AGRICULTURE ACADEMY

FACULTY OF BIOECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

Department

Name Surname

TITLE OF THE STUDIES FINAL PROJECT

Studies Final Project of Master's Studies

_____ study programme, state code _____
_____ study field

Supervisor _____
(Scientific degree, name, surname) (Signature) (Date)

Defended _____
(Head of the Department) (Signature) (Date)

Akademija, 20..

Studies Final Project evaluation committee:

(Approved by the Order No. ..., March 20...)

Chair Prof. Dr Habil. A. Surname, XX University

Members:

1. Prof. Dr Habil. B. Surname, Vytautas Magnus University
2. Prof. Dr Habil. C. Surname, Vytautas Magnus University
3. Assist. Prof. Dr D. Surname, Vytautas Magnus University
4. Assist. Prof. Dr E. Surname, Vytautas Magnus University
5. Assist. Prof. Dr F. Surname, Vytautas Magnus University

Supervisor Assist. Prof. Dr. N. Surname, Vytautas Magnus University

Reviewer, Vytautas Magnus University

Head of the Department Assist Prof. Dr. N. Surname, Vytautas Magnus University

An example of a final studies project assignment

AGRICULTURE ACADEMY OF
VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF BIOECONOMY DEVELOPMENT
Department of Applied Economics, Finance and Accounting

..... study programme

year student

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE STUDIES FINAL PROJECT

1. Topic _____

2. Contents _____

3. Conditions and general instructions _____

4. Scope of paper _____

Paper completed on __ ____ 20__.

Terms of reference submitted on __ ____ 20__.

Student _____
(signature) (name, surname)

Supervisor _____
(signature) (name, surname)

APPROVED BY:

Head of the Study programme committee _____
(Signature) (Name and surname)

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SUMMARY (in English)

Name SURNAME

Title of the work

Studies Final Project, 60 pages, 5 figures, 3 tables, 25 references, 2 annexes, in English.

Key words

Research object

Research aim

Objectives

Research method

Research results (*brief presentation of what has been analysed in all parts of the work and the obtained results*):

in the first part of work (has been analysed, presented, conducted, etc.)

in the second part of work (has been explored, analysed, determined, conducted, etc.)

in the third part of work (has been presented, assessed, estimated, proposed, etc.)

main conclusions and the importance of work to theoretical and practical domain.

*The time and place of presentation and/or publication of the research results of the work must be specified in the master's thesis.

Recommended length of the summary: 1 page.

Glossary of key terms

Ecological farming – a system of farming based on natural biological processes and materials, ensuring production and sale of high quality and more natural agricultural products (Ivanikova, Ruževičius, 2008).

Financial leverage rebalancing – adjustment of the capital structure of enterprise to achieve the targeted capital structure (Emery, Finnerty, Stowe, 2004).

Rural community – a group of people living in a certain rural locality, sharing certain common institutions (school, church, community centre, etc.) and using their services; united by solutions on the management of change of their residential locality, common understanding of the local identity, interdependence, neighbourhood relations (Atkočiūnienė, 2004, 2010).

Rural community needs – the needs based on personal needs of all members of a certain community (certain rural locality) and general needs, shortages, shortfalls of residents of a certain rural locality (Atkočiūnienė, 2004, 2010).

Price convergence – reduction in the difference between the futures price and the spot price as the date of submission approaches (Juozapavičienė, 2009).

Quality management – aligned actions guiding and managing the quality-related activity of an organisation (ISO 9000:2000); part of the general management function establishing the quality policy, aims and duties as well as the related measures, such as quality planning, quality management, quality assurance and quality improvement on the basis of quality system (ISO 8402:1994).

Model – a schematic description of a system, theory or phenomenon explaining their available or implied properties that may be used for their subsequent study (Balvočiūtė, 2007).

Modelling – study of an object by using the developed models; formal, simplified visualisation of a phenomenon (Valkauskas, 1995).

Motivation – a system of specific interrelated activation measures and techniques used to increase employees' interest and activity (Senge, 2004).

Additional working capital – difference between current assets and current liabilities not carrying any interest, showing the lack of sources of finance for financing additional current assets (Aleknevičienė, 2009).

Values – key beliefs that a certain conduct or mode of existence is personally or socially more acceptable than a conduct or mode of existence of opposing nature (Rokeach, 2001).

LIST OF REFERENCES

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**Vytautas Magnus University
Faculty of Bioeconomy Development**

Department

.....
(position, academic degree, name and surname)

To the Studies Final Project Assessment Commission

**SUPERVISOR'S REVIEW
ON THE STUDIES FINAL PROJECT**

.... 20..

Akademija

Author of studies final project

Title of studies final project

Study programme MBA "Customs Process Management"

1. Meets/does not meet the formal requirements of the work structure and scope

.....

2. Assessment of studies final project results (novelty of the topic, harmony of work aim, objectives and conclusions; adequacy and applicability of theoretical solutions; the validity of the used research methods; interpretation of empirical research results; originality, reasonableness and applicability of proposed solutions)

.....

.....

3. Assessment of the studies final project preparation process (student's effort, consistency of work preparation, adherence to deadlines, creativity and independence, consultation with supervisor, ability to respond to supervisor's comments)

.....

.....

4. The amount of total coincidence by percentage

.....

Final conclusion: *The studies final project* *the requirements and is recommended to*
(Meets/does not meet)

be evaluated
(positively/negatively)

.....
(signature)

.....
(name, surname)