

Topics for PhD theses: **Business Administration/Economics**

Admission in November 2022

Field	Juhendaja(d) /Supervisor(s)	Teema/Topic	Teema kirjeldus/A description of the topic	Keel/ Language (Estonian/ English)
Business Administration	Andres Kuusik andres.kuusik@ut.ee	Cross-cultural differences in brand communication adaption - neuromarketing approach	There have been various papers on cross-cultural differences in Europe and the differences that culture plays in marketing. Some specific differences in how brand communications can be done, have also been researched. Neuromarketing experiments can contribute to the literature by adding to the conversations on brand communication differences. This thesis will build on comparing Estonian brand communication to the same communications in Germany. Different case studies will be conducted and neuromarketing experiments will be run both in Estonia and Germany.	ENG/EST
Business Administration	Andres Kuusik andres.kuusik@ut.ee	Validating Science-based startups using creative destructions lab as an example	A lot of hype and emphasis has gone into the research of successful startups that grow into unicorns. However out of the sheer number of startups that exist, a vast majority are not unicorns. Many of these small startups are very successful, but do not have the scalability or do not wish to grow, yet are successful nevertheless. Startup accelerators, programs and conferences could probably not exist if these small scale startups would not exist, as they are the lifeblood of startup ecosystem. This thesis would look at the role and importance of small startups at different stages of their life cycle. The analysis would be based on qualitative case studies of such startups in various countries, but also combine that with data on the startup ecosystems that these startups exist in.	ENG/EST

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Business Administration	Eneli Kindsiko eneli.kindsiko@ut.ee	The sustainability of small, ageing, and non-English academic labour markets	The objective of this project is to provide new knowledge on the sustainability challenges of the small, non-English and ageing academic labour markets on the example of Baltic countries. The project helps to map the challenges of the Baltic academic labor market, with a special focus on the accelerating effect brought by the Covid-19. The main focus will be on generational (ca 20% of academic staff in Estonia and 25% in Latvia are over 60 years of age) and gender challenges (females most engaged in teaching, thus Covid hit them the most in terms of increased work load due to distance teaching and domestic duties), as recent studies have shown how early-career and female academics have taken biggest toll in their career from Covid-19. The PhD project may focus on the whole Baltic academic labour market, or just one (Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania). The study would entail mixed methods - career tracking, quantitative labour market analysis to reveal trends, and in-depth interviews.	ENG/EST
Business Administration	Kurmet Kivipõld kurmet.kivipold@ut.ee	Collectivistic leadership and innovation in education institutions	The objective of this PhD project is to investigate how collectivistic leadership (a coordination mechanism among organizational members) fosters innovation in organizations. In the focus will be education organizations where knowledge transformation is most intensive. The study combines qualitative as well as quantitative methods (triangulation) and divided into different subparts. The student is expected to do literature review (collectivistic leadership, innovation, and relations between collectivistic leadership and innovation in education organizations). The second, to make the comparative analysis about the innovation in Estonian education sector organizations with innovation of some other country education sector organizations – how external environment have an effect on it. Finally, to explore how collectivistic leadership of education organizations influence their innovation.	ENG

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Business Administration	Ülle Päril ylleparl@ut.ee	Dialogical Turn of Accounting and Accountability. Linking Non-financial and Financial Sustainability in (Integrated) Reporting.	Fundamental changes have taken place in both accounting and reporting. Financial data and - reports are still important (for investors), but non-financial information (NFI) plays an increasingly important role and more attention is paid to a wider range of information users. Different frameworks are used to complete reports, and the use of frameworks and methods varies by country and region. Studies have shown that NFI (voluntary) disclosure may be even more important and necessary for the non-profit and public sector organizations than for the business sector. The disclosure of information and its quality affects the reliability of the business environment and thus investments and competitiveness. Therefore, it is very important to study and, with based on the research results, improving quality of reporting and the use of information in the (Estonian) for-profit and non-profit business sector, both in creating credibility and improving the quality of information-based management decisions. Main challenges and research questions in the field: 1) Better reporting and reports i.e. easier to read reports for a wider range of information users. RQ: How do the reports and the information reflected there reach to the target groups (availability, readability, etc.) 2) To draw attention and influence perceptions and management decisions through reporting . RQ: How does the preparation of (sustainability) reports and the availability of information affect the organization's strategy, management and the behavior of its members. 3) Better reporting creates a more reliable business environment. RQ: What is the impact of the implementation of the EU NFI disclosure directives on the (Estonian) business environment and companies.	ENG/EST

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Business Administration	Anne Reino anne.reino@ut.ee	Whistleblowing in organization.	An effective whistleblowing system is crucial for developing an ethical climate in an organization. Nevertheless, not many companies have put the system into practice. Reasons for refusing to adopt a whistleblowing system by organizations have not been studied extensively. Resistance and ignoring the topic can be noticed even on a societal level: the content of EU directive on whistleblower protection is not reflected in the national legislation system of many countries, Estonia included. The absence of a whistleblower protection system can be one of the reasons why individuals decide not to blow a whistle. Whistleblowing is a psychological process that involves many stages influenced by several factors. The doctoral thesis should focus on a critical examination of the contextual and individual factors of the whistleblowing process.	ENG
Business Administration	Tiia Vissak tiia.vissak@ut.ee Oliver Lukason oliver.lukason@ut.ee	Firms' use of export support measures in the (non-) VUCA environment	You will conduct qualitative (case study) and/or quantitative research and study which export support measures (Estonian or other) firms have used in VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) and non-VUCA environments (during more stable times) and how this has affected their international (e.g., foreign market entries, exits and re-entries) and overall (including financial) performance. You will also find out which principles (Estonian or other) agencies supporting exports have followed to give such support to firms: how they have measured firms' export and financial performance to determine to whom to give assistance, if their support measures have changed due to VUCA and how they assess the success or failure of their export support measures.	ENG

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Business Administration	Maaja Vadi maaja.vadi@ut.ee Anne Reino anne.reino@ut.ee	Juhtimisvaldkonnad ja nende käsitlemine Eestis (knowledge of Estonian language required)	<p>Juhtimine on valdkond, mis on seotud laiemate globaalsete ja lokaalsete ühiskondlike protsessidega. Kui ajas tagasi liikuda, siis saab välja tuua, et Eesti juhtimispraktikat ja -paradigmasid on mõjutanud nii anglo-ameerika koolkonnad, Skandinaavia, saksakeelne kultuuriruum, kuid oma jälje on jätnud ka endine Nõukogude Liit ja selle ideoloogia. Siiani puudub Eesti juhtimisteaduse, sh eestikeelse terminoloogia arengu süsteemne teaduslik retrospektiivne käsitlus. Omakeelse mõtte arengu kaardistus ning käsitlus on oluline rahvuskultuuri säilimise ja tuleviku perspektiivist.</p> <p>Doktoritöö skoop hõlmab: (1)juhtimisteaduslike teemakäsitluste kaardistamine Eestis; (2) omakeelsete terminite arengu ning sellega seotud debattide kaardistamine; (3) institutsionaalset konteksti analüüs ja selle mõju Eesti juhtimisteaduse arengus (ülikoolide, katusorganisatsioonide roll, teaduskonverentsid jm); (4) mõjukamate Eesti juhtimisteadlaste ülevaate koostamist (elulugu, kujunemine, panus juhtimisteadusse). Doktoritöös kasutatakse peamiselt kvalitatiivseid meetodeid (dokumendianalüüs, narratiivid, intervjuud jm) ning töö valmib eesti keeles.</p>	EST

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Business Administration	Urmas Varblane urmas.varblane@ut.ee Maaja Vadi maaja.vadi@ut.ee	The change/dynamics of mandate of Estonian subsidiaries of MNCs in the process of restructuring of global value chains	<p>The headquarter-subsidiary relationship is crucial for the overall functioning of MNCs (Kostova et al, 2016). According to literature, the degree of integration of a subsidiary in the MNC seems to be the most important factor affecting the autonomy of managers. The autonomy of subsidiaries depends critically on the existing capacities and their evolution. The better a subsidiary is performing in comparison to other corporate units, the more autonomy its managers could enjoy. A subsidiary managers' initiative is closely linked with power creation. Power can be gained by having an ability or a capability or by possessing something with which it is possible to control somebody else. Power within a functional specialization may be labeled "functional power", while power related to the strategic direction of the MNC as a whole may be termed "strategic power". (Mudambi et al. 2014)</p> <p>This study focuses on the Estonian subsidiaries of MNCs and it targets dynamics of their mandate which is associated with their autonomy and functional or strategic power. The rationale for that study derives from notion that managing a subsidiary effectively is not simply about carrying out the mandate awarded by the parent company, but rather about fulfilling the current mandate in a superior way and taking strategic initiatives which add new value to the corporation. (Delany 2000).</p> <p>Data</p> <p>We have extensive data deposit for analyzing of MNC subsidiaries during the period 1996-2022. Since 1996 in cooperation with the Estonian Foreign Investment Agency seven surveys "Foreign Investor " have been conducted. These surveys have covered among other themes (motivation, innovation, transfer of technology and management experience etc.) also the autonomy of local managers within the multinational corporations. In 2009 and 2020 semi-structured interviews (in total around 80) were also held with the CEOs of subsidiaries of foreign owned firms in Estonia. Among the other issues also autonomy questions were asked. (PLEASE ASK MORE DETAILED DESCRIPTION FROM POTENTIAL SUPERVISORS)</p>	ENG

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Economics	Diana Eerma diana.eerma@ut.ee Mariia Chebotareva mariia.chebotareva@ut.ee	Intergovernmental Coordination from Local to European Governance	<p>The thesis can take the following directions also depending on the interests of a candidate:</p> <p>1) imply interdisciplinary approach: analysis of legal acts combined with theoretical microeconomic analysis; 2) provide a microeconomic theoretical basis for the decision-making of municipalities as well as the jurisdictions of higher level in order to enhance inter-municipal and intergovernmental cooperation in Europe; 3) suggest practical solutions for how to establish inter-municipal cooperation via introducing a special legal framework; 4) vertical and horizontal coordination processes of inter-municipal and intergovernmental cooperation can be studied, consequently providing a proposal for best practices; 5) practices of cross-border cooperation can be investigated as well. Findings may reveal obstacles and potentials for such a cooperation. Supervised PhD student will be involved into the network of COST Action CA20123.</p>	ENG

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Economics	Anneli Kaasa anneli.kaasa@ut.ee	Cultural differences and economic consequences of migration	Migration brings together people with very different cultural background. Although the economic success of immigrants and their possible impact on the host country's economy has been investigated before, this topic focuses on differences in cultural background using the theory of cultural dimensions (Hofstede, Schwartz, Inglehart, etc) as a basis. This enables to go in depth in investigating whether and why different cultures clash or not and whether some patterns of cultural dimensions can be expected to hinder or foster adaptation in new country. The topic also needs profound research of the possibilities to measure culture and taking into account the requirements set by the specifics of the research questions related to migration. The topic is strictly based on the concept of cultural dimensions in accordance of which the applicant is expected to offer a well thought-through set of research questions and explain the methods with what he/she is planning to answer those questions. Some possible research questions might be (but are not limited to): Does the cultural distance between the origin and host country of the immigrant influences the adaptation success? Do some host country cultural pattern/dimensions or some origin country cultural patterns/dimensions and/or combinations of those two hinder (or foster) adaptation? Are there some dimensions that are more relevant than others? How long does it take until immigrants' values differ significantly from those in the country of origin? Are the next generations' values closer to the host country? Does the adaptation speed depend on cultural background and if yes, on which dimensions?	ENG
Economics	Jaan Masso jaan.mass@ut.ee	Effects of technological changes on labour market	The PhD thesis would look at the effects of technological changes (automation, robotization etc) on the labour markets. The interaction of technological changes with other trends like internationalization and deinternationalization can be considered. The proposed reserach may plan to use large-scale adiministrative databases like the matched employer-employee data.	ENG

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Economics	Helen Poltimäe helen.poltimae@ut.ee	Effects of the European Green Deal and relevant compensation measures	European Union has elaborated the Green Deal, targeted to achieving no greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The policy will have enormous economic and social effect, but the research of the issues is not sufficient. It deserves more attention, which societal groups will be the most affected and which compensation measures will be the most effective. The topic should be specified further by the applicant, according to which sector(s) or countries or effects are to be studied, depending on applicant's background and interests. For example, the effects can be on specific sectors, or via energy prices on various sectors or households, on tax systems and state budget, etc.	ENG
Economics	Tiiu Paas tiiu.paas@ut.ee	Growing uncertainty and people's economic and social resilience	The proposed research aims to provide new knowledge and lessons on how people can adapt to the uncertainties arising from the unpredictability of political, economic and social developments. Research questions may focus on changes in people's wellbeing, growing inequalities as well as adapting to new forms of working offered by labour markets (e.g. remote work, telework, co-working, gig-work). What is the role of different components of human capital in supporting people's resilience to new challenges? What government action is needed to support economic and social resilience? These are just some of the possible research questions. In addition to a quantitative analysis, the use of qualitative research approaches is also recommended by the conducting the study.	ENG
Economics	Kadri Ukrainski kadri.ukrainski@ut.ee	A System Architecture Perspective on Digital Government: The Case of Estonia	The thesis takes a holistic view on the e-government information systems to study the digital government in Estonia. Using systems thinking, a model integrating the public administration organisational and functional setup together with e-government infrastructure is aimed.	ENG/EST

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Economics	Lenno Uusküla lenno.uuskula@ut.ee	Essays in applied macroeconomics	The thesis theme is open for suggestions in the field of applied macroeconomics. It can include both empirical and theoretical papers as well as different questions on growth and the business cycle analysis. All data sources such as standard macroeconomic data or unstructured bug data can be analysed depending on the specific question.	ENG
Economics	Lenno Uusküla lenno.uuskula@ut.ee	Public Private Partnership and other solutions to the green transition and other social challenges	21st century societies are facing several challengers. Green transition is one tasks that the countries need to manage, but this is only one of several that include also health care and other sectors of the economy. The common question in all of them is how to finance the necessary investments. Public debt is already at a very high level in many European countries and the fiscal limits are tested through several recessions in a row. More and more governments are looking towards cooperation towards private sector in the financing or co-financing. The thesis could benefit from the common analysis of financial data and behavioural aspects of decision making.	ENG/EST
Economics	Priit Vahter priit.vahter@ut.ee	Determinants of productivity gap between frontier firms and the rest	This study would investigate based on firm level and employer-employee level data the drivers of productivity gap between firms at the productivity frontier and the rest. This involves investigation of factors that create competitive advantage for the top performers (superstar firms) and/or factors that support or hinder catch-up by low or medium productivity firms with the productivity frontier. The topic needs to be narrowed down by the candidate by focusing on specific factors of the productivity gap. Proposals are especially welcome that would focus on: i) the role of differences in skills and diversity of workforce (e.g., by gender, cultural background, age) in explaining the productivity gap; ii) factors that hinder knowledge spillovers to low productivity firms; iii) how complementarities in innovation process of firms (e.g. between technological innovation and other factors of productivity) affect the productivity gap.	ENG