

Guidance for Academic Writing

1. Structure

Cover Page

Table of Contents

List of abbreviations/ List of figures/ List of tables (if necessary)

Introduction

Main section (with respective subsections)

- Methodology (can also be included in introduction)
- Theoretical/conceptual framework
- Literature Review
- Analysis/Discussion

Conclusion

Bibliography

List of sources for pictures (if necessary)

Declaration of Originality

2. Formal requirements

Guideline for the length of the papers:

Proseminar: 10-15 pages

Advanced Seminar: 15-20 pages (Depending on the lecturer's guidelines)

Formatting:

LEGIBILITY is important. Therefore, please use a common font (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri) in appropriate size (11 or 12) with sufficient line spacing (1.5 lines). Page margins should be at least 2 cm in all directions.

Cover Page:

At a minimum, the cover page must include following information: University, chair, type and title of course, name of lecturer, title of thesis, semester, date of submission, name of author, matriculation number, e-mail, semester of study, module, examination number.

[PDF for sample cover sheet](#)

Declaration of Originality:

Each term paper must have a declaration of originality.

[PDF to fill in](#)

3. Structure of the paper

As listed under point 1, a term paper generally consists of three parts: Introduction, main part, conclusion

a) Introduction:

Here you start as briefly and concisely as possible with an interesting introduction to the topic and a clearly formulated and meaningful research question. Furthermore, you provide an overview of the entire work.

- Formulate a "creative" introduction to arouse interest.
- 3 functions:
 - State the initial question (the topic) precisely.
 - Explain your motivation behind raising the initial research question (reasons for the choice of topic).
 - Give an overview of the individual sections.
- State the goal of the paper.
- Introduce and define central terms.
- Keep it brief and concise.

→ *Always keep the reader in mind: describe first, then explain, then put it in academic context. Pay attention to clarity, precision, and conciseness without losing track of concrete focus, research question and goal of your work (do not get lost in unnecessary digressions!).*

b) Main section:

Here you answer the initial research question logically and consistently through meaningful analysis and discussion.

- Logical structure: first theory or background/introduction, then example(s)/case study/studies, lastly argumentation/interpretation
- Argumentation:
 - Central aspect of academic work: giving reasons and justifications
 - Explain central theses and claims by giving concrete empirical evidence
 - Substantiation of arguments through valid sources, text excerpts or examples
 - Include descriptive passages in which you further expound facts.
- Meaningful and logical structure including sections and subsections
- Paragraphs: represent a unit of meaning; start with a "topic sentence"
- Short summaries at the end of paragraphs
- Transitions between different units of meaning to show connections and to facilitate a smooth reading flow. *You are guiding the reader of your work!*
- Avoid digressions and stay focused.

c) Concluding section

Here you repeat key statements and address the question(s) formulated in the introduction.

You can also add an outlook, in which you can emphasize the academic, social, or political significance of your work. You can also suggest further venues of related research.

2 functions:

- Summary of the main part and direct reference to the introduction: revisiting initial question and theses, "rounding off" the work.
- Conclusion and outlook (achievement of objectives, consequences, possible weaknesses and problems, further desirable investigations etc.): Which findings has your work gained? To what extent is your work significant and relevant – for example, in academic debates or political/economic praxis?

4. Literature research

As a starting point for the literature search, we recommend the literature of the seminar, the online databases of the University library accessible via the "Passauer Suchportal" (e.g., JSTOR, SAGE, De Gruyter), as well as using online search engines that search for academic publications with the corresponding keywords.

Limitation of internet research:

Google Scholar: Search engine for academic texts; however, it is somewhat random what literature is available.

Google: Results are unfiltered and therefore often unsatisfactory.

Wikipedia: Here you can find relevant general information and often good literature references. However, the quality of the articles is often unpredictable. Therefore, it does not serve as an adequate source, but rather as a general initial overview. Never cite Wikipedia! It is better to use specific websites (e.g., issue-, discipline-specific or region-specific portals, journals, institutes, organizations, etc.).

5. Citation and bibliography

The bibliography of your term paper should have a reasonable amount of academic literature. The literature recommended in the course outline of your seminar will provide you with a starting point for your work on the topic at hand. However, further research is essential. Your bibliography should list all material (including internet sites and videos).

The source of every information must be traceable, so use in-text citations or footnotes for both direct and indirect quotations. Even if you only paraphrase a source, you still should provide specific page numbers so that the reader can properly locate your adopted argument within the original source.

There are different citation methods and styles. Our chair does not stipulate a compulsory citation style. You can use any established citation style. Most importantly, you need to use your preferred style consistently. While we do not want to dictate any specific style, we do recommend a citation style based on the author-date method (e.g., Harvard Referencing, APA American Psychological Association).

Harvard Referencing:

<https://www.librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.html>

APA Citation Guide:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines>

https://www.studium.ifp.uni-mainz.de/files/2020/12/APA7_Kurz-Manual.pdf

Software for literature management is very useful here. The University of Passau has got a full licence of "Citavi". With Citavi, you can not only manage and organize literature; you can also insert citations and references into word processing programs such as MS Word according to all common citation styles.

Final points:

Please remember to use page numbers constantly throughout the document.

If graphs, tables, maps, and images are included, they must be annotated/explained and sourced.

6. Submission

Follow the instructions of the lecturer. As a rule, you will be asked to upload the term paper including the declaration of originality in a folder on Stud.IP in pdf format (not as a Word document!). Please do not send the paper to the chair by mail!

Recommendation: Give your term paper to a fellow student for proofreading. This way, remaining problems in the structure and formal errors can be discovered and corrected before submission.