



How to write a scientific paper?

**Guidelines for students of
social sciences**

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1. Introduction

Writing academic papers does not only challenge the creativity and commitment of students, but also requires adherence to certain formal standards. This booklet is based on guidelines first published in 1998 and existing instructions and rules for academic work at the Institute of Social Sciences (ISW), and on information from the various departments of the institute. It was revised for international students at the ISW. It summarizes the key rules of academic work, which also meet general international standards.

Thus, this small reference book should provide social science students with additional support. Literature recommendations are listed at the end of this brochure for further, more in-depth questions. Students should not, however, hesitate to approach instructors, as certain requirements (font size, margin, etc.) may vary. It is always easier to write academic papers, if you are familiar with the specific requirements of the instructor. And, since instructors take a lot more pleasure in reading well-written work, they will be happy to discuss questions with their students, especially issues regarding content.

Have fun and good luck in your studies!

2. Definition of academic work

Academic work is a

- well-planned
- systematic
- and methodical approach

to questions or problems with a learning and epistemological objective.

Principles of academic work

1. Academic work cannot be a mere reproduction of facts, but is analytical and problem-oriented work.
2. The goal is to convey your individual academic point of view.
3. Academic work is active creative work.
4. Academic papers meet generally applicable formal requirements.
5. Copying others' works is considered theft - it is plagiarism!

Forms of academic work

The main genres of academic work encountered in the course of your studies are:

- oral presentation
- handout
- report
- excerpt or text analysis
- essay
- research / term / seminar paper (Hausarbeit, Seminararbeit)
- written exams (rarely the case for MA students)
- final / graduation paper / thesis (Abschluss- oder Masterarbeit)

3. General standards and formal rules

3.1 Formatting texts

- line spacing: 1,5
- font size: 11 or 12 pt.
- font: default, we recommend 'Times New Roman' or 'Arial'
- margin: 3 cm on all sides

- page numbers: lower right
- printed single-sided

3.2 Formal rules regarding the structure of texts

All academic papers (i.e. essays, research and final papers) must include:

- a cover sheet
- a table of content (outline)
- a bibliography (specifying used sources)
- literature references and, if necessary, quotes and comments in the footnotes
- index of tables, figures, and abbreviations (if included in the text)

3.2.1 Cover sheet

The cover sheet of essays, research and final papers provides an overview of the topic, author, and function of the paper. The title of the paper is important, and it should not raise expectations, that the text cannot fulfill.

A cover sheet should contain the following information:

- university and institute
- course title and number
- name of the instructor
- semester / year (WS - Wintersemester / SS - Sommersemester)
- name, address, email, and possibly phone number
- course of study (Studiengang) and number of semesters (Fachsemester)
- student ID-number (Matrikelnummer)
- date of delivery
- type of academic work (essay, research paper, etc)
- title and subject

Information concerning the university should be written above the title and the personal description below.

For handouts, reports, and exams, information regarding the course and the author should be provided at the top of the page.

3.2.2 Table of content

The outline coherently structures and presents the results of the student's work. Subdivisions do not follow the research process, but present the results and the course of the argument. They not only receive special attention from instructors and readers, they also serve as a control tool for

the authors: repetitions and breaks in the presentation stand out, and digressions can be identified.

In social sciences the decimal system is used to organize the outline. Subdivisions should be as symmetrical as possible, i.e. chapters should have similar lengths and reflect the logic of the argument, or rather correspond to the analytical weight of particular aspects of the research. Subdivisions should have at least two sub-points. This principle, however, should not be applied too strictly, but be kept in relation to the actual length of the paper (a subdivision of eight or more points or a structure reaching as far as 3.2.1.1 is unlikely for a 15-page text).

Example:

1.	Introduction	p. 1
2.	Theory and Method	p. 3
3.	Reduction of emissions as a political aim	p. 4
4.	Comparison of Germany and Japan	p. 5
4.1	Japan	p. 5
4.1.1	Institutional requirements	p. 6
4.1.2	Reduction of emissions	p. 8
4.2	Germany	p. 10
4.2.1	Institutional requirements	p. 11
4.2.2	Reduction of emissions	p.13
5.	Civil society as a supporter of environmental politics	p.14
6.	Conclusion	p. 16
7.	References	p.18

3.2.3 Literature references /

quotes

Academic work is characterized by precision, both in the knowledge and presentation of the literature discussed, as well as in the sincere distinction between your own arguments and the information or positions considered. It is also necessary for the readers to be able to look up an idea or information in the original text.

A paraphrase is the restatement of ideas, thoughts or sayings attributable to another person. Paraphrasing is used far more frequently than direct quotations. A paraphrase must be identified as such and be clearly assigned to an author. Quotation marks are not used in this situation.

Example:

- The collapse of the socialist regimes was first celebrated as a worldwide victory of western liberal democracies, which seemed to mark the end of global ideological conflicts (Fukuyama 1992).

If this proposition reflects the fundamental tone of a work, it is sufficient to specify the name of the author and the year of publication. If, however, a piece of information, an idea or an argument is taken from a specific passage, or is attributable to a specific author, the corresponding page reference must be indicated:

Example:

- Systems theory identifies three types of differentiation of human societies, which follow each other historically (Kneer/Nassehi 1997: 122-126).

Statements and facts that are general knowledge do not require references.

Example:

- Parliamentary elections are held on September 27th, 1998.

A **citation** is the direct literal rendition of a saying, a written sentence or paragraph by another author. Citations only should be used if they are particularly telling, or if they give special weight to your argument. They are also used if something is to be proven (rather than simply referenced), or if two different arguments are being discussed. Quotes can be visually separated from the body of the text, possibly through the use of italics or a different font size, etc. A unified style must, however, be maintained throughout the paper.

Basic rules of citation:

1. A quote does not speak for itself. It must always be commented and interpreted within the context of your argument, through introductory, explanatory, or evaluative sentences.
2. Quotes should always be first-hand, i.e. taken from the original text. Quoting passages from other citations bears the risk of taking the

quote out of context and altering it. If the original is not accessible (e.g. interviews, private archives, transcripts of speeches), the multiple uses of the quotation must be identified. Example: "I always find enough players for my farewell match." (Matthäus 1997, quoted in Wontorra 1997: 3).

3. Students should quote from the original version if the following versions are only reprints, but from the most recent edition, if the text has been revised.
4. Quotes require quotation marks. Rearrangements of the syntax, as well as additions and omissions are permitted, and marked by dots and squared brackets. Example: "Lothar's problem is his exaggerated need to communicate (...), [thus] he isolates himself within the team." (Wontorra 1997: 1).
5. Quotes in a foreign language, the understanding of which can be presupposed within the scientific community (English, French, Spanish, Latin) or of a specific addressee, should be kept in the original language. Personal translations must be marked as such in a footnote.
6. The page number of the quoted passage must always be indicated for direct quotations.

Style

We recommend following the “Harvard-Style” rules for literature references and quotations:

- If an author’s name has previously been included in the text:
... Giddens (1990) ...
- Otherwise:
(Giddens 1990: 120) or (Giddens 1990: 120f), if the reference includes the following page, or (Giddens 1990: 120-125). 120ff should be avoided as it is too imprecise.
- For several authors:
(Münch/Smelser 1992: 11) or (Koch/Thomas/Woderich 1993),
when there are more than three authors use the abbreviation et al. (Zapf et al. 1990)

References may also be listed in the footnotes. In that case, all the information is listed at the first mention, after which only an abridged version is indicated.

3.2.4 Annotations and footnotes

Annotations and footnotes list additional bibliographical references or explanations, which were left out of the body of the text, but are nevertheless considered relevant and interesting for the reader. Conclusions drawn in the text can be expanded upon in the footnotes. However, since overly long and frequent annotations can break the flow of reading and thus the argument, they should be used sparingly. Footnotes and annotations must be numbered consecutively, and follow the same referencing rules as quotations and references in the text. They are only used for substantive comments, not for bibliographical information. The usual font size for footnotes is 10 pt.

3.2.5 Bibliography

The bibliography is kept at the end of the paper and lists exclusively those titles (primary texts, books, edited books, and essays) to which references were made in the text.

Books/Edited/Collective works

- The last name of the author (books) or editor (edited or collective works) is indicated first and followed by the first name, separated by a comma. For books with several authors, the individual

names are indicated in the order given in the source, and separated by slashes.

- For books edited by one or more authors, the editor's name is indicated with "ed."
- The information concerning the author is followed by the year of publication of the book. If one author has published several books in the same year, the titles are sorted by inserting lower case letters following the year of publication. The first title cited is labeled with the letter 'a' after the year and the second with 'b' etc.
- The title of the book is mentioned after a colon. The title is indicated in the reference exactly as it appears on the cover sheet of the book. If there is a subtitle, it must also be mentioned in the source reference.
- If a work was published in several volumes, "vol." and the number of the referenced volume must be included.
- The place of publication should be indicated next. Multiple places of publication are separated by slashes.
- The publisher is then indicated, after a colon.
- If place and year of publication are missing in the original text, this is indicated in the reference by: npp: np, nd (no place of publication: no publisher, no date of publication).

Example:

Giddens, Anthony, 1984: The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Articles in edited or collective work

Author(s), year, and the title of the article are indicated as described above. The title of the article is followed by "In:" or "in:", after which the editor is mentioned as you would for a book. At the end, the correct page numbers of the article are listed.

Example:

Schlichte, Klaus, 2008: The two Lives of Idi Amin, in: Großbölting, Thomas/Schmidt, Rüdiger (Hg.), The Death of the Dictator. Events and Remembrance in the 20th Century, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, S. 18-35.

Articles in journals

The structure of the reference corresponds essentially to the one of an article in a collective work. Author(s), year of publication, and title of the article are listed. The title is followed by "In:" or "in:". The name of the journal, the volume and issue numbers (separated by a slash) are then indicated. The correct page numbers of the article are listed at the end.

Example:

Thérien, Jean-Philippe/Noël, Alain, 2000: Political Parties and Foreign Aid, in: American Political Science Review 94/1, 151-162.

Referencing internet sources

A variety of texts is now also available on the internet. It is therefore important to reference these sources correctly. A complete mention must be made - as with any book - of the author, or the organization, year of publication, title, etc. Followed by:

- The complete URL or web site address
- “accessed” is written in parentheses, followed by the date (day, month, year) on which the source was last accessed.

If no author or title is available for the entry, the URL should be used, if possible with the creation-/posting date and the date of access. The posting date can usually be found at the bottom of the web page or in the site notice.

Example:

Baacke, Dieter, 1998: Zum Konzept und zur Operationalisierung von Medienkompetenz. [online] Homepage: Gesellschaft für Medienpädagogik und Kommunikationskultur. URL: www.gmk.medienpaed.de/auf002.htm [accessed: 27.05.06]

Important: Varying styles are accepted in the presentation of the bibliography, i.e. publication years in parentheses, separating title and publication place with periods or commas, periods at the end of each reference or not, etc. as long as the style is consistent, and contains all the required information, as presented above. Moreover, students should pay attention to the correct use of punctuation in all literature or source references (period, comma, colon, parentheses, etc.).

3.2.6 Index of tables, figures and abbreviations

An index simplifies the understanding of abbreviations. In research/seminar papers it tends to be the exception, but is fairly common in theses/graduation papers. The basic rule is that only abbreviations that are not featured in the dictionary need explanation. Abbreviations that do not relate to technical terms or titles of journals should be avoided whenever possible, in this case creativity hinders understanding (example: “East-Central Europe = ECE”, not: “EaCenEu”). Otherwise, personal abbreviations are listed separately. The index of abbreviations is placed at the beginning of the paper, after the table of contents and also sorted in alphabetical order.

An index of figures or tables is only required if several of these are used in a paper. The following points should be observed:

- Tables and figures/illustrations are numbered in the order in which they appear in the text.
- The respective directories should list in first place the type of document (figure, table, graph, etc.), then the number, followed by the title/description and the number of the page it is on.

Tips:

Tables and figures should be used sparingly and only to support important arguments, or visualize correlations.

Tables and figures should be designated, and the titles be unequivocal.

The source of each figure or table is to be indicated directly below.

For graphics, charts or tables designed by the student, the source should be indicated as “Eigene Darstellung”/“my own presentation” or “Eigene Berechnungen”/“author's calculations” and, followed by the data source on which the figure is based (e.g.: “own calculations, based on Statistical Yearbook 2004”). This source must then also be listed in the bibliography.

For diagrams, scales must be distinctly labeled.

If tables or figures are used in the body of the text, they should not interrupt the reading flow. They should, however, still visually relate to the argument they support.

3.2.7 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is theft of intellectual property and will not be tolerated. It will be prosecuted. Common forms of plagiarism are:

- Texts are copied from the internet, no sources indicated and the result is claimed entirely or partially as a personal academic effort.
- Passages are copied from books, journals, etc., without quoting or indicating sources.
- Essays are downloaded from the internet, and presented as original and individual work.
- Term papers, essays, etc. written by other students of the institute are re-submitted as separate work.

All these forms of plagiarism are illegitimate and will be punished. If there is any doubt, instructors will check sources and will be able to prove whether or not it is plagiarism. The consequences are:

- The submitted paper will receive a “fail” (5) grade.
- The Examination Committee will be informed of the case.
- If necessary, credits for the entire course are cancelled and the course must be repeated.

- Legal action is possible by the “owner” of the text.

For this reason, the above mentioned rules of citation and indication of sources must absolutely be respected.

4. Before you begin writing

4.1 Collecting material and researching literature

Academic research must be thorough, and even more so for a larger written assignment. Certain standards apply to the information one wishes to process:

- The information should be true. It is, therefore, essential for students to examine the source (plausibility, consistency with familiar data, overall credibility).
- It must be verifiable, thus it is necessary to reference the source. Using information from “Wikipedia” is therefore not acceptable!
- It should be clear and understandable. Students should not use sources they do not understand themselves.

What sources of information are there?

The most important ones in social sciences are:

- Literature: books, journals, so-called “grey literature” (e.g. working papers), newspapers
- Data: your own inquiries/surveys, databases, statistics, laws and documents
- Internet sources, but no Wikipedia! (a source can only be used for academic work if a proper author is indicated, either an institution or a person).

But there is more, namely information usually described by historians as “sources”:

- Oral sources: conversations, debates, interviews
- Written sources: files, records, artifacts

Using online-databases can also be very helpful, depending on the theme and the topicality of the planned research. Some topics may be very recent and therefore, looking for articles and data online can be more helpful, than sticking to reference books or library catalogues.

However, using recently published data bears risk, since most statistical data is corrected retroactively after some time (e.g. data on conflicts and economic data). Accessing articles openly online may be helpful for widening the sources, but it is crucial to make sure that the articles mention their sources correctly and properly.

The amount of research differs according to the type of academic work: for essays, excerpts, etc., students can usually rely on the literature covered in the course. For term, graduation and research papers, a more in-depth and individual literature research is expected.

The process of searching for material is closely connected to the process of formulating a research question and defining the variables for analysis. Still, it may continue after you have specified your approach to the topic. The following methods are appropriate in the beginning when you try to identify a research question and also when you have advanced and may be looking for empirical material.

Let's go-method (Drauflosgehrecherche)

- via catalogue of the library OPAC, KOBV, databanks (HU-UB website)
- internet-databases such as: scholar.google.com, worldcat.org, jstor.org or open-access
- or via www.gesis.org: offers information on social science research projects, data banks, data on political parties, welfare research, election studies, historical social research, several how-to publications, explaining social science methods. Very helpful when you look for the latest information on research projects are the databases SOLIS and SOFIS which are published in SoFid (sozialwissenschaftlicher Fachinfor-mationsdienst),

documenting many social science research projects in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. They are accessible in the HU library.

- Libraries: The social science part of the HU library is ordered according to topics
- Working Papers on the websites of relevant research institutes (you may find them also on open-access)

Advantage: You may receive a lot of ideas when you do not yet know which special aspect of your topic may be worth analyzing.

Disadvantage: You may get lost during your research...

Snowball-System

- start with the latest article in a relevant journal or with a dissertation that usually discusses state of the art research on the topic in the beginning, including approaches that were not followed and the discussion of gaps within research on this topic

Advantage: You will find the relevant mainstream literature very quickly and should be able to identify own questions

Disadvantage: You may get stuck in a citation cartel

General remark: When searching for the right literature, do not read the whole article at once, but start with the table of contents, introduction and conclusion in

order to understand quickly: *What is the message, the topic, the central assumption of this piece of work?*

Necessary steps for advanced research:

Where to look	What to look for	What you can find
reference book	keyword, general terms	general information about the topic, further keywords, background-information
journal bibliographies	names of authors, keywords	current essays and articles, names of important journals
current journals	names, keywords	current essays and articles, most recent scientific debates
standard work	text and footnotes	information about most recent scientific results and debates
PhD-dissertations	state of the art research on the issue, list of references	important references
computerized catalogue	systematic terms	relevant literature that is available in libraries
keyword catalogue	keywords	relevant literature that is available in libraries
specialized	systematic terms	special literature for particular aspects of a

bibliographies		topic
experts/college lecturer/chair of seminar	particular aspects	possibly overlooked standard work, "grey literature", other material
publisher catalogues	names of authors, keywords	new publications, announcements
press archives	keywords	current state of political debates

source: Schlichte, Klaus 2005: Einführung in die Arbeitstechniken der Politikwissenschaft, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, S. 71

4.2 Reading

In social sciences, reading, in addition to writing academic papers, makes up the largest part of the workload. Several reading techniques exist, these are, however, beyond the scope of this guidebook. Most importantly, academic reading must always remain critical. The chart illustrates the dimensions of critical reading.

Dimensions of critical reading:

For comprehension

What are the crucial statements of the text?

How are they justified?

Intrinsic critique – “critique from the inside”

Is the argumentation convincing?

Material/method: What is the foundation of the arguments? Research results, common sense, or assumptions of the author?

Is the amount of material sufficient in order to support the arguments?

Is the text logically coherent or contradictory and confusing?

External critique – “critique from the outside”

What is the author’s intention?

Does he or she address the problem appropriately?

Are the basic assumptions of the text correct?

Which opposing arguments are known or possible?

How does the author integrate him/herself within the discourse? Does he/she contribute something new? Does he/she discuss other opinions on the topic?

On the use of the text

How does it fit to the so far researched material?

How does the text relate to what I have learned so far?

Which definitions, arguments, suggestions or cross references can I adopt, maybe even criticize?

Which ideas evolve for further work?

source: Schlichte, Klaus 2005: Einführung in die Arbeitstechniken der Politikwissenschaft, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, S. 92

5. Academic requirements

The different written and oral academic requirements presented below are often required in order to pass university courses. They offer the possibility for a fair representation, systematization and discussion of academic issues. The process includes stating and defining problems, as well as developing lines of argumentation. The various written assignments completed in the course of a degree, involve testing academic methods and becoming familiar with specific topics within the field. Throughout the degree, an increasing independence in managing these tasks will be expected of the students.

5.1 Oral presentations

Oral presentations and the active participation in seminar discussions provide students with opportunities to practice communicating on academic subjects.

Besides being an exercise in structuring knowledge and presenting it in a short form, presentations often serve as a basis for a term/research paper. Given the particularity of the situation, an oral presentation remains different from written works.

Tips:

- A presentation can be formulated and written down entirely for preparation. For the presentation students are, however, encouraged to work with keywords (e.g. on index cards). It is important to speak freely, in order not to tire the audience.
- If it is completely impossible to present the material freely, make sure that the text is written in “spoken language”! Otherwise, it will be very difficult for the audience to follow the contents of the presentation.
- A presentation must take into account the specificities of oral communication. Students should only present as much information and data as necessary to illustrate the argument and understanding of issues. The audience’s ability to absorb new information by simply listening is limited. Additional

information, going beyond the timeframe of the presentation can still be introduced in the subsequent discussion. An excess of information tires the listeners and brings any discussion in a seminar to a halt.

- No oral presentation should exceed 15 to 20 minutes. By this time the capacities of any audience will be exhausted!
- Generally: one typewritten page (1.5 spacing, font 12) amounts to about 5 minutes of presentation with a normal speech flow!
- The presentation should be held at home as a trial in front of a mirror or a friend, to check your gestures, language, speed and especially the length of your presentation.
- Presentations held standing up are easier to understand as people tend to speak louder and clearer. This also enables eye contact with the audience as well as the use of gestures to help express yourself.
- The structure of the argument should be introduced at the very beginning of the presentation.
- For the audience to be able to follow the train of thoughts, students should try to structure the argument as clearly and transparently as possible.
- Visualizations not only help underline the arguments, they also serve to capture the audience's attention. Students should make sure that the slides etc. are easily readable.

- These, however, should only be used to support your presentation, they will otherwise have the opposite effect. The audience then focuses mainly on the slides and not on the speaker or the presentation.

5.1.1 Text presentation

During a text presentation, the content of the seminar text is presented. In this case, it is generally assumed that the audience is already familiar with the text. It is therefore important for such a presentation to identify the key ideas of the text and to highlight and comment controversial points, prompting the subsequent discussion. A brief reference to the author and the historical and academic context is recommended.

5.1.2 Research presentation

A research presentation distinguishes itself by the fact that students analyze and structure their own material and literature. The primary objective is to present a topic area - the topic of the session - and to provide information for the following discussion. Controversial academic positions should be pointed out and your position defined. In this case it is especially important to consult the instructor in time regarding the literature chosen for the presentation. This conversation can then also serve to clarify any questions regarding content or comprehension, and to determine key issues

to be addressed during the seminar discussion. This avoids, for example, a one-sided, too general or too specific treatment of the seminar topic.

5.2 Handout

A handout serves to support an academic lecture or presentation and provides a concise summary of the presentation's content. It aims to support the lecturer's ability to speak freely and/or summarize the key points of the presentation for the audience. Handouts follow the oral presentation closely and should not contain any additional information. It is neither intended to be an index, nor a collection of keywords or a transcript of the entire presentation. It should systematically present the examination of a certain topic or literature. All the important statements developed, justified and explained in the presentation should be listed in an abbreviated form.

The paper as a whole should, at most, be two A4 pages (spacing 1,5) long. The heading should contain the same information as the cover sheet of a term paper, and the literature consulted should be indicated at the end.

5.3 Report

Reports are used to summarize the results of an academic assignment, a seminar, a discussion forum or even a research conference. This can be done in several ways. The distinction can be made between process and result

reports, although mixed forms can also be found. We will only briefly introduce the result reports, since process reports are not usually required in the course of a degree.

Writing a result report means giving a streamlined summary of an event. Unlike a process report, the focus lies less on the type or line of reasoning mentioned, and more on giving an account of the issues, the theoretical points of view, the main arguments and the results. This type of report calls on the author's ability to distinguish between essential and inessential, and to focus exclusively on the thematic "common thread" of a session. In doing so, the goal is to sensibly arrange the contributions to the topic, and to contrast arguments and positions.

A report must therefore include the following substantial aspects:

- An overview of the topics, and the main subject of the session.
- A presentation of the context for discussion (i.e. different views, opposing opinions and their reasons).
- Questions encountered and their answers.
- Record of the agreements reached, open questions.
- Summary of main findings.
- Critical comments or personal opinion of the author. This is where opinions diverge: on the one hand, a report should reflect objectivity, thus should not contain personal opinions. On the other hand, people should be able to dispute your assessment.

In any case, personal evaluations are to be stated as such and justified!

From a formal point of view, the classic heading is to be used - as described in 3.2.1. The result report does not necessarily need to follow the chronological course of a debate, but can instead organize a chaotic discussion and provide it with a helpful structure. Frequent paragraphs should be used for clarity and a broad margin left for possible additions and comments. The style is to be strictly factual and result-oriented, formulaic phrases should be avoided. The report should also be entirely in the present tense or the imperfect and no longer than two pages (for a 90-minute session).

Should tasks, appointments, or measures be agreed on, these can be indicated at the beginning of the report. For literature, check the bibliographical references and list the texts alphabetically by author at the end of the report.

Tips:

- Drafting a report is much easier when you are well informed on the topic of an event. In this respect, it is entirely appropriate to interrupt a debate in order to clarify the interrogations or the intermediate results.
- It is also important, not to let too much time pass between the seminar and writing the report. The more recent the memories of the discussion are, the easier it is to produce a report.
- It is hardly possible to reconstruct the “reality” of a debate at a later date. The report should therefore be based on a reliable transcript of the discussion. In doing so the following points should be observed as a guideline:
 - divide the progression of the seminar by numbers,
 - emphasize levels of importance by underlining key concepts,
 - write down important contributions in detail and mention names,
 - reference text passages as citations,
 - write down blackboard inscriptions and summaries verbatim,
 - illustrate correlations graphically (arrows, colors, schematic drawings),
 - use abbreviations.

5.4 Excerpt / Text analysis

In addition to reports, students are repeatedly asked to produce written works of a maximum of two pages, covering the literature prepared for a certain session. These papers are used to assess the students' performance and improve the basis for discussion in the seminar. Students practice researching materials and analyzing literature, competences which are necessary for individual research papers.

Various names are given to this type of work: excerpt, memo, review or text analysis. These varying descriptions can be confusing, and instructors sometimes also expect quite different tasks. When in doubt, make sure to ask the instructor for the exact requirements. The following is merely a general overview.

Common features and functions of these types of works:

- capture the structure of texts,
- summarize the main points of a text,
- provide an overview of the main statements and arguments,
- give a description of the arguments and their justification,
- if appropriate, cite concise statements and key definitions. Note: quotes do not replace the effort of summarizing and using your own words. Where citations are used, the statement should also be paraphrased,
- record your own views and evaluations, and open questions.

From a formal point of view, use the classic heading, as always. Otherwise, it is sufficient to mention the source in the title of the excerpt and to indicate page numbers of any quotes in parentheses. Should additional literature be quoted or paraphrased, follow the general rules of citation.

Tips:

Two steps are necessary to create an excerpt:

- understanding the text,
- selecting, i.e. weighting the statements.

The individual steps are marked by answering the following questions:

How is the text structured? What is the starting point and the problem, what are the core assumptions, how is the argument constructed, what conclusion does the author reach?

Are there telling sentences and key definitions? Which are they? Is it worth quoting the original? How can these points and definitions be reproduced in your own words?

Does the argument appear conclusive in itself? What is emphasized or ignored by the author? What counter-arguments could be used? What do you think of the author's argument?

5.5 Essay

The essay (French *essai*= attempt, test) is not a clearly defined type of text. It provides ample room for your own means of expression and composition, i.e. no two successful essays are alike. The difference between an essay and a term paper is that the essay contains a greater proportion of individual ideas and assessment, and that the problem stated is more limited.

An essay is an “attempt” at treating an academic question in a concise and discerning form. A limited problem is discussed in a brief yet sufficient text. Consequently, the text should be “lean” and “loose”. More so than for longer papers, it is necessary to distinguish between the important and the unimportant. The author cannot lose sight of the main lines of argumentation; all non-essential details should therefore be omitted. Instead, one central hypothesis or theory is chosen, and its validity reviewed through discussion, a weighing of pros and cons.

A good essay thus gives a clearly structured answer to the question asked, and is characterized by a distinct argumentation. A common thread in the choice of arguments is discernible. The goal is to show your knowledge of the given topic through a question or a case study, and the formulation can be more controversial than in a term paper.

Question, hypothesis and content

An essay without its own question, hypothesis and plausible reasoning is no essay. The question and argument must therefore be clear before you start writing. The texts it is based on must have been analyzed thoroughly. You should have collected and picked apart the information relevant to your argument and have organized it with regards to your question. The point is not to simply reproduce the content of the texts, but to have a critical look at the statements of the respective authors. What is special about their presentation of these theories/ facts/ arguments? Is it logical? How is this text different from other texts? Your thesis should in the end be plausible, provable, and modest.

General advice on the construction of essays

With essays you do not have to choose sections with headings. Your text can be continuous –but with paragraphs and a clear structure, of course. An essay generally contains a short introduction, a main part with the discussion of your hypothesis and a final part. There is no pattern for the outline of an essay. More than anything, it should be consistent.

Introduction

The first sentences of an essay should be short and concise, express what is thought of the issue, and create curiosity in the reader. You should blurt it out and try to point out clearly what it is about. The introduction should be brief and concise regarding the subject and the question. The point of view

from which the question will be answered should also be made clear. It is generally very useful (both for writing and for reading the text) to give a brief overview of the major steps of the following argumentation at the end of the introduction. The arguments should not be presented in detail, a description of the general idea suffices.

Main part

The main part contains the presentation of selected key statements of the various authors on the problem stated in the essay. These are then supported, analyzed or refuted. What are the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments? What counter-arguments could be mentioned? What examples substantiate or disprove these arguments? The plausible explanation of your own position should remain in the foreground, and should be backed by theoretical arguments and practical / empirical examples. The position taken must be well founded (with regard to the primary literature).

Summary / conclusion / closing statement

The final part should summarize the main arguments and draw a conclusion. You should condense your main points, put them in a nutshell, rather than repeat them. Prospects for further thematic discussions may also be outlined. What questions should be pursued? What are the consequences of the analysis?

5.6 Term / research / seminar paper

Term papers constitute the most important form of academic work after the graduation paper. The challenge of a term paper is to find a relevant question in the context of a seminar and to work on it systematically and independently. The length of a term paper is usually 10 to 15 pages, but can in some cases be extended to up to 25 pages. Specific requirements are formulated by the instructors.

5.6.1 Characteristics of a good term paper

The objective of a term paper is to show that you can present an issue critically within a given time frame, and are familiar with the academic theories and research positions on the topic. You have to research, process and critically assess the relevant literature.

The following make for a good term paper:

- You need to develop your own workable problem. This problem stated and the underlying theses must be clearly discernible. Ideally, the issue should be discussed with the seminar instructor.

- The term paper is problem-oriented. The argumentation is clear and comprehensible.
- The theoretical background is sufficiently illustrated. You therefore need to work with more in-depth literature than for an essay.
- The presentation of correlations is analytical and justified.
- The results of the argument and the analysis of the question formulated in the beginning are presented in the conclusion.
- A founded and individual position on the issue is clearly evident.

5.6.2 General advice to the construction of term papers

Term papers also follow the basic outline: introduction - main part - conclusion, but may be further subdivided.

Introduction

In the introduction the topic of the paper is explained and specified:

- The introduction raises the main question and justifies its importance with regards to the larger field of social sciences.

- You should explain and justify the focus of the paper on a specific aspect of the question and draw the line with other similar topics.
- Again, it is useful to give a brief overview of the major steps of the following argument at the end of the introduction.
- The introduction does not refer to the arguments in detail, but gives only a general overview.

Main part of the paper

Over all, there are no mandatory rules for the presentation of the main part, but a few suggestions:

- The goal of this type of work is not to simply describe a phenomenon or event, and nor is it to set up a new theory. It focuses on the analysis of a theoretical issue or empirical facts.
- The main terms and categories should be identified and defined. The conceptual and categorial framework of the argument must be understandable.
- You should reconstruct and arrange collected data, foreign ideas, etc. along the question stated in order to present an “individual” work. In this respect, the current research and the theoretical background are presented here, to develop your own hypotheses and assumptions.

- Theoretical insights can therefore be used to explain empirical results, correlations can be shown between previously seemingly unrelated phenomena, and critical discussions of the academic literature can be conducted.
- The presentation of facts and ideas must be verifiable. Basic assumptions, used sources as well as the literature must be referenced.

Summary / ending / conclusion

In the conclusion, the arguments are summarized, the initial question is answered, and a conclusion is drawn. If questions remain open, they will be refined, in order to point out the progress made in the course of the paper. The results of the paper, conclusions as well as questions and answers must be placed in the context of the current research. This section also provides the opportunity to present follow-up questions and to compare results with those of other academics (example: "Unlike the authors X / Y, the conclusions of this analysis suggest..."). Related problems and possible gaps in research can be pointed out, but without taking up any new issues.

Tips:

You should generally only write papers on topics you are really interested in. Otherwise writing can turn into a "chore", which will take up a lot of time, since you will also need longer to finish your work.
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Before you start writing the paper, your thesis should be evident and you should have a first draft of the introduction. You do not have to wait until everything is “clear”. Most of the questions you will address are much too complex for definitive answers before the analysis and the writing process begins. Rather, they arise in the course of your work. The introduction may possibly be rewritten or clarified after finishing the analysis.

The first sentence in an academic paper is always the hardest. You can therefore leave for later or take comfort in the fact that it will be reformulated at the end of the work.

Writing is thinking. You can be confident that new thoughts and ideas will appear during the writing process. You should always try to express yourself as concisely as possible. Overly long and convoluted sentence structures should be avoided.

After writing the text, you should let it sit for a few days and then read it again critically. With the necessary distance you can check if your reasoning is indeed conclusive. Heavy emphasis is placed on correct spelling and grammar. You should therefore ask friends or classmates to proofread your paper, as one becomes “blind” to such errors with time. They will also be able to see whether your reasoning is understandable and consistent! To reiterate: you must submit independent pieces of work. Copying homework is considered plagiarism!

6. Graduation paper / final thesis

6.1 Specific requirements of a graduation paper

The respective study and examination regulations state as a general requirement for a graduation paper, that the thesis must show the candidate's ability to independently treat an academic problem according to academic methods (see study and examination regulations).

The final paper, which, according to the standard period of studies in the MA-program is written during the 4th semester, must be formally registered in compliance with the respective examination regulations. The time and the length of the work depend on the particular study and examination regulations.

The topic of the graduation paper is discussed and agreed to with a supervisor, who must be an authorized examiner. The paper is assessed by two authorized examiners, both of whom write a report. Moreover, both supervisors should be indicated on the cover sheet of the paper.

The final thesis must be bound and delivered in multiple copies and in accordance with the study and examination regulations. Students provide a sworn statement ensuring that the work was done independently, that all tools and resources were used as indicated, and that the work has not been submitted elsewhere for consideration.

Sworn statement

Please find a template for the statement at the end of this document

General Advice

Graduation papers do not need to be related to specific seminars or topics studied. They may, however, result from project-based seminars or classes, using previous work or empirical data.

The topic of the paper can be chosen freely in agreement with the supervisors, and should be narrowed down so as to enable a realistic

treatment of the issues within the given timeframe and length. The chosen topic will have to be confirmed by the examination committee.

Graduation papers can be based solely on theory, or draw largely from empirical data. If you consider collecting your own independent data exclusively for this assignment, you should be aware that such empirical analyses are extremely time consuming. You should therefore discuss their feasibility within the limited timeframe with your supervisor first.

Particular requirements for graduation papers are:

- A more in-depth and broader question is worked on, but this question must also be clearly defined.
- Theoretical approaches are developed in treating the issue, and a methodical analysis and critical evaluation of the relevant literature therefore takes place.
- The current state of research on the issue is presented and summarized.
- On the basis of the chosen theoretical approaches, investigative questions and hypotheses are developed.
- The methodical approach of the analysis is stated explicitly (especially in works dealing with empirical questions).
- Concepts and analytical approaches are clearly explained.
- The interpretation of empirical findings is comprehensible.

6.2 How to find a topic

There are several problems that may arise when one has to find a proper topic and a proper research question: Some students have a topic but have difficulties to formulate an academic problem. Others find a lot of interesting questions but cannot decide which of the questions they could handle within the given period of time or they do not know which would be the best method to apply. Even others, may already have difficulties in formulating a relevant topic as such. Thus, to reflect upon the following may be helpful:

Where do I get some inspiration for a relevant topic in my field of interest?

- read a newspaper (discover actual political problems)
- consult the website of a research institute that is working in fields you are interested in (oversight of current research themes)
- read a recent dissertation (in the introduction, the theory part or the conclusion you will find a discussion on research gaps, on the questions that could not be answered within this piece of work but would be worth investigating)
- look at the program of a major conference in your field of interest
- after having gone through whatever material you have chosen, simply sit down and think: where is the puzzle, the contradiction, the problem?

Tip:

Remember: For most students and scholars it is more fun to write about an innovative topic which is not yet fully researched, but for a master thesis it fully suffices to choose a solid topic on which you can find enough material.

6.3 From topic to research question

If you have already found a specific research question through the methods above, this is fine. If not, you may proceed by dividing your topic (Example: Germany's foreign policy towards Turkey) into several sub-dimensions or sub-topics, again with the aim for identifying a relevant academic puzzle or problem. After listing possible sub-dimensions or questions in which you could dismantle your topic, again ask yourself: What is contradictory, what is astonishing, what is not possible to explain at first glance?

In order to reach this stage, you could do the following:

Brainstorming: This would mean not to think systematically about your topic, but to write down what comes to your mind spontaneously when thinking of our topic.

Mind-mapping: This is a visual possibility of combining the two methods sketched above, it can help to identify a question that is not so obvious, but

interesting, or one that is not yet fully researched (e.g. you could add some state of art research-remarks to the different branches).

Apply the six W(H)-questions: Who? What/Which? Where? When? Why? How?

- Actor-related dimensions of a topic: Who are the relevant actors (chancellor or foreign minister or other organisations that influence these political actors (NGOs, enterprises, advisory councils)? Who decides? Who is affected by a political decision in this policy field?
- Different subtopics of your topic: What are the main features of this policy? Which differing or even contradicting concepts may be traced in this context? Which factors are conditional or influential for these policies?
- Geographical (directly or literally) dimensions: Where are the decisions taken? In which institution or political circle?
- Chronological aspects: When has a specific decision been made? At which point of time has a certain decision been overturned? When did the relationship enter into difficulties (or started to improve)?
- Causal relations: Why has this decision been taken/policy agreed upon? Why was it not possible to reach a decision, enter into closer bilateral relations? How do the specific perceptions of the actors involved arise? How do these perceptions shape the progress or non-progress in the bilateral relations?

Tip:

According to the state of research, one or the other dimension may be more relevant or more difficult to answer and therefore more interesting to analyse. Generally who, how and why-questions are the most interesting ones, but sometimes it may also be important to examine a topic from a chronological or a geographical perspective.

6.4 Operationalisation: Selections of Cases and Criteria

After you have chosen a research question (e.g. To which extent are the foreign ministers in Germany truly able to structure the governmental relations to Turkey – since we know that the chancellor's office generally defines the direction of the government's policies?), you will have to take further methodical decisions that will help you to further specify your research question and decide upon how you have to proceed with your work. Sometimes these reflections have already been done before the concrete research question is formulated.

Selection of appropriate cases:

- Time period of your analysis: From Kohl to Schröder, after the Eastern enlargement, after Erdogan resumed power, etc.?
- Definition of actors: In this case, you would have to decide which of the foreign ministers you will analyse (Steinmeier and Fischer or even some predecessors). If, e.g., the question was "How are

societal groups influencing Germany's foreign policy?" one would have to clarify further which of these groups you will analyse: employers and trade unions, certain NGOs, the church, migrants' organisations, etc)

- Definition of cases: You could break your topic down to specific events, such as the introduction of the concept of a privileged partnership or to specific fields of cooperation like education, culture, trade....

Finally you will have to decide upon the criteria for analysis, the specific "variables" you want to examine:

- Dependent variable: e.g., the foreign ministers' room of manoeuvre towards Turkey
- Independent variables: personal causes (type of party they belong to, backing within their respective party, standing within the cabinet, affiliation to certain groups of intellectuals or think tanks or other advisors, political socialisation, personal relationship to the chancellor), structural causes (relation between the institutional units in foreign office and chancellor's office, structure of the chancellor's office, competencies and abilities of the relevant personnel)
- Intervening variables: support of the party the respective foreign minister belongs to, public opinion on this topic, discussions on relations to Turkey on the European level, etc.

Tip:

This approach may seem to be quite technical or artificial, but it will help you in being precise and sticking to the “red thread” that you are supposed to follow throughout your thesis.

Please consider: (1) The choice of independent and intervening variables depends on the specific point you want to make, the gap you want to fill, the theoretical assumption you want to falsify or verify, etc. and may be reconsidered after you have consulted the relevant theories. Hence the choice of variables should be driven by a discussion of relevant theories. (2) The decision upon these variables then delivers the structure of your thesis, i.e. the chapters it has to contain.

After all these reflections and considerations the next questions have to be answered:

- Which of the theories helps me explain my findings (in case you start with an empirical and not a theoretical puzzle)?
- Is it possible to make assumptions on the relation of my variables according to a specific kind of theory? This may be useful in some cases: perhaps you want to verify (or falsify) the thesis that personal instincts are very much shaped by individual socialization.
- Which methods should I apply in my analysis (comparative, quantitative or qualitative methods such as expert-interviews, text-analysis or discourse-analysis)?
- Which sources and documents do I want to study?

6.5 How to structure your thesis

As explained above, the structure of your master thesis depends on your choice of variables. Generally, it is worth reflecting upon the structure, as one can say that a structure builds walls or frontiers between sections and chapters and also constructs relations between them. It has to make the central thread or theme visible.

Generally, an academic piece of work should be divided into three sections: introduction, main part and conclusion

The introduction has to contain:

- Lead-in to the main theme (citation, current event, contradiction in the state of research, some observation to raise the interest of the audience)
- Precise description of the topic
- Critical introduction into the state of the art research (less relevant for seminar essays)
- Explanation for choosing the specific question (to fill a gap in research, special perspective on a topic, to shed light on a certain contradiction that you have identified),
- Explanation and discussion of the research question (social sciences are problem-oriented, so please explain in which way, or

for whom does a problem exist, which actors, institutions, interests, ideas are relevant in this context?)

- Differentiated description of the general topic, subtopics or questions (but not too many otherwise you get too unspecific), introducing your dependent and independent variables
- Describing and explaining theory and methods, indicating in which branch of research you want to locate your own work, or from which you try to differ (for a master's thesis this should be briefly mentioned in the introduction and discussed more lengthly in a separate chapter)
- Explanation of the structure and contents of your work
- Description of your choice of material (secondary (articles and books, newspaper articles) or primary sources (interviews, datasets, laws, speeches))

Tip:

Write a first draft in the beginning in order to structure your thoughts and try to avoid unnecessary work on unimportant side tracks of your topic, then re-write the introduction after you have finished the main chapter.

The main part contains:

- theory and methods, probably ending with the formulation of hypotheses (depending on the topic)
- the empirical analysis along the dependent variables you have defined

Possibilities for structuring the main part are:

- chronological outline/structure (what happened from X to Z, in specific periods)
- causal structure: examining cause – impact – effect
- relational order: assumption 1, assumption 2, conclusion
- dialectical order: pro and con arguments, synthesis in the end

Conclusion:

The conclusion should summarise your findings. It should not contain new information but present the answer to the question that you have posed in the introduction and should reflect upon the relations of arguments and variables you have discussed in your main part.

6.6 Common errors in term and graduation papers

- The topic and the problem are not clearly formulated.
- Terms are poorly defined. Just as it must be clear which assumptions an argument is based on, it is also necessary to define terms precisely (academically, not only generally). Texts with unclear assumptions and definitions do not usually bring across a convincing line of argumentation.
- The theory examined is too broad and not related to the actual question. The goal is not to show that you have an extensive knowledge of literature, know all sorts of theories and are able to reproduce them. You must show you can find theoretical starting points for dealing with your own questions and can use these theories to treat your subject.
- The theoretical and empirical parts have no understandable connection. Both parts fall apart because the analytical framework was not successfully developed and theoretical approaches are not used to support the empirical analysis, i.e. to develop the independent variables.
- The argument is erratic or self-contradictory. It is important to have a “common thread” in order to convince and make the reader

understand the argument. The complexity of reality may have to be limited to essential aspects, as required by a particular argument. To present all the existing correlations in a short essay is hardly possible. It helps to build the argument in stages, with transitions between the different arguments (this structure should be outlined in the introduction). Contradictions do not usually appear on the same page, but if an overview of the text is lost.

- The research question is not answered.
- One of the biggest mistakes is losing sight of the research question in the course of the work and ending, so to speak, in the middle of nowhere. One should thus always keep the question in mind and has to come back to it in the conclusion.
- Formal errors in spelling and grammar, or when quoting or making references and in the table of content.
- Plagiarism. It cannot be said often enough: plagiarism is considered intellectual property theft and will be severely punished!

6.7 Oral defense of the graduation paper

The oral defense of a thesis serves as the final discussion of the submitted work. In the master's program, the defense is about 30-45 minutes long, and is held in front of both reviewers. The student begins with a 10-minute presentation including:

A brief presentation of the work with regard to questions and key findings,

A critical position is taken towards the comments and questions given in the report.

A critical discussion with the evaluators then takes place.

Tip:

Defensive strategies in the defense are strongly discouraged. You should respond to the criticism of the reviewers, but always defend your own point of view by referring to the appropriate passages in the paper (for example, if criticism is that a particular thread on the topic was not pursued), and argue accordingly.

7. Further readings

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