



Universität Hamburg
DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

FAKULTÄT
FÜR WIRTSCHAFTS- UND
SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN

Academic Writing

Formal Requirements

For

Term Papers

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1. Preliminary remarks

Writing academic papers is an essential part of academic studies. The requirements as to form and content of academic papers are high. The present document summarizes the procedure and essential formal requirements for writing and submitting bachelor's and master's theses at our Chair. It is our aim to provide students with a uniform basic concept in order to render their first steps easier. Furthermore, we aim to ensure all students have solid methodical skills and profound knowledge enabling them to successfully complete their academic paper. We are convinced that acquiring basic methodical skills is not only helpful for writing academic papers but will also prove beneficial to our students in their future professional life.

If students fail to fulfill the formal requirements contained in these guidelines or violate rules for citation, points will be deducted from their final grade. In the worst case, the thesis will be graded “unsatisfactory”.

The guidelines hereafter set out are based on the following standard references for academic writing, which we also recommend for further reading:

- Kornmeier, Martin (2007): *Wissenschaftstheorie und wissenschaftliches Arbeiten – Eine Einführung für Wirtschaftswissenschaftler*, Heidelberg.
- Sachs, Sybille/Hauser, Andrea (2002): *Das ABC der betriebswirtschaftlichen Forschung – Anleitung zum wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten*, Zurich.
- Theisen, Manuel Rene (2017): *Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten*, 17th ed., Munich.

We always try to keep the provided links in this document updated and functional. In case a link does not work, the provided details will help you to find the required information by searching on the internet.



The present guidelines and provisions of the relevant examination regulations and academic offices (“Studienbüros”) apply. Students themselves are responsible for observing these guidelines and provisions. Literature references are indicated for further reading; any rules deviating from these guidelines are to be ignored when preparing an academic paper at our Chair.

2. Writing your academic paper

The following section presents the basic formal and methodical guidelines that are important for writing academic papers.

2.1. Formal requirements for writing a paper

Academic papers must be prepared and submitted in due form. The following aspects are to be taken into account in this regard:

Language:

The thesis can be written in either German or English.

Gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory language:

With this section, we would like to encourage you to give thought to gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory language during your writing, and to find a writing style which you consider appropriate. Since the Universität Hamburg does not have binding guidelines, it is up to you to decide about adjustments to your style of writing.

Students writing in English can, for example, find alternatives for words and formulations making women invisible in language (e.g. simultaneous use of female and masculine pronouns, alternatives to the use of 'man' as a noun, verb or adjective in words such as 'mankind', or 'man made'). In addition to misogyny, language also reflects and reconstitutes racism and the discrimination of people with disabilities. Non-discriminatory writing avoids prejudiced or patronizing terms and expressions. [The Inclusive Language Guidelines of the University of Newcastle](#) (last access July 2020) give an overview of how discrimination is reproduced in English and which strategies can be implemented in order to avoid it. Additionally, [the British Sociological Association gives further information on their website](#) (last access July 2020).

Students writing in German can refer to the following links for information regarding gender-sensitive and discrimination-free German language:

- [Guideline for gender-sensitive language usage](#) from the University of Applied Science in Ostwestfalen-Lippe (last access July 2020)
- Publication focusing on [gender diversity sensible language usage – discrimination-free writing, speaking and images](#) at the Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt (last access July 2020)
- [Glossary and checklist regarding the guidelines for a racism-critical language usage](#) of the AntiDiskriminierungsBüro (ADB) Köln (last access July 2020)

Font:

To achieve better readability and comparability students are asked to prepare their thesis choosing the font “Times New Roman” that is equivalent in scale 12 pt. (normal spacing) plus 1.5 line spacing and justified margins with hyphenation.

Margins:

Margins must be formatted as follows in case of term papers (“Hausarbeit“), bachelor’s and master’s theses:

- Top: 2.5 cm (including header, if applicable)
- Bottom: 2.5 cm (including footer, if applicable)
- Left: 3 cm
- Right: 2.5 cm

Length:

- Special term paper (“Große Hausarbeit”): 20 pages +/- 10% (40.000 characters)
- Regular term paper: 10 pages +/- 10% (20.000 characters)

If the number of pages of the term paper submitted falls below, or exceeds, the number of pages as indicated above, this will have a negative impact on grading (the number of pages includes figures/tables whereas it does not include title page, abstract (if applicable), table of contents, reference or other lists or appendices).

Time frame:

- Special term paper (“Große Hausarbeit”): 4 weeks
- Regular term paper: as announced in the course

Page numbering:

Page numbering with Arabic numerals begins with the first page of the body of the document. The table of contents, list of tables, list of figures, list of symbols and reference list as well as the list of appendices must be numbered with Roman numerals. Numbering begins with the table of contents. Title page and abstract do not have page numbers.

Formatting:

- for (section) headings: font size 14 pt., bold, line spacing: 1.5 lines, paragraph: spacing after 18 pt., pagination (i.e. a new section always begins on the next page)

- for subheadings: font size 13 pt., bold, line spacing: 1.5 lines, paragraph: spacing before 18 pt., spacing after 12 pt. (pagination only if the subheading would be otherwise located at the bottom of the page)
- for continuous texts: font size 12 pt., line spacing: 1.5 lines, paragraph: spacing after 10 pt.
- for figure and table captions and for footnotes: font size 10 pt., single spaced
- for tables: font size 10 pt., line spacing: 1 line. Often landscape format is advisable for the sake of clarity.
- for references: font size 10 pt., line spacing: 1 line, paragraph: spacing 12 pt.

Inserting figures and tables in the text:

Figures and tables must be inserted in the text whenever they are directly referred to in the text (otherwise they should be listed in the appendix). Often figures or tables are useful to explain complicated facts in an easily comprehensible manner. All figures and tables must be consistently formatted throughout the thesis (left-aligned/with frame or centered/without frame, etc.) and consecutively numbered. As a rule, figures or tables contained in the body of the document are not self-explanatory: this means that each figure and/or table contained in the text must be explained. References for tables and figures are indicated directly below the respective table or figure; the wording of the reference always begins as follows: "Source: ..." (cf. figure 1). The short citation format is to be used (cf. Section 5.4). The title of the figure or table must be of font size 12 pt. and references of font size 10 pt., left-aligned with hanging indent (exactly aligned with the title of the figure/table).

2.2. Structure of the paper and information on the drafting of preliminary indices

Academic papers must present the following structure:

- title page
- abstract
- table of contents
- list of figures (if necessary)
- list of tables (if necessary)
- list of abbreviations (if necessary)
- list of symbols (if necessary)

- list of appendices (if necessary)
- body of the document
- appendix (if necessary)
- reference list

Title page:

The title page should contain the following elements:

- title of the paper
- type of paper
- name and chair of the supervising professor
- the student's name and address
- deadline for submission

Abstract:

The abstract is a summary of the whole thesis and serves to offer readers a comprehensive overview of the research question, the method used and the findings of the thesis. It is written in the same language as the thesis and should not exceed three-fourths of a page.

Table of contents:

The table of contents comprises the entire content of the thesis and should therefore be clearly structured. In general, one can differentiate between three basic elements: introduction, main part and conclusion.

For the table of contents in the main part universal decimal classification is to be used. In order to ensure a clear structure of the thesis students should use, in general, three structural levels at the most. Each section must be divided into at least two subsections (i.e. item 2.1 must always be followed by item 2.2). The subheadings must be formatted using a hanging indent. Numbering of subsections must line up precisely with the heading of the main section.

All parts of the table of contents should show a clear reference to the topic of the thesis. This means that headings should ideally be related to the research question. Furthermore, the structure of the table of contents should be clearly laid out and free from redundancies. The headings of the individual sections should be precise, short and informative in order to reflect the logical structure of the thesis. In addition, headings must be self-explanatory. Full sentences, particularly relative clauses and passive clauses, should be avoided.

List of figures and list of tables:

The list of figures and list of tables comprise all figures and tables of the thesis including their respective title and page number.

List of abbreviations:

The list of abbreviations only contains technical abbreviations in alphabetical order and their explanation. This also comprises abbreviations used in the reference list. Students are advised not to use too many abbreviations which impede readability. Common abbreviations (for example, those listed in “Duden”) will not be included in the list of abbreviations. All abbreviations included in the list of abbreviations must be introduced in the main part of the thesis, i.e. the relevant term is written out when mentioned in the text for the first time and followed by the abbreviation (in round brackets). Subsequently, only the abbreviation will be used in the text.

List of symbols:

The list of symbols contains all symbols used in the text (e.g. @, €, &, §, §§, %) in alphabetical order including their explanation.

List of appendices:

The list of appendices contains all appendices including their respective title and page number. Appendices include, for example, the questionnaire used, transliterated wording of interviews, or statistical evaluation of surveys.

2.3. References and reference management with Citavi or Mendeley

At first, we would like to mention two very useful web-based citation guides regarding the recommended citation-style for term papers – the so called “Harvard style”:

- [Dublin City University Library Guide to Harvard Style of Citing & Referencing](#) (last access July 2020)
- [Harvard College Writing Program \(Harvard Guide to Using Sources\)](#) (last access July 2020)

Over the past few years, a number of software solutions have established themselves in the academic disciplines as an alternative to manual reference management and formatting of the reference list. **Windows-users** are recommended to use *Citavi Pro*, as the Regional Computing Center (RRZ) has acquired a license to use this software free of charge. Further information can be found at the website of [Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg](#) (last access July 2020)

Students using *Citavi* must make the following adjustments with regard to citation:

- For term papers written in English: citation style “*American Psychological Association 6th edition (APA)*”

For **Mac-users**, we recommend the cloud-based citation manager „Mendeley“ available for free at <https://www.mendeley.com/>

Students using *Mendeley* must make the following adjustments with regard to citation:

American Psychological Association 6th edition (APA)

More detailed information about the APA citation style are available in:

American Psychological Association (Ed.). (2010). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

2.4. Drafting the list of appendices

The appendices include all documents that are necessary for understanding the content of the thesis but do not necessarily have to be incorporated in the text itself. These are often interviews, additional evaluations, supplementary material, etc. Appendices are listed consecutively. They may include tables, figures, samples, etc. that have no place in the body of the document. The sources underlying the appendices are to be stated in the reference list as well. All information contained in the appendices must be referred to in the text accordingly. Contrary to tables and figures, in appendices titles must be located above and sources below the illustration.

3. Submission

Students must submit **one** printed copy of their term paper to the academic office in due time. In addition, an electronic version should be submitted as well (WORD document + PDF file). Please, use an USB stick as storage device. Furthermore, all digital sources that are not publicly accessible should be contained in a separate folder on the data storage device. If SPSS data sets, transcription files or the like have been used (particularly in case of empirical theses) these must be contained on the data storage submitted, too. The responsible supervisor will hand out the USB stick after the grading is done. The term paper **must not be bound**, a simple tacked copy (loose-leaf binder, filing strip) is sufficient.