

Guidelines for writing academic papers: seminar projects, bachelor and master theses

July 2021

What is academic paper?

An academic paper is a piece of writing that addresses a well-defined research topic, using available sources of information, such as existing academic articles, case studies and data (quantitative or qualitative).

A paper can be “theoretical” or “empirical”. A “theoretical” paper can be either a systematic survey of the academic literature on the chosen topic or a development of a formal mathematical model that illustrates an economically relevant phenomenon. An empirical paper addresses the chosen topic by analysing a piece of data using appropriate research method.

Whatever type of academic paper you choose, it must be written well. This means: clear statement of the topic, good use of existing literature, and a clearly visible, well-argued own perspective on the topic based on the surveyed literature or data analysis results (depending on the type of the thesis). You may find the guidelines below helpful for writing a good paper.

Format

Number of pages:

Seminar paper: 10 ± 5 , or ca. 1500 words

Bachelor thesis: 20 ± 5

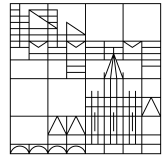
Master thesis: 45 ± 10

Margin: 3 cm left, 4 cm right.

Type face and size: Times New Roman, 12 pt.

Row alignment and spacing: Justified, interval 1.5 rows.

Page numbers:



Excluding the coversheet, all pages have to be numbered. The information pages preceding the main text (content list, symbol list and list of illustrations) have to be numbered with Roman numerals. For all the other pages use Arabic numerals.

Citation

— An academic paper must build on existing literature, which must therefore be appropriately cited. Every citation must be found in the reference list, and must be verifiable. Citations that are not explicitly identified as such may cause a negative assessment up to “inadequate” if they constitute verifiable plagiarism. Direct citations begin and end with quotation marks. Indirect citations (i.e. the thoughts of an author are analogously transferred) are not marked with quotation marks. References to publications are generally not submitted as footnote, but within the ongoing text, i.e. “...Moral Hazard...(Holmström 1982).” When using direct citations, the page number should be added. Page number do not have to be added when making an indirect citation, but if the work being cited in large and discusses multiple issues, referring the reader to the relevant section of it is helpful, and will be appreciated.

General structure of a paper or thesis

Cover sheet:

Follow the guidelines of the Examination Office.

Contents table:

The numbering and caption within the text and content list have to coincide.

Symbol list (does not apply if symbols are not used):

The symbol list includes all used symbols and variables with definition.

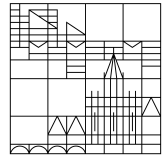
List of illustrations (if any):

The list of illustrations mentions all illustrations with numbers and caption.

Main text:

The following structure is recommended. First, the introduction leads the reader to the subject of the paper. It states the research question and motivates it (why is it important to study the research question addressed in the paper?), outlines the structure of the work and briefly summarises the results. A good introduction is meant to grab the reader’s attention and persuade him/her to read on.

The next sections deal with the subject in greater detail. Their purpose is to give the reader sufficient knowledge to understand the topic of the paper. Depending on the type



of the paper and its focus, sections summarising relevant theoretical concepts, existing literature, empirical methods and data may be written.

The next section is “Results”. Depending on the paper, it may contain empirical results (e.g., regression estimates from the empirical models described in the previous section(s)), or theoretical results (e.g., solutions of the previously outlined theoretical model), or literature review findings.

— The next section discusses the results in light of the research question and concludes. It should also note the limitations of the paper (eg., limited data or issues with the theory or literature analysis) and, where appropriate, directions for further study.

Equations, tables and figures:

The above objects, when used in the paper, have to be numbered consecutively and referred to by their number.

Appendices:

— An appendix may or may not be included. Its purpose is to report on the results or data that may be helpful but are not essential. Do not expect every reader to read the appendix, so do not put any important results there. Examples of information that may be put in the appendix: derivation of the formulae, details of how the data were obtained, pictures of experimental materials or lab (where appropriate).

List of references:

The alphabetically sorted list of references should be put at the end of the paper and should contain only those publications that are referred to in the text. Different sources (i.e. journal articles, book chapters) must be cited differently. See examples below.

Monographs

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon & Schuster

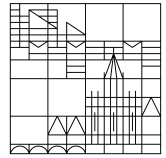
Book chapters

Kreps, D. M. (1990). Corporate Culture and Economic Theory, in *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy*, by J. E. Alt, und K. A. Shepsle (Eds), Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press, 90-143

Journal articles

Card, D. and Krueger, A.B. (1994). Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast-Food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. *American Economic Review*, 84 (4), 772-793

Working Papers



Martins, P. S. and Walker, I. (2006). Student achievement and university classes: Effects of attendance, size, peers, and teachers. IZA Discussion Paper 2490

Unpublished Work

Hakenes, H., and Schnabel, I. (2007) Bank Competition and Capital Regulation. Unveröffentlichtes Manuskript. Max-Planck-Institut zur Erforschung von Gemeinschaftsgütern, Bonn.

Internet sources

— Damewood, C. Things to serve with Chili. <https://www.leaf.tv/articles/things-to-serve-with-chili/>. Accessed 1 July 2021.

Affidavit:

There has to be an affidavit end of each Bachelor- and Master thesis, followed by the author(s) signature(s) and date:

— “Hereby I/we declare that I/we wrote the present thesis without any assistance from third parties and with no other sources than those indicated in the thesis itself. Verbatim sentences as well as parts of sentences are cited as such. Other references are acknowledged as to the statement and the extend. This thesis (or seminar paper) has never before been presented in this or a similar form to another examination authority and has not been published yet.”

Academic papers assessment criteria

- Is the subject interesting and relevant?
- Has its relevance been sufficiently established/argued?
- Is the research question clearly defined?
- Does the work shows its author’s familiarity with the existing research on the chosen topic?
- Has the research question(s) been adequately addressed? That is, has the author used the right method or, in case of literature review, cited the right literature?
- Does the paper provide “additional value” or does it only list up well-known facts?

“Additional value” means either (or all): new theory, new data or empirical results, new application of the existing theory/method/problem, new method, or newly discovered substantial problem with the existing theory/method/finding.

- Is the paper well-written?
- Have the formal guidelines, presented in this note, and applicable University regulations been observed?