

Guidelines for Seminar Papers and Final Papers (BA / MA Theses)

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1 General Requirements

This document contains guidelines for students who need to write a seminar paper or a final paper. Please read through carefully before you start writing. Very importantly, you need to talk to your supervisor to clarify any critical points.

1.1 Finding a Topic (Final Papers Only)

1.1.1 Come Up With Your Own Topic

You are welcome to suggest your own topic. Please approach us before you put a lot of work into your project. Especially, we do not require that you do extensive literature research before you present us with your topic.

It is very important, but unfortunately quite hard, to find a precise and clearly marked-off topic. Only on the basis of such a topic will you be able to write your paper within the available time.

1.1.2 Pick a Topic from Our List

If you do not want to suggest your own topic, you can ask us for the assignment of one. Please approach us if you are interested.

1.2 Time and Page Limits

	Seminar papers		Final Papers (Theses)	
	BA	MA	BA / ZA	MA
Time Limit	Please refer to the submission deadline		3 months	6 months
Page Limit	12*	15 (20 for groups)*	40*	60*

Table 1: Overview of Time and Page Limits

* Each 2000 characters of the main text and footnotes (including space characters) count as one page

1.3 Handing In

You must hand in your **seminar paper** as a printed copy and as a PDF file via e-mail or on a CD/DVD/USB to your supervisor in due time.

For **final papers**, you must hand in two printed and bound copies of your paper as well as in a machine-readable, electronic version at the Examinations Office.

1.4 How to Write: Your Own Language, Your Own Understanding

- Write only what you understand yourself.
- Use your own words to reflect the thoughts of other authors. Do not just copy things.
 - Quotes should not replace own explanations, at most they can be used to illustrate them. You will fail the course if you plagiarize.
- The work must be written so that the reader can understand the reasoning without reading the relevant articles. A good paper always has a section that establishes a theoretical background and a section that applies this background to your particular topic. Use the former to show that you are able to handle models (from the literature), to interpret them correctly, and to utilize them for your own work. If there is more than one study about the problem, it is very likely that these studies differ in some aspects. A lot can be learned from the differences between such studies. Try to understand and explain them:
 - Do papers with different approaches arrive at different results? Which differences between the approaches could be responsible?
 - What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of different papers? Which problems of an old paper did a newer paper manage to solve?
- Most importantly: It is always better to be deep than broad. Try to focus on a specific problem and explain in detail how one thing causes another. Try not to include additional material as long as you have not fully explained all relevant arguments. If you can think of any reasons why readers may not believe an argument, make sure to mention – and try to discuss – all of these reasons, before you move on.

1.5 Readers

Your work targets advanced economics students. Assume that readers know the usual technical terms.

1.6 Tools of the Economist

Show that you know how to use the tools of an economist. A good paper contains all of the following elements. Please talk to your supervisor if you plan to avoid one or more of these elements.

- **Formal models:** Make sure that all steps of your calculations can be traced. Extensive calculations can go in the appendix. Be sure to work out the **economic intuition** of a model in your explanations.
- Mathematics is not an end in itself. It is only a tool to explain economic reasoning.
- **Diagrams** can be useful to support your arguments. Do not forget to explain them.
- **Examples** can increase the reader's understanding.
- Support your theoretical arguments with **empirical data** where it is possible.
- Don't forget to show the **policy implications** of your arguments.

2 Citations and Bibliography

Any use of foreign intellectual property has to be labeled as such.

The author-date system of the Chicago Manual of Style is the de facto standard for citation in economics. Please use it in your paper. A citation consists of two elements: First, a reference is labeled by giving the name of the author(s) and the year of publication, e.g., Maier (2010). Second, details about each reference are provided in the reference list. A detailed explanation of how to cite and how to format the reference list is available online:

<http://library.williams.edu/citing/styles/chicago2.php>

If you refer to the main results of another work, it is not necessary to use page numbers. However, if you refer to something more specific, you should always provide a page number. Readers should be able to quickly find the information to which you are referring.

Often, it is best to embed citations in your prose, e.g. 'Sinn (2003) argues that systems competition may lead to the reappearance of market failure because national governments disregard welfare in foreign countries.' or 'Empirical findings by Ahern and Dittmar (2012) support this theoretical result.'

Sometimes it is more convenient to describe an argument or a claim and append the citation in parentheses: 'Tax competition can reduce overall welfare. (Zodrow and Mieszkowski 1986, Sinn 2003)' or 'The actual direction of the effect depends on the elasticity of the tax base. (Köthenbürger 2002, p. 402)'

Quotations are less common, e.g. 'Köthenbürger (2002, p. 403) finds that "RTS proves to be particularly well suited to mitigate fiscal externalities generated by tax

competition” or “[T]he distinguishing mark of the firm is the supersession of the price mechanism.” (Coase 1937, p. 389)’

It is not necessary to stick to the guidelines of the Chicago Manual of Style at all cost. For example, if you cannot find an appropriate way to cite a rarely used type of reference (e.g. a newspaper article or a doctoral dissertation), try to use good judgment and stick to the criteria of consistency and unambiguousness: Consistency requires that all references of the same type should be formatted identically. Unambiguousness requires that the reader should be able to quickly find the reference based on the information in your reference list.

3 Elements of the Work

A paper consists of the following elements:

- Cover page
- Table of Contents
- Similar tables if necessary, e.g. a table of symbols
- Introduction
- Main body
- Summary and conclusions
- Appendix (if necessary) (for example: formulae, diagrams, tables)
- Bibliography
- Sworn declaration (only for final papers)

3.1 Cover Page

The cover page contains information about the seminar and the author of the work.

3.1.1 Information about the Paper

- University, faculty, chair, professor
- Title of the seminar (not for final papers)
- Semester (not for final papers)
- Title of the paper
- Due date
- Name of supervisor

3.1.2 Information about the Author

- Name
- Semester
- Course of study (+ study profile)
- Matriculation number
- Address

3.2 Table of Contents and Similar Tables

- Your paper should include a table of contents.
- A table of symbols is helpful if you use many symbols.
- Tables of tables, abbreviations, and figures are usually not necessary.

3.3 Introduction

Your introduction is very important. Use it to do the following things:

- Motivate the topic: Why should the reader be interested? Are there current developments that make the topic relevant? What is the larger context of the topic?
- Clarify the question: Which issues are discussed and which are avoided in the essay?
- Outline related literature and explain how you chose it.
- Briefly summarize your results.
- Outline the structure of the rest of the text.

4 Formal Requirements

Formal aspects of your paper will enter into the grading process.

4.1 Expression, Orthography, and Grammar

The work must be written in clear English. Pay attention to spelling and punctuation. Make sure to have your work proofread by somebody else.

Avoid designations like 'I' or 'we'. Use the passive voice instead.

4.2 Graphics, Tables, and Formulae

- **Main Text vs. Appendix:** Figures and tables can appear in the text or the appendix.
- Calculations and proofs, which are not necessary for the understanding, belong to the appendix.
- **Numbering:** Figures, tables and formulae should be numbered consecutively.
- **Headlines:** Each table and each figure should have its own caption.
- **Sources** of tables and figures have to be specified.

4.3 Page Layout

Please note that we require a slightly different page layout than other chairs.

- Margins: left 2.3 cm, right 4 cm, upper 3 cm, lower 3.3 cm
- Main text: 1.5 line spacing, font size 12pt
- Footnote: single spacing, font size 10pt
- Use justified text ("Blocksatz") and make sure to switch on hyphenation ("Silbentrennung").
- Page numbering: Pages should be numbered. Page numbering should start (with number 1) on the first page of your introduction.

5. Important research tools

5.1 Literature

Prepare the literature search carefully.

- Identify relevant key words.
- Use thesaurus to cover a large spectrum of key words (use also different languages).
- List the results of the search.
- Prepare a literature data base and complete this simultaneously.
- Prepare a bibliography (see section 4.2.9 for more information) and complete this simultaneously to your literature collection.

If you search for relevant literature, you should not use the usual google engine. Instead, you should concentrate on those search engines that focus on academic articles. These are for example:

- Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.de/>
- Econlit (via Ebsco host) <http://search.ebscohost.com/>
- Jstor <http://www.jstor.org/>
- Sciencedirect <http://www.sciencedirect.com/>
- Ideas <http://ideas.repec.org/>
- SSRN <http://www.ssrn.com/en/>

If you have found an interesting article, you can search for more recent studies which cite this work and studies the current article refers using:

- ISI Web of Science (Thomson Scientific)
- Google Scholar

The university has access to all relevant search engines. If you want to do the search for literature at home, you first have to install a VPN (virtual private network) client. See <http://www.rze.uni-erlangen.de/dienste/internet-zugang/vpn/> for details.

5.2 Data

You should try to supplement your analysis with real world data. Prepare some histograms or scatter plots that illustrate the relationship between the variables of interest. If you have enough methodological skills, you may try to make own regressions. Important data sources are:

- World Development Indicators <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>
- OECD Statistics <http://stats.oecd.org/>
- EUROSTAT <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>
- CIA World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
- IMF <http://www.imf.org/external/data.htm>

- AID data
<http://aiddata.org/>
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6. Recommended Literature on Academic Writing

6.1 General

- Belcher, W.L.: Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks. A Guide to Academic Publishing Success. Sage Publications (2009)
- Booth, W.C., Colomb, G.G., Williams, J.M.: The Craft of Research. 3rd ed. University of Chicago Press (2008)
- Cargill, M., O'Connor, P.: Writing Scientific Research Articles. Strategy and Steps. 2nd ed. Wiley-Blackwell (2012)
- Gladon, R.J., Graves, W.R., Kelly, J.M.: Getting Published in the Life Sciences. Wiley-Blackwell (2011)
- Hartley, J.: Academic Writing and Publishing. A practical handbook. Routledge (2008)
- Murray, R.: Writing for Academic Journals. 3rd ed. McGraw-Hill (2013)
- Swales, J.M., Feak, C.B.: Academic Writing for Graduate Students. Essential Tasks and Skills. 3rd ed. University of Michigan Press (2012)

6.2 Economics and Econometrics

- McCloskey, D.N.: Economical Writing. 2nd ed. Waveland Press (1999)
- Thomson, W.: A Guide for the Young Economist. 2nd ed. MIT Press (2011)
- Cochran, J.H.: Writing Tips for PhD Students. University of Chicago (2005)
https://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/john.cochrane/research/papers/phd_paper_writing.pdf
- Neugeboren, R., Jacobson, M.: Writing Economics. Harvard University (2001/5)
<https://writingproject.fas.harvard.edu/files/hwp/files/writingeconomics.pdf>
- Varian, H.: How to Build an Economic Model in Your Spare Time.
<http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~hal/Papers/how.pdf>
- Westerlund, J.: The Recipe for a Successful Thesis in Applied Economics. University of Gothenburg (2010)
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.470.9123&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- University of Mannheim, Economics Department: further references and guidelines in German
<http://prexl.vwl.uni-mannheim.de/index.php?id=3507&L=1>

6.3 Academic English / Style

- Skern, T.: Writing Scientific English. A Workbook. 2nd ed. Facultas Verlag / UTB (2011)
- Strunk, W., White, E.B.: The Elements of Style. 4th ed. Pearson (1999)

6.4 Plagiarism

- Weber-Wulff, D.: False feathers: A perspective on academic plagiarism. Springer Science & Business. (2014); particularly recommended: Chapter 2: Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct)