



Essays and Term Papers

The term paper is the result of a thorough investigation of a particular topic and constitutes the most extensive written assignment you will be asked to produce in a seminar. Therefore, it is important that you consider the following hints.

1. General hints

These are **the formal guidelines** you are **required** to follow:

- 12 point Times New Roman or 11.5 Arial
- 1.5 line spacing,
- wide enough margin for comments and corrections (usually 2.5 cm on the left, 3-4 cm on the right),
- *Blocksatz* (also in footnotes),
- Structure your text visibly by using paragraphs (each paragraph should explore one particular aspect of your argument; indent the first line of each paragraph apart from the first one after a new headline).

Length

- *lektürebezogene Aufgabe* (PS, S): requirements to be announced in class (depends on the module and number of credit points),
- *Hausarbeit* (PS): term paper of 12-15 pages,
- *Kombinierte Arbeit* (S): term paper of 20-25 pages,
- B.A. thesis: 35-40 pages,
- M.A. thesis, *Staatsexamensarbeit*: 60-80 pages.

This does not include the title page, table of contents, bibliography, and the obligatory statement of autonomy. When in doubt, check with your teacher how much you are supposed to write.

Please hand in your paper in **print**, and send a **PDF** version to your teacher.

2. Language and style

Your style must meet academic standards by being explicit, unambiguous and neutral. Moreover, you should ...

- ... avoid colloquialisms,
- ... avoid an overly complicated sentence structure,
- ... employ the appropriate terminology of the respective field of research,
- ... explain technical and other important terms,
- ... not use "I", "me", "my" etc. too often,
- ... not use verb contractions (i.e. no "isn't", "she's", "don't" etc.),
- ... not translate quotes from the most important European languages (but you can provide translations or paraphrases in footnotes),

Bibliography and citation

Familiarise yourself with our comprehensive [Style Guide](#) to learn all about parenthetical citation and how to compile a Bibliography/Works Cited list.

Please note that footnotes should be reserved for additional information which would, if included in the text, disrupt the coherence of your argument and the fluency of your text. This includes hints to other material or to a further line of argument which you cannot develop in full in your chapter.

A hint on synopses/paraphrasing and biographical information:

When writing about narrative texts (such as novels or films), avoid plot synopses. If necessary, briefly contextualise the chapter/scene, but you should always assume that your reader is familiar with the plot of the narrative.

The same goes for biographical information (about authors, etc.): these are generally irrelevant to your analysis.

3. Structure

Your final term paper should look like this (please stick to this outline also when writing a short paper of 5-7 pages; in this case, your table of contents need not be as comprehensive, of course):

Title Page

- essay title (clear, precise and concise statement of your essay topic),
- date of submission,
- course title,
- supervisor,
- institution,
- your name and matriculation number,
- eMail address,
- *Prüfungsnummer*.

Table of Contents

It should reflect the trajectory/organisation of your argumentation.

Do not just number your chapters like 1., 2., 3., etc. Make sure you break the topic down into different aspects of analysis (e.g. 2.1 / 2.2 / 2.2.1 / 2.2.2 / 2.3 etc.), especially in comprehensive term papers of more than 12 pages.

Abstract (only for final theses)

If you are writing your final thesis (i.e. B.A. or M.A. Thesis), you must enclose a short abstract in English. This is a brief and objective description of the guiding question or hypothesis and the result of your essay (in no more than 200 words).

Introduction (approx. 10% of the paper)

Your introduction should clarify the following points:

- What is your aim?
- What are the key questions you want to examine?
- Why is your topic relevant?
- What is your material?
- What is the method/theoretical approach you are using?
(This does not mean to simply list the names of your sources!)
- What is the structure of the essay/your procedure?

Main Body (to be named according to your topic, approx. 80% of the paper)

The main body of your paper should demonstrate that you are able:

- to work with relevant secondary literature,
- to work out a comprehensible structure and argument (i.e., do not present a random selection of findings – what you include should be relevant for the topic at hand),
- to present a correct and logical argumentation within the field of research,
- to make an independent argument (the mere presentation of secondary literature is no independent achievement and should not be the main part of the essay!), for instance, by choosing your own examples, comparing different theories and approaches, critically reflecting on secondary literature.

Opinion vs. Interpretation

When writing a term paper, you may be wondering what amount of input should come from secondary literature and to what extent you may express your personal opinion. There can be no simple answer to that question in terms of percentages. What you should demonstrate in your paper (concerning academic writing) is the **ability to work with academic research and to reflect on sources critically**.

Of course, your individual take on the primary text plays a major role in your interpretation, but this should not limit your reading to a bunch of personal statements like, "In my opinion, the text is very amusing." You should be particularly careful to avoid purely subjective comments (like how interesting/entertaining you found the text), though you may of course include statements on *what* exactly made the text fascinating or problematic. However, your evaluation of that should be linked to analytical criteria – what textual phenomena triggered your response?

Conclusion (approx. 10% of the paper)

You should return to the original thesis/leading question as formulated in your introduction. Include a short and precise summary of your findings and formulate a brief evaluation. End with an outlook on future research questions.

Bibliography / Works Cited

More detailed hints regarding how to compile a Works Cited list can be found in our comprehensive Style Guide.

Consult an adequate number of up-to-date secondary sources. You can only arrive at a well-founded term paper if you have consulted a sufficient number of sources including monographs and academic essays. You may use online sources that are of academic quality. However, online sources must not outnumber print sources.

Appendix (if necessary and useful)

Make sure it is complete and correctly labelled. Illustrations like screenshots can be part of the appendix, but they can also be integrated into the relevant chapter if they do not take up more than half a page.

Statement of Autonomy (*Selbständigkeitserklärung*)

[German] Ich versichere, dass ich die beiliegende Arbeit ohne Hilfe Dritter und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel einschließlich des Internets angefertigt und die den benutzten Quellen wörtlich oder inhaltlich entnommenen Stellen als solche kenntlich gemacht habe.

[English] I herewith affirm that I have composed the thesis presented autonomously and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages in the text that were extracted from other works either literally or accordingly were identified as borrowings

→ Sign this statement and add the date.

4. Plagiarism

The faculty policy regarding plagiarism applies:

Prüfungsordnung § 17 (3):

(3) Versucht die oder der Studierende, das Ergebnis einer Prüfungsleistung durch Täuschung, Plagiat (ganz oder zu Teilen) oder Benutzung nicht zugelassener Hilfsmittel zu beeinflussen, wird die entsprechende Prüfungsleistung insgesamt mit "nicht ausreichend" (5,0) bewertet.

PrOBA SLK – ANLAGE C:

Unter einem Plagiat ist im Rahmen einer Prüfungsleistung der Umstand zu verstehen, dass eine Studentin oder ein Student eine schriftliche Arbeit einreicht, die *wörtlich oder nahezu wörtlich, ganz oder zu Teilen* aus einer Arbeit oder mehreren Arbeiten (publiziert im Internet, in Zeitschriften, Monographien etc.) anderer ohne entsprechende Kennzeichnung übernimmt und dies damit *als eigene Leistung ausgibt*. In diesem Sinn liegt auch dann ein Plagiat vor, wenn bei der Übernahme in eine andere Sprache als die des Originals *übersetzt* wurde.

Sinngemäße Übernahmen und wörtliche, in Anführungszeichen gesetzte bzw. anders entsprechend ausgewiesene Übernahmen, die unter Angabe der Quelle als solche gekennzeichnet sind, fallen nicht unter diese Definition.