



## **Recommendations on how to write a seminar paper**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Aim of the guideline

The main task of a seminar paper is the presentation of the state-of-the-art of the scientific discussion on a particular subject, ideally complemented by your own critical thoughts on the topic. You are not expected to develop new scientific insights. Writing a seminar paper requires identification, structuring, systematizing, comparing and, above all, concisely presenting relevant information. Therefore, this guideline provides all relevant information for writing a seminar paper at the Chair of Ecosystem Services that fulfils these requirements.

After reading this guideline you should know:

- (1) how to get started,
- (2) what are the formal requirements of a seminar paper,
- (3) how to structure and write the paper.

## 1.2 Some general information

Seminar papers are of about **12 to a maximum of 15 text pages** on the selected topic, plus title page, contents, any lists and references section. Seminar papers are to be written in English language.

If not stated differently **one paper copy** is to be submitted to the student examination office at IHI Zittau, Markt 23. In addition, authors will send a single pdf-file of their paper by email to their supervisor. **Please be aware of the deadlines for submission.**

The supervisor assists the student in structuring the topic and the framing of the paper. It is strongly recommended that each participant presents her/his tentative structure of the seminar paper to the relevant supervisor before starting to write it. Please contact your supervisor by email **to fix an appointment in advance**. Further consultations throughout the semester are possible in case problems occur or questions arise.

## 2 Before you start writing

### 2.1 Literature review

The aim of writing a seminar paper is to practise and extend your skills in scientific writing. The literature review is usually the starting point of scientific work and it should be carried out thoroughly. A scientific seminar paper should be based on academic literature, building mainly on academic journals and books and – if relevant – so-called grey literature (e.g., reports, working or discussion papers). A paper that is based on only two or three sources cannot be considered as systematically and comprehensively researched. The same applies to papers that are only based on standard text books.

When you choose a topic provided by your supervisor it is especially important to understand what the topic is about before you begin your literature search. Usually, one or two starting references are provided for each topic by the supervisors. We recommend that you start from here to search for additional sources and set your personal focus.

You have to pay attention to the quality or seriousness of the literature you use, this applies especially to internet sources. If political sources are used they should be carefully examined with regard to their intended target group and the context in which they are published.

The **university libraries (SLUB and HSZG)**, as well as the **electronic journal database (<https://rzblx1.uni-regensburg.de/>)** should be used as a starting point for your literature search. If you have any questions finding initial literature and problems, please contact the supervisor. However, the literature search itself is to be carried out by the student.

Some **relevant academic journals** in the field of ecosystem services are:

Biological Conservation	Environmental Management
Conservation Biology	Environmental Policy and Governance
Ecological Economics	Journal of Environmental Economics and Management
Ecological Indicators	Land Use Policy
Ecosystem Services	Sustainable Development
Environmental and Resource Economics	
Environmental Conservation	

## 2.2 Structure your paper

After finalising or sometimes already during the literature search it is important to structure the information and the paper. Due to the maximum length of the seminar paper, it is very important to clearly define and delineate the topic. This means that you need to synthesise available information and that not all of the material found can be further considered.

The structure of a seminar paper depends on the topic and the specific methodological approach. For example, papers based on empirical findings usually have a methodology section and a section presenting results. However, all seminar papers do have an introduction, a main part and a conclusion. The structure, and thus, the table of contents, provides a good overview and a “red thread” through the seminar paper. The specific structure of your paper will be subject to discussion with your supervisor.

Structure your paper into **sections** that represent the key parts of your paper (e.g. introduction, your approach, results and conclusions). The sections are further divided into **subsections**. Section **headings should be meaningful** and support the reader to understand what the section is about. Sections are structured into **paragraphs** with each paragraph treating a (new) thought. This formal structure is designed to facilitate reading. Use **simple sentences and concise formulations**. Complicated sentences as well as meaningless fill words must be avoided. For illustrating specific findings or structuring information you are encouraged to use **illustrations, graphs or tables**. Make sure you refer to them in the text.

## 3 Writing the paper

### 3.1 Layout

You can use either **Arial** (font size **11 pt**) or **Times New Roman** (font size **12 pt**). Please make sure to use the same fonts throughout the document (header and footer, page numbers, and text). Insert figure captions below the figure and headings of tables and boxes above. For the general text (not for tables, maps, figures, references, etc.) use a **1.5 line spacing**. The text is to be formatted in **full justification using hyphenation**.

Footnotes can be written with a single line spacing in 9 or 10 pt. The reference list can also be formatted with single line spacing.

**Page margins** should be as follows:

- Upper margin about 2.5 cm,
- Lower margin about 2.5 cm,
- Left margin about 2.5 cm,
- Right margin about 2.5 cm.

### **3.2 Title page**

Every seminar paper has to have a title page. **Please use the following format:**

Technische Universität Dresden  
International Institute Zittau  
Chair of Ecosystem Services  
Prof. Dr. Irene Ring

**[Title of the seminar paper]**

[If applicable, sub-title of the paper]

Seminar paper submitted by: [First name and surname]  
Master Programme: [e.g. Ecosystem Services]  
Module: [e.g. Ecosystem Services – Concepts & Developments]  
Semester: [Number or your semester]  
Matrikel-No.: [Matrikel-No.]  
Address: [Address]  
Email address: [TUD Email address]  
Date of submission: [Date of submission]

**3.3 Contents**

The table of contents includes all lists (except the table of contents) as well as all headings of the sections and subsections of the seminar paper. Please use the automatic creation of the table of contents by your word processing software. This requires you to use the style sheets/settings for headings in your programme. The headings need to be numbered (1. Introduction; 2. Methodology and so forth) – in the text as well as in the table of contents. Subheadings also require numeration (e.g. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 as presented on page 1 of this guideline).

**3.4 Lists of tables and figures**

Throughout the text, **tables and figures must be numbered** in the order in which they appear. Moreover, they must be given **captions** that clearly describe their content. To **automatically create** the list of tables and the list of figures use the automatic features provided by MS Word or other programmes to ensure a consistent appearance, and avoid inconsistencies between labels in the text or the list itself.

**Examples:**

**List of Tables**

Table 1: Name of the table.....7

**List of Figures**

Figure 1: Name of the figure.....8

**3.5 List of abbreviations**

All abbreviations used in the seminar paper are to be listed in alphabetical order in the abbreviation list. For example,

- BCM      Biodiversity and Collection Management
- ESS      Ecosystem Services
- p.        Page
- WTO     World Trade Organisation



### 3.6 Referencing

Where you refer to any foreign thought or statements of other authors you have to **provide a reference**. As a rule, you should aim to **cite other authors indirectly** which means using your own words to describe their thoughts (but you still have to provide the source).

Direct quotes should only be used if the **exact wording** is important or if it is a particularly formulated wording. They are introduced by quotation marks and concluded with quotation marks. Direct quotes require, in principle, **literal accuracy**, and must not be given any other meaning in your work than in the original context.

Use **American style** for referencing authors, which means you refer to them **directly in the text**. If a text has more than two authors only the name of the first author should be given together with the suffix "et al.". When using a direct quote, you also add the page number(s). For indirect quotes, provision of page numbers is recommended for monographs/books, dissertations or any longer publications where it would be difficult to find the original source. Please ensure that the references in the text are consistent.

Please note: **Never directly copy text from another author or website** without using quotation marks and providing a reference with page number! If you refer to the thoughts of another author and describe it in your own words, it requires a reference as well (but without quotation marks). **Plagiarism will influence your grade** and, in relation to the extent of copying, may lead to failing the module examination.

#### **Some examples:**

##### Direct quote

“Direct quotes should only be used if the exact wording is important or if it is a particularly formulated wording” (Ring et al. 2017, p. 3).

##### Indirect quote

Generally, authors should be quoted indirectly in your own academic work, the direct quotation is commonly used if the exact wording is important (Ring et al. 2017).

Ring et al. (2017) stress the use of indirect quotations and recommend direct quotations only in cases where exact wording matters.

### Formatting within the text

A single author: ...	(Ring 2017)
Two authors: ...	(Ring and Hagemann 2017)
More than two authors: ...	(Ring et al. 2017)
Direct/indirect quotation on page 3: ...	(Ring et al. 2017, p. 3)
Direct/indirect quotation on page 3 and the following page: ...	(Ring et al. 2017, p. 3f.)

### **3.7 Reference list**

Only sources mentioned in the text (that is, referred to in the text, tables, figures and/or footnotes) may be included in the reference list. The reference list is to be **sorted alphabetically** by authors. A subdivision according to the nature of the sources (e.g., books, periodicals, essays, manual articles, dissertations) is not recommended. You should follow a systematic reference style. We do not prescribe any styles, **you can choose the reference style for your paper according to your peer journal** (e.g., Ecological Economics). You may also use a literature referencing software programme such as Mendeley or Endnote.

Prior to submission, please check the completeness of the reference list and make sure that you use a consistent style for your references.

#### **Examples how to cite different types of sources:**

##### **Books**

Klenke, R.A., Ring, I., Kranz, A., Jepsen, N., Rauschmayer, F., Henle, K. (Eds.) 2013. Human-Wildlife Conflicts in Europe – Fisheries and Fish-eating Vertebrates as a Model Case. Springer, Heidelberg

Pohl, C., Hirsch Hadorn, G., 2007. Principles for Designing Transdisciplinary Research. oekom Verlag, Munich

## **Book chapters**

Ring, I., Barton, D.N., 2015. Economic instruments in policy mixes for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem governance. In: Martínez-Alier, J., Muradian, R. (Eds.), Handbook of Ecological Economics. Edward Edgar, Cheltenham, pp. 413–449

Meyers, N., 1997. The World's Forests and Their Ecosystem Services. In: Daily, G.C. (Ed.), Nature's Services – Societal Dependence on Natural Ecosystems. Island Press, Washington, D.C., pp. 215-237

## **Journal articles**

Røpke, I., 2005. Trends in the development of ecological economics in the late 1980s to the early 2000s. Ecological Economics 55, 262–290

## **Reports / Discussion papers**

Ring, I., Schröter-Schlaack, C. (Eds.) 2011. Instrument Mixes for Biodiversity Policies. POLICYMIX Report No. 2/2011. Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ, Leipzig. Available at <http://policymix.nina.no>

Santos, R., Ring, I., Antunes, P., Clemente, P., 2010. Fiscal transfers for biodiversity conservation: the Portuguese Local Finances Law. UFZ Diskussionspapiere 11/2010. Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ, Leipzig

## **Websites**

Lamborelle, A., White, S., 2018. Ecosystem services of EU forests. Retrieved March 7, 2018 from <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/infographic/ecosystem-services-of-eu-forests/>

USDA Forest Service, 2018. I-Tree Tools for Assessing and Managing Forests & Community Trees – i-Tree Utilities. US Department of Agriculture. Retrieved March 7, 2018 from <https://www.itreetools.org/utilities.php>

### **3.8 Annex**

You can provide additional information on the topic of the paper into an annex. This may relate to **original statistics, questionnaires or computer programmes** that are too long and detailed to be included in the paper itself. Yet, this information meaningfully complements the paper in providing further information, for example, to make the original data available or better understand the methodological approach. However, the actual text must be a stand-alone text, self-evident and self-readable, understandable and verifiable even without the annex. If you use an annex, it should be referred to in the main text.

## **4 Prior to submission**

We recommend to have **another person reading your seminar paper** prior to submission. Our experiences show that with increasing time pressure towards the submission deadline, many spelling and grammatical errors occur which the writer does not identify anymore. Having someone reading the paper could also be helpful in terms of **improving readability and expression**.