

Hints for term papers

Preface

This document provides a first overview regarding both technical and content-related issues of designing a term paper. It is advisable to consult the course instructor in this regard, too.

Length

In general, it should be noted that a term paper's quality is not determined by its length, but rather by its content, structure, and the coherence of its line of thought. However, presenting certain content within a limited amount of pages is part of the assignment. Finally, the task requires the presentation of relevant – and the omission of irrelevant – information. Therefore, term papers should be limited to

- 10-12 pages for B.A. level
- 15-20 pages for M.A. level

Note that this does not include cover page, table of contents, references, and the appendix. Non-compliance to this limits can influence the grading.

Technicalities

A term paper consists of

1. Cover sheet, including information regarding
 - a. University, department, chair
 - b. Course title, course instructor
 - c. Title of the term paper
 - d. Information about the author: name, postal and mailing address, matriculation number, degree program, study semester
 - e. Assignment's date
2. Table of contents
3. Introduction
4. Main body
5. Summary/ conclusion
6. References
7. The following declaration, with date and signature:
"I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my own unaided work. All direct or indirect sources used are acknowledged as references."

The following requirements apply to the paper's formatting:

- font style: times new roman, 12 pt. (or similar font styles that are accepted by international journals or similar)
- line spacing 1.5
- margins 2.5, except lower margins, that should be 2cm

- justified text
- page numbering: arabic numerals; page 1 one should be the first text page. It is optional to use Roman numerals for the table of contents. No page numbers should appear on the cover sheet.
- Dividing the paper into several paragraphs, including several headers, is advisable, since it provides a clear structure to the reader.
- Figures and tables should have a header and be numbered serially. Sources need to be acknowledged as references.

Content design

- Introduction
The introduction should introduce the reader to the paper's central topic. This central theme should be derived from a broader problem in a comprehensible manner. Furthermore, the paper's content should be outlined. If desired, its structure can be outlined, too. After having read the introduction, the reader should be aware of the central topic and have an idea about the content presented, too.
- Main body
The main body should tackle the questions raised in the introduction. Examining these questions step-by-step should determine the paper's structure. However, it is important not to digress within this part, but rather to focus solely on the relevant subjects. Arguments should be presented logically justifiable, consistent, and never redundant. The argumentation should be well-founded. External sources have to be acknowledged as references. The same applies to anybody's statements and claims, however, such statements need to be distinguished clearly from well-founded expertise.
The structure depends on the paper in question. All papers should start with an outline of the relevant scientific approaches. What follows is the presentation of relevant research literature/ findings and the derivation of hypotheses, typically. However, a crucial requirement of the paper is not only to outline, but also to tackle established theories and research findings in a critical way. This critique should include both positive and negative aspects. For instance, it is required to compare different scientific approaches with respect to their logical and theoretical differences, as well as empirical evidence, including possible contradictions. Possible critique may be found in the existent research literature, but should also be developed on one's own. Of course, it is mandatory to build this critique in a well-founded way. If logically/ empirically justifiable, presenting suggestions for advancement of the tackled theories is desirable.
If empirical analyses are a part of the paper, a description of the data basis as well as an outline of the conducted research (including the methodology applied) should follow. Subsequently, a separate paragraph should be devoted to the presentation of the results and their discussion.
- Summary/ conclusion
The main findings should be summarised and discussed. Of course, it is important to pick up the research questions presented in the introduction and provide an answer to them. An outline to which extent the paper contributes to explaining the phenomena tackled should be provided. In addition, starting points for answers to questions beyond the paper's scope can be discussed.



Grading

Grading is based on the following criteria:

- Identification of research problem and selection of research question(s)
- Knowledge about the subject
- Selection of sources
- Line of reasoning
- Autonomy of argumentation
- Compliance to technicalities
- Expression, orthography, grammar