

UNIVERSITY OF FLENSBURG
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION
CHAIR FOR INTERNATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS
PROF. DR. STEPHAN PANTHER

Guidelines for Composing an Academic Paper

Last update: January 2014

0 Introduction

These guidelines cannot serve as encompassing introduction to academic working.

We recommend you to attend the courses on the basics of academic writing and working offered by the [MeQs](#) project (without charge). Moreover there are numerous introductory textbooks illustrating the principles of academic working comprehensively.

These guidelines sum up the most important aspects that will be taken as a basis of assessment at our professorship. Other professors might have different requirements; this is often due to different conventions in different disciplines. Everywhere that various ‘correct ways’ (e.g. regarding citation) exist, we will present the alternative preferred in economics.

A simple academic assignment given in class represents the first possibility of practicing academic working techniques. You can benefit from this practice for your bachelor or master thesis.

While master theses actually strive for the first own results of research, bachelor theses and seminar papers can set their goals a little lower and answer to an own problem through the use of existing research and material scientifically. Still they are not about the mere reproduction and accumulation of material, but the use of the same according to academic criteria.

Special characteristics of academic working style are:

- *To strive for new scientific findings*
- *A critical and sceptical attitude*
- *The verifiability of the results*

As a consequence to these characteristics, certain requirements are to be met regarding the content and the form of academic work.

1. Content-Wise Requirements

1. The quality of the paper will be higher when you try to include new arguments instead of just reproducing existing ideas. To achieve this, you can carry out a comparative analysis of different positions on the topic, you can change the perspective of regarding the material, you can include new material, you can question existing opinions, ...
2. Naturally it is compulsory to give an outline of the current state of knowledge **in one’s own words** and as precise as possible as a foundation for the paper. Depending on the length of your paper and your “status” (seminar paper vs. master thesis!) this part may be the biggest. By using your own words and methods of depiction you show that you understood the material used and your specific issue.
3. The paper accounts as failed if material is cited directly from other sources without marking the citation clearly and without indicating the source. Acts like that will be evaluated as **plagiarism**, a deadly sin among academics.
4. The purpose of working with a critical attitude demands to analyze **more than one source concerning the given topic** wherever possible. Overall there should be certain diversity among the material you use. A rule of thumb suggests using as many sources as the paper

has pages. Using about 15 sources in a seminar paper should be fine if you really do use those sources.

5. *The content-wise **quality** of the paper is **reduced** by:*

- Platitude
- A word load of meaningful sounding sentences without any relevant content
- „Bouquets of flowers“, meaning you list different contents without a convincing and logical order of arguments, leaving it to the lecturer to pick out the best points
- Missing explanations of specific terms. The general political and economic terms do not have to be specified. Special concepts are to be explained. It is up to the student to decide in which cases further explanation is needed.

6. The ***structure*** is like the business card of the whole paper. It should clearly show the logical order and is to be displayed in the ***table of contents*** at the beginning of the paper (see below “table of content”). The reasonable order of a paper or thesis cannot be generalized, but depends on the matter and the question. Look at academic articles to get a feeling and keep in mind the logic of the paper shall not only be made accessible to yourself but also to the unconversant reader.

7. Not all sources are of the same quality. The differences derive from the level of intellectual quality and the possibilities of verification. Generally the following ranking can be used as an orientation (starting with the best kind of material to the worst):

- Primary Material: official documents, company reports, self-collected data, own interviews, surveys, etc. Due to the high work load of collecting this kind of data, these materials are not too relevant for normal seminar papers given in class but maybe for a bachelor or master thesis.
- Scientific publications (essays in magazines and anthologies, books, working papers.) Signal: the scientific quotation rate
- Works produced by international and national renowned institutions
- Overview essays (Überblicksaufsätze)
- Textbooks and encyclopedias
- Material provided by popular science or journalism (exception: very recent topics)

The first three categories are totally fine. Overview essays can be helpful as an entry point to the topics but should not be used as main source. The other mentioned categories shall not appear in an academic paper (discuss issue-dependent exceptions with supervisor!).

8. The ***internet*** is eminently suitable as a ***source of information***. Please also consider the above mentioned ranking for information extracted from the internet. Meaning that you should regard non-scientific texts with caution.

2. Formal Requirements

Besides the content-wise aspects, clarity and coherence are important means of evaluation.

1. The work shall be written in an easily readable typeface (Times New Roman, Arial, etc.) with a font size of 12 pt and a line spacing of 1,5. A font size of 8 or 10 pt shall be used for foot notes and indented quotations. The continuous text shall be justified. For the page margins, you might add to the standard presets of the word-processing programs a margin for corrections of 4 cm on the right side.
2. The use of extravagant designs is restricted by the need for a uniform and comprehensive structure of an academic paper. Certain conventions are to be followed. For example, words in a foreign language shall be printed in italics when they do not appear in a quotation but in the continuous text (e.g.: the German *Sozialstaat* played an important role in the process of...)
3. All pages should be numbered consecutively. In cases where list of tables, list of abbreviation, literature and appendix occupy larger parts of your paper, you might number them separately with Roman numbers.

Scope of work

- Paper in class: according to indication of your lecturer
- Bachelor thesis: 60 +/- 10 pages
- Master thesis: 80+/- 20 pages

Language

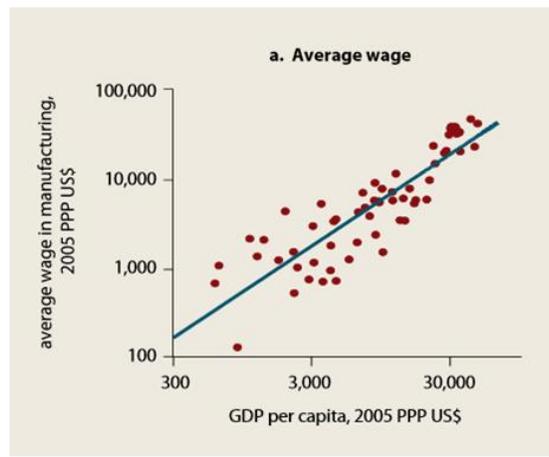
You should put effort into correct spelling, punctuation and an appropriate and faultless use of language. Generally the scientific terminology is objective, unemotional and precise. Normally the first person form will not be used. Subjective expressions like “I think”, “I believe”, etc. shall be avoided as well as the use of metaphors and flowery formulations. This is not to be confused with linguistic frugality. Always let somebody proofread your scientific texts – especially with regard to linguistic and grammatical correctness.

Illustrations, Diagrams, Tables

Illustrations can represent a valuable complement to your text. Sometimes a graph can say more than 10 pages of text! It is important to refer to the displayed illustrations and tables in your text. Consequently no illustration can stand alone or shall be included without explaining comments in the text.

All kinds of illustrations need to be titled with a name, their source and a consecutive number. Distinctions are to be made between tables on the one hand and figures (graphics, diagrams, maps, etc.). Title, numeration and indication of source shall be designed as follows:

Abb. 1: BIP und Durchschnittslöhne



Source: World Bank (2013, p. 9)

Tabelle 7: Zugang zu Krediten und Elektrizität und Firmengröße

Constraint	Firm size			Income level				All
	Small	Medium	Large	Low	Lower middle	Upper middle	High	
Access to finance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Power shortage	●	●	●	●	●			●
Lack of skills			●				●	
Informal competition	●	●			●	●		●
Tax rates				●		●	●	

● most severe
 ● second-most severe
 ● third-most severe

Source: World Bank (2013, p. 295)

Generally, figures and tables are cited just like references in the text, according to Harvard citation style (see section 4). This means no simple copy- & pasting of the URL below the picture or similar. If you use a figure from a different source, it is irrelevant how it was titled or cited in that piece of work or which number it carried. This information needs to be adapted to your work.

For graphics or tables you established yourself, write “own illustration” instead of the source. If you used data for doing so, write: Source: own illustration with data from World Bank (2009, p. 17). Please make sure you label axes etc. completely. If you modified an existing graph (example: you took a graph from the World Bank and added some arrows), you will indicate: adapted from World Bank (2009, p. 17).

The figures and tables with consecutive numbers are listed in the table of figures and the list of tables, respectively. There you indicate the number, title and page number. Figures of all kind can be listed together, whereas tables are usually listed separately.

Structure/Table of Contents

All elements of the work have to be presented in the table on contents. Each element shall be numbered consecutively. Arabic numerals are preferred:

1
1.1
1.1.1
1.1.2
1.2
2
...

If you want to introduce subchapters, the minimum per main chapter is two. Consequently if chapter 1.1.1 exists, chapter 1.1.2 also needs to be existent. Just one subchapter will not make sense due to the fact that if you only want to include one sub-item to chapter 1.1 you will not need to introduce a chapter called 1.1.1. You should simply add the sub-item into chapter 1.1.

Further you should avoid too much fragmentation of your work. If a subchapter only consists of one paragraph, you should rethink your structure. Ending up with an exceptionally high number of levels of heading is another good reason for reconsidering your structure.

Handing in your paper

The examination regulations (“Prüfungsordnung”) determine the number of hard copies to be handed in. You always have to hand in two copies in case of seminar papers (“Seminararbeiten”). The form of delivery for seminar papers is in a stapler, bachelor and master theses need to be bound.

Additionally an electronic version (in pdf or doc format) of your work has to be included on CD-ROM. Sources from the internet have to be put on the CD-ROM, too. The CD-ROM shall be labeled clearly. In the case of seminar papers, it might be sufficient to send a pdf via e-mail, please talk to your lecturer.

3. Composition

Title Page

The title page has to include the following elements: University, Institute, Department, Lecturer/Supervisor, when appropriate name of the class (in case of a seminar work), type of work (seminar work, bachelor thesis, master thesis, etc.), topic, final date for submission as well as name, program, matriculation number and address of the author.

Table of Contents: including page numbers

List of Abbreviations (if applicable – if you use abbreviations in your text; ask your lecturer)

List of Figures (if applicable): for graphs, etc.

Example:

Figure 1	European Union countries' currency status	page number
Figure 2	[Title of figure 2]	page number
Etc.		

List of Tables (if applicable): for tables

Introduction

The introduction guides the reader towards your topic and awakes her interest. The scientific interest and the research questions of the paper shall be displayed clearly. The methodology (why you wrote the paper the way you did) as well as the structure (as orientation for the following pages) have to be described.

Also the motivation for writing this paper (why the reader should be interested in the topic) can be presented in this part of the work. This will normally only be relevant for topics you chose yourself. If you do not have a special motivation for writing the paper or if the topic was simply assigned to you by your supervisor, you do not need to make up fancy motivations.

Main Part

Final Chapter/Conclusion

The conclusion has to refer to the research question set in the beginning. The main points and findings of the main part shall be summarized and an objective response to the research question has to be provided. In other words, a short description of everything examined shall be presented. **A certain redundancy is allowed: a unconversant reader might just have read 50 pages and is grateful for a little reminder of what the initial question was and what was analyzed, even if you feel like repeating yourself.** Further future prospects (what else can be done), sometimes final conclusions (Altogether...) can be named. **Avoid bringing up any new aspects in this part!**

Bibliography

Annex (if applicable): e.g. transcribed interviews

Official Statutory Explanation of personal contribution under oath for the work

4. *Methods of Citation and Bibliography*

General rule: for each statement made in the text you have to offer a justification– either through substantive argumentation (small fraction) or by referring to someone who has already carried out this argumentation.

The *citation system* is based on the idea of verifiability. A clear differentiation between your own ideas and those taken from other sources should be made. Further it should be clear where you took the ideas from. The usual practice is to mention the main points of other people's texts in your own words. A good paper makes references for every single idea taken from others. This does not imply that evidence needs to be given after every sentence but usually after every entire argument.

When citing, differentiations can be made between direct and indirect quotes. In direct quotes, you adopt one or several sentences. Word-for-word/Direct quotes have to be short and limited to certain concise parts of the text. If you want to include a longer direct citation (more than 2 to 3 lines), change the typeface and indent the line. Example:

Douglass C. North (2005) writes the following on this:

„Economists of a libertarian persuasion have for some time labored under the delusion that there is something called laissez faire and that once there are in place ‚efficient‘ property rights and the rule of law the economy will perform well without further adjustment” (North, 2005, p. 122).

With corresponding quotes you adopt an argument, a piece of information or similar correspondingly in your own words. Nevertheless this requires a personal contribution, because you are supposed to interconnect arguments, information etc. logically according to the requirements of your specific question. Mere sequencing is not productive and not nice to read.

From all the different methods of citation, we prefer the the American system (also called *Harvard citation style*). General Rule: in the continuous text you only include a short reference, indicating **author** and **year**.

Examples:

- Indirect quote: ... was of the opinion that markets when left alone tend to be instable (cf. Stackelberg, 1934, p. 27f.).
- Direct quote: Daher „I am of the opinion that markets when left alone tend to be instable” (Stackelberg, 1934, p. 27).

As you can see, indirect quotes differ from direct ones with regard to the “cf.” meaning “compare” in Latin. One space separates “p.” (page) and the page number.

If you want to mention an author in your continuous text, quote as follows:

Stackelberg (cf. 1934, p. 27) is of the opinion that markets when left alone tend to be instable.

If you use the same source a few times in a row (same author and same year), you can shorten the quotation with „ibid.“= latin for “in the same place”:

Stackelberg (cf. 1934, p. 27) is of the opinion.... Furthermore he states that,... (cf. ibid.)

Or in case that it is a different page number: (cf. *ibid.*, p. 35). The use of “*ibid.*” is supposed to ease the reading. Therefore it is convention to use “*ibid.*” only when the former quotation is on the same page of your work. Since the reader would need to browse back otherwise, this procedure would not ease the reading.

If you refer to more than one page:

Stackelberg 1934, p. 27 et seq. – for p. 27 and the next page/ next pages

Stackelberg 1934, p. 27-31, if you wish to be more exact

If you quote an argument from several pieces of work, you write all sources in brackets and separate them by semicolon.

Die Dualität des spanischen Arbeitsmarktes hat sich in den letzten Jahren intensiviert (vgl. Müller, 2013, S. 17f.; Rodríguez, 2012, S. 98).

If you are referring to a work produced by two authors, write: cf. Stackelberg/Müller 2012. If you are referring to a work produced by more than two authors during the continuous text, you can confine yourself to just mention the first surname and replace the other surnames by “et al.” (et alii = Latin for “and others”). Example: (cf. Müller et al., 2000, p. 99).

When quoting directly, the indication of sources belongs to the sentence, i.e. before the punctuation mark. With corresponding quotes you proceed accordingly, if the indications refer to one sentence. If you took over several sentences or a whole paragraph from someone you signalize this by placing the indication of the source after the punctuation mark, i.e. outside of the last sentence.

In this citation system, no foot notes are being used for references. Still they can be used to make comments or remarks. Footnotes should not include essential information for the understanding of the continuous text but represent additions of medium priority. Do not let your foot notes become pools of low priority information. The appropriate use of foot notes requires certain intuition and experience.

The mentioned literature (and only the literature that really has been mentioned!) is to be listed completely in the bibliography at the end of the paper (in alphabetical order of author names). A differentiation between essays, monographs, internet sources etc. is not necessary. Formats as follows:

For an essay from an edited volume:

Author(s), Year, “Essay title”, in publisher, *book title*, place: publishing house, pages of essay.

Engerman, Stanley L./ Sokoloff, Kenneth L. (2006): “The Persistence of Poverty in the Americas. The Role of Institutions“, in: Bowles, Samuel/ Durlauf, Steven N./ Hoff, Karla (eds.), *Poverty Traps*, New Jersey; Princeton University Press, p. 43-94.

The authors of the anthology are marked as publishers. In the case of one publisher please use “ed.”, in the case of more than one publisher you should use “eds.”.

For a monograph:

Author, year, book title, place: publishing house.

Stackelberg, H. von (1934): *Marktform und Gleichgewicht*, Wien und Berlin: Springer.

For an essay in a magazine:

Author, year, "essay title", *name of the magazine*, issue, pages of the essay.

Stackelberg, H. von (1935): "Der typische Fehlschluß in der Theorie der gleichgewichtslosen Marktformen", *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, 95, p. 691-708.

For a Working Paper:

Author, year, "title of the paper", *Working Paper Series*, Issue.

Durlauf, Steven N./ Fafchamps, Marcel (2004): "Social Capital", *NBER Working Paper*, No. 10485.

As long as you work uniformly, it is your own decision whether you...

- ... just abbreviate the first names of the authors
- ... mention the publishing house or not
- ... indent the author's name, print it in bold or put it in block letters
- ... put a colon after "in"
- ... put a comma, period, or a colon after the year

It is NOT your own decision ...

- ... to put a point at the end of every quotation
- ... to organize an author's works according to the year of publishing as well as to sort works of one author that have been published in the same year alphabetically and to differentiate them with lower case letters (2000a, 2000b)
- ... to put essay titles in quotation marks while book and magazine titles are to be put in italics

Internet sources represent a problem in terms of *traceability*. They should be cited with a maximum approximation to the above mentioned scheme. When a corrector looks into the bibliography he wants to recognize the origin of the source as quickly as possible and, if applicable, retrieve them. Therefore you should mention all relevant information so that the source can easily be found. Besides author and title this might also be e.g. the authoring agency and the last update. Afterwards add the complete URL as well as the date of access.

Side note: It might be helpful to read an article from **Wikipedia** to get an insight to a topic. Nevertheless, we do not accept wikipedia.org as a quoted source!

Example for internet quotations:

IMF (2011): "Statement by an IMF Mission on Pakistan", Press Release No. 11/430, 22. November 2011, available on <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2011/pr11430.htm>, date of access 23.11.2011.

Rodrik, Dani (2011): „Why is the bankruptcy of the Greek government different from the bankruptcy of California?“, 07. November 2011, available on

<http://www.typepad.com/services/trackback/6a00d8341c891753ef015392e055d9970b>,
date of access 23.11.2011.

Mair, Stefan (2009): „Staatsversagen und Staatszerfall“, in: *Informationen zur Politischen Bildung*, Nr. 303, p. 8-10, available on <http://www.bpb.de/files/ES3BIB.pdf>, date of access 23.11.2011.

Critically use your common sense and ask yourself whether the mentioned information is sufficient for the reader to immediately realize what kind of source it is.

There is only one bibliography, books and internet sources are not separated.

Recently many sources are published digitally and in hard copy. A classic example is represented by journal articles that can be found as pdf in online libraries. In that case it is not necessary to include the hyperlink. General principle: A hyperlink shall enable the reader of the paper to find the original source more easily and faster. If it is helpful, it should be included. In the case of an article from the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (as long as you quote correctly with issue and page number) the reader will not have any problems finding the source quickly (in the internet or as hard copy) – you do not have to put the hyperlink in your list. Further in online libraries problems with regard to copyrights may occur. Consequently the hyperlink may not be able to lead to the right document.