

# Guide to Writing Seminar Papers and Final Theses

Chair for Empirical International Economics

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## 1 Formal Requirements

A paper consists of the following parts:

1. Title page
2. Table of contents
3. Index of figures, tables, symbols, abbreviations (where applicable)
4. Main text
5. Appendix

## 6. References

For bachelor and master theses, please include a signed statement at the end of the thesis that you confirm that the paper was produced independently by you, and that you did not use any other resources or assistance that you did not list or cite in the thesis. The Registrar's Office recommends the following text:

"I hereby declare that I wrote this present thesis paper independently, without assistance from external parties, and with-out use of other resources than those indicated. All information that are taken from other publications or sources in text or in meaning are duly acknowledged in the text."

### 1.1 Structure of the title page

The title page should include the following information:

- The title of the paper
- Type of paper: seminar paper (including the name of the seminar) or bachelor thesis or master thesis
- First and last name, address, matriculation number
- Date of submission

### 1.2 Table of contents

The table of contents includes all sections of the main text with page numbers. Where applicable, an index of figures, tables, symbols and abbreviations as well as references are also part of the table of contents. The main text and all subsequent pages of the thesis have a page numbering using Arabic numerals.

### 1.3 Index of figures, tables, symbols

An index of figures and tables is only required when figures and tables are actually used in the thesis. The index should include the name of the figure/table (e.g. "Fig. 1: Phillips curve", "Tab. 2: Balance of payments Germany 1998") and the corresponding page number. If symbols are used, a list of symbols is also required. Care must be taken to ensure that the same economic variable is denoted with the same symbol in the course of the main text and that the same symbol is not used for different variables.

## 1.4 Index of abbreviations

The use of abbreviations is to be avoided as much as possible. Exceptions are abbreviations which are common in everyday language (such as “e.g.”, “i.e.”, “etc.”, “USA”) and abbreviations commonly used in citations (such as “Ed.”, “p.”, “pp.”, “cf.”). All other abbreviations which seem absolutely inevitable are to be defined in an index of abbreviations placed between the table of contents and the main text.

## 1.5 Main text

The main text with most relevant figures and tables (in exceptional cases, you may provide an additional appendix with figures, tables, and derivations that are not relevant for understanding the main text) should have the following length:

- Seminar papers: 15 pages (maximum variation +- 10%)
- Bachelor thesis: 30 pages (maximum variation +- 10%)
- Master thesis: 50 pages (maximum variation +- 10%)

The following page structure and typeface have to be adhered to:

- Margin: left and right margin combined approx. 5 cm
- Line spacing: 1.5 lines
- Default font: 11 pt (for Arial) or 12 pt (for Times New Roman)

However, the blank space between paragraphs should not exceed multiple centimeters.

If there is a significant deviation from this specified length and structure, there will be a grade deduction. **Spelling, grammar, punctuation and phrasing** are important. The use of a dictionary is recommended. If automatic hyphenation is used in the thesis, the hyphenations should be checked for correctness because this is a common source of error (e.g. “excha-nge”).

## 1.6 Quotations and Citations

Seminar papers and final theses are academic papers. Therefore, the author’s own opinions and results have to be clearly visible. The paper has to be of

your own wording, meaning it is not sufficient to adopt parts of other texts almost word-for-word and only change the sentence structure and exchange single words. If such text parts are discovered (and they will be discovered!), the paper will be graded inadequate (5.0). Every argument that is not your own has to be identified explicitly. There are two types of quotations, word-for-word quotations and indirect quotations. Word-for-word quotations are to be used sparingly and only for essential statements. Word-for-word quotations are to be cited with quotation marks and true to the original, they cannot be paraphrased. If parts are to be omitted, this is to be indicated by [ . . . ]. Own additions within the quotation have to be indicated by square brackets as well. Indirect quotations are used when arguments that are not your own are adopted in your own wording. Indirect quotations are the usual way to review the literature. Citations should be implemented in the main text and look as follows:

- This follows the early work of Evans and Reichlin (1994) and recent work by Morley and Wong (2020), who argue that ... or
- The impact of consumer sentiment on aggregate consumption and, more generally, economic activity has been attributed to the prevalence of incomplete markets (see e.g., Carroll et al., 1994; Ludvigson, 2004; Pappa et al., 2023).

## 1.7 Tables and Figures

Both tables and figures in the main text as well as in the appendix are to be numbered consecutively according to their order, have to be labeled (e.g. “Fig. 3: The LM curve”) and need to have a citation immediately below the figure/table (e.g. “Source: Ohr (2001), p. 55.” or “Source: EZB, annual report 2011, p. 56”). For tables and figures created by the author, a statement such as own illustration is to be used (e.g. “Source: eurostat, own illustration”).

## 1.8 Appendix

The appendix includes content that does not concern the main text such as extensive derivations and tables/figures. However, the main text of the paper must refer to this content.

## 1.9 References

An important part of academic writing is the identification of arguments that are not your own as either word-to-word quotations or indirect quotations. Therefore, the references include all sources used in citations. However, the references does not include sources not cited in the text. An example of how to cite a journal article:

- Morley, J. C., Nelson, C. R., and Zivot, E. (2003). Why are the Beveridge-Nelson and unobserved components decompositions of GDP so different? *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 85(2):235-243.

If you are unsure how to cite articles, books etc. check out how it's done in the article you refer most to in your paper.

## 2 Content Requirements

The introductory literature given by the supervisor has to be used as a foundation for the paper. In addition, the literature taken into account has to go far beyond this introductory literature with an own literature research being a crucial key element of the paper. In general, popular scientific literature (meaning non-professional literature such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.) is to be avoided. Daily newspapers should only be used to reference contemporary news and events.

The structure of the paper should create a reasonable and coherent structuring of the contents. The chosen section headings have to be precise and reflect as much information as possible about the contents of the respective section. The sections should be weighted similarly regarding content and size. The paper must not only consist of statements and assertions but every statement or assertion has to be causally justified. Moreover, results cannot be merely listed but have to be justified in detail and a strong line of argument has to be provided for essential results of the paper.

The **introduction** should provide a good motivation of your topic or research question. It should answer the question why is your topic relevant? In the **main part** of the paper it is useful to focus on a few (depending on the length of your paper) selected papers that you review in great detail. Note that a detailed explanation of the research questions as well as the employed methodology is crucial for a good grade. We are aware of the fact that understanding

and explaining the methodology used in scientific articles is challenging. Nevertheless try as good as you can and make sure to use your own words.

### **3 General Remarks**

- It is advisable and desired that consultations with the supervisor takes place. In particular, the structure of the paper should be discussed in order to avoid misinterpretations and to clarify the assigned topic.
- For final theses, a 1-2 pages expose has to be handed in after two weeks and a detailed structure of the thesis and list of referenced literature have to be handed in after one third of the assigned writing time.