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Guide to Writing Academic Term Papers

General

- Term papers are approx. 3,000-3,500 words long (6 ECTS) or 5,000-6,000 words long (9 ECTS)
- The submission deadline is 30 September (summer semester) or 31 March (winter semester)
- The topic of the term paper must be agreed with the lecturer.
- On the text type: A term paper is an academic text that can be regarded as a preliminary stage of a journal article. You can therefore take articles in academic journals and edited volumes as a model for structure and style.

Content

- A term paper comprises
    - your own research question or hypothesis
    - academic literature that is thematically related to your research question/hypothesis
    - method and data collection: An empirical term paper requires your own data collection and its method and data basis must be discussed
    - analysis and discussion of the data
    - summary of the findings and outlook

- Take articles you have read as a model for the structure. The text must have a clear common thread and build up in a logical way. A term paper must be more than a series of brief summaries of other texts. Guiding the reader is important here: the reader should always know how and why each section makes a meaningful contribution to the overall product, the "term paper".
- Structure of the term paper and weighting of the parts (deviations are possible):
    - Introduction (including the research question and a justification of where it arises from and why it is relevant): approx. 10%
    - Research overview (discussion of the existing literature on the topic): approx. 20%
    - Empirical part (data basis, method of data collection, method of analysis, presentation and discussion of the results) or, for literature-based term papers, theoretical discussion: approx. 60%
    - Conclusion (summary and outlook): approx. 10%

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- You are welcome to criticise or to include your own position on the topic in the conclusion. However, this must be justified and must refer specifically to sources for this positioning/assessment. A mere "gut feeling" or an unsupported opinion has no academic foundation and is therefore not appropriate for a term paper.
- Work closely with your data or the reading and feel free to give a variety of concrete examples from your data to develop your argument.
- Be as concrete as possible and write as clearly and comprehensibly as you can. Very abstract formulations often indicate that a source has not been properly understood.
- Use technical terminology and make sure that you have understood it.
- Write syntactically complete sentences and pay attention to agreement and textual coherence.
- Pay attention to your spelling and be sure to proofread the text before submission.

(Linguistic) Formal Requirements

- Choose a standard font (e.g. Cambria, Times New Roman, Arial) in font size 12 with 1.5 line spacing.
- Page margins of approx. 2.5-3 cm.
- Alignment: justified
- Page numbering (should begin on the first page of text, not on the title page or table of contents)
- Metalinguistic expressions are to be set in italics (e.g. "The word *ecosystem* is increasingly used metaphorically.")
- Please cite using short references in the text (see below), not in footnotes.
- Footnotes are only to be used for additional information that is not essential for understanding the main text and should therefore be kept to a minimum. Please do not use endnotes.
- There is no binding requirement for term papers regarding a particular form of gender-sensitive language. However, you should consciously consider how you wish to refer to people in your writing and use your chosen form consistently throughout your paper.
- If you use figures or tables: Number them consecutively and embed them in the text. Refer to each figure or table in the text and do not leave them without comment.

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Title Page

- It should include the following information:
    - University
    - Title of the seminar
    - Semester
    - Name of the lecturer
    - Your name
    - Matriculation number
    - Date of submission
    - Title of the term paper (must fit the subject of the work thematically. Avoid generic titles such as *Term Paper in the Seminar Cultural Linguistics)*

Table of Contents

- Choose meaningful titles for your chapters (not: Introduction, Main Part, Conclusion)
- Structure your paper into meaningful sections and subsections by means of chapters (e.g. Ch. 1, Ch. 2, Ch. 2.1, Ch. 2.2; please do not use too many "sub-subchapters", otherwise it quickly becomes confusing)
- The bibliography and any appendices are to be listed as items in the table of contents

Quotations

- Engaging with the existing literature is a fundamental part of term papers. Refer to existing literature and establish connections between your data and the literature.
- Material and wording that you take over from other texts must be clearly marked as direct or indirect quotations with a reference to the source.
- Give all sources that you quote directly or indirectly, i.e. do not plagiarise.
- All texts that you refer to in the text must appear in the bibliography.
- All titles in the bibliography must also be mentioned in the text.
- Cite in the text, not in footnotes! The reference includes the names of the authors (max. 3; if there are more: first author and et al.), year and page number.
    - Example: As Müller-Spitzer (2022, 42) notes, "language […] has a collective and individual component".
    - Mark omissions with […]
    - If the quoted text contains spelling mistakes or the like, mark them with [sic]

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    - Quotations of more than 3 lines should be set off from the running text as indented block quotes.
- Avoid too many direct quotations; paraphrase content more often to demonstrate that you have understood it. Do not forget the reference to the source when doing so.

Bibliography

- All sources used are to be included in the bibliography in alphabetical order. If you cite several works by the same author, list them in chronological order.
- Use one format consistently for the references, e.g. as follows:
    - Monographs:
      Vallentin, Rita (2019): *Language and Belonging*. *Local Categories and Practices in a Guatemalan Highland Community*. Berlin: Peter Lang.
    - Articles in edited volumes:
      Späth, Lena (2022): Wir und Die. Zur Diachronie der lexikalischen Basisunterscheidung Mensch vs. Tier. In: Lind, Miriam (ed.); *Mensch – Tier – Maschine. Sprachliche Praktiken an und jenseits der Außengrenze des Humanen*. Bielefeld: transcript, 77-105.
    - Articles in academic journals:
      Podhovnik, Edith (2018): The Purrification of English: Meowlogisms in Online Communities. English Today. In: *English Today* 34 (3), 1-15. DOI: 10.1017/S0266078418000020.

Evaluating Sources

- Please use academic sources that can be cited in your research overview. These must have been properly published in academic journals, edited volumes or as monographs by academic publishers.
- Verify the origin of texts and, for online sources, make sure that they come from a citable source (academic publications, university libraries or the like).
- Private websites, blogs or news sites are not academic sources.
- Wikipedia can serve for initial orientation but is not itself citable. Look up the sources cited in the entry and cite the original sources.
- General reference works and dictionaries are not academic sources in the strict sense. However, you may cite them to indicate how terms or concepts are commonly understood.

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- You can of course use other texts (e.g. laws, texts by NGOs, interest groups etc.) as sources to shed light on specific positions on a topic, but academic sources should clearly predominate.
- Make sure that the sources are pertinent and relevant to your topic.
- Without a minimum number of academic, pertinent references (rough guideline: at least one source per page of text), a term paper is unsatisfactory.

Declaration of Independent Authorship and Aids

- Your term paper must be written independently by you. Even when AI tools are used, the author's own academic contribution must be recognisable. A term paper that consists to a substantial extent of adopted or merely compiled AI-generated passages does not meet the requirements for independent academic work and is unsatisfactory.
- Please attach the completed declaration of independent authorship and the declaration on the AI guideline to your paper.
- All aids used must be stated transparently. This applies both to conventional aids, such as translation, grammar or style-checking programs and to AI tools. If you use AI tools, please observe the guideline on the use of AI tools of the Faculty of Cultural Sciences.