
Guidelines for writing Seminar Papers, Bachelor or Master Theses

These are some basic guidelines for writing seminar papers, bachelor or master theses. They are a minimum requirement rather than an exhaustive manual.

1. Number of pages

A bachelor thesis usually contains 35 pages $\pm 10\%$ and a master thesis 45 pages $\pm 10\%$. The expected scope of seminar papers is announced during lectures, but is usually around 5000 words. This refers exclusively to text pages (without front cover, table of contents, lists of abbreviations/symbols/figures/tables/references and appendix). Figures and tables are no direct parts of the text, so including many figures and/or tables may well exceed the specified number of pages of a thesis or seminar paper.

2. Formal document characteristics

- Font type: Times New Roman size 12 (footnotes size 10) or Arial size 11 (footnotes size 9).
- Line spacing: 1.5 (footnotes 1).
- Margins: 2.5 cm at the right, top and bottom and 3.0 cm at the left.
- Alignment: full justification (except for headings).
- Page numbers: included in the footer.
- Headings:
 - Classify sections and subsections with Arabic numerals according to the decimal classification system (1, 1.1, 1.1.2, 2, ...).
 - Highlight headings in bold.
 - Font size for main section headings (1, 2, ...) are two points larger than the rest of the text.
 - All other headings are font-sized like the text.
- Tables: To be numbered with Arabic numerals (Table 1, Table 2, ...). The table heading is located above the table and should be as concise as possible. Below the table, provide the source. Tables need to be self-created (e.g., in Excel or a statistical software).
- Figures: To be numbered with Arabic numerals (Figure 1, Figure 2, ...). The figure caption is located below the figure and should be as concise as possible. Below the figure, provide in addition the source. Figures need to be self-generated graphics or integrated as external high-quality graphic files.

3. Structure

A paper or thesis usually contains:

- a front cover,
- a table of contents (not expected for seminar papers),
- a lists of abbreviations/symbols/figures/tables (optional, not expected for seminar papers),
- the text body,
- a list of references,
- an appendix (optional),
- an affidavit.

3.1 Front cover

The front cover requires:

- the emblem of the University of Kassel,
- the title(s) and name(s) of the chair(s) supervising the thesis,
- the title of the paper or thesis,
- your personal information (name, address, phone number, email address, current course of studies, matriculation number, current semester) and the date of submission.

For bachelor and master theses the front cover has to be prepared in line with the template provided by the examination office.

3.2 Table of contents (not expected for seminar papers)

The table of contents indicates the structure and all elements of the thesis. It summarizes all sections and subsections of the text body with section number, section heading and the initial page of each (sub)section. The table of contents and the lists of abbreviations/symbols/figures/tables are shown with Roman (I, II, ...), text sections with Arabic (1, 2, ...) numerals.

Example:

Table of contents	I
List of abbreviations.....	II
List of symbols.....	III
List of figures	IV
List of tables.....	V
1. Introduction	1
2. Heading of the second section.....	2
2.1 Heading of the first subsection of the second section.....	4
2.2 Heading of the second subsection of the second section	7
3. Heading of the third section	10
Conclusion	14
References	16
Appendix.....	17

3.3 Lists of abbreviations/symbols/figures/tables (optional, not for seminar papers)

- The list of abbreviations includes all abbreviations used in the text body in alphabetical order. Commonly used abbreviations such as “e.g.” do not have to be included.
- The list of symbols includes all symbols used in the text body with their respective definition.
- The list of figures includes all figures used in the text body and the appendix with the number of the figure, the title and their respective page numbers.
- The list of tables includes all tables used in the text body and the appendix with the number of the table, the title and their respective page numbers.

3.4 Text body

3.4.1 Introduction

The main body of the thesis starts with an introduction that provides information on the topic, the research objectives and the methodological approach of your work. The introduction should not exceed two pages and usually includes:

- **Relevance of the topic:** At the beginning you should arouse the interest of the reader by presenting the topic and pointing out its relevance.
- **Definition and distinction of the objectives:** Define the central question and goal of your thesis or paper. The main question serves as a framework which guides through the thesis and should be answered in the conclusion.
- **Overview and methodological approach:** Complete the introduction by illustrating your methodological approach in detail, give a preview of the main insights, and briefly outline the structure of the thesis.

3.4.2 Main body

The main part of the thesis contains the core element: the elaboration of the chosen topic. It follows a consistent and comprehensive argumentation by examining the formulated research question. The main body of the thesis is divided into sections and subsections with precise titles.

The number of chapters and sections and the depth of the hierarchical structure should be proportionate to the length of the paper or thesis. The length of each chapter should reflect its importance within the work. Make sure the reader can follow your train of thoughts.

- Explain equations, figures or tables in the main text.
- Explain every abbreviation when used for the first time.
- Be clear and concise.
- Avoid repetitions.
- Use professional technical terms and avoid colloquial expressions.
- Choose an appropriate style and use correct grammar and orthography.

A presentation free of your personal valuations is absolutely necessary; it is recommendable to avoid statements in the first person and impersonal third person (one..., I..., we...).

External thoughts, notions and ideas have to be marked as citations and references by using the Harvard Citations Style. Thus, whenever you directly or indirectly quote sources from external literature, statements or ideas, these references must be indicated right in the text and right after the quote in shortform by using the following pattern: last name of author(s) and year of publication.¹ The reference must always be related to the source you actually used, even if the author used a quotation himself. Every source that has been used needs to be found in the list of references, providing more details about the place of origin.

3.4.3 Conclusion

The conclusion takes up the initially formulated research question, includes a critical reflection of the results, and summarizes the main outcomes of the work. Do not provide new data or facts in the conclusion. However, do not simply review the arguments stated before. The conclusion covers max. one and a half pages.

3.5 List of references

The list of references catalogues all sources used in the thesis in alphabetical order of the authors' last names. This includes books, contributions to collective volumes, articles in scientific and non-scientific journals and newspapers as well as dissertations, bachelor and master theses. Internet sources have to be tagged with the exact link and the date of download. Each reference includes the essential bibliographic data (name of author(s), title of the publication, edition, place and year of publication). Several sources of the same author in a given year are indicated with small letters after the year (e.g. 2015a, 2015b).

Primarily use academic literature (journal articles, books). Newspapers, magazines, periodicals and encyclopedias are not considered appropriate sources for academic research and should only be used in selective cases, e.g. if they represent an important source for data, public opinions or exact definitions. Wikipedia is not considered a reliable source and should not be quoted.

- Journals articles

Name, Initials (Year), Title of the article, *Title of the journal*, Volume (Issue), page numbers.

Example: *Pastor, J. T. and Lovell, C. (2005), 'A global malmquist productivity index', Economics Letters, 88 (2), 266–271.*

- Books and independent publications

Name, Initials (Year): *Title*, edition, place of publication, publisher.

Example: *Braudel, F. (1982), The Wheel of Commerce, 2. ed., London, Collins.*

- Contributions to collective volumes

Name, Initials (Year), 'Title of the article', in: first name(s) of the editor (editor(s)): *Title of the collective volume*, place of publication, publisher, pages.

¹ Not only direct copies of someone else's ideas without giving credits to the original author are considered plagiarism but also re-wording. Every thesis and paper handed in to the chair takes a software-based plagiarism test.

Example: *Levich, R.M. (1985), Empirical Studies of Exchange Rates: Price Behavior, Rate Determination and Market Efficiency, in: R.W. Jones and P.B. Kenen (eds.), Handbook of International Economics, Vol. II, International Monetary Economics and Finance, NorthHolland, Amsterdam, p. 979-1040.*

- Internet sources

Name, Initials (Year), 'Title', entire URL. Accessed: date.

Example: *Academic Skills Tutors/Librarians, Information Services (2013): Harvard Quick Referencing Guide, https://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CC8QFjAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.staffs.ac.uk%2Fassets%2Fharvard_quick_guide_tcm44-47797.pdf&ei=hXdWVfjyL8uAUZ_WgbAF&usg=AFQjCNH5Wr7xqGWNBUldkOpU8zmlwA2rUvg&sig2=IUJrRH59feEeA-UBbG5MGQ&bvm= bv.93564037,d.d24&cad=rja. Accessed: 16 May 2015.*

For more examples and see e.g. <http://www.citethisforme.com/guides>.

3.6 Appendix (optional)

The appendix contains supplementary material (e.g. detailed description of the data set, additional tables and figures). It only includes secondary material without direct relation to the main text body, but nevertheless with enough significance to be mentioned.

3.7 Affidavit

The affidavit is located at the very end of your thesis or paper. It has to be included in German language to be legally binding, but can additionally also occur in English. You have to sign the affidavit indicating the date of signature.

„Hiermit versichere ich an Eides Statt, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig und ohne die Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe. Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus veröffentlichten und nicht veröffentlichten Schriften entnommen wurden, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Die Arbeit ist in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form oder auszugsweise im Rahmen einer anderen Prüfung noch nicht vorgelegt worden.

Mir ist bekannt, dass bei meiner Arbeit eine Prüfung auf nicht kenntlich gemachte übernommene Textpassagen und sonstige Quellen stattfinden kann. Ich stimme zu, dass dafür gegebenenfalls ein Upload und die Speicherung meiner Arbeit auf eine externe Datenbank des jeweiligen Softwareanbieters erfolgt, sofern meine Arbeit dafür vorab ausreichend anonymisiert wird (i.d.R. genügt dafür die Entfernung des Deckblatts und der Unterschriften-seite). Ich stimme ebenfalls zu, dass zukünftig umgekehrt auch andere Arbeiten auf Plagiate aus meiner anonymisierten Arbeit überprüft werden.“

„I hereby confirm to the best of my knowledge that this thesis/paper is solely my original work and that I have only used the sources and materials indicated. All quotations from other works as well as paraphrases or summaries of other works have been identified as such and properly acknowledged in the thesis/paper. This thesis/paper or parts thereof have not been submitted to an educational institution in Germany or abroad as part of an examination or degree qualification.

I am aware that my work may be checked for text passages and other sources that are not referenced correctly. I agree that, if necessary, my work will be uploaded and stored on an external database of a respective software provider, given that my work is sufficiently anonymized in advance for this purpose (as a rule, the removal of the cover sheet and the signature page is sufficient). I also agree that future works from others will be checked for plagiarism from my anonymized work.”

4. Information on data protection for empirical and experimental theses

If you work with data as part of your thesis, the topic of data protection is of great importance. The processing of personal data (such as date of birth or email address) generally falls within the scope of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Anonymized data, i.e., data that can no longer be linked to a person, is not covered by the GDPR; however, the requirements for anonymized data are higher than one would assume based on common parlance.

The collection of personal data is generally permitted if it is necessary for the research purpose of the thesis and the corresponding consent of the affected persons has been obtained. However, to ensure the security of their data, you must comply with certain data protection and documentation obligations. If you plan to collect personal data or are provided with personal data by our department, please familiarize with the subject early on. Respective information can be found on the University of Kassel data protection team’s webpage. The information is currently only available in German language, but some guidance in English is provided by the [European Research Council](#). If you plan to collect own data, this may have to be agreed upon with the data protection team. Please also discuss the topic with your supervisor early on (while you are working on your exposé).