Chair of Macroeconomics
Freie Universität Berlin
Prof. Dr. Britta Gehrke

Guidelines for Writing Academic Papers

Length (of the text):

- Bachelor's thesis: 30 pages (+/- 10%)
- Master's thesis: 40 pages (+/- 10%)
- Project and seminar papers according to individual specifications

This information applies to the pure text. The table of contents, bibliography, and appendix are not included in the page number.

In addition, an appendix can be used. However, it should not contain any tables or figures that are <u>important</u> for understanding the text. These belong in the text.

Language: German or English

Structure: A complete paper should include at least:

- Title page (including title, name, student ID number, and information about the supervising persons, please observe the guidelines of the examination office)
- Table of contents
    - Pay attention to meaningful titles and a logical structure in the table of contents (e.g. sub-points should fit the higher-level structure, there should be at least two elements on each structure level).
- List of figures, tables, symbols, and abbreviations, if applicable
- Text (including introduction, main part, and conclusion/summary)
- Bibliography
- Appendix, if applicable
- Affirmation of Authorship (follow the university guidelines)

Format:

- Font size 12pt (exceptions for footnotes, etc.), line spacing 1.5
- DIN A4 pages, normal margins (e.g. each 2.5 cm)
- The selected font should be clear and easy to read, such as "Times New Roman". Use one font throughout the document (no different fonts).
- All pages should be numbered consecutively (except the title page). The same applies to the headings (e.g. 1, 2, 2.1, 2.2, etc.), figures, tables, and formulas. Variables used in the text or formulas should be defined in the text. Figures and tables should be provided with meaningful captions.
- Indexes at the beginning of the paper (e.g. list of abbreviations, list of figures) are to be numbered with Roman numerals.

Good scientific practice, citations, and bibliography:

- The bibliography <u>must</u> contain all sources referred to in the paper or on which the argumentation of the paper is based. Plagiarism is considered academic misconduct and may lead to expulsion in severe cases. Your paper will be checked for scientific misconduct (also using special software).
- A bibliography should be formatted uniformly and sorted alphabetically.

- Sources in the text should be indicated by short references, e.g. Müller (2021), Müller and Schulz (2020), and Müller et al. (2019).
- It is best to follow the citation style found in academic articles. It is important to choose a citation style and consistently apply it.
- Make sure to use current versions of scientific papers. Often, for example, working papers are available that are later published in a scientific journal. It is possible that the statements and results of a study may still change during this process.
- Pay attention to the quality of your sources. Indicators include:
  - "Peer review" and reputation of a scientific journal
  - Top 5 economics journals: American Economic Review, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Econometrica, Journal of Political Economy, Review of Economic Studies
  - A list of the most important economics journals is available here.
  - Renowned working paper series (NBER, CEPR, ECB, ifo, IZA, IMF).
  - Websites or newspaper articles can be used in exceptional cases. For websites, the URL and the date of access should be indicated.
- A good starting point for literature research is https://scholar.google.com/. Further valuable tips can be found here.
- The sources of data that you use must also be clearly stated (including the name and origin of the dataset, URL if applicable, and date accessed). This can be done in the text or in a separate directory for data sources.
  - If possible, create figures or tables with data yourself and do not simply copy them from other sources.
  - Pay attention to consistent and readable scaling and label in a way that the figure/table is self-explanatory.
- Established sources of data include, among others, the data from the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, the Deutsche Bundesbank, Eurostat, the OECD, the World Bank, the St. Louis Fed, and the Penn World Tables.
- Please provide the data you used, e.g. in an Excel spreadsheet (exceptions for confidential data sources), along with all codes (Matlab, Stata, etc.) and Excel elaborations. Codes must be prepared in such a way that the analysis can be started with a single click and is comprehensible (e.g. definitions of variables). You can submit codes and data, for example, with a USB stick or as a zipped email attachment.

Evaluation:

We will evaluate your work based on the following criteria (in decreasing order of importance):

1. Content-related treatment/formulation of research question and problem solving/research methods/data work
2. Literature review (breadth and depth)
3. Writing style/expressiveness/coherence of argumentation/audience orientation
4. Structure: relevance to the topic/organization
5. Formal design/layout

Of course, these criteria overlap: for example, a clear structure helps with a coherent argumentation and good literature review aids in content-related treatment.

Last but not least:

- Write your work in such a way that students in your field who are at a similar level of study can understand it. This means that knowledge from basic courses can be assumed.
- Read through each of your texts with a bit of distance (e.g. after sleeping on it) and ask yourself for each sentence whether it needs to be there and whether the argumentation is coherent. This also applies to the discussion of literature and opposing views. Everything must have a clear reference to the message of your work.
- For a coherent argumentation, it can be helpful to discuss the result of your work already in the introduction. In a scientific work, it is not about making it exciting for the reader, but rather about conveying a clear message and orientation for the reader (from the first page on).
- A simple and easily understandable sentence is often better than long, convoluted sentences. Avoid too much passive voice.
- Ideally, have a third person proofread your text before submission. This way, unnecessary typos and difficult-to-understand sentences can be found immediately, and you can avoid them only being noticed during evaluation of the work.

Good luck!