

Guidelines for Writing Term Papers and Thesis at the IPS

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The following guidelines serve as a general framework for term papers and dissertations at the IPS. They are intended solely as a guide and do not constitute binding requirements. You may also use other citation styles, provided that these are commonly used and consistent within the relevant subject area.

1. Procedure

1.1 What is an academic term paper?

A final dissertation or academic term paper is an independent exploration of an academic question or topic (usually one you have identified yourself). It is not a presentation of your own opinions or views.

1.2 Initial questions

Starting points for identifying a topic may include, for example, your own reflections or unanswered questions arising from presentations or seminar discussions. Use these questions as the starting point for your further work by re-examining the relevant passages, comparing them or developing working hypotheses. You can and should also begin searching for secondary literature at this point.

For **theory-based** papers, the following applies:

You can make a topic, a research question, a comparison, or a reconstruction the subject of your paper. Work your way forward from the primary literature until you arrive at a rough framework for your line of argument. This can then serve as a (proposed) outline and guide your further exploration.

Over time, the outline – or even the question or topic – may change slightly from time to time. This is not unusual and demonstrates that you are engaged in a process of discovery and are responding to new insights. The topic, outline, research question, or comparative perspective will serve as a guiding thread throughout the rest of your work, helping you to distinguish what is important from what is not. You should regularly record and formulate individual insights in writing. As your engagement with the topic progresses, these individual text segments will coalesce into sections of your thesis.

The following applies to **empirically based** papers:

You should take a research question as the starting point for your paper. This will serve as a guiding thread throughout the rest of the process and narrows down the topic. However, you may also choose to focus your paper on empirical phenomena, theoretical aspects, or aspects of a typology. Set out to find relevant literature (snowball sampling). You will find inspiration in

recent articles in relevant specialist journals, in (recent) anthologies, and in literature reviews, which summarise and systematise the current state of discussion on specific topics. Consider which method(s) are best suited to addressing this question and what data you require or wish to generate.

The following applies to **all** papers:

- The **structure** of your paper should make it clear which steps are being taken to address your chosen topic. Avoid rambling digressions that stray from the topic.
- It is better to explore the subject in **depth** rather than breadth. Side notes can and should be included in the form of footnotes.
- The **academic relevance** of the topic and a clear **theoretical basis** are crucial.
- Always consider to what extent you can also address the chosen question in **practical** terms. Is the topic too broad and should it be broken down further? Is there access to relevant data, sources, or fields of research? Is the chosen method suitable for addressing this research question, or might other methods be more appropriate?
- Avoid **platitudes** or generalisations such as ‘The importance of the media is growing ever greater in modern society’.
- Always ask yourself whether the ideas and conclusions you put forward are supported by the arguments developed in your work or can be substantiated by other sources.
- You should reflect on your assumptions, key methodological and theoretical decisions, and your approach, and demonstrate this clearly. **Demonstrated reflection and analytical depth** are crucial elements of successful academic work.

1.3 Structure of the paper

For **empirically** oriented theses, the following applies when structuring your thesis or term paper, use the structure of articles in specialist journals as a guide. The following structure is usually followed:

1. Introduction
2. Theoretical discussion/presentation and discussion of relevant theoretical considerations
3. Methods and methodological remarks
4. Presentation of the findings (ideally not in isolation from the theoretical considerations)
5. Conclusion

However, *each* section must have a clear title that makes the content of that section predictable (i.e. not simply ‘Introduction’, ‘Theory’, etc.).

For **theory-based** papers, such a generalised structure does not necessarily apply. Here too, the introduction and conclusion provide the framework for your paper. In between, you present your argument and engage with the topic. How you structure this section depends on the chosen topic.

The following applies to **all** papers:

- Your paper must contain the following elements:
 - Cover page (including module title, exam number, date of the course, date of submission, semester, name, student number)
 - Table of contents
 - List of figures and tables, if applicable
 - List of abbreviations if there are more than five
 - Main body of the paper
 - Declaration of originality (to be found on the IPS website)

- The **introduction** provides a brief thematic introduction and an overview of the topic. Your research question is explained and elaborated upon. Here, you should make clear the extent to which the chosen research question is of academic relevance. Finally, you should outline the structure of the paper. For final-year dissertations, you should also summarise the current state of research here. The introduction should make up approximately ten per cent of the thesis (slightly more if the current state of research is discussed).
- The **main body** aims to investigate and answer your research question or to explore the topic in depth. The subheading structure should not exceed three levels of depth. Subheadings must never appear in isolation (where there is a 1.1, a 1.2 must follow). Under no circumstances should more than two sub-points be covered per page, as otherwise individual sub-points will be dealt with too briefly. The main body makes up approximately 70–80 per cent of your paper.
- The **conclusion** summarises your *findings or argument* (it is therefore not merely a recapitulation!). What you write here must be evident from your paper and explained; i.e. you should not introduce any new arguments at this stage. Instead, you should refer back to the introduction and the issues or questions raised there. This is also the right place to further contextualise your findings, discuss them or highlight possible implications, problems or follow-up questions. The conclusion should make up approximately ten per cent of the paper.

2. Formal Layout

2.1 Formatting

All work should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Use justified text, font size 12
- Font: Times New Roman (or a similar serif font)
- Line spacing: 1.5
- Margins: 2.5-3 cm on all sides, including *page numbers*
- Ensure that each page contains between one and four (thematically related) paragraphs to improve the readability of the paper.
- Use longer direct quotations only in exceptional cases; indent them and use single line spacing.

Stating your own position:

- Personal forms of address are not used in academic papers. However, it is entirely acceptable to state your own position as the author: ‘My thesis is...’, ‘I would like to demonstrate in the following...’, ‘I shall therefore limit myself to...’. The use of the plural form – ‘We are attempting to demonstrate...’ – is somewhat outdated. Where possible, however, the first person should be avoided.
- The IPS recommends using gender-sensitive language, provided that the relevant lecturers or examination officials do not issue any specific or further guidelines.

2.2 Citation style

All content taken verbatim or in essence from other sources must be identified as such. The relevant source must therefore be cited at the appropriate point in the text. Provided it is customary in the academic context, you may use the traditional ‘German’ citation style, in which references are included via footnotes. Here, a source is cited in full the first time it is mentioned, as in the bibliography, and in abbreviated form for every subsequent mention, e.g.:

Luhmann therefore speaks of ‘self-reference’¹. [...] He insists on a separation of the factual and social dimensions.²

However, it is also possible to use the ‘American citation style’, in which the source reference is included directly in the text rather than in a footnote.

The text then reads (surname year: page number), e.g.:

Mill did not see the greatest threat to freedom as coming from the state, but from society itself; he feared a ‘tyranny of the majority’ that would stifle minority views and unconventional ideas and ways of life (Pfetsch 2003: 256).

If the content of **two consecutive pages** is reproduced, one writes (surname year: page number f.), for example:

A sample is a selection of a group from the population, in which every element of the population (i.e. in this case, every person from the target group) must have an equal chance of being included in this selection (Diekmann 1997: 327 f.).

For **three consecutive pages**: (surname year: page number ff.), e.g.:

(Diekmann 1997: 327 ff.), if the quoted text extends to p. 329,

and for **more than three pages** (surname year: page number 1-page number 2), e.g.:

(Diekmann 1997: 327-330).

For texts with **up to three authors**, all are named: (Name 1/Name 2/Name 3 Year: Page):

The term ‘security’ refers to the guarantee of the physical existence of a political collective, its protection against internal and external threats, and the freedom to determine its own development in a self-determined manner (Rittberger/Zangl 2003: 185).

If there are **more than three authors**, only the first is named, followed by ‘et al.’:

Text reproduced from another source (Rittberger et al. 2002: 185).

If the name is already mentioned in the sentence, it does not need to be repeated in the reference:

Alongside a sharp increase in the number of international migrants, some of the underlying conditions for international migration have also undergone fundamental changes. Fassmann (2002: 148-151) identifies four such factors.

Secondary quotations (quotations taken from sources that themselves cite others) should be avoided where possible and, where used, marked with single quotation marks.

¹ Luhmann, Niklas (1984): Soziale Systeme. Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, S. 57 (Translated with DeepL).

² Luhmann, Soziale Systeme, S. 119 (Translated with DeepL).

When a passage is **quoted in essence**, do not use ‘cf.’ (cf. = compare). This abbreviation is only used when adapting someone else’s idea, applying it to a different case, or similar. If in doubt, omit ‘cf.’.

If you are **quoting verbatim** rather than paraphrasing, the direct quotation must be marked with quotation marks. Any words you add yourself that are necessary to preserve the sentence structure, as well as changes in capitalisation, should be placed in square brackets. Omissions of sentences or parts of sentences are indicated by [...]:

However, the Colombian state only combated the paramilitaries half-heartedly, partly because ‘[there were] well-documented links in all groups to sections of the military, even though the paramilitaries were not state-organised death squads as in the Cono Sur of the 1970s’ (Kurtenbach 2004: 15).

With this citation style, **footnotes are used only for comments**.

Quotations in **English** do not generally need to be translated. For all other languages, either a separate translation is provided or a reference to the translation is included in the text.

Multiple cited sources are separated by a semicolon:

Text reproduced from several sources (Rittberger et al. 2002: 185; Luhmann 1997: 222).

Errors in the original text are marked with [sic]. This is not necessary for texts written in accordance with the old spelling rules.

Note: It is advisable to use a reference management programme such as Citavi. In this case, please use a standard and appropriate citation style, e.g. that of the American Psychological Association (APA).

2.3 Bibliography

The bibliography lists all books, articles and other sources used in alphabetical order. Only in special cases (e.g. analysis of interviews or newspaper articles) is it customary to separate the different types of sources. The following also applies to the bibliography: for works with up to three authors or editors, all are listed; for more than three, only the first is named, followed by ‘et al.’.

The citation style described here is not the only one possible, nor is its use mandatory. Alternatively, you may use another citation style commonly used in the social sciences. As a general rule: choose one citation style and stick to it exclusively throughout your work.

Note: The categorisation in this guide is intended solely to illustrate the citation styles for different types of text. Such categorisation is not standard practice in a bibliography!

Monographs:

Surname, First name. ^{Edition (from the second onwards)}, Year: Title: Subtitle. Place: Publisher.

Alemann, Ulrich von/Forndran, Erhard 2002: Methodology of Political Science: An Introduction to Working Methods and Research Practice. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

For older works, the year of first publication is given in square brackets, followed by the year of the edition being cited. In this case, editors are listed after the title.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig [1921/22] 1989: Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Critical edition, edited by Brian McGuinness. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Collected works/reference works:

Surname, first name (ed.) Year: Title: Subtitle (series title, if applicable). Place: Publisher.

Nohlen, Dieter (ed.) 1998: Encyclopaedia of the Third World: Countries, Organisations, Theories, Concepts, People. Hamburg: Rowohlt.

Articles in anthologies and handbooks / encyclopaedia entries attributed by name:

Surname, First name Year: Title: Subtitle, in: Editor's surname, First name (ed.): Title: Subtitle, vol. (if applicable): Volume title. Place: Publisher, pp. X-Y.

Vorländer, Hans 1995: 'Popular Sovereignty', in: Nohlen, Dieter/Schulze, Rainer Olaf (eds.): Encyclopaedia of Politics, Volume 1: Political Theories. Munich: Beck, pp. 686-691.

Articles in journals:

Surname, First name Year: Title: Subtitle. Journal title Volume number (Issue number), pp. X-Y.

Schlumberger, Oliver 2000: The Arab Middle East and the Question of Democratisation: Some Critical Remarks. Democratisation 7 (4), pp. 104-132.

'Grey literature' (working papers, discussion papers, etc.):

Surname, First name Year: Title: Subtitle (series, number). Place: Publishing institution, pp. X-Y (if applicable).

Meyer, Berthold 2009: Internal Leadership and Overseas Deployments: What Will Become of the Bundeswehr's Hallmark? (HSFK Report No. 2/2009). Frankfurt am Main: Hessian Foundation for Peace and Conflict Research. [This is the correct citation if you have the text in paper form.]

Internet sources:

Depending on the type of text, see above; additionally, state the source and the date the page was last accessed:

Meyer, Berthold 2009: Internal Leadership and Overseas Deployments: What Will Become of the Bundeswehr's Hallmark? (HSFK Report No. 2/2009). Frankfurt am Main: Hessian Foundation for Peace and Conflict Research. http://www.hsfk.de/Publikationen.9.0.html?&no_cache=1&detail=3982&cHash=d9bff9ced, last checked on 2 July 2009.

Social media:

As a general rule, the verifiability of source references must also be ensured here. As these are not usually academic sources, they are normally not included in the bibliography. Screenshots of the cited passages should always be taken. If you are working empirically with social media content, this constitutes field material that can be inserted at an appropriate point in the main text of your thesis to refer to it. If the screenshots do not already appear in the main text of your thesis, they should be appended to the end of the thesis. To refer to the source, you should then cite the location in the appendix, for example as follows:

The debate was sparked by a correspondingly satirical post on the parliamentary group's Instagram profile (see Fig. 1a in the appendix).

In addition, the hyperlink, date accessed, author or profile should be stated there, and, where applicable, a reference should be made to an archived version of the page on the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/>).

If you have used **several texts from the same source** and the same year in your thesis (whether monographs, articles, or a mixture of both), list them in the order in which they are cited in the text and label them with lower-case letters so that all references can be clearly identified:

Merkel, Wolfgang 1999a: 'Defective Democracies', in: Merkel, Wolfgang/Busch, Andreas (eds.): Democracy in East and West: Festschrift for Klaus von Beyme. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, pp. 361-381.

Merkel, Wolfgang 1999b: 'Legitimacy and Democracy: Endogenous Limits of European Integration', in: Andersen, Jeffrey J. (ed.): Regional Integration and Democracy: Expanding on the European Experience. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, pp. 45-68.

Merkel, Wolfgang 1999c: System Transformation: An Introduction to the Theory and Empirics of Transformation Research. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

This spelling convention is also used in the body of the thesis:

Here is a quoted idea (Merkel 1999b: 27).

2.4 Use of text-generating AI

Please refer to the current version of the IPS AI guidelines.

3. Important information regarding submission

At the IPS, assignments must always be submitted both digitally as a PDF and in printed form (by post or via the postbox).

For final theses, the regulations of the Examinations Office and the relevant examination regulations (ASPO, LASPO and FSB) apply. Bachelor's and Master's thesis must be submitted exclusively directly to the Examinations Office.

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