Guidelines for Writing Academic Papers

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1 What Is an Academic Paper?

An academic paper is an analysis of a relevant topic, for example an economic-policy topic, whose external form follows certain conventions. Every academic paper must (a) address an identifiable subject, (b) say something that has not yet been said, (c) be useful to others, and (d) provide information that makes it possible to verify and replicate its results (Eco 2010, pp. 6–10). The structure, length, and format of academic papers may differ across countries, universities, departments, and academic journals.

1.1 The Principles of Good Academic Work

The principles of academic work apply regardless of form, country, university, publication purpose, or research background. They apply to all kinds of academic publications, including seminar papers, bachelor's theses, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations. Academic writing always means working systematically by (Umberto Eco 2010, p. 12):

1. identifying a specific, clearly defined topic,
2. collecting material on this topic (literature, data, experiments),
3. organizing and evaluating the material,
4. examining the topic in light of the collected material,
5. connecting all material into a coherent whole,
6. writing the thoughts in such a way that readers can understand what is being said and, if necessary, can consult the same material.

In addition, academic work requires an appropriate research method and research design. The methodological approach should be suited to the research question and must be described and justified in a transparent and comprehensible manner.

It is important that the paper demonstrates the author's own critical engagement with the topic and the positions discussed. After all, an academic paper should advance current research. It need not represent a major breakthrough, but it should make an original contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the relevant field. To ensure the paper can be assessed objectively, all sources must be disclosed, and it must be clear which results and conclusions come from other authors and which are the author's own.

The *minimum* criteria for an academic paper are therefore:

- **an appropriate presentation of the problem,**
- **an appropriate and well-justified research design and methodological approach,**
- **a comprehensible and contradiction-free argument within each (sub-)section,**
- **a coherent overall structure of the paper,**
- **engagement with the relevant literature,**

- **correct citation practice, and**
- **complete documentation of sources and aids used.**

1.2 Use of generative AI

The use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, is not generally prohibited. However, AI may only support the writing process and must not replace independent thinking, argument development, source-based writing, or the student's own academic contribution.

AI tools may be used, for example, for brainstorming, structuring ideas, improving language, translating passages for better understanding, or identifying search terms for literature research. It is not acceptable to submit AI-generated paragraphs, arguments, or entire sections as one's own work. It is also not acceptable to generate or use unverified references, or to present AI-generated claims without critical checking. Table 1 presents examples of AI use cases.

Students remain fully responsible for everything they submit. This includes the accuracy of all statements, the quality of the argument, the correct use of sources, and the integrity of the final text. AI-generated output must always be reviewed critically, revised carefully, and checked against reliable sources.

If AI tools are used, this must be disclosed transparently. The disclosure should state which tool was used, for what purpose it was used, and that the student remains responsible for the final text. Undisclosed or improper AI use may be treated as academic misconduct and can lead to serious consequences, including failure of the examination. Appendix B provides a template for a declaration of independence.

Use case	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Text creation	May help overcome writer's block, generate ideas, or clarify concepts, but the student must write the academic content independently.	Using AI to generate paragraphs, arguments, or whole sections of a paper that are submitted as one's own work.
Text translation	May be used to translate passages for comprehension or as a starting point for further revision.	Submitting AI-translated text as final academic writing without substantial own revision and authorship.
Sentence polishing	May help correct grammar, spelling, and wording in order to improve clarity and readability.	Letting AI substantially reshape the wording or tone of a text without careful review.
Source work	May help identify keywords, suggest search terms, or support the initial exploration of a topic.	Using AI-generated references without verifying that the sources exist, are accurate, and are relevant.
Rephrasing	May help reformulate sentences for clarity or conciseness, provided that the writer checks the result carefully.	Using AI to conceal reliance on a source may be considered plagiarism.

Table 1: Acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI (own compilation based on lecture's experience).

AI note

Throughout these guidelines, you will find AI notes like this one, offering guidance on how to use AI responsibly.

2 Title, Research Question and Structure

Title. When choosing the title, make sure that it is clear and sufficiently precise. Topics such as *'The Economy in Germany"* are too broad and do not indicate what the paper will actually focus on. A title such as *"The Analysis of Network Effects"* is also rather imprecise. For example, *"Indirect Network Effects in the Adoption of Electric Vehicles"* would be a more precise title. However, in many cases, especially in seminar papers, you will already be assigned a topic or title. In that case, the title itself must not be changed without first consulting your supervisor. Instead, you should use your research question to narrow down, specify, and personalize the assigned topic.

Research question. A research question is usually more precise than the general topic or title. It defines what exactly the paper aims to answer. It is therefore advisable to first identify a clear research question and then formulate a meaningful title on that basis, if the title was not already given to you. In an academic paper, it is not enough to simply combine summaries of text passages or articles. Rather, there should be a clear line of argument that proceeds from a research question. In general, the structure of the paper should follow from that research question and every (sub-)section should contribute to answering the research question.

Finding a topic and a research question, as well as creating an outline, are among the first steps you must take when writing your paper. Be sure to discuss your topic, research question, and outline with your supervisor in good time.

Structure. As a rule, every paper consists of:

1. a title page;
2. a table of contents;
3. a list of tables, a list of figures, and a list of abbreviations, if applicable;
4. an **introduction** that
   - presents the research question or hypothesis;
   - motivates the research question and the broader topic and explains their current relevance;
   - refers to the current state of research;
   - explains the aim of the paper; and
   - outlines the paper's structure;
5. a **main part**, usually consisting of several sections, including, for example,

- a presentation and discussion of the relevant literature;
- a distinction from related academic work;
- where applicable, a description of the author's own data collection;
- an explanation of the methodology;
- a presentation and interpretation of the results;

6. a **conclusion** that summarizes the main results and, where appropriate, provides an outlook;
7. a bibliography documenting all references and sources used;
8. an appendix, if applicable;
9. a handwritten and signed declaration of independent work.

> **AI note**
> AI tools can be useful for brainstorming possible research questions, identifying different perspectives on a broad topic, or testing whether a research question is sufficiently precise. However, the final research question must be developed and justified by you.

3 Literature Search

The term material search describes the process of searching for, evaluating, and organizing sources (this might also include data for an own analysis). All sources used in the paper, and only the sources used in the paper, are listed in the bibliography. This enables readers to find and verify the sources used.

3.1 Searching for Material and Finding a Topic

The search for relevant literature and other materials is a key foundation of an academic paper. It helps you gain an overview of established theories and models, the current state of research, ongoing academic debates, and potentially relevant data sources. This overview provides the basis for formulating a research question and for positioning your own analysis and results within the existing literature. A useful starting point is to consult literature reviews, handbooks, academic databases, and reliable online sources. Once you have identified some relevant publications, you can use their reference lists to find further literature following the snowball principle. After this initial search, it is highly recommended to discuss the proposed research question with your supervisor.

At the same time, you should bear in mind that narrowing down the topic and defining a clear research question will help you conduct an effective literature search. You should therefore not spend too much time on the initial literature search. Once your topic and research questions have been agreed upon, you can conduct a more targeted search for material.

How many sources you need depends on your specific task and the type of academic paper you are writing. In general, quality should take precedence over quantity: it is better to rely on fewer, highly relevant sources that you engage with in sufficient depth than on many sources that are addressed only superficially. Among other things, you have the following options:

- the university libraries' catalogue,
- shelf browsing in the library,
- electronic databases such as:
  - EBSCOhost, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, SSRN, NBER Working Papers, IDEAS, EconPapers, EconBiz, EconLit
- academic journals:
  - In economics, the so-called "Top Five" journals are often regarded as the leading general-interest journals: *Econometrica*, *American Economic Review*, *Review of Economic Studies*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and *Journal of Political Economy*. However, many topics are better covered in specialized field journals like the *International Journal of Industrial Organization* for industrial economics.
- Google Scholar.

AI note

AI tools can be used as part of the literature search. They may help you generate search terms, identify related concepts, suggest relevant papers, authors, journals, or strands of literature, and help you find relevant literature. Such AI-supported searches can be a useful and legitimate way to identify relevant literature. However, every AI-suggested source must be checked carefully before it is used: make sure that the source actually exists, is accessible, meets academic standards, and is relevant for your research question. **Do not use or cite sources suggested by AI without reading and evaluating them yourself.**

3.2 Types of Sources

References serve to indicate the origin of other people's ideas and to make the corresponding sources identifiable and retrievable. This allows readers to verify or trace where the original idea can be found and whether it has been reproduced correctly. *Therefore, always check sources for their truthfulness and availability.* Do not trust a source blindly; evaluate it critically. For example, interest groups and industry associations can provide valuable data and information. However, their statements should be assessed in light of the interests represented by the organization. Claims that may be influenced by these interests should therefore be critically evaluated and, where appropriate, cross-checked against independent sources.

AI note

AI-generated text is not an academic source. If an AI tool summarizes an argument, names a study, or makes a factual claim, you still have to verify this information using reliable academic sources. Only sources that you have actually read and checked should be cited in your paper. Do not cite an AI tool as evidence for an academic claim.

A general distinction is made between primary and secondary sources:

Primary sources, as the term suggests, are first-hand sources and thus original material. Such data may be quantitative (e.g., statistics, surveys, experiments) or qualitative (e.g., interviews, observation, analyses). They include, for example, research articles by a scientist who has collected and evaluated empirical data themselves. Research results are published in academic articles in journals, in books, or in independent reports.

Primary sources may also include company documents, market reports by trade associations or consultancies, industry, company, or consumer statistics, as well as opinion and market research surveys.

Secondary sources, by contrast, are second-hand sources because they refer to other sources or summarize other sources. They arise when an author cites primary sources. A meta analysis, e.g., that primarily relies on statements and analyses by others is usually a secondary source.

Whenever possible, use the primary source and refer to secondary sources only if the primary source is not accessible and the secondary source can be assessed as reliable. Publications in academic journals, for example, are subject to more or less strict peer-review procedures and are usually critically examined many times by experts.

Primary and secondary sources are usually:

- journal articles ("papers"),
- academic books and edited volumes,
- doctoral dissertations and habilitation theses,
- official publications.

Internet sources should be documented with the same care as printed sources. Whether a source is suitable for academic work depends primarily on its quality, authority, and provenance rather than on the medium through which it is accessed. Reliable online sources may include publications and data provided by public institutions and international organizations, such as the *OECD*, *Eurostat*, *Destatis*, the *Bundesbank*, or the *ECB*, as well as legislation, regulatory documents, company reports, and official data documentation.

Particular caution is required when using journalistic, commercial, or otherwise non-academic online sources. The author or responsible institution should be clearly identifiable, and the source should be sufficiently reputable and appropriate for the purpose for which it is cited.

Because online content may be modified or removed, cited web sources should be documented as precisely as possible. Bibliographic entries should include a direct URL to the cited material and, where appropriate, the date of access. If the content is not available in a stable or archived form, it is advisable to save a local copy, for example as a PDF.

Grey literature is unpublished literature, that is, academic work that may still be subject to correction. It includes discussion papers, also called working papers, as well as manuscripts. You should ensure that grey literature comes from reliable and trustworthy sources. Examples include a discussion paper series of a renowned institute or databases such as SSRN. The reference should always include the month and year and, where applicable, the issue number in the series. Before submitting your work, please also check whether the working papers in your bibliography have been published in a journal in the meantime. If a published version exists, check whether there are substantive differences between the discussion paper and the published version. If the argument, data, or result you refer to appears only in the discussion paper version, you must cite that version.

4 Writing

The focus of academic writing should be on clarity and comprehensibility. Informal language should be avoided and arguments should be presented with linguistic precision. An academic paper is generally well written if it addresses the right audience, is coherently structured, uses appropriate wording, and cites correctly.

4.1 Audience

The audience of a paper is not necessarily unambiguous. Even though the supervisor will read it, it should also be aimed at a knowledgeable audience (other students or scientists) and at an interested, non-specialist audience. The writing style and the use of technical terms should be oriented toward these groups.

Write the text so that it is understandable for the intended audiences, and explain facts and concepts in a way that these audiences can follow. Do not assume that readers have the same level of expertise that you acquired while writing, and do not get lost in technical expressions that only a few people understand. At the same time, you can expect readers to have a certain amount of prior knowledge.

For example, if you write a paper on cartel damage claims and define cartels you should also make sure to define all terms that go beyond, e.g., what are cartel damage claims and what are the relevant laws in the area of interest. In case you refer to empirical models or conduct your own empirical analysis you should explain the specific methods, such as the estimated model. Terms such as variance and standard deviation, by contrast, do not need to be explained.

4.2 Writing Style and Expression

An academic paper is characterized by an objective writing style. Try to avoid

- colloquial, flowery or bold language;
- lengthy descriptions;
- irrelevant anecdotes or expressions of personal concern;
- value judgments;
- long nested sentences;
- nominal style;
- (excessive) repetitions;
- passive formulations.

Instead, try to use an active language. Technical terms are an exception with regard to repetition. Use one technical term consistently and avoid synonyms. But refrain from using a barrage of technical terms as your paper should be easy to read.

> **AI note**
>
> AI tools can be helpful for improving clarity, grammar, and wording, especially when writing in a foreign language. However, it is usually better to write your own draft first and then use AI tools for targeted revision. Fully AI-generated text can be difficult to check critically because it often sounds fluent and polished even when the argument is vague, incorrect, or not well connected to the literature. When using AI for language revision, give clear instructions, for example to improve grammar without changing the meaning or to make a paragraph more concise. Otherwise, AI tools may introduce unnecessary transitions, vague phrases, or formulations that do not fit your argument. The content, argument, structure, and interpretation must remain your own. Always review AI-suggested formulations carefully before using them.

Academic writing differs from creative writing not only in terms of language choice but also in terms of method. Structure plays an essential role in an academic paper. The following tips will make the writing process easier for you (Lang 2010):

- First, become clear about the aim of your paper, that is, the hypothesis or research question.
- Then formulate your results and write down your central arguments.
- Do not work on the text in the order in which it is read, that is, from the first to the last sentence, but work in sections and paragraphs. The outline is your structure.
- A page without a paragraph is a lost page, just as a paragraph consisting of only one sentence is a lost paragraph. Paragraphs make the text easier to read. You should structure your paragraphs so that the main idea becomes clear early on. In many cases, the first sentence can serve as a topic sentence that introduces the central point of the paragraph. This point should then be developed and supported by facts, theories, and logical arguments. Individual

paragraphs should flow into one another in terms of content.

- Before writing a section, first note which arguments you want to use and in what order. This ensures that there is a clear line of argumentation within the section.
- Following Hemingway, "*The first draft of anything is shit*": revise your first draft both linguistically and substantively. This is not optional but an essential part of the work process.
- In the entire paper, no heading should appear without following text. For example, if you open section 3 with the heading "3. Research Methodology," do not proceed directly to the subsection "3.1. Statistical Model." Instead, first provide an overview of the structure of the section.

4.3 Working empirically

In some cases, it can be useful to conduct a (simple) empirical analysis to answer your research question. However, an empirical analysis should only be included if it directly contributes to answering that question. It should not be added merely for the sake of having an empirical part. If you would like to conduct an empirical analysis but your current topic is not suitable for one, discuss possible alternatives with your supervisor.

For empirical papers, fewer literature sources may be required than for purely theoretical work, as the empirical analysis itself forms a central part of the paper. The data and empirical method should be explained clearly: describe the data and relevant variables, explain the empirical approach in sufficient detail, and, where appropriate, state the main estimation model as a formula.

Results should be presented in a clear and well-structured way, with graphs and tables focusing on the most relevant findings rather than reporting every possible specification. Importantly, results should not only be reported statistically but also interpreted intuitively and put into context, for example by discussing their economic relevance and relating them to previous findings or meaningful benchmarks.

The source code and data used for the analysis should be submitted together with the paper to ensure transparency and reproducibility. In addition to all other sources, the source of the data must also be included in the bibliography. If you use data that you have collected or generated yourself, this should be stated in the main text, together with a brief description of how the data were collected or constructed.

4.4 Further Aspects

The following three subsections provide a brief overview of how to deal with abbreviations, Anglicisms, and footnotes. Experience shows that these are common sources of errors, which is why they are highlighted separately here.

Abbreviations. Write out abbreviations that are not generally known before using them for the first time, and then place the abbreviation in parentheses (e.g., International Monetary

Fund (IMF)). You may then use these abbreviations in the text without explaining them again. All abbreviations that you introduce yourself must be included in the list of abbreviations. Common abbreviations such as "etc." or "i.e." do not need to be introduced explicitly. Be aware that abbreviations are generally harder to understand than spelled-out terms. Therefore, do not introduce an abbreviation simply because one exists but carefully consider which terms are worth abbreviating.

Footnotes. Footnotes may contain comments, additional information, explanations, cross-references, further literature references, and remarks. However, you should move such information to footnotes only if it is relevant to a small part of your readership and would interrupt the flow of reading. Try to keep the number of footnotes to the necessary minimum or avoid them altogether.

Anglicisms. This paragraph is only relevant for papers written in Germen. Use English terms consistently in an English-language paper. In a German-language paper, use German terms as far as possible. For example, do not write "airline" or "network effect" in a German paper if suitable German terms are available. English terms should only be used in a German-language paper (a) if they are proper names, such as *Federal Trade Commission* or *The Economist*, or (b) if there is genuinely no adequate German equivalent, such as for roaming or lock-in, and using a German term would be confusing.

5 Citation and Bibliography

Seminar papers draw upon concepts, arguments, and statements that may have originated from scientific literature. **The rule is that every external line of thought that you reproduce must be accompanied by a reference.** The bibliography contains all sources cited in your text. **The citation must include the page number**, unless you are referring to the source as a whole, which should only be done in exceptional cases.

5.1 Citing in the Text

In your paper, you will have to refer to findings by other authors. This enables readers to distinguish external knowledge from newly developed findings and to verify whether the external knowledge has been reproduced correctly.

The citation format in this guide follows the guidelines of the journal *Perspektiven der Wirtschaftspolitik* for German-language papers and those of the journal *German Economic Review* for English-language papers. These citation styles are available in Citavi, a reference management program that can help you create a well-formatted bibliography.[1]

[1]Zotero is a similar program. As of 2026, both programs are available free of charge to members of the University of Siegen.

AI note

Do not use AI tools to decide whether a statement needs a citation. A source is required whenever you reproduce an external idea, result, claim, dataset, or argument. If AI helps you rephrase a passage, you still have to cite the original source from which the idea or evidence comes. You remain fully responsible for avoiding plagiarism. This means that you must check whether AI-supported paraphrases are sufficiently independent from the original wording and whether the underlying source is cited correctly. Rephrasing a source with AI does not remove the need for proper citation.

Direct quotation. If you reproduce a source verbatim, you must place the passage in quotation marks and reproduce it exactly, including letters and punctuation. At the end of the quotation, provide the source. Use direct quotations only if an exact reproduction of the wording is necessary. Direct quotation is therefore an exception. If you nevertheless quote directly, you should avoid longer verbatim quotations. If you decide to use a longer quotation, you should indent it and format it with single spacing and/or a somewhat smaller font size like so:

> "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Aenean commodo ligula eget dolor. Aenean massa. Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus. Donec quam felis, ultricies nec, pellentesque eu, pretium quis, sem" (author, year, page number).

If parts of the original are omitted within a direct quotation, this must be indicated by [...]. Similarly, all changes within a quotation must be made in square brackets. If you quote a passage that contains an error, you must mark the error with [sic] (Latin abbreviation for *sic erat scriptum*, meaning "thus it was written"). This shows readers that the error did not occur during the quotation process.

Indirect quotation. Whenever you refer to external lines of thought, findings, or statements without reproducing the wording literally, this is an indirect quotation. It must be marked by a reference.

Citation style. Especially in English-language economics literature, it is common to cite sources **directly in the text** and not in footnotes. The reference is given in the form

(Last name, year, page number).

Use the abbreviation "f." when referring to one immediately following page. For several consecutive pages, use the exact page range (e.g., pp. 130–133).

The reference should always appear in a place where it is immediately clear which content the source refers to. If several sentences refer to one source, name the source in the first sentence. The following is an example of several sources in one sentence.

Example

Horizontal mergers may have both positive and negative effects on the bargaining power of the firms involved (Inderst and Wey, 2003, pp. 2 f.), although some studies reach different results under stricter assumptions (for example, de Fontenay and Gans, 2005, p. 545).

Multiple authors. If you cite two authors, their last names are connected with "and." For three or more authors, only the name of the first author is given and supplemented with "et al." Note: in the bibliography, however, all authors must be listed.

(Last name and Last name, year, page) or (Last name et al., year, page)

Using authors' names in the running text. If you mention the authors' names in the running text, omit the names inside the parentheses. As a general rule, no name should appear without a date and page reference.

Bundeskartellamt (2013, p. 145)

Several articles in the same year. If you cite two or more sources by the same author or the same group of authors from the same year, you must distinguish these sources both in the text and in the bibliography by adding a lowercase letter after the year, e.g., 2005**a** and 2005**b**. This ensures that each in-text citation can be clearly matched to exactly one entry in the bibliography. For example:

(de Fontenay and Gans, 2005a, p. 1 f.) and (de Fontenay and Gans, 2005b, p. 501 f.)

In the bibliography, the corresponding articles must also keep the lowercase letter after the year:

- De Fontenay, C. C., Gans, J. S. (2005a). Vertical integration in the presence of upstream competition. *RAND Journal of Economics*, 544-572.
- De Fontenay, C. C., Gans, J. S. (2005b). Optional fixed fees in multilateral vertical relations. *Economics Letters*, 88(2), 184-189.

Authors with identical last names. If you cite different authors with the same last name, you must distinguish them by adding the first initial.

(C. Wey and W. Wey, 2000, p. 128)

Citing entire works. If you refer to a work as a whole, omit the page number in the reference.

(Bundeskartellamt, 2013)

Citing legal texts. For legal texts or texts of a similar nature, one can distinguish between statutes, judgments and orders, as well as expert reports and decisions. Legal texts often contain so-called paragraph numbers. These are consecutive numbers that you usually find in the left margin. If the source contains paragraph numbers, you should use them instead of page numbers.

This is how you cite a ***statutory provision***:

§/Art. number para. number sentence number statute (abbr.)

Example

§ 9 para. 1 sentence 1 EStG, §§ 17 EStG and 7 AO,
§§ 17 EStG and 23 EStG, §§ 17–23 EStG

Because of their length, cite ***decisions and judgments*** in footnotes.

Court (abbr.), type (judgment or order) of date of decision – file number, source, page number/paragraph number (para.).

Example

BFH, judgment of 28.11.1980 – VI R 193/77, BStB1. 1981 II, p. 368.
VerfGH Berlin, order of 30.10.2003 – file no. 125/02, pp. 1–3.

Expert reports and decisions are cited like monographs.

5.2 Bibliography

In the bibliography, you provide full details of the literature cited in your paper. This means that you do not list all works you know or all works that exist, but only those that you have actually cited.

AI note

Do not ask AI tools to produce final citations or bibliographic entries without checking them. AI-generated references may be incomplete, inaccurate, or entirely fabricated. Always verify the author names, title, journal, year, volume, issue, pages, DOI, or URL using the original source or a reliable database.

The bibliography is placed after the main text and before any appendices (if applicable). **All sources must be listed alphabetically by the author's last name.** Do not divide the bibliography into monographs, journal articles, contributions to edited volumes, and other types of sources. If several publications by one author are listed, the most recent appears first. Older

publications follow chronologically. If you cite several publications by one author from the same year, distinguish them by adding lowercase letters after the year. If the author is unknown, the entry appears under "n.a." (no author). Each title is given with the complete bibliographic information. The italicized part indicates what should be searched for first in databases.

Journal article	Last name, Initial. (year), title of the article, *name of the journal (in italics)* volume number (issue), pages. Hunold, M., R. Kesler and U. Laitenberger (2020), Rankings of Online Travel Agents, Channel Pricing, and Consumer Protection, *Marketing Science* 39(1), pp. 92–116.
Discussion paper	Last name, Initial. (year), title of the paper, *discussion paper no. (in italics).* Das, S., P. Hufschmidt, F. Mankat and K. Theocharopoulos (2025), Political budget cycles in federal systems: The case of India, *MAGKS Joint Discussion Paper Series in Economics No. 18-2025.*
Monograph	Last name, Initial. (year). *title of the book (in italics).* Place, publisher. Hefeker, C. (1997), *Interest Groups and Monetary Integration: The Political Economy of Exchange Regime Choice*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press.
Contribution to an edited volume	Last name, Initial. (year). Title of the section, in name of the editor (ed.), *title of the book (in italics)* (pages), place, publisher. Palm, R., S. G. Kessing, S. Gavhari and S. Fatimies (2005). Reforming the business environment in Afghanistan: Institutional reforms first, in S. Kurz and A. Fröde (eds.), *Promoting the business and investment climate*, Eschborn, GTZ.
Internet source	Last name, Initial. (year), title. Available online at: exact URL (http://www.example.com/exactpath) [date accessed].

	World Trade Organization (2018), Trade statistics and outlook: Strong trade growth in 2018 rests on policy choices. Available online at: `https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres18_e/pr820_e.pdf` [17.05.2018].
Legal texts	Statutory provisions, judgments, and orders are not included in the bibliography; decisions and expert reports are cited like monographs.

6 External Appearance

Deviating requirements resulting from the examination regulations or requested by your supervisor take priority.

6.1 Title Page

For the title page you should use the corresponding *template*. In any case, the title page should contain the following information:

- title of the paper,
- name and address of the author, including telephone number and email address,
- student ID number, degree program, and number of semesters,
- prepared for (module, course, supervisor, chair, university),
- semester (winter/summer semester),
- submission date.

6.2 Length and Form

The required length of a paper may vary depending on the course, the type of examination, and the applicable examination regulations. Therefore, you should always follow the requirements stated in the examination regulations and the instructions given by your supervisor. As a general guideline, a seminar paper is often about 12 to 15 pages long, a bachelor's thesis between 25 and 40 pages, and a master's thesis 45 to a maximum of 60 pages. This length usually refers to the text part of the paper, including list of references, figures and tables. The title page, lists, and appendix are not usually included in the page count. These page ranges should therefore be understood as guidelines rather than strict targets. An important part of the writing process is to determine how much space is needed to answer the research question in a clear and convincing way. Therefore, do not force your paper into a corset through formatting tricks.

Use one of the **standard fonts**, such as Times New Roman in **12-point** font size or Arial in 11-point font size, with **1.5 line spacing**. The font size in **footnotes** should be **substantially smaller** than the font size in the main text (a difference of approximately 2 points), and the

line spacing should be single. Format your paragraphs as **justified text**. Choose the following margins:

- left margin: 3.5 cm,
- right margin: 3.5 cm,
- top margin: 2.5 cm,
- bottom margin: 2.5 cm.

Example

This example text follows the formatting requirements described in these guidelines. It uses a standard font, 1.5 line spacing, and justified alignment. Paragraphs are separated without inserting an additional blank line.

This is a second paragraph. It begins directly after the preceding paragraph without additional vertical spacing. Footnotes should use a smaller font size and single line spacing.[1]

[1] This example footnote uses a smaller font size and single line spacing. Its longer text demonstrates the formatting of a footnote extending over two lines.

The section headings should exclusively use Arabic numerals (i.e., 1, 2, 2.1, 2.2, 3, etc.). Number your pages as follows: the title page does not receive a page number. The pages of the lists (table of contents, list of abbreviations, list of figures, and list of tables) use Roman numerals, beginning with the table of contents on page II. The main text starts again with page 1 in Arabic numerals. The bibliography and appendix continue the Arabic page numbering of the main text.

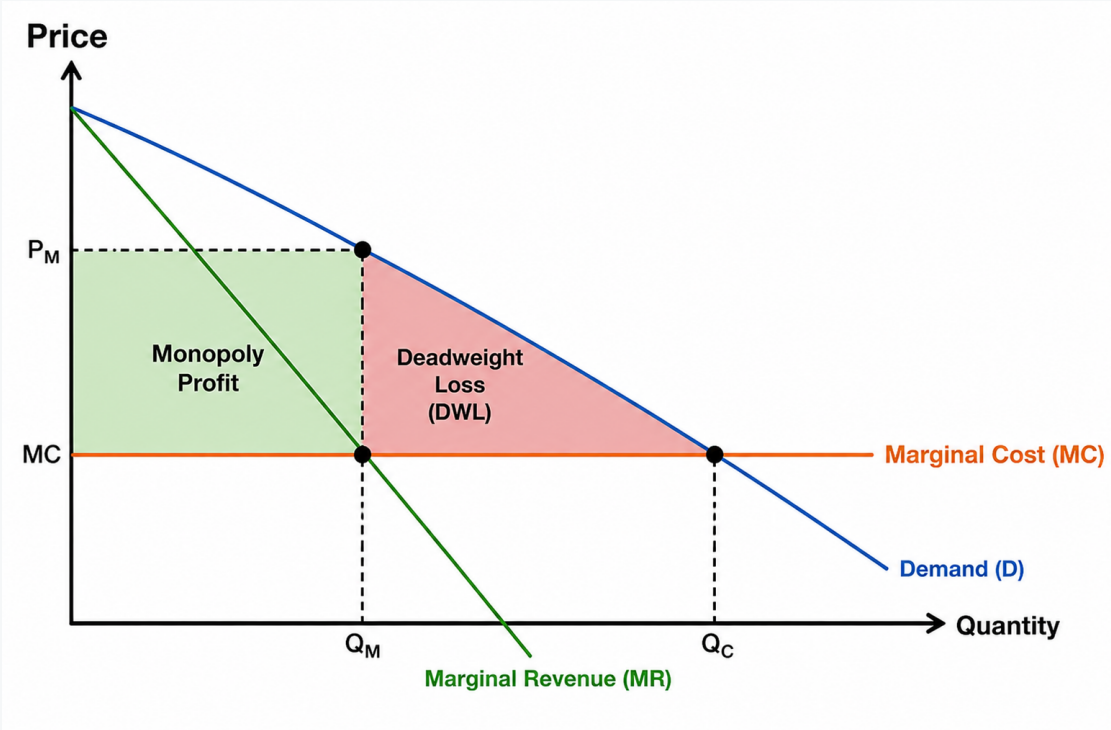
6.3 Figures, Tables, and Equations

Figures, tables, equations, and footnotes each form independent groups and are numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals within each group. In other words, the first table in the text must be labeled “Table 1” and the first figure “Figure 1”.

Each figure and table should have a numbered caption consisting of the label “Figure” or “Table”, followed by the respective number and a short, informative **title**. If you refer to a table or figure in your paper, you must state its number in the text. Make sure that each figure or table is as self-explanatory as possible. In a graph, for example, you must **label** the coordinate axes, curves, and points. In addition, you must provide the source below the table or figure and include brief and important **explanatory notes**. If a figure or table was created with the help of AI, this must be indicated in the source note. In principle, all tables and figures should be designed so that readers can understand the table or figure using only the heading, labels, and further explanations, without having to read the running text.

Example

Figure 1: Monopoly Profit and Deadweight Loss



Notes: The monopolist produces Q_M, where marginal revenue equals marginal cost, and charges price P_M. The green rectangle shows monopoly profit, while the red triangle shows the deadweight loss relative to the competitive quantity Q_C.
Source: Own illustration.

If you created a figure or table yourself, you must clearly indicate this. You can do so with a note such as "Own illustration" or "Own calculation." If your own creation is based on data from another source, this must be indicated. For example, you could write "Own illustration; data source: Federal Statistical Office (2013)." But bear in mind that recreating an existing figure or table is not counted as own creation.

Tables should be inserted in such a way that they do not span several pages. Figures and tables that contribute to a better understanding of a central statement belong in the running text at a suitable point. The text must then always refer to the tables and figures used. If figures or tables are not of central importance, they should be included in the appendix.

Equations should not be embedded in a running sentence, but should stand alone and be centered on the next line. All equations to which you want to refer should be numbered consecutively. The numbering is placed in parentheses and appears to the right of the equation.

Example

$$Q_i = \alpha + \beta P_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{1}$$

Equation 1 describes a simple relationship between price and quantity demanded. The

dependent variable Q_i denotes the quantity demanded for observation i. The variable P_i is the corresponding price. The constant term α represents the expected quantity when the price is zero, while the coefficient β measures how quantity changes when the price increases by one unit. In a standard demand model, β is expected to be negative. The error term ε_i captures all other factors affecting quantity that are not included in the equation.

Intermediate steps in calculations do not need to be numbered. If a calculation or proof interrupts the flow of reading, for example because it is very long or complex, it should be placed in the appendix and only the central insights should be stated in the text. When using Word, make sure that equations are inserted using the equation function. This also applies to variables inserted in the running text.

7 Editing and Revision

For a text to become "good," it has to be revised several times. This work step is called editing and revision. Plan enough time for this. As a rule of thumb, you can allocate one third of your total working time to it.

First, check your work for consistency in content and a clear line of reasoning. Read the introduction and check whether the research question or working hypothesis is clearly stated and whether its relevance has been motivated. Make sure that all content in the main part contributes to answering the research question or examining the working hypothesis. If you no longer consider a passage relevant, delete it. In the conclusion, all questions raised in the introduction should be taken up again and answered.

Next, revise your text linguistically so that it satisfies the criteria of an academic writing style. Always use automatic spell-checking, but do not rely on it blindly.

AI note

AI tools can support the revision process by pointing out unclear sentences, repetitions, missing transitions, or inconsistencies in structure. However, do not accept suggestions automatically. You remain responsible for deciding whether a change improves the paper and whether the final text accurately reflects your argument.

Finally, check the formal requirements of the paper. The central question here is whether you have complied with all formatting requirements and whether the paper has a consistent appearance.

Before submitting your paper, it may also be a good idea to have your paper proofread by a fellow student or another suitable person. Make sure to allow enough time for this, as experience shows that proofreading usually takes at least one week.

If you have to submit your paper digitally, save the file as a PDF after completing the revision

process (not as a Word document!) and submit it on time in accordance with the requirements. In the printed version, make sure that you have signed the declaration of independent work by hand.

For your convenience, we have created a checklist for the requirements of a good academic work (see Appendix A). You may want to print and check the listed items.

8 Literature for interested readers

- Eco, U. (1993), *Wie man eine wissenschaftliche Abschlussarbeit schreibt: Doktor-, Diplom- und Magisterarbeit in den Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften / Ins Deutsche übersetzt von Walter Schick. 6, Durchgesehene Auflage der deutschen Ausgabe / Umberto Eco*, Heidelberg, C.F.Müller.
- Krämer, W. (2015), *Statistik verstehen: Eine Gebrauchsanweisung*, München, Piper.
- Mankiw, N. (1996), My Rules of Thumb, *The American Economist* 40(1), pp. 14–19.
- Thomson, W. (2011), *A guide for the young economist*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.

A Checklist

Try to answer the following questions before submission:

External form and layout:

☐ Are all lists up to date and complete?

☐ Have the automatic lists been updated again?

☐ Are all sources cited correctly and included in the bibliography?

☐ Is the bibliography sorted alphabetically by last name?

☐ Have all sources listed in the bibliography also been cited in the paper?

☐ Have different formats, such as font sizes, italics, and spacing, been used consistently?

☐ Is the text fully justified, with straight margins on both the left and right sides?

Content and structure:

☐ Are the topic, background, and aims of the project clearly formulated?

☐ Is the research question explained in the introduction and answered in the concluding section?

☐ Is the line of argument recognizable?

☐ Are the individual sections coordinated with one another and sensibly structured, without repetitions or inconsistencies?

☐ Are the references and connections clear and comprehensible to the reader?

☐ Are there transitions between the parts of the text?

☐ Are the arguments or main statements formulated clearly, illustrated with concrete examples, and supported by sources?

Language and style:

☐ Are the sentences short and concise, without stretching over several lines?

☐ Have unnecessary foreign words / technical terms / complicated formulations been avoided?

☐ In a German-language paper, have Anglicisms been translated into German where possible?

☐ Is the language active?

☐ Is the text objective and detached?

☐ Are the expressions used precise?

☐ Is the language appropriate for the intended audience?

☐ Are grammar, spelling, and punctuation correct?

Use of AI:

☐ Have all AI-supported parts of the work been critically reviewed?

☐ Have all factual claims and references suggested by AI been checked against reliable sources?

☐ Has the use of AI tools been disclosed transparently where required?

☐ Is it clear that the argument, structure, and academic contribution are your own?

Before submission:

☐ If you worked empirically attach your code and data to your submission.

☐ Has the declaration of independence been signed?

☐ Has the paper been saved as a PDF file?

B Template: Declaration of Independence

Name: **Student ID:**

Module:

Title:

Declaration of Independent Work

I hereby declare that I have written the present work independently and without assistance from others. I have used no sources or aids other than those listed. Passages taken verbatim or paraphrased from other works, including electronic sources, have been identified as such and properly referenced. In particular, I declare that I have clearly identified all quotations and paraphrases from other works and disclosed any use of AI-based language tools. I am aware that plagiarism constitutes academic misconduct and may be sanctioned under the examination regulations.

I acknowledge that this work will be stored in a database for plagiarism detection and compared with other texts to identify similarities.

I declare that I have not submitted this work, or any part of it, elsewhere for assessment. The printed version of this work is identical to the electronically submitted version.

_____ _____

(Place, Date) (Signature)