

## Academic term papers

A guide for students at the HHU Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
(last updated: March 2022)



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## How to use this guide

There is more than one appropriate way to write academic term papers. The formal and citation requirements in particular vary in part significantly from subject to subject and from lecturer to lecturer so **it is important to ensure you always discuss all content and formal requirements with the responsible member of the teaching staff.**



### What this guide aims to do:

This guide covers the basic approach to preparing academic term papers and describes typical components of such pieces of work and the applicable formal requirements. It focuses on aspects specific to HHU and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. References to further information and contacts at HHU are provided where possible.

### What this guide cannot do:

This guide is not an all-encompassing reference work covering every aspect of writing academic term papers. At the end of this guide, you can find an overview of the guides provided by the individual institutes at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities where you can learn about subject-specific aspects.



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## Approach to preparing an academic paper

### Before starting the writing process

- ✓ Read the relevant [exam regulations](#) to learn about the scope and other modalities.
- ✓ Decide on a suitable topic (e.g. that is oriented to a seminar topic or [module](#) focus) and think of an appropriate question.
- ✓ Discuss the content and formal requirements with the lecturer of the course for which you are writing the term paper or seek an academic supervisor for your bachelor's/master's dissertation/thesis.
- ✓ Register your term paper or dissertation/thesis [online](#).
- ✓ Prepare an initial concept, structure or notes for your work. Create a timetable comprising all the necessary steps from literature research to final proofreading. Discuss your plan with your supervisor.

### During the writing process

- ✓ Find suitable sources that can provide answers to your question. You can access numerous books, e-books and specialist databases via the [University and State Library](#) (ULB). To access this offering from home, you need to install a [VPN client](#) on your computer.
- ✓ You can find lots of helpful tips and specific information for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in the [ULB compass "Research" \(German only\)](#) (please note: You should log into ILIAS before clicking on the link).
- ✓ Structure the material you have found and use it to break your topic down appropriately. You can use one of the [literature management programmes](#) provided by HHU to make your work easier if you wish.
- ✓ And then start writing! You can obtain advice and support on all questions relating to the writing process from the [writing advice service](#). If you are studying German Languages and Literatures, you can also contact the [subject-specific writing advice service](#).

### Once you have written your paper

- ✓ Leave it for a few days before checking it carefully. It's best to print it out to do this – go through it and look for content, linguistic and formal mistakes. You can find a helpful [checklist \(German only\)](#) covering rhetorical and linguistic aspects at the end of the guide provided by the Institute for Japanese Studies. Get someone who is not studying your subject to read your text to ensure it is understandable.
- ✓ Upload your bachelor's or master's dissertation/thesis to the student portal as a PDF document before the deadline. Follow the [click-by-click guide \(German only\)](#) provided/ clarify with your supervisor how you should submit your work.

## Formal requirements

### Scope and time required for marking

You can find information on the scope and time required for marking academic term papers in the latest version of the applicable exam regulations or the subject-specific annex:

[Bachelor's programme exam regulations](#)

[Master's programme exam regulations](#)

### Group work

Term papers can in principle also be realised as a piece of group work as long as it is clear what contribution each individual group member has made.

### Page setup

Write your piece of work using a computer word processing programme. You can buy Microsoft Office 365 Pro Plus at a discount via the [HHU software portal](#). Numerous free programmes are also available, e.g. [Libre Office](#). Set your pages up as follows:

- ✓ **Format:** A4
- ✓ **Page margins:** defined by the supervisor
- ✓ **Font size:** 11 pt for sans serif fonts and 12 pt for serif fonts; footnotes: 10 pt
- ✓ **Font types:** e.g. Arial or Times New Roman
- ✓ **Line spacing:** 1.5; for footnotes: 1.0
- ✓ **Text justification:** Full justification with hyphenation
- ✓ **Page numbering:** From the first page of the introduction to the last page before the declaration of authorship (the pages before the introduction are however counted)

### Gender-sensitive language

Generic use of male terms with a corresponding disclaimer at the start of the text ("women are also included...") is no longer appropriate. Please clarify with your supervisor what gender-sensitive language you should use and then apply it systematically throughout your work. The ["Gender-sensitive language" guide provided by the HHU Central Equal Opportunities Officer \(German only\)](#) contains a range of helpful suggestions for gender-sensitive formulations.

### Accessibility

If you also wish to make your work available to people with visual impairments you must ensure the document is accessible. You can find numerous guides and handouts on the [Diversity portal page](#).

### Citations

Wherever you copy texts word-for-word (direct quote) or paraphrase texts (indirect quote) from other works in your paper, you must state the corresponding source to enable your statements to be verified. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, which will be [punished accordingly](#).

**PLEASE NOTE: Copying your own work for other courses without a citation also constitutes plagiarism. Some subjects and lecturers prohibit the use of previous work entirely. It is essential that you check whether your supervisors permit this.**

While the full source must be stated in the [bibliography](#), a brief reference (author, year of publication, page number) is sufficient in the text itself. This should appear either directly after the quote in round brackets, as a footnote at the end of the page or in a separate remarks section at the end of the text – here again, it is important to take a systematic approach.

The Düsseldorf University and State Library offers a helpful module – [ULB compass “Yes to citations, no to plagiarism” \(German only\)](#) – that presents various citation styles and enables you to try them out.

You can often also find subject-specific citation methods in the [guides for the individual subjects](#). If you are unsure, please speak to your lecturer/academic supervisor.

## Components of an academic paper

An academic paper usually comprises the following sections, which should appear in the order in which they are described here. The sections marked with an asterisk (\*) are optional and should only be added where relevant.

### Front cover

Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf  
Institute/department  
Semester  
Seminar type: Seminar title (*not required for bachelor's and master's dissertations/theses*)  
Lecturer

### Title of the academic paper

Subtitle where applicable

Your first and last name  
HHU e-mail address  
Study programme and subject-related semester  
Student ID number  
Submission date

### Table of contents

In the table of contents, you should list all elements of your paper together with the page number on which the corresponding (sub)section begins. The section and subsection headings listed in the table of contents should be identical to those in the text. If you wish to break a section down further, it should contain at least two subsections. The majority of word processing programmes offer the option of creating and updating tables of contents automatically to make your work easier.

### List of figures\*

In the list of figures, you should state the numbering, title and page number of all figures you have included in chronological order. You should only create such a list if you include multiple figures. For each figure, you should state the source of any data used in it and who created it (e.g. "author's own work"). The corresponding sources should also be included in the [bibliography](#).

### List of tables\*

In the list of tables, you should state the numbering, title and page number of all tables you have included in chronological order. You should only create such a list if you include multiple tables. For each table, you should state the source of any data used in it and who

created it (e.g. “author’s own work”). The corresponding sources should also be included in the bibliography.

### **List of abbreviations\***

In the list of abbreviations, you should state all abbreviations you have used in alphabetical order together with a corresponding explanation. You should only create such a list if you include multiple subject-specific abbreviations. Common abbreviations such as “e.g.” or “approx.” should not be included.

### **Introduction**

In the introduction, you should present the topic of the paper, describe its relevance and place it in an appropriate context. You should state the object of the paper, the concrete question and objectives of the work, and provide an overview of the structure, your methodical approach and the current state of research. As a rule of thumb, the introduction and conclusion should not account for more than 10% of the paper.

### **Main part**

In the main part, you should address your question in detail. Create sections and subsections that match the steps in your examination of the topic. While the introduction usually has a corresponding top-level heading, the main part does not – the individual section headings in the text are sufficient here. Ensure that a clear thread runs through the text and that every subsection contributes to answering your question. You should usually begin the main part by explaining key terms/concepts and presenting the current state of research, before describing your approach.

### **Conclusion**

In the conclusion, you should refer back to the question you posed in the introduction and summarise the results of your work without repeating yourself word-for-word. You should not bring up new aspects here that have not already been mentioned in the main part. You can also make reference to unanswered questions, potential further questions to be pursued or wider contexts.

### **Bibliography**

In the bibliography, you should provide information on all the sources you have used in your work. Please note: You should only list literature you have actually used here. Once you have finished writing your paper, you should check that every source quoted in your text also appears in the bibliography and then check that every source mentioned in the bibliography actually also appears at least once in your finished work.

By contrast with the brief reference in the text itself, the bibliography should include the full bibliographic details of all works you have quoted. Sort your sources alphabetically by the surname of the authors or publishers. If you quote multiple works by the same author, you should sort them chronologically in descending order by year of publication. If multiple works were published in the same year, they should be listed sequentially using small letters (2020a, etc.) The bibliographic details may vary slightly depending on the type of source, but the name of the author or publisher, the title – and subtitle where relevant – of the work and the year/date of publication (or the last access date in the case of Internet sources) must always be included. As in the case of brief references in the text itself, there are various conventions for providing source information in the bibliography. The key thing is to be systematic. The [ULB compass “Yes to citations, no to plagiarism” \(German only\)](#) and the [guides for the individual subjects](#) provide information to help you cite different types of publications correctly.

## Annex\*

The annex contains presentations or materials that you have not been able to accommodate within the text itself for space or aesthetic reasons such as transcripts, questionnaires, minutes/records of meetings, tables, etc. Use numbering and headings to structure your annex and make reference to these elements in your text.

## Declaration of authorship

This declaration is about the work rather than being part of the work itself and is therefore not included in either the table of contents or the page numbering. By signing a declaration of authorship, you confirm that you have complied with all rules regarding the academic referencing of sources and citations in your work. You can use the following formulation as an example, customising the text in italics depending on your situation:

### Declaration of authorship

I certify that this document is solely my own work and that I have not used any sources and aids other than those stated. All passages in my work that are quoted word-for-word or paraphrased from other texts are indicated accordingly and I have cited the sources in each individual case. *This also applies for all drawings, sketches, audio/video recordings and graphics.* I consent to the use of plagiarism detection software to check my work in the event that plagiarism is suspected.

\_\_\_\_\_

Place, date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

**PLEASE NOTE: If you make a “statutory declaration in lieu of an oath” here, you may also face criminal charges in the event of plagiarism.**



## Subject-specific guides

Please note: We would be pleased to receive information about further guides available within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities or updated links [via e-mail](#).

### English and American Studies

[Guidelines and information on writing term papers](#)

### German Studies

[How do I write a good seminar paper/dissertation/thesis? \(German only\)](#) (Linguistics)

[Information sheet on writing academic seminar papers \(German only\)](#) (Modern German Philology)

[Guide to writing Medieval Studies term papers \(German only\)](#) (Medieval Studies)

### History

[Guidelines on writing academic papers \(German only\)](#)

[Term papers and other academic works in advanced seminars \(German only\)](#) (Early Modern History)

[Expectations for written papers in advanced seminars \(German only\)](#)

### Jewish Studies

[Guidelines on writing academic papers \(German only\)](#)

### Classical Philology

[Guide to writing presentations and term papers \(German only\)](#)

### Art History

[Academic papers \(German only\)](#)

### Japanese Studies

[Guide to writing academic papers \(German only\)](#)

### Musicology

[Seminar paper requirements \(German only\)](#)

### Philosophy

[Academic papers \(German only\)](#)

### Romance Languages and Literatures

[Style sheet for term/study papers and dissertations/theses \(German only\)](#)

### Social Sciences

[Techniques for academic papers \(2017\) \(German only\)](#)

### Linguistics

[Hints and tips on writing presentations and term papers \(German only\)](#) (Linguistics – general)

[Guide to writing academic papers \(German only\)](#) (Phonetics, Phonology)