

# Instructions for writing and presenting a scientific seminar paper

University of Hamburg  
Chair of International Trade and Economic Integration

PD. Dr. Felix Roth

17<sup>th</sup> April 2023

## Summary

The following pages contain instructions for writing and presenting a top-grade scientific paper (<http://www.uni-hamburg.de/straubhaar>).

This includes a collection of frequently asked questions and common mistakes of students who have already written a scientific paper at the Chair of International Trade and Economic Integration. Completeness cannot be claimed.

Please note that the formality of the scientific paper should be discussed with the responsible supervisor.

## Table of Contents

1	Content.....	1
2	Outline.....	2
	Introduction .....	2
	Main part .....	2
	a) Theory .....	2
	b) Empirics .....	2
	c) Politics.....	3
	Conclusion.....	3
3	Formality.....	4
	Cover .....	4
	Register, appendix .....	4
	Text part .....	5
	Citation .....	5
4	Style of writing.....	7
5	Formal requirements.....	8
	Citation .....	8
	Bibliography.....	8

# 1 Content

The paper must be consistent regarding content. Therefore, the structure must be visible throughout the whole paper to ensure coherence. Approach and argumentation should be based on the structure.

Thus, all issues that are raised in the introduction must be treated thereafter. All statements and conclusions require a detailed and comprehensible argumentation.

It is recommended to introduce every chapter by outlining its key issues and to give a short summary in the end. A convenient transition to the following chapter is important to maintain the paper's common thread.

In general, you should pay attention to

- an accurate formulation of the research question
- a profound explanation of the methodology used in the paper
- a coherent description of certain examination steps
- a stringent procedure of analysis
- a succinct conclusion of the results

The topic of the paper must be unambiguously defined and covered in detail. You should rather discuss one smaller topic area in depth than a range of topics superficially. Historical and thematically convenient digressions constitute an exception to this.

The paper must represent the author's understanding of the topic. Hence, it is advised not to rely on complicated formulations and/or foreign words. Furthermore, all foreign words that are used in the text must be explained with the exception of terms commonly used in economic sciences.

*Advice: In case you are doubting about the necessity of a word's explanation, you should rather give the explanation. If the explanation is not a core part of your work, it can be given as a footnote or in a conceptually organized glossary.*

Any data and fact usage requires the declaration of the data source.

## 2 Outline

The outline should contain an introduction, a main part and a conclusion. Its structure should be formed like in the example below.

- 1.
2.
  - 2.1
    - 2.1.1
    - 2.1.2
    - 2.1.3
  - 2.2
- 3.

### Introduction

- Motivation and economic relevance (What is the key issue?)
- Purpose of the paper and accurate formulation of the research question (What does the paper aim for?)
- Methodology (Which methods are used? Is the approach of theoretical, empirical or political nature?)
- Description of the structure

### Main part

Depending on topic and question, the paper focuses on theory, empirics OR politics. The other parts should be treated shorter accordingly.

#### a) Theory

- How does theory treat the topic? What is the status quo?
- What results from theory?
- How can I use theory for further research? Do I want to push theory forward or do I want to use it practically?
- Summary: Results, strengths and weaknesses

#### b) Empirics

- Overview: Which data is currently available?
- Selected descriptive data on the topics
- Statistical econometric analysis of data
- Summary: Results, strengths and weaknesses

**c) Politics**

- What results from theory and empirics for politics?
- To which extent do these results differ from the target state?
- Is there any possibility to turn the current state into the target state?
- How should measures be formed to have a politico – economic chance of realization?
- Summary

**Conclusion**

- What are the results?
- Which consequences do the results have? (development of policy recommendations)
- Limitations and prospect

### 3 Formality

In order to submit the seminar paper, please hand in two copies. The usage of a plastic folder is adequate; however a filing stripe can be used as well. It is your own choice whether you provide the first page with a transparent cover sheet or with a paperboard. For aesthetic reasons, it is also recommended to finish the last page with a paperboard. In doing so, you can reduce costs. Furthermore, archiving the paper is facilitated.

#### Cover

The paper's cover must provide the following information:

- University of Hamburg
- Chair of International Trade and Economic Integration
- Prof. Dr. Straubhaar
- Seminar paper (course title)
- Semester
- Name, surname of the author
- Date of submission

There should also be an additional page providing the following information:

- The author's personal information (Name, surname, registration number, semester)
- Contact information (Email address, phone number, address)
- Name of the academic supervisor
- Statement of authorship and signature

*“Hereby I declare that this thesis is my own work an effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged “*

#### Register, appendix

- The paper must contain a table of content (with page numbers) and an alphabetic list of references (bibliography).
- The list of figures, tables, abbreviations etc. should be placed right after the table of contents.
- The bibliography should be placed after the paper's text part (and before the appendix).
- The bibliography must only list the literature that has been used in the paper.
- Extensive explanations, illustrations or tables etc. that are not necessary for the general reading comprehension should be attached as appendix. This is reasonable if they are related to the paper but do not fit into the text for reasons of complexity or stringency.
- Headlines and captions of illustrations as well as references of a source should be concluded with a full stop.

- Abbreviations should be listed in the index of abbreviations and explained during the first usage.

### **Text part**

- 1,5 line spacing
- 7 cm margin in total (left + right)
- Justified text alignment (within the bibliography, a left-aligned text is recommended)
- Recommended text style:
  - Times New Roman, type size 12
  - Arial, type size 11
- Extent of the paper:
  - 40.000 – 50.0000 characters (without blanks)
  - About 13 – 15 pages
- The text should not contain passages that are out of context. Every caption should be followed by a text paragraph. The extent of paragraph is variable. A passage may only have a formal connecting or explanatory function.

### **Citation**

References must be given and quotes must be marked as such. The violation of those rules will count as an attempt of deception; it will be punished accordingly.

The usage of literal quotations is not common in the field of economic literature. Literal quotations are used only if exact wording is necessary. Any literal citation must be integrated in the text and explained. The thoughts of other authors should not just be adopted, but rather be scrutinized.

It is reasonable to use convenient citations. You should however use your own words to reflect other authors' reasoning.

If you apply indirect quotations, you should work as precise as possible. Do not use “ff.” and just give a range of pages if it isn't indispensable (see Krugman 2015:48-50). This range should then be as little as possible in order to enable the comprehension of the central statement.

It is required to use the American citation method (short references within the running text). Footnotes should be used for additional comments.

- The American citation method is characterized by bibliographical references within the text but not in footnotes.
  - Example for an indirect quote: During the course of the last century, world trade has changed drastically (see Krugman 2015:48).
  - Example for a literal quote: „The direction and composition of world trade is quite different today from what it was a generation

ago and even more different from what it was a century ago”  
(Krugman 2015:48)

- References in the bibliography should contain:
  - Author’s name – comma – Author’s pre name – comma – (year of publication) – colon – title incl. subtitles – comma – in – colon – reference (where did you find it? – same standards, italic) - volume (if existing) – comma – edition (not 1st edition) – comma – place of publication – publisher – p. – first and last page – full stop.
  - Example: ITOH, Motoshige (1995): The Japanese Distribution System and Access to the Japanese market, in: KRUGMAN, Paul R.: *Trade with Japan: Has the Door opened Wider?*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, p. 175 – 190.



## 4 Style of writing

Enumerations suggest a priority order and bullet points suggest an equalization of the passages. Since both cases occur very rarely in seminar papers, you should basically write a continuous text.

The usage of paragraphs facilitates the reading experience.

The longer a sentence, the harder it is to understand for the reader. For this reason, you should rather rely on short sentences.

Integrated Internet links should be provided in the same text format. As they cannot be clicked anyway and, moreover, the information is already conveyed, any further marking is unnecessary.

Narrations, anecdotes and personal experiences should not be processed in a scientific paper (unless explicitly they match the paper's topic). If they are relevant, they can be added to the appendix.

First person expressions (and first person plural) should be avoided in general.

## **5 Formal requirements**

In order to submit the seminar paper, please hand in two copies. The usage of a plastic folder is adequate; however a filing stripe can be used as well. It is your own choice whether you provide the first page with a transparent cover sheet or with a paperboard. For aesthetic reasons, it is also recommended to finish the last page with a paperboard. In doing so, you can reduce costs. Furthermore, archiving the paper is facilitated.

### **Citation**

The correct citation method must be applied accurately (<http://www.uni-hamburg.de/straubhaar>).

It is important to distinguish between literal and indirect quotations (introduced with “see”)

Please note that references require the exact page number. Do not use the abbreviations “f.” and “ff.”. Page ranges must also be precise (see MÜLLER (2008:9-10)).

### **Bibliography**

Do not distinguish between “additional literature”, “secondary literature”, “read literature” or “internet literature”.

Only the sources actually used in the paper should be listed in the bibliography. Every listed source must be quoted at least once in the text.

In case a source does not feature a title and/or an author (individual persons are preferential; juristic persons just if necessary) and/or no date of publication, the source’s quality should be questioned.