

RESEARCH ESSAY

Guidelines for the Creation of a Research Essay

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Good academic writing does not simply take any result or theoretical position and assume it to be true. Instead, it seeks to prove or disprove the result or position by supporting or countering it with the use of reliable sources and facts.

1. OBJECTIVES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

A research essay should demonstrate the ability to work independently in a scientific manner. Students should prove that they are able to independently grasp a scientific topic, formulate a research question if necessary, research relevant literature and justify and theoretically underpin their own thoughts and findings on this basis.

2. STRUCTURE OF A RESEARCH ESSAY

The structure of the research essay should reflect a logical progression of main points and explanatory points. The text should be a coherent and cohesive whole and follow a linear structure. There should be a logical integration of the main and explanatory points across the various sections, with clear transitions between them. This can be done, for example, by referring to a key argument in a previous chapter, which can then act as a progression to the next point. The main body of the essay is composed of the core argument (around 70% of the essay), preceded by an introduction (around 20%) and followed by a conclusion (around 10%).

2.1 Introduction

The introduction is the first section of an essay and should be designed as an integral part of the text. The introduction should contain concise but clear statements of the following points, named in subchapters or subheadings as appropriate:

- Rationale for the topic from the current state of research on the chosen topic (Why is the topic relevant and what are the open questions to be addressed in the paper).
- Aim of the essay or investigation (What is to be presented/found out and why? What research question does the research essay pursue?)
- Delimitation of the topic and possibly topic-related definitions (What can be done in the thesis and what cannot? What should be the scope of the intended results?) A reasonable delimitation of the topic is the prerequisite for a successful seminar paper!
- Overview of structure and argumentation sequence (How is the work structured and what can the reader expect in the main part?)

It makes sense to think about these introductory remarks early on, even if they are written towards the end of the writing process, in order to give your own work a stringent and clear line of argumentation that extends throughout all parts of the research essay and leads to a meaningful conclusion.

2.2 Main Body

This part of academic writing should peak and maintain interest through coherent and comprehensible argumentation. This is only possible if the essay has a common thread that links each key point. If something is not considered common knowledge, then it must be explained and supported with the use of a theory-based argument. All assumptions, considerations, and arguments must be proven and discussed. Each argument should be as clear and structured as possible.

The topic sentence should be at the beginning of the paragraph with the supporting points clearly connected to it. The structure of individual paragraphs should loosely follow this framework:

- Clearly state the main point of the paragraph using a topic sentence.
- Explain the topic sentence and elaborate on it using supporting points.
- Conclude the argument in a way that leads the reader to the next point.

2.3 Conclusion

The conclusion should give the reader a final, overall impression of the essay. It should not be a repetition of what was written in the essay. This is only useful in a longer essay, for example a master's thesis. Instead, the conclusion should draw the arguments to a close. It should summarize the key arguments within the essay and seek to conclude the thesis or main claim and answer any questions that were raised. The conclusion can also include any follow-up questions or perspectives regarding the topic that could be further researched.

The conclusion should not include any new ideas or arguments, but rather should state the outcomes regarding the central claim or thesis.

3. FORMAL GUIDELINES AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Components of the Research Essay

The research essay consists of the following parts, listed in the table of contents (except for title page and table of contents):

- Title page
- Table of contents
- List of figures and/or tables (if necessary)
- List of abbreviations (if necessary)
- Text part with introduction, main part, conclusion
- Bibliography
- List of appendices (if necessary)
- Appendices and materials (if necessary)

3.2 Formalities

Formalities	Explanation
Length BACHELOR	7–10 pages of text
Length MASTER	12–15 pages of text
Paper size	A4
Margins	Top and bottom 2cm; left 2cm; right 2cm
Page numbers	Centered at the end of the page Apart from the title page, all pages must be numbered. The pages before the body of the text (if applicable, e.g. title page, table of contents, list of tables and abbreviations) should be numbered in Roman capital letters (I, II, III, IV, etc.), with the page number not appearing on page I (title page). The pages of the text part are numbered with Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.). These page numbers are continued to the end, i.e., also through the appendix (if applicable).
Font	General text: Arial 11 pt.; headings: Arial 12 pt.; justified
Line spacing	1.5
Sentences	Justified; hyphenation
Footnotes	Arial 10 pt., justified
Paragraphs	According to conceptual structure – 6 pt. spacing after line breaks
Title page	The title page should contain at least the following elements: title of thesis, type of thesis, course name, course of study, date, author's name, matriculation number, tutor's name. Course-specific adaptations of the information are possible.
Sections and subsections	A maximum of three levels (1. Main heading, 1.1 Section, 1.1.1 Subheading) Only individual chapters in the text of the assignment are numbered consecutively; otherwise, sections of the assignment, such as the list of figures and/or tables or the bibliography, are not numbered. Do not underline; use <i>italics</i> sparingly to emphasize passages.
Citation standard	Please refer to the citation guidelines on myCampus.
Anti-plagiarism pledge and affidavit	This pledge must be submitted electronically (via myCampus) before you can submit your assignment.
Submission	Please refer to the corresponding guidelines in myCampus – Turnitin.

3.3 Evaluation

The evaluation criteria and their corresponding weight are listed below.

Evaluation Criteria	Explanation	Weight
Introduction	Structure of the objectives	4%
Structure	Structure and process	12%
Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Literature evaluation- Application and understanding of definitions, approach- Quality of sources	20%
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Clear information on the chosen methodology- Justification of the methodology- Appropriate use of the methods and procedures for dealing with the question and the topic- Proportion of theoretical and practical part/reflection of own approach	20%
Argumentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Quality of argumentation/Key structure- Clarity of reasoning- Topic comprehension- Combination of theory and practical part- Critical assessment of the findings and own interpretation	20%
Conclusion	Conclusions and recommendations	4%
Representation	Clarity of the representation	4%
Accuracy	Spelling and punctuation	4%
Language	Linguistic expression	4%
Literature	Listed references/bibliography	8%

Good luck with your research essay!