Guidelines and Regulations

Seminar Papers and Final Theses in Economic and Social History

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Contents

Introduction

The production of a scientific text is perhaps the most important part of academic work. Academics typically write entire books or articles and essays, the latter either for professional journals or academic anthologies. Over the course of their studies, students practice writing such texts in seminar papers, and in the final thesis, students are expected to demonstrate their competence in academic writing. These theses will be regarded as proper academic texts and therefore they should meet academic requirements. In other words, academic literature (and primary sources if applicable) need to be used and cited in a sufficient manner, and the thesis must meet formal criteria and meet expectations regarding suitable language, proper structure and conclusive argumentation.

What exactly do these requirements look like? This varies from discipline to discipline and from department to department. The following information booklet specifies the requirements for seminar papers and final theses at the Göttingen Institute for Economic and Social History.

First, formal guidelines concerning the layout and elements required in a written work are explained in detail. This is followed by remarks on writing style and choice of language. A third section deals with the structure of the thesis, focusing in particular on the functions of the introduction and conclusion. The fourth part focuses on developing academic arguments; it deals with the extent to which academic literature needs to be utilized and the manner in which the literature should be referenced (citation). Finally, the evaluation criteria applied by faculty are summed up and discussed.

1. Formal Requirements

A first important requirement for academic work is the ability to write a text of a predetermined length. Accordingly, there are specifications for different types of seminar papers and final theses with regard to their expected length. Slight deviations (in principle: 10% longer or 10% shorter) are admissible, but significant deviation from page requirements will result in a lower grade. In the case of a very substantial deviation, faculty can refuse to accept the work altogether.

The following page guidelines refer only to the body of the text (without illustrations and cover sheet, table of contents, or bibliography). A typical <u>full</u> text page contains between 2,500 and 3,000 characters (including spaces):

Proseminar paper:	12-15 pages
Abschlussseminar paper:	15-20 pages
Bachelor's thesis	35 pages (+/- 10%)
Hauptseminar paper (MA-level)	20-25 pages
Master's thesis	80-90 pages (ca. 25.000 words)

For every page of text, please have 2 cm margins on the left side and at the bottom, and 2.5 cm at the top. On the right side of the page, please leave a 3 cm margin for correction purposes. We ask you to choose one of the following fonts: Times New Roman (font size 12 for text, footnotes font size 10) or Arial/Helvetica/Calibri (font size 11 for text, footnotes 9). Other easily readable fonts and appropriate font sizes are also possible if the resulting text density per page is comparable. The body of the text should be formatted in justified or "block text" paragraphs with 1.5 line spacing. The line spacing for footnotes is 1.0 (endnotes are not permitted). Please do not leave spaces between two paragraphs; instead; you can indent the first line of a paragraph slightly (except directly after a heading). This booklet is formatted according to these exact specifications. You can decide for yourself on all formatting aspects that are not regulated here, however, we ask you to be consistent in your formatting.

In addition to the formatting guidelines specified above, we ask you to structure and present your work neatly and appropriately. This means in the ideal case:

- Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. All sentences should be correctly structured and, importantly, you should avoid incomplete sentences. ~~For example without predicate~~.

- All formatting should be consistent, i.e. similar text parts are formatted in the same way, all headings and sub-headings arranged uniformly etc.

- Footnotes should be formatted consistently somewhat smaller than the main text, headings to be easily recognizable and separated from the text, the bibliographic titles need to be separated from each other etc.

- If applicable, illustrations, diagrams, and graphs must be reproduced in good quality so as to be easily legible and understandable.

- Double spaces are to be eliminated, hyphens should always be short (-), dashes long (--) and framed by spaces etc.

While all this may seem pedantic, such accuracy is essential in the academic world. Formal mistakes and poor formatting distract from the actual thought process, particularly as faculty will inadvertedly track and correct such errors automatically when assessing papers. If mistakes become too frequent, focussed reading of the contents becomes nearly impossible. While you cannot really eliminate every little mistake, it is still important to make every effort to avoid such errors and minimize their number.

In addition to adhering to the specified number of pages, and the proper layout and formatting of the text, there is a third formal requirement regarding the basic elements of the paper or thesis. Every piece of academic writing, from the introductory seminar paper to the master's thesis, must contain a number of elements, following a certain order of sequence, and (partly) adhering to a particular style:

- <u>Cover sheet</u>. For seminar papers there is a sample cover sheet which can be downloaded from the department's website. You don't have to adopt it in full, but all the information provided on the sample must appear on your cover sheet as well.

- <u>The "Declaration on Good Scientific Practice"</u> (also available as download) must be included in the paper or thesis in proper wording either at the beginning or (particularly for Bachelor's and Master's theses) at the very end.

- <u>Table of Contents</u>. The table of contents appears on the second page of a work. It lists all headings and subheadings (beginning with the introduction followed by the main and final sections up to the appendices) in full and exact wording, indicating on which page the respective heading appears. Numbering starts with the cover page. The work must be numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals, starting with the table of contents, i.e. page 2 and include the bibliography and a possible appendix.

- <u>Introduction, Main Section and Final Section</u>. The exact requirements for the introduction and conclusion are discussed in the third section.

- <u>Bibliography</u>. All academic literature that was cited directly or was relevant for your work must be listed; the format for citation is explained in detail in section 4 of this leaflet. If primary sources have been used - which typically concerns Bachelor's or

Master's theses - you also need to compile a separate list of sources. Lists of Abbreviations or diagrams are usually unnecessary for shorter academic papers, but can be useful for Master's theses.

2. Language

The circumstance that a text is called "academic" does not to have to be proven by writing in a dry way and in complicated sentences. Academic writing means to focus on a well-structured argumentation according to the usual practices of the respective subject. This may happen through experiments in natural sciences and, for example, through references to sources and literature in history.

Anything that distracts from understanding the development of the reasoning lowers the quality of the text. This applies not only to the formal errors and spelling mistakes, but also to breaches of style. A uniform style of writing, however, can also distract from the argumentation if it is inappropriate. It is more beneficial, it seems, to cultivate a more commonplace art of formulation rather than a pompous manner of expression alienated by over-seriousness and affectation, is it not? Conversely, flippant or colloquial formulations clearly show that you have not taken the subject totally seriously and aren't cool enough to meet the requirements for a convincing argumentation, are they, dude? Choose an appropriate style of language.

In addition to this, it goes without saying, first and foremost, of course, do without any fillers such as "naturally" and "of course" and to refrain unconditionally from stage directions – I say this because one often tries to say what comes next, although this should actually already result from the thought process –, without, of course, letting the elaborateness of sentence constructions take the upper hand unnecessarily, but of course not giving up the changing rhythm of short and long sentences nor to sacrifice understandability whereby it is precisely the extent of understandability of sentences of high complexity with a multitude of substantives and repetitive chains of nouns, as well as being far too rambling including potential separation of subject and predicate and the subordinate clauses nested in each other, which, although this is unattractive and confusing as everyone admits, might well be at the expense of the quality of reception.

This was not easy to read, was it? Then read the same paragraph once more in a better style:

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Write in as much detail as necessary but keep it as short as possible. Fillers like "naturally" and "of course" are unnecessary – the same is true for stage directions. A complex sentence that includes many substantives, long subordinate clauses or intellectual insertions is more difficult for the reader to understand than several shorter sentences. However, a staccato form of short sentences is also not ideal, so that, as general rule, every second or third sentence should have a subordinate clause (like this one here). Furthermore, the chain-linking of nouns ("the evaluation of the final part of the introduction of the candidate's work") often diminishes the understanding of the reader.

The excessive use of foreign words, on the one hand, hampers the reading flow. Wherever possible it is best to choose the simplest synonym that you can think of. Pure, compact jargon is a strain for the reader and demonstrates the author's narrow-mindedness. On the other hand, one should use established technical terms without hesitation and take pains to rephrase them, since this signifies a knowledge in the specialised research field.

3. Structure and Development of Argument

The introduction is the most important part of the work by far, since both the idea and structure of the work are carried out here – if the introduction is successful, the work usually is successful; if the introduction is not successful, the whole work itself often exhibits problems. An introduction, in detail, fulfils up to five functions.

- Introducing both the topic to be discussed and the main focus of the topic
- Developing and clarifying the research question
- *Discussing the state of research*
- *Exposing and explaining the choice of methodology and material*
- Outlining the structure of the work

The first two points and the last one are essential in every introduction and can be found in the introduction to this guide as well. The two points in italics are more important for dissertations, especially Master's theses.

The topic can be introduced by a discussion starter, such as a current event or a historical quote. It, however, should be kept short: The aim is simply to lead the reader to the main focus of the work in the shortest possible way. Ideally, it culminates in the research question of the work. This question should be clearly recognizable for the reader. It should clarify the

concrete interest of the work and stress the aspect of the topic that will be studied. Eventually, he/she should outline the structure of the work. This outline should focus on explaining and justifying the significance of the chosen structure; in other words, it should give a rough overview rather than an exhausting description of every section.

More ambitious works such as Master's theses should cover further aspects in the introduction. The development of a question takes place immediately after, immediately before or simultaneously with the discussion of the state of the research: Which arguments or omissions in previous research will be linked to the paper? Why is one's own work a relevant contribution to the discussion? In addition, with larger projects, the question often arises as to which methods and which materials are to be used for the process. An approach can thus be derived from the question thereby justifying the choice of methods and materials. From this the structure of the work can be established.

The concluding part of the paper summarises the most important findings of the main part, connects them with each other and relates them back to the introduction: Which aspects of the question could be answered, which remain open (for future research)? Go beyond the main part in which you draw a conclusion, give an overview or integrate your results into an overall context.

Between the two parts of the structural framework (the introduction and the conclusion), the main part deals with the actual question formulated at the beginning. The art of writing scientific texts involves bringing the complex considerations of the subject into a meaningful and linear sequence and structuring them effectively. Meaningful linear sequence means first of all that the transition from one thought to the next, especially from one chapter to the next, appears logical and natural to the reader (leitmotif). While it is of course possible at the beginning of a chapter to explain to the reader what the chapter should do, it is also possible (and definitely more elegant) to lead the reader to understand the chapters relevance through its positioning in the train of thought, by means of the introductory remarks on the approach, and, moreover, through the carefully chosen heading of the section itself. (When you have to explain a joke's punch line, it is not well told: The same applies to the train of thought in the main part of a scientific work. A meaningful linear sequence also means that the reader knows what purpose the point serves at each stage of the work: The argumentation is always oriented to the question and target-aimed. Statements which neither directly,

nor indirectly (necessary background information), serve to answer the question, are superfluous.

The structuring of the explanations takes place at the highest level through the introduction of chapters and subchapters. Each structural level of detail contains at least two chapters, the equal parts should be organised at the same level of detail. A structuring that is too uneven (two short chapters and then a third one which is often subdivided and covers most of the main part) should be avoided, as should too fine a subdivision: No subchapter should be shorter than one page.

Within each section, the train of thought is further subdivided into paragraphs. The paragraph is a means of structuring, as it were, between the level of individual sentences and the level of individual chapters i.e. a paragraph should contain significantly less than one chapter, but also normally significantly more than one or two sentences. A paragraph marks, so to speak, the end of a thought of medium scope and the beginning of a new one.

4. Artificial Intelligence

Since the release of OpenAI's ChatGPT in 2022, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in general academic work has increased significantly, leading to wide public discussion regarding the application of this and similar programs. Artificial intelligence applications (especially so-called "large language models") are now capable of producing texts of high grammatical quality. These texts are often indistinguishable from those written by humans, which poses challenges for students and educators.

The following guidelines are intended to assist students in using artificial intelligence. They do not claim to be exhaustive, and the establishment of precise rules regarding the use of artificial intelligence is the responsibility of the Georg-August University of Göttingen, the faculties, the module coordinators, and the respective lecturers.

Value Personal Effort

AI tools can serve to support research activity and writing but should (and cannot) replace one's own thinking and the development of analytical skills. The advancement of one's reading and writing abilities, as well as the acquisition of analytical skills – which in our discipline are primarily gained through the production of scientific texts – are crucial for the successful study of economic and social history.

These are core competencies that will be beneficial in many areas of your future professional and private life. If you rely too heavily on artificial intelligence in the preparation of your term papers, bachelor's, and master's theses, you run the risk of completing your studies without acquiring these core competencies, thus undermining the very purpose of your education.

Use AI Tools to Support your Research

AI can be valuable for finding synonyms, rewriting texts, overcoming writer's block, or drafting preliminary versions of paragraphs. Essentially, these programs can help improve your writing. However, you should bear in mind that they are meant to supplement, not replace, your own efforts. AI tools are designed to make your work easier; they are not suitable for content creation and knowledge production but are more valuable for structuring your work at the university. You need to familiarize yourself with these tools and understand how they function before using them. The responsibility for selecting, analyzing, and interpreting secondary literature and sources—as well as the original production of academic texts—still lies with the student. Be aware that AI, especially when creating texts that are not in English, may invent citations, sources, and facts and misinterpret contexts. The responsibility for the texts produced rests with you!

AI tools that can help you with structuring include: ChatGPT, Scite, Jenni, Research Rabbit, R Discovery, Lateral, Audiopen, Paperpal, and many others. Note that some of these are paid services.

Transparency

Whenever AI tools are used for generating or editing academic texts, this must be made transparent. In scholarly works, it is crucial to clearly mark if entire texts or passages have been created or edited using artificial intelligence. Avoid having parts of your work identified as plagiarized. This would have serious consequences! Use the *Declaration of Good Academic Practice* on the Institute's Website to document your usage of artificial intelligence.

Awareness of Future Developments

When using artificial intelligence, you should consider that the technology for detecting AI-generated texts will advance in the future. This could impact the assessment of academic works. It is important that students are aware of this possibility and the ongoing development

of this technology and maintain the integrity of their work. This is particularly true for bachelor's and master's theses, which in our field are considered a measure for the acquisition of the core competencies mentioned earlier.

It should also be noted that the rules and guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence at the University of Göttingen, the various departments, and individual educators can change at any time. Make sure to inform yourself in advance (ideally before starting your work) about the rules that apply to your specific work if you plan to use AI tools.

Awareness of Future Developments

Open communication between students and educators is crucial. Engage in discussions with your lecturers; ask questions about the use of artificial intelligence! This way, you can ensure that academic standards are maintained and that your educators are informed about the use of artificial intelligence.

5. Bibliography and Citation

An important feature of academic texts is consistency in referencing the literature and sources on which the writer relies. Any direct citation is to be placed in quotation marks (quotation) and reference is to be made to the original text. In addition, if thoughts are paraphrased, references are necessary. All academic texts referenced or consulted in the production of the thesis are listed in a bibliography arranged alphabetically by the authors' last names.

The term "academic text" deserves special attention. Scientific work can only be based on other scientific texts and sources adhering to disciplinary guidelines. If a text has no scientific character, it may only be used, if it has source character, is suitable as a source for the work and is treated as a source (e.g. like self-presentation of a company in the context of a work about this company). This applies in particular to texts from the internet. General reference works such as Wikipedia may of course be used for the preparation of seminar papers or theses e.g. in preliminary fact finding. However, this kind of more general information is considered to be a part of 'public knowledge' and is therefore not to be substantiated as a citation (unless cited verbatim); hence, reference works are also not mentioned in the bibliography. Excluded are articles that do not serve solely as a source of information, but are discussed critically. How broad the literature base should be is difficult to generalise. A good rule

of thumb is: one to two titles per page of the work, whereby fewer titles may be permitted in the case of poor literature and more may be required if appropriate in the case of good literature. The aim must be to be able to shed light on the subject matter dealt with and not to burden oneself with too many aspects taken from a single professional text. This means: dare to develop a critical distance to research literature; form your own point of view as far as possible. How the literature used is cited varies by disciplinary culture and individual preferences of the supervisors or the publication. There is no universally correct system but there are two very important rules: <u>Uniformity</u> (the chosen citation method applies to the entire work) and <u>unambiguousness</u> (every academic text mentioned must be unambiguously identifiable). Precisely because there are different citation systems, it is one of the requirements in science to produce texts according to a given citation system. The following binding rules therefore apply to all seminar papers and final theses in Economic and Social History (except where a supervisor approves of the work, or makes other rules):

References to texts are made in footnotes. Endnotes or in text citations as used in the social sciences (e.g. Smith, 2015:13-26) are not permitted. The footnotes must be numbered consecutively from beginning to end and not for each page separately. Footnotes always begin with a capital letter and ends with a full stop.

- In the footnotes the complete bibliographical details are included when a title is mentioned for the first time like it would be found in the bibliography.[1]
- After the second mentioning of a title only a short title is used: the surnames of the authors   (separated by slashes) and a short version of the title (as a rule the most important noun) are used and if necessary followed by the page number.[2]
- If several references coincide in one place, they are summarized in a footnote and separated by a semi-colon.
- If the same work is quoted again in a footnote that follows immediately afterwards, the reference to "ibidem" in the abbreviated form" ibid" is enough. This always refers to the last title mentioned in the previous footnote. If there are references to other pages in the same text, the new page reference follows.[3]

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[1] Cf. Samsonow, Elisabeth von, Auf Gänsefüßchen schleichen. Regarding the current plagiarism discussion, In: Recherche. Zeitung der Wissenschaft, no. 1/2011, p. 7; Deutsches Institut für Normierung, Schreib-und Gestaltungsregeln für die Textverarbeitung: Sonderdruck von DIN 5008:2011, 5th Ed., Berlin 2011. In this respect particularly unclear: Guttenberg, Karl Theodor zu, Fußnoten, 10th Ed., Stuttgart 1974.
[2] See also: Samsonow, Gänsefüßchen, p. 7; Guttenberg, Fußnoten, pp. 1-6.
[3] Ibid., p. 3.

- The pages are indicated as follows: one page – p. 3, consecutive pages pp. 3-5. There is always a space after "p".
- Different literature forms are cited according to the following schemes:
  - **Monograph**: author, title, subtitle, edition, place of publication, year of publication.
  - **Anthology**: Editor (Ed.), title, subtitle, editions, place of publication, year of publication
  - **Contribution to an anthology**: author, title, subtitle, in: Editor (Ed.), title, subtitle, edition, place of publication, year of publication, pp. 000-000.
  - **Journal article**: author, title, subtitle, in: journal title, volume number, year of publication, pp. 000-000.
  - **Article in a popular magazine** (like Spiegel or similar): author, title, subtitle, in: magazine title, number, year of publication pp. 000-000.
  - **Newspaper article**: author, title, subtitle, in: title of newspaper, date month year, pp. 000-000.
  - **Article in a reference book**: author, title of article in: title of reference book, edition, place of publication, year of publication, pp. 000-000.
  - **Internet text**: author, title, in: http//web address (retrieved month, day, year)
- Authors are listed according to the following scheme: surname, first name. With two people: surname 1, first name 1 and surname 2, first name 2. With three people: surname 1, first name 1, surname 2, first name 2, surname 3, first name 3. With more than three people only the first is mentioned and by means of "et al." the other authors or publishers referred to.
- With contributions to anthologies the publishers are listed according to the following scheme: first name 1, surname 1, first name 2, surname 2 and first name 3, surname 3.
- If place of publication or year of publication are not specified, write n.p. or n.y. (no place given or no year given).
- For the first edition, the edition is not specified, only from the second (2nd edition). A fictitious bibliography can be found on page 12 to illustrate these requirements.

6. Conclusion

The formal requirements for a seminar paper or a final thesis are varied, ranging from a pre-defined number of pages and specified parts of the work to formulation and citation rules right through to suitable language. How well these guidelines are adhered to and how carefully, conclusively and consistently the work is carried out has an influence on its assessment. Naturally, supervisors focus more on formalities during the first seminar papers you write,

whereas a certain degree of competence is expected for the final papers. At this stage, a good, formal structure is considered a matter of course.

In all types of seminar papers and final theses, assessment considers 1) whether a sufficiently comprehensive empirical and literature basis has been compiled from scientific professional texts, 2) whether the research question and the conceptual framework of presented in the introduction are convincing, and 3) whether the argument has been convincingly realised – through a systematic, goal-oriented and persuasive train of thought. Each of these three points carries just as much weight as the adherence formal requirements and are therefore decisive for the grading process.

A third level of evaluation becomes increasingly important over the course of study, from seminar to thesis and from BA-level to MA- level: Does the author succeed in breaking away from the existing literature, in gaining a critical distance, in finding convincing independent evaluations and arguments of the historical object? Such competence is not required in an introductory seminar paper, but in later seminar work it makes the difference between a good and a very good grade.

By critically reinterpreting existing knowledge, by finding new perspectives, by incorporating new sources or by applying theory: does the work go beyond the current state of research as it exists? In seminar papers this would be an excellent bonus and in terms of a Bachelor's thesis a very positive aspect. In the Master's thesis, however, independent scholarship has to be demonstrated: You should be able to deliver your own scientific work in the manner corresponding to the principles of the subject's culture. This is the educational goal of the Master's programme in Economic and Social History. As you begin your studies, on the other hand, it is sufficient to first study the principles of the subject's culture (with regard to formalities, literary work and conception) and to practice the appropriate writing of scientific texts.

Fictitious Bibliography to illustrate the requirements

Berghoff, Hartmut, Art. „Business History", in: International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, vol. 1, Oxford 2001, pp. 1421-1426.

Berghoff, Hartmut et al. (ed.), The Making of Modern Tourism. The Cultural History of the British Experience, 1600-2000, Houndmills and New York 2002.

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Berghoff, Hartmut, „Aus dem Nichts wurde richtig was". Bertelsmann feiert am Donnerstag seinen 175. Geburtstag: Der Aufstieg des Mittelständlers zum globalen Medien- und Dienstleistungskonzern, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, September 9, 2010, p. 14.

Bernsee, Robert, Privatisation and corruption in historical perspective: The case of secularisation in Bavaria and Prussia in the early nineteenth century, in: Business History 60 (2018), pp. 321-342.

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Dee, Donald U. and Jakob, Mark, „Naughty but nice: The self-fashioning of the sex products industry. The case of Beate Uhse", in: http://www.geschichte.uni-frankfurt.de/mng/WSG/downloads/Dee_Jakob.pdf (retrieved April 4, 2011).

Engel, Alexander, Der Warenverkauf des Handelshauses Amman in Schaffhausen 1748–1779. Methoden und Entwicklungslinien, in: http://www.stadtarchiv-schaffhausen.ch/Schaffhausen-Geschichte/Engel-Amman/ (retrieved April 4, 2011).

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Kaufhold, Karl Heinrich (ed.), 1801 bis 2001. 200 Jahre Sparkasse Göttingen. Älteste deutsche kommunale Sparkasse, Göttingen 2001.

Köhler, Ingo, Die „Arisierung" der Privatbanken im Dritten Reich. Verdrängung, Ausschaltung und die Frage der Wiedergutmachung, München 2005.

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Köhler, Ingo, Overcoming Stagflation. Innovative Product Policy and Marketing in the German Automobile Industry of the 1970s, in: Business History Review 84, 2010, pp. 53-78.

Logemann, Jan, Engineered to Sell. European Emigres and the Making of Consumer Capitalism, Chicago 2019.

Schneider, Michael C., Unternehmensstrategien zwischen Weltwirtschaftskrise und Kriegswirtschaft. Chemnitzer Maschinenbauindustrie während der NS-Zeit (1933–1945), Essen 2005.

Schneider, Michael C., Zahlen und Bekenntnisse – die preußische Konfessionsstatistik vor dem „Kulturkampf", in: Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte 35, 2007, pp. 25-44.

Schneider, Michael C., Medizinalstatistik im Spannungsfeld divergierender Interessen: Kooperationsformen zwischen statistischen Ämtern und dem Kaiserlichen Gesundheitsamt/Reichsgesundheitsamt, in: Axel C. Hüntelmann, Johannes Vossen and Herwig Czech (eds.), Gesundheit und Staat. Studien zur Geschichte der Gesundheitsämter in Deutschland, 1870–1950, Husum 2006, pp. 49-62.