

Guideline for writing

scientific papers

(Bachelor and Master Theses / Seminar Papers)

Last updated: August 2026



Table of Contents

List of figures.....	IV
List of abbreviations.....	V
1. The objective of this guideline.....	1
2. Process before writing a seminar paper or thesis	2
2.1. Topic selection and first steps	2
2.2. Literature review.....	3
3. Writing a seminar paper or thesis	4
3.1. Content aspects of the paper or thesis.....	4
3.2. Formal aspects of the paper or thesis	5
3.2.1. Cover page.....	5
3.2.2. Table of contents and lists.....	7
3.2.3. Affidavit and agreement to plagiarism finder software.....	8
3.2.4. Diction	9
3.2.5. Formatting and text layout.....	9
3.2.6. Citation style within the text.....	10
3.3. Code of conduct of the use of AI-systems and AI-related tools.....	10
3.3.1. Purely technical tools	10
3.3.2. AI systems.....	11
3.3.3. Disclosure statement.....	11
3.3.4. Responsibility	11

4. Submission and grading criteria of papers/ theses 12

References Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.

List of figures

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Figure 1 | Example of the cover page of a seminar paper / thesis |
| Figure 2 | Numerical classification |

List of abbreviations

APA	American Psychological Association
ed.	edition
e.g.	exempli gratia (for example)
i.e.	id est (that is)
JSTOR	Journal Storage
p.	page

1. The objective of this guideline

Past experience has shown that several easily avoidable mistakes tend to reappear during the process of writing scientific papers. This guideline aims at preventing some of these common mistakes. In addition, it provides advice on writing a scientific paper. It is not an exhaustive manual, but rather provides suggestions in order to improve the process and the output of scientific work.

Besides general advice regarding scientific papers, which can also be referred to using the relevant literature, this guideline discusses the requirements of the Chair of Human Resource Management and Leadership. The primary purpose of this guideline is to help students of this Chair to work on their scientific papers. Additional questions can be discussed with the respective supervisor.

Please note that the guidelines below apply equally to bachelor theses, master theses, and seminar papers. Any deviations are noted where applicable.

Good luck when writing your paper!

2. Process before writing a seminar paper or thesis

2.1. Topic selection and first steps

The scope of the scientific paper will either be discussed in the introductory session or directly agreed upon with the responsible supervisor. The responsible supervisor also guides the choice of the concrete topic. When selecting and specifying a topic several aspects should be considered.

1. Problem and research question

First, a concrete problem has to be related to the current state of research. How relevant is this problem? Then, related research questions can be derived from the problem.

2. Objective(s) of the paper

According to the problem presented in the paper, objectives should be specified. Examples for an objective range from an analysis of different instruments or an empirical investigation of hypotheses to the development of an adjusted theoretical model.

3. Basic structure of the paper and methodology

Following the objective, the structure of the paper will be derived. At this point, you should denote the main parts within a table of contents and their partial aspects. Furthermore, a method for solving the problem has to be found at this stage.

Bachelor Thesis

When students write a bachelor thesis at our Chair, they will first be asked to complete a preference survey, in which they can indicate their topic preferences. Based on their responses, students will be assigned a topic. Students then need to translate this topic into a scientific research question and develop it further together with their supervisor. Students can address their topic either through an empirical study or a literature review. Further details on this will be provided when you complete the preference survey.

Master Thesis

Students who are interested in writing a master thesis should consult the relevant literature or coursework offered by the Chair in order to form ideas about a potentially interesting research project for the master thesis. From this, students will develop their own suggestions about topics or research questions, which will then be discussed and specified with the responsible supervisor in order to find a final topic and research question. To start, it's sufficient to have a topic idea, a justification for its relevance or the research gap it addresses (which should go beyond simply "nobody has tested this before"), and a rough sense of how you plan to investigate it (e.g., survey, experiment, field study, secondary data analysis, ...). An empirical study is a fundamental component of the master thesis. After a topic has been initially suggested by a student, a period of three to six weeks should be used to narrow it down to a more specific problem and research question. During this period, the student will receive guidance from their responsible supervisor.

Seminar Paper

In the seminar, students select a topic from a list of suggested options and develop it further in consultation with their supervisor in the form of a literature review.

2.2. Literature review

A literature review is an important element of every scientific paper. A systematic review can be done using bibliographies, textbooks and (internet-) databases. Exemplary sources include:

- For an initial overview, use *Google Scholar*
 - Search for (combination of) keywords of relevant concepts (e.g. "job satisfaction" and "performance")
 - Forward search: Search for article that cite a well-known article
 - Backward search: Articles listed in the reference section of papers
- Databases (e.g. Lexis-Nexis, Wiso-Net, JSTOR, APA-PsycArticles, ...; check the UB Mannheim's website (<https://www.bib.uni-mannheim.de/>) for access to some of these databases)

- General or specific bibliographies

Since quality is a concern when conducting academic work, it is helpful to consider journal rankings before using a source. For a ranking of journals, consider, for example, the [vzb rating](#) or the “Journal Quality List” from www.harzing.com. In addition to quality, it is important to consider the year when a paper was published and to check whether it is still relevant.

3. Writing a seminar paper or thesis

3.1. Content aspects of the paper or thesis

The structure or table of contents can be deduced from the problem tackled by the paper. (Sub-)aspects of the problem are reflected in the main bullets of the table of contents. The text of the paper should be divided into three parts: Introduction, main part and conclusion.

The **introduction** is supposed to show the relevance of the topic, introduce the goal of the paper, including the research question and the problem it seeks to address, present the methodology used, and outline the structure of the main part.

The content of the **main part** varies depending on the type of scientific paper (e.g., literature review, a paper including an empirical study, ...) and should be discussed with the responsible supervisor. In general, students should consider the following aspects:

- Different but central subject areas should be treated equally in terms of quality and quantity.
- Using short introductions connecting the subsections is helpful to express the overall chain of argumentation of the paper.
- Occasional summaries both aid to structure the text and to assist the reader's comprehension or emphasize relevant aspects.

The **conclusion** of the paper is used to sum up the most important results and to provide interpretations and implications of these results. It is not sufficient to repeat

statements made in the main part; one should rather provide a context for the findings. Additionally, the conclusion can be used to point to unsolved questions and avenues for future research.

3.2. Formal aspects of the paper or thesis

3.2.1. Cover page

The cover page of the paper needs to contain the following: “Universität Mannheim”, “Chair of Human Resource Management and Leadership”, “Prof. Dr. Torsten Biemann”; [type of paper] e.g. “Master Thesis”, [title of the paper], [name], [address], [student ID], [e-mail address], [supervisor] und [hand-in date].

Figure 1 shows an example of the formal arrangement of the title page for seminar papers and theses. Arrangements can be done differently, of course, but need to contain the same information.

Universität Mannheim
Chair of Human Resource Management and Leadership
Prof. Dr. Torsten Biemann
Seminar Paper/ Bachelor Thesis / Master Thesis
(Title, German)
(Title, English)
Handed in by:
[Name]
[Address]
[Student ID]
[E-mail address]
Supervisor: [Name]
Hand-in date: [Date]

Figure 1: Example of the cover page of a seminar paper / thesis

3.2.2. Table of contents and lists

When preparing your table of contents, please indicate the following elements, where applicable. Each list should be placed after the table of contents and before the main text of the paper.

- List of figures (if applicable)
- List of tables (if applicable)

Optionally, you can also include:

- List of abbreviations (if applicable)
- List of symbols (if applicable)

After the chapters and subchapters for the main body of your thesis/paper, further components have to be shown:

- References
- Appendix (if applicable)
- Affidavit and agreement that paper is examined by a plagiarism finder software (see 3.2.3, **only relevant for seminar papers and master theses**)

The **table of contents** describes the structure of the paper. It should be meaningful and comprehensive with regard to how the topic is handled. The numerical classification, as shown in Figure 2, can be used as an example.

Numerical classification:

Table of Contents
 List of figures
 List of tables
 ...
 1 ...
 1.1 ...
 1.1.1 ...
 1.1.2 ...
 1.2 ...
 2 ...
 ...
 References
 Appendix

Figure 2: Numerical classification

The **table of contents** should clearly and completely display all sections and subsections of the text, indicating also their respective page number. We advise against using more than four heading levels (e.g., 2.1.1.1 as maximum).

The **appendix** may include additional material and documents, which simplify the understanding of the text, but are not an integral part of the text and/or are not easily accessible (e.g., questionnaires within empirical studies). Nevertheless, the appendix should not be mistaken as a dump for non-relevant material.

The **list of references** lists all used sources from the text, cited within the paper. This applies to directly cited sources as well as to indirectly cited sources and illustrations that have been taken from a source.

Please refer to the **American Psychological Association's (APA) Style Guide** for details on scientific writing and formatting regarding all sections included in the table of contents. You can borrow an exemplar from the library or use resources available online (<https://apastyle.apa.org/>).

3.2.3. Affidavit and agreement to plagiarism finder software

ONLY RELEVANT FOR MASTER THESES AND SEMINAR PAPERS!

In the case of electronic submission via Prüfungs-Ilias, i.e., currently for bachelor theses, this step is omitted and completed directly in the system.

At the end of the paper the candidate needs to separately attach a written statement with the following content (the actual wording needs to be taken out of the particular valid examination regulations of the course of studies):

“Hiermit versichere ich, dass diese (Abschluss-)Arbeit von mir persönlich verfasst ist und dass ich keinerlei fremde Hilfe in Anspruch genommen habe. Ebenso versichere ich, dass diese Arbeit oder Teile daraus weder von mir noch von anderen als Leistungsnachweis andernorts eingereicht wurde. Wörtliche oder sinngemäße Übernahmen aus anderen Schriften und Veröffentlichungen in gedruckter oder elektronischer Form sind gekennzeichnet. Sämtliche Sekundärliteratur und sonstige

Quellen sind nachgewiesen und in der Bibliographie aufgeführt. Das Gleiche gilt für graphische Darstellungen und Bilder sowie für alle Internet-Quellen.

Ich bin ferner damit einverstanden, dass meine Arbeit zum Zwecke eines Plagiatsabgleichs in elektronischer Form versendet und gespeichert werden kann. Mir ist bekannt, dass von der Korrektur der Arbeit abgesehen werden kann, wenn die Erklärung nicht erteilt wird.”

This statement needs to be **dated** and signed **manually with the first and the last name**. Digital signatures are not valid!

3.2.4. Diction

For scientific texts, a factual and clear language is appropriate. Explain newly introduced concepts and terms. Use technical terms in an appropriate amount. Though technical terms should and can be used, an artificial and exorbitant accumulation of technical terms inhibits the reading flow. Avoid long sentences ranging over multiple lines. These can be difficult to understand for the reader.

3.2.5. Formatting and text layout

The formatting (margin, font, font size, ...) should be according to the APA style. You can find more details on the APA website: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format>.

Deviating from APA style rules, **the line spacing of bachelor and master theses is 1.5**. The text should be **left-aligned**. The text body is 15 pages for seminar papers, 20 pages for bachelor theses, and 40 pages for master theses (each +/- 10 percent). Relevant figures and tables should be placed in the text and pay into the page count.

Page numbers need to be on the top right corner. The pages of the lists before main text of the paper are to be shown in Roman numerals. The main text uses Arabic numbers. The numbering starts with the cover page with I, however, the cover page should not display a number. The appendix should use Arabic numbering.

3.2.6. Citation style within the text

All thoughts and explanations that do not directly stem from the author of the given paper (i.e. which come from scientific literature or other sources) **have to be** declared as such. This can be done using direct or indirect citation such that all used sources of a written paper are related to clearly and completely. In this context, complete refers to the claim that each source that is cited in the text has to reappear in the list of references and vice versa. If sources are omitted, the author presents work of others as their own accomplishment. This form of intentional or unintentional plagiarism has negative consequences on the evaluation of the paper.

Citations can be distinguished into two categories: Citing primary and secondary sources. Generally, students should cite the original (primary) source. Secondary sources, sources that cite a primary source themselves, bear the risk of (partially) modified content. Secondary sources should therefore only be used in exceptions (e.g. in cases in which the primary source is not available). These secondary references should be declared as such (i.e. cited from author, year, pages).

The citation of primary sources can happen in two ways: The **direct citation method** repeats the literal wording of the original source which then appears in the text using quotation marks. The **indirect citation method** reiterates the content of a quote and does not appear in quotation marks. **Please adhere to the citation rules from the APA manual.**

3.3. Code of conduct of the use of AI-systems and AI-related tools

This code of conduct applies to all theses and seminar papers written at our Chair and supplements the university's general rules on academic integrity and good scientific practice.

3.3.1. Purely technical tools

The use of purely technical digital tools - such as text processing software, spelling and grammar checkers, reference management software, databases, and search engines - is always permitted and does not need to be disclosed.

3.3.2. AI systems

AI systems (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, DeepL Write, or comparable generative AI tools) are treated differently, since they can generate, summarize, or evaluate content rather than merely format it. Three levels of use apply:

Language editing. You may use AI systems to improve the language of text you have already written yourself - e.g., to correct grammar and spelling, improve readability, or refine style. This is permitted without prior approval and does not need to be disclosed. The ideas, argumentation, structure, and content must remain entirely your own.

Support for coding and data analysis. You may use AI systems to support coding or statistical analysis for your empirical work (e.g., to draft or debug code) without prior approval. This use must be disclosed in the statement described below.

All other uses. Any other use of AI systems - e.g., generating or structuring ideas, conducting or summarizing literature research, or drafting text - is only permitted after you have discussed it with your supervisor in advance and received explicit agreement. It must also be disclosed in the statement described below. If you are unsure whether a use goes beyond language editing, ask before you use the tool, not afterward.

3.3.3. Disclosure statement

Any use of AI systems beyond language editing (i.e., for coding/data analysis support or any other approved use) must be disclosed in a separate statement appended to your thesis. You may use the template below, adding one row per relevant use.

AI Tool	Thesis Section	Purpose of Use	Discussed with Supervisor?
<i>e.g., ChatGPT</i>	<i>e.g., Section 4.2</i>	<i>e.g., Debugging Stata code</i>	<i>e.g., Not required (disclosure only)</i>

3.3.4. Responsibility

Regardless of the tools used, you remain fully responsible for the content, correctness, originality, and academic integrity of your thesis. Any AI-generated output must be

critically reviewed and verified against primary sources; it may never be adopted uncritically. AI systems may not be listed as an author or co-author of the thesis.

4. Submission and grading criteria of papers/ theses

Bachelor Theses

Bachelor theses are submitted digitally via the Prüfungs-Ilias platform. Students are **not required** to hand in a manual copy. The examination office will communicate all relevant details regarding the digital submission in due time to the students. Please hand in your thesis as well as additional resources like data or code (if applicable).

Master Theses

It takes priority that the thesis is submitted digitally by the specified deadline to the supervisor via email using a common format (PDF or Word) together with any supporting materials (e.g., raw data, code for the data analysis, interview transcripts, ...), as agreed with the supervisor.

In addition, you are required to hand-in **two** manual copies of your thesis. There are not specific requirements regarding the type of binding, as long as it is sturdy enough that no pages come loose. We recommend going for a soft binding option that tends to be cheaper. You can submit the manual copies a) by handing them to your supervisor personally (in this case, please ask about their schedule beforehand) or b) you can send them via post. Regarding the second option, it is sufficient to bring the manual copies to the post office by the deadline (i.e., they do not have to arrive at the Chair by said deadline). It is best to get a receipt so that you can prove that it was submitted correctly. Alternatively, you may deposit the copies directly in the letterbox at the entrance of L1, 1. In all cases, please make sure that the envelope is correctly addressed.

Please use the following address:

Universität Mannheim

z. H. Frau/Herr (name of the supervisor)

BWL, LS Prof. Biemann
68131 Mannheim

Seminar Papers

The paper needs to be submitted digitally by the specified deadline to the supervisor, via email using a common format (PDF or Word).

After handing in the scientific paper, the assessment is done using the following criteria, which also serve as the structure of the assessment report.

1. Clearness of the research goal and the approach

At this criterion, it is important that all relevant research questions that can be deducted from the specified topic are represented in a clear and comprehensible way using the introduction of the paper. Furthermore a clear approach should be evident from this introduction.

2. Composition and outline of the paper

The common thread of the paper should be comprehensible. The outline of the paper should be logical and consistent. Single sections and subsections should be separated correctly with respect of content. Beyond the outline, the text should be structured. The line of argument should be systematic and built on previous sections. In addition, it is important to pay attention to the weights and priorities of the sections in a logical and sensible way.

3. Content

The content of the paper should be differentiated and focused. Here, the correctness of the statements and the reasoning when connecting statements are evaluated. It is also important to consider how deeply a paper/ thesis discusses an aspect. Statements should be explained and be based on relevant sources.

4. Quality of the empirical/theoretical analysis

This criterion evaluates the overall understanding and the comprehensible presentation of the analysis. Furthermore, the theoretical foundation that the analysis is based upon as well as the methodology and the interpretation of the results will be evaluated. The chosen theoretical framework should be appropriate for the research problems and questions. In addition to this, methodological competence, which is expressed in the empirical part of the paper, will be evaluated. The result of the paper should be an answer to the questions raised in the introduction. Finally, it is evaluated which results the author generated and to what extent he or she dealt with all the asked questions.

5. Interpretation and use of literature

Literature should be gathered thoroughly. For more information read 2.2.

6. Language

Comprehensibility, style, readability and clarity of expression will be evaluated.

7. Formal composition

Given formalities should be adhered to. All lists have to be complete and available. Citation method, spelling and punctuation should be correct.

8. Critical appraisal and analysis/personal opinion

The paper should discuss the subject in a comprehensive and differentiated way. A critical review of the results and methodology must be provided at the end of the paper.

Evaluation is accessible to the author at the student service center or at the Chair. In addition to this, it is possible to arrange an appointment with your supervisor for a comprehensive feedback.