

University of Hildesheim

Department of Cultural Policy: Colloquium on "Writing academic papers"

Writing final papers for study modules – suggestions on how to:

...deal with a topic in detail

...write good academic papers

...develop your own written arguments.

1. Preparation

How to independently follow up on a seminar or seminar topic, presented by Thomas Renz – January 2012

Objectives of final papers/homework assignments

In order to write a successful final paper for a study module, you first need to formulate some ideas about your approach. You should do this preparatory work on your own before presenting your ideas to your supervisor and discussing how to proceed with your paper. By working through the following questions in chronological order you should end up with a written record on how to proceed.

a) Subject matter

- What topic am I going to address?
- Do I have any specific guidelines from the lecturer, module or seminar?
- Was there a particular seminar that I found particularly interesting?
- Was there a particular seminar that I feel is worthy of further research?
- Have I already done some work in a particular area?

Aims of this stage

- To establish which research issues I want to address (Basically: what do I want to know?)
- To place the subject in its academic context (which subject/field am I writing about?)
- To create a working title

b) Literature search

- What literature am I already familiar with from the seminar?
- What books are available in the Hildesheim University library?
- What other books are available (Common Library Network: gbv.de)?
- What online resources are available?

- Be selective here!

Aims of this stage

- To create a written list of relevant books and resources
- To borrow books, if appropriate
- To find out whether there are adequate resources to make the topic viable

c) Structure – Introduction

- o Introduction to the topic
- o Presentation of the issues to be addressed
- o Presentation of the methodology

- Main section

- o From the general to the specific
- o What are the key issues that I need to address?
- o Which topics do I need to tackle in order to provide answers to my questions?

- Conclusion

- o Summary of results
- o An opportunity to give a personal opinion/analysis
- o An opportunity to make recommendations on cultural policy
- o An opportunity to look ahead to future studies

Aims of the preparatory work

- To write down the topic, research questions and title
- To draw up a list of literature and resources
- To create a good structure

- Once this has been done, you should arrange a **meeting with your supervisor**. They may suggest some modifications to the topic or structure and recommend additional literature. This is an opportunity to come to a formal agreement on your paper and set a deadline for its completion.

2. Work phases

You will now work through the following three phases:

a) The reading phase

- Gain an overview of the materials available

- Organise the material (e.g. borrow the books required)
- Set up a system to organise and manage the literature (using index cards, Word documents or software, e.g. Citavi)
- Note citations/extracts:

- o Note the (original) wording
- o Make comments (why did I note down this particular citation?)
- o Assign the citation to a particular section
- o Note the source

Aims of this stage

- To document all relevant information
- To assign each citation to a specific section
- To work through all sections

b) The writing phase

- Arrange all your citations and ideas into a logical sequence for each section
- Develop your own arguments

Aims of this stage

- To create a rough draft

c) The revision phase

Content

- o Revise your arguments
- o Are all your statements backed up by appropriate sources?
- o Have all the issues been addressed in full?

Language

- o Spelling
- o Grammar
- o Style and expression

Format

- o Justified text
- o Hyphenation switched on
- o Bold or highlighted titles

- o Sensible page breaks
- o Sensible line breaks
- o Sensible paragraphs
- o Page numbers inserted
- o Left and right margins observed
- o Title page
 - Name, address, e-mail
 - Semester number, course, department
 - Module of the course being studied
 - Title of the paper
 - Submission date
 - Supervisor
- o Table of contents
- o Bibliography

Aims of this stage

- To finish the paper
- To print, bind and submit the paper

3. Presentation

a) Citations

- Do not combine citations
 - Always incorporate citations into an argument
 - Decide on one format for citations
 - In footnotes: include name, year, title, place, e.g.:
- o Renz(2012): Modulabschluss arbeiten verfassen – ein Vorschlag. Hildesheim.
 - o Use abbreviations (ibid, Op. cit.) if you have identical footnotes
 - Use short forms in the main text (e.g. Renz 2012)

b) Rationale/types of writing

- Descriptive writing – for your rationale
- Discussions
- Analyses
- Evaluations

For more tips on literature (in German) see:

www.uni-hildesheim.de - Institut für Kulturpolitik – Studium und Lehre – Downloads –
Leitfaden zum wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten für Studierende