

Guideline for Writing Term Papers

Degree Program B.A. Social and Cultural Anthropology,
B.A. Culture and Society (Subject Social and Cultural Anthropology),
and M.A. Social and Cultural Anthropology

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1 Purposes of the Term Paper

The term paper, as a central component of introductory and advanced seminars, is essentially two things at once. On the one hand, it is (a) an exercise in producing independent academic work, on the other hand, it is (b) an exam.

- (a) First and foremost, the term paper is intended to serve as a practice exercise, a space in which you can engage with topics that interest you. It allows you to develop and refine your ability to construct arguments and to enter into a scholarly conversation with other authors who have explored similar topics and questions.
- (b) At the same time, the term paper is an **exam** for which you will receive a grade based on the quality of your submission.

It is the combination of these two aspects that makes the term paper distinctive and from which its learning objectives are derived. By completing a term paper, you should learn how to:

- Narrow down a **topic** to a manageable scope;
- Develop a **research question** that relates to the topic and can be answered within the framework of the topic;
- Identify relevant **research literature**, read it critically, take excerpts and incorporate it appropriately into your own writing;
- Construct clear and well-founded **arguments**;
- Write **effectively**.

In short, the goal is for you to learn how to participate in the academic conversation through writing.

2 General Requirements

2.1 Dates and Deadlines

- Registration for the term paper, as well as withdrawal from the exam, can be completed via CM-Life.
- Please refer to the seminar syllabus / schedule for the deadlines for **registration, withdrawal, and submission** of the term paper (and where applicable, any resubmission). Alternatively, you may contact the **Office of Examinations**. The responsible office for your program is the Office of Examinations [Referat I/4 Arbeitsgruppe V](#).

2.2 Registering for the Exam

- Please register for each exam in CM-Life under the module for which you wish to receive the credits. A corresponding exam is available for each course. If you encounter any problems, please contact your examiner or the department's responsible office. Errors during registration may lead to problems with the recognition of your exam results and their display on your Transcript of Records (ToR).

2.3 Scope of the Term Paper

The length of the term paper as an exam should fall within the following range (excluding the title page, table of contents, bibliography, and any appendices):

- In the degree program B.A. Social and Cultural Anthropology (SKA), 25,000 to 30,000 characters, including spaces (approximately 12 pages)
- In the degree program B.A. Culture and Society (KuG), 28,000 to 34,000 characters, including

spaces (approximately 10 to 12 pages)

- In the degree program MA Social and Cultural Anthropology (SCA) term papers are written following the respective course and should comprise 20 to 25 pages of main text (56,000 to 70,000 characters, including spaces).

2.4 Formatting

- Font: Times New Roman (12 pt) or Arial (11 pt)
- Alignment: Justified text; 1.5 line spacing
- Margins: 2.5-3 cm on the left and right; 2.5 cm at the top and bottom
- Page numbering: Include page numbers in the footer (centred or ranged right). Page numbering begins with the introduction, which is designated as page 1.
- Long quotations (three lines or more): indented, 10 pt font size, single-spaced
- Footnotes: 10 pt font size, single-spaced, left-aligned
- Headings: bold and numbered
Chapters (14 pt font size); Subchapters (12 pt font size)
- Bibliography:
Single spaced, left-aligned, hanging indent (recommended)
no numbering of bibliographical data
- An example of a title page can be found here

3 The Topic of the Term Paper

3.1 How to select a Topic

Discuss with your examiner the requirements and expectations regarding the topic of your term paper. In many cases, it is advisable, or even required, to select a topic that is related to a topic you have already worked on (for example, in a presentation) or that develops and expands upon it.

- **Association:** Begin by engaging creatively and associatively with your chosen topic area. Write down any terms and ideas that come to mind, using a word cluster, mind map, concept tree, or a similar method. You may do this on a large sheet of paper, on movable index cards, or with [mind-mapping software](#). Additional resources and support for academic writing are available through the Writing Center of Bayreuth University.
- **Key Terms:** Next, examine whether certain concepts have already emerged as particularly important or central. Which of these are key terms in the social and cultural sciences? How are they defined within the relevant literature? What characterizes these concepts, and how do they relate to one another? Ideally, you will identify two, or at most three, central terms (that is, scientific concepts) that will serve as the conceptual and theoretical foundation of your topic and approach. At this stage, you should also begin to explore the current state of research surrounding these terms.
- **Topic Analysis I:** Start by asking yourself the following questions: What do I actually want to find out? What sub-questions could or should I ask? Which other topics are similar to mine? Where do the differences lie? What aspects should definitely remain the same? How is my topic positioned within the broader research landscape?

Topic Analysis II: In the next step, divide the topic into its two dimensions. Temporarily separate the empirical ('real') dimension of the topic from its scientific or social and cultural

anthropological dimension (that is, the terms and perspectives you apply to it). Could you investigate the same phenomenon using different terms and anthropological questions? Which ones? Could you apply the same terms and questions to a different empirical phenomenon? Which one? The aim is, firstly, for you to develop a sense of the multidimensional nature of each topic and, secondly, to recognise what makes your own topic unique in comparison with 'similar' topics.

- **Narrowing the Topic:** Next, limit the scope of your topic with regard to its temporal and spatial dimensions; select the aspects you wish to examine and place one aspect at the centre of your analysis; restrict the elements to be compared; reduce the number of purely illustrative examples; limit both the amount of empirical material and the research methods employed. (Please note: in your paper, you must provide a *substantive justification* for the way in which you have narrowed the topic!).

3.2 Research Question

The research question is the backbone of your term paper. Once you have identified a topic, you are well on your way developing a research question, but you have not yet reached your destination. The topic defines the field in which you want to work, whereas the research question specifies how and why you engage with that field. Review the entire process of topic selection (3.1) and answer the following three questions:

- a) What am I writing about? [Topic; the empirical or theoretical object of inquiry]
- b) What do I want to know? [The question you are asking about the object of inquiry]
- c) Why do I want to know this? [Aim]

Then complete the following sentence:

- a) „I examine / look at / write about ...,
- b) Because I want to understand / find out / explore,
- c) In order to consider / find out / contribute to, ...“

Now formulate a sentence that begins with the final part (c): „The aim of this paper is to, ...“ after that refer to (a) and (b). Voilà, you have the research question of your term paper!

4 Research of Literature

Basic information on the research of literature:

- The aim of a literature review is to gain a well-informed **overview** of the current state of research on a given topic.
- In addition to monographs, edited volumes, and academic essays, **secondary literature** can be highly helpful. Keep in mind that for some topics, only a limited amount of material has been published in German. In such cases, it might be necessary to conduct your research using English keywords. Identifying, locating, and critically engaging with relevant literature is a fundamental component of academic work. Under no circumstances should you rely only on AI-based research of literature.
- As many databases and library catalogues are covered by the university's licensing agreements, they can only be accessed through the university network. Off campus, external access to the university can be realized through the [ITS using Cisco VPN](#).

4.1 Strategies for the Research of Literature

- **Snowball method:** A useful starting point is the seminar syllabus / schedule. Examine the bibliographies of publications related to the topic of your term paper and search for books and articles that are cited therein. These sources will, in turn, refer you to further relevant literature. A characteristic feature of this search strategy is that the literature you discover is generally older than the bibliography from which you started.
- **Local Library Catalogues:** Make use of the University Library catalogues when searching for relevant literature.
- **Electronic Journals Library (EZB):** This search tool allows you to search for journals, but not for individual authors or articles. Therefore, you should first determine in which journal, year, and issue the article you are looking for was published. If the University of Bayreuth holds a license for the respective journal, you will be able to download the article. <http://ezb.uni-regensburg.de/ezeit/fl.phtml?bibid=UBFM>
- **Subject-specific Databases:** Here you find (organized by academic discipline) archives of journals, libraries, and other academic institutions. They allow you to search for bibliographic record and, in many cases, download the full text of articles.
 - o List of subject-specific databases: <https://www.ub.uni-bayreuth.de/de/index.html>
 - o International Bibliography of the Social Sciences: <https://search.proquest.com/>
 - o JSTOR: <https://www.jstor.org/>
 - o Social Science Citation Index: <http://apps.webofknowledge.com/>
 - o Social Science Open Access Repository: <https://www.gesis.org/ssoar/home/>
 - o Persée: <http://www.persee.fr/collections>
- **Meta-search engine “Karlsruher Virtueller Katalog”:** <https://kvk.bibliothek.kit.edu>
- **Search engine (should be used with caution!):** <https://scholar.google.de/>

4.2 Reading

Academic texts are often dense, linguistically complex, and rich in reference to other publications, theories, and arguments. For this reason, you should take sufficient time for reading and use the following questions for orientation:

- **What do I want to know?** From what perspective am I reading this text?
- What is the author’s **central problem** or **research question**?
- What are the **key terms** in the text? How are they defined?
- What **methods** are used to address the problem (empirical or theoretical)?
- What are the text’s **key findings** or **core arguments**?
- How can the author’s approach and result be **evaluated** and **critically assessed**? What aspects have been neglected, and what would need to be added?

4.3 Excerpting

To fully understand an academic text, reading it only once is often not sufficient. It is also essential to take notes while reading. For this reason, you should prepare **excerpts** (content-based summaries). You have only understood what you can put into your own words. In this context, it is helpful to first skim the entire text before beginning your **notes**. When preparing your excerpt, you can follow the structure of the text itself and trace the **author’s line of argument**. In many cases, it is useful to record the **structure of the text** in the form of an outline, since key ideas that together constitute an argument may appear in different parts of the text. Bring these ideas together and assign thematic headings to the sections you

worked out. Don't forget to record the **page numbers of the original text** so that you can later work with quotations. In addition, take notes of everything that strikes you while reading, and formulate your own observations. Draw **connections to other texts** and engage critically with the author's arguments!

4.4 Management of Literature and Knowledge

To avoid losing track of the literature you have identified and worked with during your research, we strongly recommend using **reference management software**. Programs such as **Zotero** and **Citavi** are available free of charge.

4.5 Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when the ideas of others are falsely presented as one's own intellectual work. This includes, for example, reproducing or translating text from other sources (such as books, journals, websites, etc.) either **literally or in essence** without properly acknowledging the original source. Plagiarism may involve not only passages of text but also other forms of content, such as figures, collected data, models, ideas, hypotheses, and arguments. This also applies when only individual sentences or parts of sentences created by others are incorporated into one's own work. Furthermore, plagiarism occurs when text is copied word for word without quotation marks, even if a source citation is provided afterward.

Plagiarism is considered a form of academic misconduct. Consequently, papers containing plagiarism will be graded as "fail" (5.0) and referred to the Board of Examiners. In serious cases, or in the event of repeated academic misconduct, the Board of Examiners may deny the opportunity to retake the assessment. This results in the permanent loss of the right to complete the examination.

The University may use plagiarism detection software to identify instances of plagiarism.

Every term paper should conclude with a **declaration of academic integrity**, including the date, place, and the signature. Please use the following wording:

„I hereby declare that I have completed this paper independently and have not used any sources or aids other than those indicated. Passages reproduced verbatim, including individual sentences and parts thereof, have been clearly identified as quotations. “

I further declare that the content-related argumentation, analysis, interpretation, and structure of this paper are entirely my own work. I have used generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, or similar applications) exclusively for linguistic purposes, such as spell-checking, grammar checking, and the translation of individual terms. No use has been made of such tools for the generation of text passages, arguments, ideas, or research results.

In exceptional cases where generative AI tools have been used beyond these purposes, such use has been fully documented in the appendix, including the name of the tool, the complete prompt, and the purpose for which it was used.

I am aware that any violation of this declaration will be considered an attempt to deceive and will be treated as academic misconduct."

4.6 Artificial Intelligence

Students bear sole responsibility for the preparation and integrity of all parts of their work, including the accurate citation of sources. AI tools may be used for language translation, proofreading, brainstorming, formatting, and the creation of data visualizations, provided that the required declaration of use is included. However, AI must not be used to generate written assignments, academic arguments, or academic writing styles. Any use of Large Language Models (LLMs) in the preparation of written work must be clearly disclosed, including the prompt(s) used (see also the Declaration of Academic Integrity above). This requirement applies both to textual content and to the creation of images, graphics, and visualizations. Adaptive AI platforms also include translation software such as DeepL. Digital tools that do not possess a specifically generative function, such as online dictionaries, library catalogues, and similar resources, do not need to be cited.

Example: „This term paper was proofread using Microsoft Copilot. The prompt used was: ‚Please correct the grammar of this term paper.‘“

AI tools typically do not provide sources, or they may generate fictitious references. They may also produce incorrect information and can generally access only content that is freely available online. It should further be noted that AI systems tend to generate general statements rather than well-founded and clearly argued positions. By contrast, the purpose of term papers in the humanities and social sciences is to discuss a question and the associated line of reasoning in a convincing manner. It is therefore the responsibility of the author to verify the relevance, veracity or accuracy of AI-generated content.

Copying texts, or even individual text passages, from the internet, as well as using AI tools without properly acknowledging such use, constitutes academic misconduct. Such conduct may result in severe disciplinary consequences, including expulsion from the university.

Documents and courses on reflection and guidance:

- Key ethical questions regarding the use of generative AI
- Basic AI Certificate (AI-Cert) für Bachelor's students

5 Writing the Term Paper

5.1 Title (≠ Topic ≠ Research Question)

The title of your paper should be informative and clearly indicate what the paper is about. The title of the seminar within which the paper is written is not an appropriate title for the term paper itself! The title should concisely capture the central argument of your paper and ideally spark the reader's interest. Avoid wordy phrases and parenthetical constructions (e.g., „(In)Security in Niamey“) or similar devices. You should also avoid using your research question itself as the title of your term paper!

5.2 Introduction, Main Parts, Conclusion

- The **introduction** presents the topic and outlines its relevance to anthropology. Here, you narrow down your topic and formulate the specific anthropological research question that you will address in your paper (see 3.2).
- The **main parts** contain a systematic discussion of the research question. This is where the key terms relevant to your topic are introduced and defined. The topic is then discussed with

reference to relevant theoretical approaches and debates, or empirical findings are presented. Throughout the paper, it is essential to maintain a clear connection to the research question formulated in the introduction. The main parts should be organized into chapters, sections, and subsections that reflect the stages of your argument. The structure should not extend beyond the second level of numbering (e.g., 2.1). The individual chapters and sections must be logically linked so that a common thread can be identified. Even without the logic and apparent plausibility of the numbering sequence (such as 'Of course, chapter 2.3 comes after 2.2!'), the structure must make sense. At the beginning of a new chapter, or at the end of the preceding one, you may briefly summarize what has been achieved so far. Likewise, each chapter should begin with a short preview of what will be discussed in the following section (Keyword: Piloting. The reader should be guided throughout the chapters and discussion, and should repeatedly refer to the research question set out in the introduction).

- The **conclusion** begins by summarizing the results of the paper. No new ideas or arguments should be introduced at this stage. Then think about what your work was about, what you discovered in your work, and answer the research question raised in the introduction. In a third step, you should either formulate further questions or put forward a critical argument (for example, in response to a social or cultural anthropologist or a particular theory) that logically follows from the line of reasoning set out in the main parts.
- The introduction and conclusion may also be referred to as 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion'. The main sections have headings based on their content.

5.3 Argumentation

Before writing the first sentence of your term paper, you should already have planned the overall architecture of your argumentation. An argument consists (in addition to its premises) of a series of interconnected statements that culminate in a conclusion, that is, a reasoned answer to your research question. The steps required to answer your research question form the stages of your line of argumentation (i.e., the chapters and sections of your term paper). It should be apparent that each step follows logically and necessarily from the preceding one. The arbitrary or random placement of a paragraph (i.e., a sub argument) suggests a disrupted line of reasoning (i.e., the incoherence of the argument). Strive for a clear and coherent argument throughout your paper and pay close attention to maintaining a consistent **thread of argument**. **Originality** and critical reflection are highly encouraged!

5.4 Paragraphs

Paragraphs are the fundamental components of any text and should follow a clear internal structure. They should not be confused with segments of text that are merely separated by line breaks (more or less arbitrarily). **Paragraphs are self-contained units of meaning**. Each paragraph represents a thought. The first sentence introduces that thought; the following sentences elaborate on it by providing evidence, examples, or further details; the concluding sentence reinforces the thought introduced at the beginning of the paragraph and at the same time creates a transition to the next paragraph (see: <https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Paragraph>).

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5.5 Sentences

- **Write clear and understandable sentences.**
- **Avoid long and complex sentences.**
- **Who is speaking?** Make sure the reader knows who is speaking. Use clear rhetorical devices

(e.g., „For Goffmann theatre is ... “or „From Goffman’s point of view ... “).

- By contrast, when making statements that clearly reflect your own contribution (for example, when you summarize (in your own words) what others have said so far, suggest a new perspective, or critique authors based on your own ideas, use explicit rhetorical devices (e.g., “In summary, I argue / it becomes evident / it appears as if; Goffmann’s approach is less convincing compared to...”). In addition, use **paragraphs** strategically to create such distinctions. A deliberate use of rhetorical emphasis and verb use as well as paragraph breaks is necessary to clearly distinguish between content you have developed and content from other sources in your text, and to make the central thread of your argument clear.
- **Avoid passive constructions whenever possible.**

5.6 Words

- **Avoid using complicated jargon.** Concepts and theories from the social sciences should always be introduced deliberately and with clear purpose. Be mindful of the distinction between an obscure foreign word and a technical term; the former can often be replaced by a plain English equivalent, whereas technical terms should be introduced consciously and explained adequately when they first appear.
- **Connect your thoughts.** Transitions in writing indicate how one idea relates to the preceding one and contribute to both the flow of the text and the clarity of your argumentation. You use transitions to highlight conclusions, causal relationships, examples, comparisons, additional information, etc. This means that you should not use transitions haphazardly, but rather sparingly and thoughtfully. In the following are some examples of transitions:
 - „Therefore“, „Thus“, „For this reason,“(causal relationship)
 - „Consequently“, „Hence“(conclusion)
 - „Furthermore“, „In addition“(addition)
 - „This point makes clear that“, „This observation illustrates that“, (emphasis); always use "this" at the beginning of a sentence with a clear reference).
 - „For example“, „For instance“(example)
 - „Therefore“, „For this reason“(Summary)
 - „Although“, „While“, „But“(exception/contrast)
- **Avoid filler words and filler phrases:** Many words can usually be removed from a text without affecting its meaning, for example: actually, also, extremely, particularly, precisely, naturally, often, very, immensely, really, undoubtedly ... (see Schneider 2001: 131-3).

5.7 Proofreading

Once you have completed your paper, you should carefully proofread it. It is often helpful to set the finished paper aside for a period of time before beginning the revision process. When proofreading, pay attention to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and language style. Critically review your work once more from the following perspectives:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Content: | Is the research question clearly formulated? Is the argumentation logical and convincing? Is there a clear “common thread” running through the work? |
| Language: | Does the paper read smoothly? Are the sentences perhaps too convoluted? If so, consider breaking one long sentence into two or three shorter ones. Are the technical terms used appropriately? Are there unnecessary foreign words in the text? |
| Format: | Is the structure correctly formatted? Are the page numbers correct? Are quotations, |

citations, and the reference list formatted consistently and in accordance with the required style? Are spelling and punctuation accurate? Are all sources cited completely and correctly?

Before submitting your term paper, you should also ask a fellow student to proofread it.

P.S. Take advantage of the support services offered by the UBT Writing Center.

6 Evaluation Criteria

- **Topic and research question:** Is it clear what the paper examines? Is the paper's objective clear? Is the research question clear and concise?
- **Starting point and frame of reference:** Are the scope and selection of the literature reviewed appropriate in terms of the subject matter? Is a meaningful link established with the current state of research?
- **Approach:** Is the methodological and theoretical approach clear? Are the key terms introduced, defined or described in a way that is easy to understand? Are the terms, theories and methods applied appropriately to the topic? To what extent do you demonstrate critical reflection and the ability to engage critically with sources and the literature?
- **Results:** Are the structure and organization of the work clear and easy to follow? Are the line of reasoning and the development of the argument clear and easy to follow? Are the findings meaningfully discussed in relation to the current state of research?
- **Formatting:** Are the citation style and bibliography correct? Is the paper structured in accordance with the guidelines (formatting, length)? Is the content presented consistently? Are the illustrations correctly incorporated into the text?
- **Please ensure you use gender-neutral language:** There are various ways of doing this. An overview can be found in the University of Bayreuth's [language guide](#).
- **Language:** Is the work written in a way that is easy to understand? Is the work correct in terms of spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure and phrasing? Avoid typos and repeated words; delete any words or parts of sentences that have been left by mistake when rephrasing.
- **Originality**

7 Formal Matters, Citation Styles

Please refer to the leaflet '[Formal Structure of Academic Papers](#)' published by the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at UBT.

8 Important Contacts

The UBT Writing Centre offers both one-to-one and workshop-based support. Further information, such as the current course programme, can be found at <https://www.schreibzentrum.uni-bayreuth.de/en/index.html>

Students with neurodivergent conditions are particularly encouraged to seek advice and support from the University of Bayreuth's Diversity Service Centre: <https://www.diversity.uni-bayreuth.de/en/index.html>

Further information on UBT's AI resources, including training courses, can be found at <https://www.its.uni-bayreuth.de/en/ai>.

9 Recommended Reading

On the fundamental building blocks of scientific argumentation:

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein (2006): *They Say, I Say. The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. New York, NY & London: W. W. Norton.

Writing clearly and effectively in German and English:

Franck, Norbert and Joachim Stary (2009): *Die Technik wissenschaftlichen Arbeitens. Eine praktische Anleitung* (15. Auflage). Paderborn: Schöningh (UTB).

Schneider, Wolf (2001[1984]): *Deutsch für Profis. Wege zu gutem Stil*. München: Goldmann.

Skern, Tim (2011): *Writing Scientific English. A Workbook* (2. Auflage). Wien: Facultas WUV (UTB).

Standop, Ewald und Matthias Meyer (2008): *Die Form der wissenschaftlichen Arbeit. Grundlagen, Technik und Praxis für Schule, Studium und Beruf* (18. Auflage). Wiebelsheim: Quelle & Meyer.

Strunk, William Jr. and E[lynn]. B. White (1979 [1918]): *The Elements of Style*. Boston, MA u.a.: Allyn and Bacon.