



University of Bamberg

Junior Professorship of Sociology, esp. Work and Health

<https://www.uni-bamberg.de/sozges/>

Guidelines for Writing Term Papers

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Contents

1	Preparation	1
1.1	General Remarks	1
1.2	Topic and Research Question	1
1.3	Preliminary Consultation	1
1.4	Registration	2
1.5	Length	2
2	Writing the Term Paper	3
2.1	Literature Search	3
2.2	Components	4
2.2.1	Title Page	5
2.2.2	Table of Contents	5
2.2.3	List of Abbreviations	5
2.2.4	List of Tables and Figures	5
2.2.5	Introduction	5
2.2.6	Main Body	5
2.2.7	Conclusion	7
2.2.8	References	7
2.2.9	Declaration of Authorship	7
2.2.10	Appendix	7
2.3	Formatting	7
2.4	Citing Sources	8
2.5	Further Information and Links	10
3	Submission and Assessment	11
3.1	Submission	11
3.2	Assessment	11
4	Appendix	12
4.1	List of Important Academic Journals in Different Disciplines	12
4.2	Sample Title Page	13
4.3	Sample Declaration of Authorship	14
4.4	Assessment Form	15

1 Preparation

1.1 General Remarks

The purpose of a term paper is to address a research question of your own choice within the thematic scope of the course. By writing the paper, you demonstrate that you are able to develop a scientific research question and address it independently. In principle, two approaches are possible. You can either investigate a research question by identifying, reviewing, and synthesising existing academic literature (literature review), or you can conduct your own data analysis (secondary data analysis). A data analysis is generally more time-consuming, but it gives you the opportunity to apply and practise methodological skills using a concrete research question. In the early stages of your studies, particularly before completing the relevant methods courses, a literature review is recommended.

1.2 Topic and Research Question

An important step is to choose a topic and formulate a scientific research question that can be answered within the scope of the term paper. The topic should have a clear connection to the course, should be current in a broad sense, and should be of scientific and/or practical relevance. Personal interest in and curiosity about the topic are, of course, an advantage. When formulating the research question, make sure that it is clear and can be answered within the scope of a term paper.

1.3 Preliminary Consultation

Before you start writing your term paper, you may discuss your research question and planned approach with the instructor. You are welcome to attend office hours, which take place every Wednesday from 14:00 to 15:00. Prior registration by email is recommended. Before the meeting, please prepare a brief project outline (max. 1 page) and send it to the instructor by email in advance. The project outline should contain the following information:

- **General information:** Name, email address, date, degree programme, semester of study, provisional title of the term paper
- **Research question:** State the specific research question you would like to investigate. Explain why you consider the research question relevant. What scientific or practical added value could result from answering the question? In your view, how does the research question relate to current societal debates and challenges?
- **Theoretical framework:** Which theories or models are relevant to your research question? Which assumptions or hypotheses can you derive from them?

- **Methodological approach:** Explain how you intend to answer the research question. *For a literature review:* Which search terms will you use? Which search criteria will you apply? Which bibliographic databases will you use? *For your own data analysis:* Which datasets will you use? How will you obtain access to the data? Which constructs are relevant to the research question? How will they be operationalised? Which statistical methods will you use? What is your analysis strategy?
- **References:** List the sources used in your project outline.

1.4 Registration

You are responsible for registering your term paper in FlexNow. The registration and withdrawal period runs from 1 June to 10 July in the summer semester and from 16 November to 29 January in the winter semester.

1.5 Length

At Bachelor's level, the term paper should comprise 10–12 pages of main text (with approximately 10 references). At Master's level, the paper should comprise 15–20 pages of main text (with approximately 15 references). The title page, tables, figures, lists, and appendices do not count towards the main text.

2 Writing the Term Paper

2.1 Literature Search

Once you have developed a research question and discussed it with the instructor, you can begin working on the term paper itself. A central step is to search for academic literature relevant to your topic. The most important bibliographic databases for the subject areas covered by the Junior Professorship are listed below. Please note that most databases can only be accessed through the university network.

1. [Web of Science / Social Sciences Citation Index](#): An article database covering the social sciences and related fields, including social medicine and psychology. It indexes thousands of social science journals across numerous disciplines.
2. [PubMed](#): PubMed includes MEDLINE, a database maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM), covering medicine, dentistry, preclinical sciences, health-care, nursing, veterinary medicine, and related fields such as biology, biochemistry, psychology, and sports medicine.
3. [Google Scholar](#): A large search engine for academic literature across disciplines. Google Scholar also displays citation counts for publications. This makes it possible to identify influential publications relatively quickly and to use cited and citing references for snowball searching.
4. [Bamberg Catalogue](#): Joint catalogue of the University Library and the Bamberg State Library. It includes books and other media from the Bavarian Library Network and allows interlibrary loan requests. Textbooks and monographs can be particularly useful for obtaining an initial overview at the beginning of your literature search.

Some tips for your literature search:

1. **Identify suitable search terms.** Create a list of keywords relevant to your research question. Also consider synonyms, related terms, and alternative spellings (example: “health”, “healthy”, “wellbeing”).
2. **Make sure to search for English-language literature as well.** This will usually yield a substantially larger and more informative set of results.
3. **Use Boolean operators.** You can use the operators “AND”, “OR”, and “NOT” to refine your search.
 - **AND:** Show only sources containing both terms
Example: “Unemployment” *AND* “Health”

- **OR:** Include synonyms as well
Example: “Unemployment” *AND* (“Health” *OR* “Wellbeing” *OR* “Well-being”)
- **NOT:** Exclude terms (in Google Scholar: “-”)
Example: “Unemployment” *AND* “Health” *NOT* “Retirement”
Example: “Unemployment” *AND* “Health” “-Retirement”
- **Truncation (*):** Includes different endings of a search term
Example: “unemploy*” finds both “unemployment” and “unemployed”

Particularly in the context of a term paper, it is impossible to review everything that has been published on a topic. You cannot include everything you find and must therefore make a selection. To identify particularly important sources, you should consider several criteria. In many cases, the title and abstract will already indicate how relevant a source is to your research question. The publication date can also be important. As far as possible, the literature should be up to date and reflect the current state of research. In addition, you can use Google Scholar to check how often an article has been cited and thereby identify particularly influential publications. To avoid getting lost in the literature search, it can also be helpful to draw up a timetable for the paper in advance and stop searching once the time allocated to the literature search has been exceeded.

In addition to searching bibliographic databases, it is worth consulting leading academic journals directly. The appendix to this document contains a list of important journals in sociology, medical and health sociology, social epidemiology, work and health, and public health.

Further information on literature searches and general search strategies is available [on the University Library’s information page on literature searching](#).

2.2 Components

A term paper usually has the following structure:

- Title page
- Table of contents
- List of abbreviations
- List of tables and figures (optional)
- Introduction
- Main body
- Conclusion
- References
- Declaration of authorship
- Appendix (optional)

The individual components are described in more detail below.

2.2.1 Title Page

A sample title page containing all necessary information is provided in the appendix to this document.

2.2.2 Table of Contents

The table of contents provides an overview of the structure of your paper. It is relatively easy to create if you use the appropriate heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) in Microsoft Word. A YouTube tutorial on creating automatic tables of contents and headings is available [here](#). For reasons of clarity, the table of contents should preferably not extend beyond two levels of headings.

2.2.3 List of Abbreviations

All abbreviations must be explained when they are first used in the main text and must also be listed alphabetically in the list of abbreviations (example: BMI = Body Mass Index).

2.2.4 List of Tables and Figures

If you include several tables and/or figures in your paper, a corresponding list can be useful.

2.2.5 Introduction

The introduction should establish the relevance of the topic and state the specific research question. As a general rule, begin with broader information, then become increasingly specific, and finally arrive at your research question. Bear in mind that readers will usually have only limited prior knowledge of your topic. The first paragraph should therefore provide an engaging starting point that introduces the topic in an interesting way. This could, for example, be a current societal debate or a statistic illustrating an important trend. In a subsequent paragraph, narrow down the topic, lead up to your research question, and state it explicitly. In the final paragraph, provide a brief overview of the structure of the paper. The introduction should not substantially exceed approximately 1–2 pages (a maximum of 15% of the total length of the paper).

2.2.6 Main Body

The main body investigates the research question. It usually consists of several sections. The precise structure and titles of the individual sections are generally up to you, but the main body should cover the essential aspects of the topic and follow a logical structure. In

many cases, it is useful to distinguish between a theoretical section and a results section. The following points should be considered:

- **Definition of key terms:** Key technical terms should be defined and used consistently. If, for example, your paper examines the health consequences of unemployment, it should be clear which statistical definition of unemployment you are using and which groups of people it includes (e.g. marginally employed persons?).
- **Theoretical framework:** Important theories, models, or concepts relevant to your research topic should be addressed and explained clearly. Theories are central to scientific work and, among other things, serve to formulate reasoned assumptions about relationships between variables. If, for example, your paper examines the health consequences of fixed-term employment contracts, you should first formulate assumptions about why fixed-term employment might affect people's health. Possible approaches include stress models from psychology (e.g. limited ability to plan for the future as a stressor) or deprivation concepts from medical sociology or sociology more generally (e.g. interruptions in employment increase the risk of poverty, and poverty restricts access to healthy choices).
- **Methodological approach:** If you are writing an empirical paper, you must explain in a methods section which data you use and how they were collected, which inclusion and exclusion criteria you applied to your analytical sample, how key variables (e.g. unemployment, mental health) were constructed, and which statistical methods you used. The methods section should document your approach step by step and enable other researchers to obtain the same results using the same data and analytical strategy. For data analysis, we recommend the statistical software "Stata", as this is the programme for which we can provide the most support. You are, however, free to use alternative software such as "R".
- **Presentation of results:** In a literature review, the relevant section presents the findings of studies addressing your research question. Individual studies should be summarised concisely with regard to their most important characteristics (methods, key findings, limitations). The literature should also be presented systematically in subsections that follow a logical structure, for example by theoretical approach, research discipline, or methodological approach. The main contribution of the paper lies in classifying the individual studies, discussing them critically, and drawing an overall conclusion with regard to your research question. If the findings of studies differ substantially, this should be presented and possible reasons for the differences should be discussed. Methodological strengths and weaknesses of individual studies should likewise be identified, and the contribution of each study should be weighted accordingly. In an empirical paper, the results section presents the findings of your data analysis. When reporting results, use the STROBE checklist linked in the

footnote¹ or, more generally, follow the structure of studies published in academic journals. As a rule, a descriptive section (describing the distribution of individual variables in the analytical sample) and a section presenting the main multivariable analyses (regression tables, etc.) are expected.

2.2.7 Conclusion

In the final section, summarise the main body of the paper and answer the research question on the basis of the evidence presented. You may discuss limitations of previous studies, identify further research questions, and outline promising directions for future research. You may also discuss practical implications, for example possible measures to address the problem under investigation. The conclusion should be approximately the same length as the introduction.

2.2.8 References

The reference list documents all sources used in the paper. In an author-date citation style, references are listed alphabetically by the surname of the author.² In numerical citation styles such as Vancouver, references are listed in numerical order. [Here](#) you can find an overview of different source types (books, journal articles, websites, etc.) and how they should be documented in the reference list. Only sources cited in the text should be included in the reference list.

2.2.9 Declaration of Authorship

A template for the declaration of authorship is provided in the appendix to this document. The declaration must be signed and included in the paper as a scan.

2.2.10 Appendix

An appendix may be used for additional results, tables, or figures. This can be particularly useful for empirical papers.

2.3 Formatting

Please observe the following formatting requirements:

¹STROBE = *Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology*. The checklist is available online at <https://www.strobe-statement.org/>.

²If several works by the same author are cited, they are listed chronologically by year of publication. If several works by the same author were published in the same year, the year is followed by a, b, c, etc.

Paper size:	DIN A4
Font (size):	Times New Roman (12 pt) or Arial (11 pt)
Text alignment:	Justified
Line spacing:	1.5
Left and right margins:	2.5 cm each (standard setting)
Top and bottom margins:	2.5 cm each (standard setting)
Page numbers:	Numbering in Arabic numerals begins with the introduction. Page numbers should be placed at the bottom right. The table of contents may be numbered using Roman numerals. The title page has no page number.
Section headings:	Section headings may be bold and may use a larger font size, but not larger than 16 pt. Headings and main text should use the same font. Please do not use coloured text.
Emphasis in the text:	No <u>underlining</u> or bold emphasis

2.4 Citing Sources

All sources used in your paper must be cited correctly. Citations make clear which research findings and ideas are your own and which are based on the work of other authors. They also allow readers to identify and locate the sources you have used. Using another person's ideas or wording without acknowledging the source constitutes plagiarism. Both verbatim (direct) quotations and paraphrased (indirect) use of other sources must therefore be clearly identified.

Different citation styles exist. The important point is to use one style consistently throughout your paper. For term papers and theses at the Junior Professorship, the citation style of the *American Sociological Association* (ASA) is recommended. In ASA style, in-text citations generally consist of the author's surname and the year of publication. There is no comma between the name and the year.

For two authors, both surnames are given and connected by "and" (e.g. Martin and Bailey 1988). For three authors, all three surnames are listed the first time the source is cited (e.g. Carr, Smith, and Jones 1962). In subsequent citations, only the first surname followed by "et al." is used (Carr et al. 1962). For four or more authors, only the first surname followed by "et al." is used from the first citation onwards. When several sources are cited together, they are separated by semicolons.

Examples of indirect citations:

Analyses of the German Microcensus suggest that unemployed people do

not generally start smoking when they become unemployed, but those who already smoked beforehand increase their tobacco consumption (Hollederer 2005).

A Europe-wide study found that increases in unemployment were subsequently associated with increases in mortality from suicide and alcohol abuse (Stuckler et al. 2009).

Although women and men obtain university degrees at approximately equal rates, only around 30% of researchers worldwide are women (UNESCO 2015).

If the author's name is already mentioned in the main text, only the year is placed in parentheses:

Based on the German Microcensus, Hollederer (2005) shows that unemployment may be associated with changes in smoking behaviour.

For direct quotations, the original wording is placed in quotation marks and the page number is also provided. In ASA style, the page number follows the year directly and is separated from it by a colon. The abbreviation "p." is not used. Omissions are indicated by "[...]". Your own additions or explanations within a quotation are also placed in square brackets. Your own explanatory notes can, for example, be marked with "author's note".

Examples of direct quotations:

The authors refer to the calculated costs as the "minimum cost of healthy living" (Morris et al. 2000:888).

A review found evidence that more generous unemployment insurance benefits may protect mental health: "Specifically, we found that when UI [unemployment insurance, author's note] benefits are generous [...] the resulting financial security results in better mental health among those who are unemployed" (O'Campo et al. 2015:92).

Longer verbatim quotations should be formatted as indented block quotations. In general, long direct quotations should be used sparingly. It is usually preferable to summarise the statements relevant to your own argument in your own words and cite the corresponding source indirectly.

When referring to specific statements, findings, or passages from a source, it can also be useful to provide a page number for an indirect citation. As with direct quotations, the

page number is appended to the year after a colon, for example (Müller 2022:45–47).

Reference management software can make working with sources and citations considerably easier. Such programmes contain a range of citation styles and allow references to be formatted largely automatically. Zotero is a free reference management programme. Instructions for installing and using Zotero are available [on the University of Bamberg website](#). When using automatic formatting, select the *American Sociological Association (ASA)* citation style. Further information on correct citation practices is available [here](#).

Note on the use of reference management software: Even if Zotero or another programme allows you to save and cite a source automatically, you remain responsible for ensuring that the information in your paper is complete and correct. Always check whether all necessary details, such as authors, year of publication, title, journal or edited volume, volume, issue, page range, or publisher, appear correctly in the reference list. If an organisation rather than an individual is responsible for a source (e.g. the Federal Agency for Civic Education, GESIS, or the Federal Statistical Office), the organisation should be entered as the author. Pay particular attention to the year of publication.

2.5 Further Information and Links

- [Study and Examination Regulations for the Bachelor's Programme in Sociology](#)
- [Study and Examination Regulations for the Master's Programme Sociology and Social Research](#)
- [Module Handbook for the Bachelor's Programme in Sociology](#)
- [Module Handbook for the Master's Programme Sociology and Social Research](#)
- [Module Handbook for the Master's Programme Public Health](#)
- [University of Bamberg Courses on Academic Writing](#)
- [Responsible Use of Sources in Academic Work](#)

3 Submission and Assessment

3.1 Submission

Term papers must be submitted electronically. A printed copy is not required. Please include a signed and scanned declaration of authorship. Papers must be submitted exclusively via the Virtual Campus (VC) course page.

The submission period for term papers is three months. The following standard submission deadlines apply to term papers at the Junior Professorship:

Summer semester: 10 September

Winter semester: 10 March

The term paper must be submitted via VC by **23:59** on the respective submission date at the latest. Submission after the deadline is not permitted, and a late term paper will be awarded a grade of **5.0 (fail)**.

An extension of the submission period is possible in the event of illness certified by a medical doctor. Please submit the medical certificate electronically via the secretariat's email address no later than the submission deadline. The submission period will be extended by the number of certified days of illness.

3.2 Assessment

Assessment takes into account compliance with formal requirements, style and structure, and academic content. Overall, the paper should address a research question relevant to the course, be based on suitable and up-to-date academic literature, comply with academic standards, follow a logical structure, and be clearly written. To make the assessment criteria transparent and comprehensible, the assessment form for term papers is included in the appendix.

4 Appendix

4.1 List of Important Academic Journals in Different Disciplines

Sociology:

- [American Sociological Review](#)
- [Annual Review of Sociology](#)
- [European Sociological Review](#)
- [Zeitschrift für Soziologie](#)
- [Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie](#)

Medical and Health Sociology:

- [Journal of Health and Social Behavior](#)
- [Sociology of Health & Illness](#)
- [Social Science & Medicine](#)
- [Health Sociology Review](#)

Social Epidemiology:

- [Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health](#)

Work & Health:

- [Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health](#)
- [Occupational & Environmental Medicine](#)
- [International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health](#)

Public Health:

- [Annual Review of Public Health](#)
- [European Journal of Public Health](#)

4.2 Sample Title Page

University of Bamberg

Faculty of Social Sciences, Economics and Business Administration

Junior Professorship of Sociology, esp. Work and Health

<Title of the course>

<Title and name of the instructor>

<Current semester (winter or summer semester)>

<Title of the term paper>

<Name of the author>

<Address>

<Email address>

Student ID number:

Degree programme:

Semester of study:

Submission date:

4.3 Sample Declaration of Authorship

Declaration of Authorship

Declaration

I hereby declare that I have prepared this term paper without the assistance of third parties and without using any aids other than those indicated, and that the paper has not previously been submitted in the same or a similar form for another course. All passages adopted verbatim or in substance have been identified as such.

Place, date

Signature

4.4 Assessment Form

Assessment Form for Term Papers

Course:

Instructor:

Title of the paper:

Author:

Date of assessment:

Criterion	Description	Weight
Topic and research question	The topic has a clear connection to the course, is broadly current, and is of scientific and/or practical relevance. The research question is clearly defined and can be answered within the scope of a term paper.	0.10
Structure and argumentation	The content of the paper and the approach taken are clear from its structure. The individual parts of the paper are logically connected and form a coherent line of argument. The paper contains an introduction that explains the relevance of the topic and states the scientific research question. The main body presents the findings systematically. The conclusion answers the research question, discusses the findings while considering possible limitations, and provides an outlook on future research and/or practical implications.	0.20
Theoretical framework	Relevant theories and concepts are presented in the main body and applied to the research question. Key terms are defined and used consistently.	0.20
Methods	The data used are suitable for answering the research question. The empirical material, variables, and statistical methods are described completely and transparently. The statistical methods are appropriate and the results are interpreted correctly.	0.20
Use of literature and sources	The literature reviewed is relevant to the research question, meets academic standards, and is largely up to date. Sources are cited consistently, completely, and in a formally correct manner. Direct quotations and paraphrases are clearly identified, and all sources cited in the text are included in the reference list.	0.15
Language and style	The text is largely free of grammatical and spelling errors. It is written clearly and comprehensibly. Appropriate academic terminology is used and colloquial expressions are avoided.	0.10
Formal criteria	Compliance with the required length and number of sources; completeness of the paper (title page, table of contents, introduction, main body, conclusion, reference list, declaration of authorship); compliance with the general formatting requirements (font, line spacing, margins, etc.).	0.05
Overall grade		
Overall grade (rounded)		