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Guidelines for Writing Academic Papers

**- Seminar Papers, Bachelor's Theses, and
Master's Theses -**

Table of Contents

1	General Notes on Formal Structure	1
1.1	Text Formatting	1
1.2	Page Format	2
1.3	Formatting of Tables, Figures, and Graphs	2
1.4	Scope of the Thesis.....	3
2	General Notes on Content Structure.....	3
2.1	Content Concept and Approach	4
2.2	Structure of the Thesis	4
2.2.1	Title Page	5
2.2.2	Table of Contents	5
2.2.3	List of Abbreviations	5
2.3	List of Tables and Figures	6
2.3.1	Main Text.....	6
2.3.2	Bibliography.....	9
2.3.3	Appendix/Glossary/Index of Decisions.....	10
2.3.4	Affidavit.....	11
3	Citation Style (Footnotes).....	12
4	Use of AI-powered tools	14
4.1	Examples of How to Cite the Use of AI Tools.....	15
4.2	Special Requirements for Legal Theses.....	15
5	Submission of the Paper	16
6	Presentation.....	17

List of Abbreviations

e.g. = for example

ed. = editor

Vol. = volume

p. = page

etc. = and others

cf. = compare

e.g. = for example

List of Tables

Table 1: Formatting Headings 2

1 General Notes on Formal Structure

Below you will find important information on the formatting and structural layout of your academic paper. The guidelines in this chapter are intended, in particular, to ensure that papers written at our department have a uniform appearance and should therefore be strictly followed.

1.1 Text Formatting

Academic papers must be formatted consistently throughout; the following recommendations must be followed:

- Use the **Arial font** in **12pt**.
- Please set the **line spacing to 1.3 lines** and use both **justified alignment** and automatic **hyphenation**. Note: Double-check the hyphenation before submission, as even word processing programs can make mistakes!
- Use “single” line spacing for **footnotes**; the font size there is **10pt** (see the examples below regarding citation style).
- **Paragraphs** should always begin flush left. A spacing of 6pt should be used between paragraphs; **sections**, on the other hand, should be separated by a blank line!
- The **table of contents** should be numbered (e.g., 3.2; 3.2.1, etc.). To avoid errors, use the automatic table of contents feature in your word processor whenever possible (e.g., using style sheets). More than four levels of headings are not recommended.
- **Headings** should be formatted in accordance with this style guide and, depending on their outline level, as shown in Table 1:

Outline Level	Font size	Formatting	Leading	End spacing
1	18	bold	24pt	6pt
2	16	bold	18pt	6pt

3	14	bold	18pt	6pt
4	12	bold, italic	12pt	6pt

Table 1: Formatting Headings

1.2 Page layout

- Use the following **margin settings**:

Top: 3.0 cm

Bottom: 2.0 cm

Left: 3.0 cm

Right: 2.0 cm

- Page **numbers** should be aligned to the right in the header. The title page is considered the first page but is not numbered. The table of contents, list of abbreviations, and lists of figures and tables are numbered using Roman numerals (I, II, III...). When the main body of the thesis begins, the numbering starts again at one, but this time using Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3...).
- In the **header**, in addition to the page number, the title of the respective part of the thesis (not the chapter, section, or subsection) should be listed left-aligned in 10pt font.
- In the **footer**, the author's name should be aligned to the left and the current semester to the right, also in 10pt font.

1.3 Formatting of Tables, Figures, and Graphs

To attract sufficient attention, texts must be designed not only in terms of content (see below) but also visually. Key concepts here are: **schematization and visualization**.

There are (virtually) no limits to your imagination here. Nevertheless, here are some important guidelines you should keep in mind:

- Tables, figures, and graphs are part of the text and should be inserted where they are necessary for understanding the text and where the flow of the text allows.

- Tables, figures, and graphs should generally be inserted into the document only after they are first mentioned in the text or referenced accordingly.
- Tables, figures, and graphs must be provided with a clear label (a caption) located directly below them.
- The font specified above should be used, but with single line spacing and a font size of 10pt.
- Tables, figures, and graphs must be numbered consecutively and listed in a separate table of figures (see below).
- Tables, figures, and graphs taken from other sources must be identified as such by means of a footnote and a reference to the source (see below).
- In all cases, your own visualizations or tabular summaries are preferred over scanned or reproduced ones!

1.4 Scope of Work

The **length of the paper** depends primarily on the topic being addressed. Nevertheless, **the following general guidelines** apply:

- Seminar papers are approximately 20 pages long.
- Bachelor's theses are approximately 70 pages long.
- Master's theses are approximately 100 pages long.

If there are multiple authors, the required number of pages increases proportionally!

2 General Notes on Content Structure

Below you will find some important aspects regarding the content structure of your thesis. However, these guidelines are neither exhaustive nor definitive. Close consultation with your thesis advisor is therefore essential.

2.1 Content Concept and Approach

Before you begin your academic thesis, you must have a complete **grasp** of the topic and its objectives, as well as at least a general **understanding of** the current state of the academic discussion. If anything is unclear, you must consult with your advisor in a timely manner to clarify any remaining questions and avoid taking the wrong approach from the outset.

By the time of the outline discussion at the latest, you should have created a **logically structured, consistent, and meaningful outline** that demonstrates your academic grasp of the topic. I can tell you from experience that this will not remain the final version of your outline, as an academic paper is a living document that continues to evolve throughout the writing process. It is therefore inevitable that initial ideas may later become obsolete, while new ones emerge. It is important, however, that throughout the entire writing process, you do not lose sight of either the topic with its established focal points or the objectives you have set.

For a successful thesis, it is equally essential that you **maintain an ongoing dialogue with your advisor**, presenting and discussing your interim results with them. This exchange and the defense of your ideas will, in particular, help solidify your own views and assessments; it is precisely this independence that later becomes a crucial component of academic work.

2.2 Structure of the Thesis

Academic papers generally follow the same structure; they consist of the **following structural elements**:

- Cover Page
- Table of Contents
- List of Abbreviations
- List of Tables and Figures
- Main text
 - Introduction

- Main Body
- Conclusion and Results
- Bibliography
- Appendices / Glossaries / Index of Decisions
- Affidavit

2.2.1 Cover Page

The cover page is prepared entirely by your advisor and will be handed to you or emailed to you shortly before you submit your thesis.

2.2.2 Table of Contents

All academic papers must be preceded by a table of contents—an overview of the content consisting of the headings of the text sections with their respective page numbers. Lists and appendices must also be included in the table of contents.

The table of contents must immediately reveal the “**central theme**” of your paper; a glance at the table of contents must show an outsider how you have approached your topic and what path you have taken in resolving the issues at hand. Only then does the table of contents fulfill its purpose.

The table of contents should be **numbered** (3.2.2). However, more than four levels of heading should be avoided.

2.2.3 List of Abbreviations

In academic papers, it is often essential to use abbreviations, although excessive use should be avoided to ensure readability. If abbreviations have been used, they must be explained in a **separate, alphabetically ordered list of abbreviations**.

For **legal abbreviations**, care must be taken to ensure that they are used in accordance with the list of abbreviations found in relevant standard legal works (e.g., Münchener Kommentar, Palandt, GK-HGB).

2.3 List of Tables and Figures

The lists of numbered tables and figures are compiled from the **captions** of the individual tables and figures, including the respective page numbers.

2.3.1 Main Text

2.3.1.1 General Guidelines

The **presentation of an academic paper** should facilitate selective reading. This also requires the **visual structuring** of the text. Furthermore, as the author, you should strive to structure your paper in such a way that it

- is simple and straightforward in structure,
- meets academic standards,
- effectively conveys the findings, and
- is easy for the reader to follow.

It is essential that a **clear “common thread”** be evident throughout the paper. This is supported, for example, by meaningful and concise introductions, transitions, and brief interim conclusions, possibly even within subchapters.

The **language** of your thesis should be characterized in particular by the following features:

- Clarity,
- comprehensibility,
- concise and scholarly diction, and
- concise style.

As is well known, it is easier to present a topic in lengthy explanations than in just a few words. Nevertheless, in the interest of readability, you should strive to make your

presentation as **concise** as possible. **Short sentences** facilitate understanding, even of complex concepts.

Colloquial language should be avoided, as should the first-person form or overly embellished, “poetic” word choices.

Technical and key terms must be used unambiguously and consistently, and defined when necessary. If the nature and scope of the definitions warrant it, a **glossary** should be created.

Academic papers must always adhere to the rules of **proper spelling**. In some cases, it may be helpful to have a third party read the paper before your final round of proof-reading (rather than relying solely on spell-check programs); this person should also pay attention to linguistic aspects, grammar, and typos.

Changes in typography often serve to highlight individual sections of text more clearly, enabling the reader to quickly grasp the topics being discussed or to emphasize specific points. This is typically achieved through the use of bold or *italics*. Both are acceptable, though excessive use is not recommended.

2.3.1.2 Structure and Content Organization

The paper should be structured into an introduction, main body, and conclusion, with each of these three sections comprising multiple chapters. This applies in particular to the main body, which usually consists of 2–3 main chapters.

Introduction

The introduction should introduce the topic addressed in the paper, clarify the research question and its relevance, and outline the structure of the paper. In some cases, theses may already be formulated in the introduction, which will then be examined for their validity in the main body.

Standard elements of an introduction include:

- A precise formulation of the research question, including the scope of the topic and definitions of key terms.
 - ➔ What do I want to find out?
- An explanation of the academic and practical relevance of the research question; possibly with reference to a current event.
 - ➔ Why is this important?
- A review of the current state of research, i.e., the state of the legal scholarship on the topic.
 - ➔ What views have already been expressed? Is there a “research gap”?
- Working hypotheses.
 - ➔ What conclusions do I want to reach / am I reaching?
- Overview of the course of the study in the main body.

Main Body

The main body **deals with the thesis topic in detail**. You will determine the structure and subdivisions of the main body in consultation with your advisor. As a general rule, the scope of the chapters and subsections should correspond to the topic covered within the thesis as a whole.

Typical contents of the main body include:

- Presentation and discussion of theoretical foundations and concepts.
- Examination of the research topic / detailed derivation of the thesis’s findings using the previously presented foundations / concepts.
- Supporting and clarifying the results using illustrative examples (including case law) or empirical validation.
- Interpretation of the insights gained and the results achieved.
- Transition to the conclusion.

Conclusion or Results Section

Following the main body, a **brief and concise summary of the most important results** should be provided and—if necessary—a **brief outlook** on future developments

or further research questions should be offered. Together with the introduction, the summary forms the framework of the paper.

Standard elements of the conclusion or results section include:

- A concise presentation of the central findings—presentation in tabular form or as a graph is permitted and encouraged.
- An assessment of the significance of your own results, both scientific and practical, possibly with reference to the working hypotheses from the introduction.
 - What results have I arrived at, what is their significance, and do they deviate from the initial hypothesis?
- A reference to future developments or research questions.
- Concluding remarks.

2.3.2 Bibliography

The bibliography serves to provide further explanation of the source references in the footnotes (see below). Therefore, **all sources** from which citations were taken must be listed in the bibliography.

The source citations must be formatted in such a way that the source can be clearly identified (this applies in particular to foreign literature).

The bibliography must be arranged **alphabetically by author**. Multiple publications by a single author should be arranged **chronologically**; multiple publications by a single author from the same year should be distinguished by adding lowercase letters (starting with “a”) to the year in both the main text and the bibliography.

If there are **more than two authors or editors**, only the first is listed, followed by “*et al.*”; if there are more than three places of publication, only the first is listed, followed by “*et al.*” First names may—but need not—be abbreviated using the first letter of the first name.

A **subdivision** into monographs, handbooks/commentaries, and journals is permitted; for a large number of references, it is even encouraged.

Internet sources must also be further specified in the bibliography. If there is an author, the sources are listed alphabetically in the bibliography; otherwise, it is permissible to either list the source under “Unknown or No Author” (u.A. or o.A.) in the bibliography or to add a section titled “Other Materials” (or similar) to the list of authors.

When citing articles from **anthologies**, the anthology must appear as a separate entry in the bibliography alongside the cited article.

- Federal Cartel Office, The Future of Antitrust Enforcement in an Economized Competition Law, 2007, >http://www.bundeskartellamt.de/wDeutsch/download/pdf/Diskussionsbeitraege/070920_AK_Kartellrecht.pdf< (last accessed: June 3, 2008)
- Claussen, Banking and Securities Law, 3rd ed., Munich 2008.
- Ensthaler/Gesmann-Nuissl/Strübbe, Design of Supervisory Systems in Product Safety Law, Cologne 2005.
- Ensthaler/Gesmann-Nuissl, The Legal Status of the Commercial Agent within Motor Vehicle Distribution Systems—and a Discussion of the European Court of First Instance Judgment of September 15, 2005 (Case T-325/01), in: European Journal of Commercial Law (EuZW) 2006, pp. 167–172.
- Gesmann-Nuissl, “Banking Transactions,” in: Ensthaler, J. (ed.), Joint Commentary on the German Commercial Code (HGB), pursuant to § 406 HGB, 6th ed., Berlin 2006, pp. 101–135.
- Gesmann-Nuissl, “Quo vadis GmbH?—On the Draft Act on the Modernization of GmbH Law and the Combating of Abuses (MoMiG),” in: Journal of Business and Banking Law (WM) 2006, pp. 1756–1764.
- Haedicke, Patent Law, Cologne 2009.
- Reh binder, Copyright Law, 16th ed., Munich 2010.

2.3.3 Appendix/Glossary/Case Law Index

Appendices, glossaries, and case law indexes should only be included with a thesis if they contribute to a deeper understanding of the work. In the main text, a reference to the appendix should then be made at the appropriate place.

More extensive appendices (e.g., detailed results of an empirical survey or questionnaire) may also be included with the thesis as a PDF file on a CD-ROM.

2.3.4 Affidavit

A sworn statement must be submitted for bachelor's and master's theses. Please use the form available at the following web address:

https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/wirtschaft/fakultaet/mimes/pruefungen/Selbststaendigkeit_Einverstaendnis_Wiwi.pdf

A violation of the obligations arising from this declaration will result in the failure of the course.

3 Citation Style (Footnotes)

Proper citation is crucial in academic work. We expect a **high degree of accuracy** from you in this regard, and for good reason. After all, someone who merely paraphrases another person's essay or article in their own words but cites it properly is simply lacking in originality. However, anyone who copies an essay or article without citing it is committing **plagiarism**, which can result in the work being downgraded or even graded as a "fail."

If you borrow ideas from other works, this must be clearly indicated by means of a **footnote**; that is, the reader should immediately know when your statements are based on sources. If you **reproduce** passages **verbatim**, this must be indicated in the text with "**double**" **quotation marks**. If you paraphrase the text, quotation marks are not required. If you omit **any text**, you must indicate this with square brackets [...] so as not to distort the original text.

Footnotes—which may contain not only quotations but also brief comments and notes—always begin with a capital letter and end with a period. Multiple references in a single footnote are separated by a semicolon.

Specifically:

- When citing **national court decisions**, the court, the reference with the year (or BGHZ volume number), the first page of the judgment, and the specific reference (enclosed in parentheses); for judgments in corporate law, intellectual property law, and competition law, the keyword is also cited.¹ The case number of a decision is only relevant if the judgment is unpublished!
- When citing **decisions of the General Court (EuG) or the Court of Justice (EuGH)**, the case number and the name of the judgment must be provided; if possible, the citation in the official collection should also be included.²

¹ See also BGH GRUR 2003, 958 (960) – Paperboy = BGHZ 156, 1 (6).

² ECJ, Case C-418/01, IMS Health v. NDC Health, ECR 5 - 2004, I-5039, para. 38.

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- For **articles**, the author's name and the source must be cited, including at least the first page and then the specific page cited.³ The title of the article does not need to be repeated in the footnote; it appears in full in the bibliography.
 - When referencing a **commentary**, the commentary and the editor must be named.⁴ In most cases, a suggested citation format can be found in the commentary itself (on the first few pages).
 - For **monographs** and **articles from anthologies**, the author and the specific page number are cited (all other details can be found in the bibliography); the title of the work is only included if there is a risk of confusion.⁵
 - **Internet sources** may, of course, be used—provided they are reputable. In the footnote, please always include the complete URL, which allows the cited passage to be found online. For PDF documents, the page number should be specified in the footnote; otherwise—if available—the number of the relevant section should be provided. It has also become standard practice to indicate, either in the bibliography or in the footnote, when you last visited the page.⁶

If you have any questions beyond these guidelines or are unsure about the correct way to cite sources in footnotes, please contact your advisor.

³ *Ensthaler/Gesmann-Nuissl*, EuZW 2006, 167 (169).

⁴ Palandt/Heinrichs, § 823, para. 21.

⁵ Claussen, § 4, line 6.

⁶ Lambert, "Does British Telecom Own Hyperlinks?" (last accessed March 13, 2002), <<http://www.infoday.com/newsbreaks/nb000703-2.htm>>.

4 Use of AI-powered tools

The use of AI-powered tools (e.g., ChatGPT, DeepL, or similar applications) is **generally permitted** in the context of academic work. However, the use of such tools does not relieve students of their obligation to **conduct independent academic work**. In particular, the authors remain solely responsible for the accuracy of the content, the legal assessment, and the academic quality of the work.

AI systems can assist with research, structuring, linguistic editing, or brainstorming. However, they are **not academic sources**. The content they generate may contain factual errors, inaccurately reflect legal assessments, or invent sources and bibliographic references. All information provided by AI tools must therefore be critically examined and verified using appropriate academic sources.

The use of AI tools must be **made transparent**. If content generated or edited by AI is directly incorporated, paraphrased, or otherwise integrated into the scholarly work, this must be clearly indicated. The same applies to the use of AI systems for translation, rephrasing, or the creation of illustrations, graphics, or other materials.

Scholarly work must continue to be based **primarily on the author's own analysis, reasoning, and evaluation**. In legal scholarship in particular, it must be ensured that the legal assessment, the interpretation of legal provisions, and the development of lines of argument are carried out independently. Merely reproducing AI-generated text does not meet the requirements of scholarly work.

Digital tools **without a generative function**—such as spell-check and grammar programs, legal databases, library catalogs, or search functions on academic research platforms—do not require attribution.

4.1 Examples of how to cite the use of AI tools

Verbatim reproduction of text

“The principle of separation is one of the fundamental structural principles of German property law” (“Explain the principle of separation in German property law,” ChatGPT output, June 19, 2026).

Paraphrase

German property law fundamentally distinguishes between contractual obligations and acts of disposition in rem (see “Explain the principle of separation in German property law,” ChatGPT output, June 19, 2026).

Translation

“The invention must involve an inventive step.” – “The invention must be based on an inventive step.” (Translation using DeepL, June 19, 2026).

Figure

“Smart Contract in a Blockchain Network,” figure generated with ChatGPT, June 19, 2026.

4.2 Special Requirements for Legal Research Papers

When using AI tools, it is important to note that they do not guarantee reliable information about the current legal situation. AI-generated content may contain outdated versions of laws, repealed case law, or non-existent literature and references. Statements regarding legal provisions, court decisions, and scholarly sources must therefore always be verified against the original sources. Legal arguments must not be based exclusively on AI-generated content.

5 Submission of the Paper

The set **submission deadlines must be strictly adhered to**; papers submitted late cannot be evaluated.

- For seminar papers, the advisor sets a uniform deadline for all students.
- For bachelor's and master's theses, the submission deadline is determined by the respective examination regulations—however, precise coordination with the advisors is also required in these cases.

For final theses, **two bound copies** of the thesis must generally be submitted; the thesis must also be made available in **electronic form as PDF and Word files** (e.g., via email or on a CD-ROM attached to the thesis).

This also applies to seminar papers, unless otherwise agreed upon with the advisor.

As a precautionary measure, we would like to point out that all papers will be subject to a **plagiarism check**.

6 Presentation

Seminar papers must be presented on a scheduled date. **Each student** is allotted **10–15 minutes** for the **presentation of their seminar paper**. During this time, you should use standard presentation tools (e.g., PowerPoint) to present the content of your paper to all other seminar participants. The focus should be on the research question, the key arguments supporting your approach, and the main findings of your work.

The presentation is followed by an **open discussion of approximately 10 minutes per presenter**, during which the written paper must be defended.

A presentation should be professionally designed. In particular, the **slides** should not be overloaded but should be **clear and appealing**. The audience must be able to read them; a font size of at least 16 pt. (preferably larger) is appropriate for this purpose. Charts, tables, and illustrations often captivate the audience more than the written word. Please note that the source of any illustration or chart must also be cited on the slides.

The **results of final theses** must also be presented. The duration of such a presentation is generally set at **20 minutes**, followed by a **discussion of approximately 10–15 minutes**.

Individual arrangements regarding these presentations are always made with the advisor.

There is no dress code for the presentations; however, we would like to point out that you can rehearse your presentation at the department under “challenging conditions”—you may not have this opportunity again later!

We wish you every success with all your work!