

## Term papers (“Hausarbeiten”)

### Interdisciplinary Studies of Science, M.A.

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Within the ISoS programme, term papers are the usual assignments through which you will be **completing a module**. A term paper is obligatory for completion of *Main Modules 1, 2, and 3*. In addition, you may be required to complete one or multiple term papers for *Main Module 4*, depending on which object discipline you choose. Furthermore, the essay you will be required to write for the *Introductory Module* may share some similarities with the later term papers. Finally, the master’s thesis that you will complete as part of the *Final Module* closely resembles a term paper, albeit in a longer and more in-depth form.

As each course and module is different from the next, you should **always get in touch with the lecturer** of the course in which you wish to write a term paper, be it to talk about your preferred topic or any subject-specific requirements you need to be aware of. However, there are some **basic characteristics** that each term paper should abide by, both relating to its form and its content. Here you will find a short overview of aspects you should pay attention to.

#### Content guidelines

- The primary aim of a term paper is the **discussion of a scientific question** through the use and analysis of scientific literature and, depending on the field, empirical data. By drawing on this, you should be able to **formulate arguments** for the hypothesis that will ultimately be the answer to your chosen question. Naturally, you may also **argue against** hypotheses brought forth by researchers in the publications you draw upon.
- In arguing against other researchers or in criticising their position, you should always adhere to the **principle of charity**. This means that you should consider their arguments in their strongest possible interpretation and that you will interpret their statements in the most rational way possible. You should also assume that their position has been researched to the best of their abilities and that they are not pursuing any hidden agenda with their hypotheses.

- The **introduction** is an essential part of your term paper. It defines: **1. The main research problem and question** (What is the empirical or conceptual ‚puzzle‘ that you would like to address?); **2. Your research goal and interest** (What are you trying to show and how does it contribute to current research); **3. The research object** (Which specific concept, unit of analysis or case are you looking at?); **4. Your theoretical angle** (What kind of theory are you using? Why?); **5. The core assumption** (What explanation/interpretation would you propose for understanding the research problem?); **6. The structure of your argumentation** (What are the research steps and the main chapters of your thesis?).

### Formal guidelines

- Term papers must abide by the **standards of scientific and academic writing** (see <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/forschung/gute-wiss-praxis/index.xml>). This means first and foremost that you must under no circumstance resort to **plagiarism**. Term papers must also include a **table of contents** and a **bibliography**. They should also be **proofread** before being handed in, as to minimise mistakes. Finally, **citations** should be uniform. Usually, you can choose one of the most common styles (Harvard, Chicago etc.). When in doubt, feel free to ask your lecturers about their preferences.
- Every term paper should roughly adhere to the following **structure**: **1. Cover page** (containing information such as your name, your matriculation number, the course, the module, your email address, the title etc.); **2. Table of contents** (listing all sections and sub-sections); **3. Introduction** (in which the problem and your chosen question are introduced); **4. Main part** (in which your arguments supporting your hypothesis and those countering other hypotheses will unfold, and which may include several sub-sections); **5. Conclusion** (in which you will recap the main arguments and formulate the final answer to your chosen question); **6. Bibliography** (listing all literature used); **7. Signed declaration** that you are the sole author of your paper. For this declaration you can use the following sentence:

*I hereby certify that the text "Title" was written independently and without outside help, also without the help of an artificial intelligence (e.g. ChatGPT), and that no other writings or resources were used, other than those specified by me. The passages taken*

*verbatim or in terms of content from the works used are indicated. The text has not been submitted to any lecturer in the same or similar form.*

- Both the **introduction** and the **conclusion** of your term paper should **each** roughly account for **10%** of the entire text.
- Most lecturers are quite flexible on the **formalities** of a paper. Some standard fonts you can use are **Times New Roman** in **size 12** and **Arial** in **size 11**, but other fonts are imaginable. You should use **justified formatting**. **Borders** can roughly be 2 cm at the top and the bottom, 2,5 cm on the left, and 3 to 4 cm on the right. It is important to keep in mind that your lecturers may have specific requirements.
- **Term papers** written in *Main Modules 1, 2, and 3* shouldn't exceed **6.000 words**. The **essay** written in the *Introductory Module* should be up to **2.000 words** long. Your **final thesis**, written in the *Final Module*, must be approximately **70 pages** long.
- Term papers are to be handed in at the latest on the **31<sup>st</sup> of March** when written during the **winter term**, and on the **30<sup>th</sup> of September** when written during the **summer term**. Should you have difficulties adhering to these deadlines, your lecturer may grant you an extension.