

# GUIDELINES FOR WRITING STUDENT PAPERS

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UT Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics  
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## **1. TYPES OF STUDENTS' RESEARCH PAPERS**

The main types of written papers at the Department of Semiotics [at the Master's level] include literature review, academic essay, case study, Master's thesis and Master's project. In case of literature reviews, academic essays and case studies the author's name, the course title and the date should be provided in the heading, a title page is not required. It is essential to use appropriate referencing as regards all the sources used in all academic papers.

### **1.1. Literature review**

Literature review is a survey of a problem or topic, based on previous studies. The aim of the literature review is to enhance skills of working with academic sources. The suggested structure for a literature review is the following:

- a short overview of the reviewed source(s) and author(s);
- a short overview of the conceptual framework of the source;
- conclusions or an original discussion

### **1.2. Academic essay**

Academic essay is an analytic discussion of a theoretical problem with the aim of developing the students' abilities of analysis and argumentation. The suggested structure for an academic essay:

- description of the problem and introducing the research question;
- overview and explanation of the theoretical premises;
- analysis of the problem;
- discussion and conclusions

### **1.3. Case study**

Case study is an analytic study of a phenomenon or a problem conducted from a selected theoretical perspective. Case studies enhance the skills of applying disciplinary knowledge for interpretation and explanation of phenomena. Suggested structure for a case study:

- description of the object and setting the research problem;
- overview and explanation of the theoretical premises;
- analysis of the phenomenon;
- discussion and conclusions

### **1.4. Master's thesis and master's project**

Master's thesis and Master's project should follow the departmental guidelines of writing and formatting as explained below.

## 2. GUIDELINES FOR WRITING PAPERS

Correct formatting is a requirement for any final paper. A paper not adhering to formatting guidelines can be rejected and returned for corrections with lowering the grade by one unit.

### 2.1. General requirements.

All written papers must be presented in a standard format (A4) on white paper or in an equivalent electronic form.

The Master's thesis and the project is submitted for pre-defence as a PDF and a DOCX file one week prior to the pre-defence at the latest; for final defence the thesis/project should be submitted as a PDF file via the online environment for theses submission and as a hard copy (one hardbound copy) delivered to the Department's secretary one week before the date of the defence at the latest.

Use 12 point Times New Roman font and line spacing 1.5. Leave the following margins to the page: left 3–4 cm, top 3–4 cm, bottom 2–3 cm and right 2 cm. On pages where a new chapter or other independent part of the structure starts the top margin should be 6–7 cm. The first paragraph after the title may start without an indentation; the remaining paragraphs should start with an indentation or else a space between paragraphs should be used.

It is not recommended to use various shifts or significantly differing font styles within one paper. For emphasis, use either **bold** or *italic*. The selected manner of emphasising must be followed systematically throughout the paper, and not mixed with other styles. Emphasising should be used as little as possible, and no more than strictly necessary.

All pages starting from the title page up to the end of appendixes, and including the pages with tables and schemes, should be taken into account in numbering. The title page, the page of the table of contents and the first page of the introduction are considered in overall numbering, but the number is not to be marked on the title page.

All the materials used and referred to in the paper must be included in the list of references.

The materials and numerical information that help to understand the text, add some important data or assure the results in the conclusion, may be included as Appendices (e.g. form of a questionnaire, large unprocessed data, etc). Appendices are included after the list of references. All Appendices should have a title. If there is more than one Appendix, they should be numbered with Arabic numbers, marked with e.g. *Appendix 2* in the right upper corner of the page. The Appendices may be preceded by a separate page titled *Appendices* that lists the titles of the appendixes to follow. Every Appendix must start from a separate page. In the table of contents Appendices must be shown separately with their titles and the page numbers.

A list of abbreviations can be added to the paper if necessary; abbreviations in common use are not included in the list.

All notes should be footnotes. Footnotes can also include the originals of translated quotations, references to private correspondence, oral interviews as well as full references in case of indirect referencing.

### **2.1.1. Special requirements for Master's theses and projects**

The title page (see Appendix 1) contains the name of the institute and the department, the title of the paper, the author's name, the type of the paper, the supervisor's name, the place and year of presenting the paper. The title of the paper should not be given in upper-case letters.

At the very end of the thesis an electronic licence (see Appendix 2) is added that authorises the preservation and publication of the thesis on the Internet in the digital archives of the Tartu University Library. The non-exclusive licence must be submitted in the electronic (PDF) file of the thesis and is a prerequisite for allowing the author to defend the thesis.

The title page is followed by the Table of Contents that includes all the parts of the paper and their full titles with their starting page numbers.

Introduction, Conclusion, List of References and Summary, as well as the main chapters, should all start from a new page with an indentation. They must be formatted as the headings of the same level, e.g. chapters (Heading 1), but without numbers. Numeration is used only in case of chapters.

Table of contents, introduction, conclusion, references and summary in Estonian as well as all first-level chapters start from a new page each and use the same title format. All main sections and subsections must be numbered. In case of numbering subchapters (e.g. 1.1., 1.2., 1.1.1. etc), the numbers are separated by full stops without spaces. Introduction, Conclusion, Summary, References and appendices (if any) should be left unnumbered in the table of contents, though they will be listed there.

Main chapters can end with a concluding paragraph separated by \*\*\*.

## **2.2. Titles**

The titles should be as short as possible, but encompass the whole content of the respective sections. There is no need to repeat the text of the general titles in the subtitles.

No full stops should be placed at the end of the titles; if the title consists of two sentences, there should be a punctuation mark at the end of the first sentence, but not at the end of the full title.

All main sections, Introduction, Conclusion, Summary, References and Appendices must start on a new page. There should be two empty lines (spaced 1.5) between the title of the main section and the following text, two empty lines before the subtitles and one empty line after the subtitles. If at least two lines of the main text after the title do not fit on the same page with the title, the whole subsection should begin from the next page.

All titles start from the left margin; do not use centering.

## **2.3. Lists**

Items in the lists are usually marked with Arabic numbers, lower-case letters, dashes, or asterisks or other graphic symbols. It is important to use the same symbols throughout the paper.

Numbers can be used in the lists if the succession or number of the items on the list is significant, or if any of the items are referred to in the text, or if the items consist of more than one sentence. In other cases, it is advisable to use other graphic symbols instead.

No section of the thesis should end with a list; lists should always be followed by an explanation or assessment.

## 2.4. Tables and Figures

All tables should be numbered, so that they could be referred to, and titled so as to enable the reader to comprehend them. Numbering is not necessary if there is only one table in the paper.

The titles of the columns and rows should start with upper-case letters, the titles of subcolumns and subrows may be given in lower-case letters. The titles of the columns and rows should be as exact and laconic as possible.

The data presented in a table must be related to the text of the thesis and referred to within the text, either directly (*Table 2 introduces, explains, clarifies* etc), or by adding the number of the table at the end of the sentence (*see Table 2*).

All graphic images (diagrams, schedules, schemes, charts, photographs and other images, etc.) are called *Figures*. Every Figure should have a laconic title; Figures are numbered similarly to Tables.

Comments may be added to Tables or Figures to specify some details. If the table is taken from a source, then the reference should be marked under the table/figure in a smaller font. If the table depicts a modified original, also the original source should be referred to.

## 2.5. Quotations

The most important requirement of quoting is the exactness of the quotation, which means that the quotations must be true to the original in all the following aspects: wording, orthography, punctuation and all possible highlights used (underlining, bold text, etc). The thought in the original text should not be changed in the quotations, which might easily happen if the logical relations with the following or the previous sentences of the chosen quotation are not taken into account.

Quotations from other languages must be accurate; the original language quotation may be presented in a footnote.

A quotation may constitute a separate paragraph or a sentence, but it can also be a part of the main text. In either case, the quotation must be incorporated in the rest of the text. Being a part of the main text, the quotation is separated from it by quotation marks and an in-text reference is added.

In case of longer quotations (more than 3 lines) the quotation will be written in a smaller font (10) using single line spacing, no quotation marks, and block indentation.

In instances where cultural space has a territorial character, the border is spatially located in elementary meanings. However, even in this instance, the border retains the idea of a buffer mechanism, a unique unit of translation, transforming information. [...] Areas of multiple cultural meanings [my underlining — S.D.] carry out the very same function on the boundaries of the semiosphere: town, trade route and other areas forming a kind of creolisation of semiotic structures. (Lotman 2005: 211)

The following paragraph starts without an indentation.

All words or sentences omitted from a direct quotation must be replaced by points in square brackets (see the example above). Square brackets are also used in case the author wishes to stress a part of the quotation, or add some thoughts to the quotation.

## 2.6. Referring

Referring is the condensed version of an article or a book. It means that you will be using your own words to present someone else's thoughts. Referring can be used if the text is too long or extensive for a quotation, and could not deliver the main idea if, for example, only one sentence is mentioned. Referring should be as accurate as possible, leaving out all that is unimportant for the purposes of the current thesis. What is most important about referring is making a clear distinction between your own thoughts and comments, and the referred part of the text.

In case of referring to a source, quotation marks are not used, while the reference to the source text or author must be inserted into the text, e.g.

Kaarel Kask discusses the principles for periodization of the history of semiotics (Kask 1950: 5-25). Semiotic eras proposed by Anton Andekas 27 years after the periodization suggested by Kask (Andekas 1997: 45-66) follow the eras of Kask in several aspects.

## 2.7. References

References contain bibliographical information about the document, indicating where the quotation or reference was taken from. There is no universally accepted style of referencing; the styles vary according to different publishing houses, journals and institutions. One requirement still applies everywhere: within one paper the referencing must be in the same style. The students of the Department of Semiotics are suggested to follow the style of the journal Sign Systems Studies and observe the following guidelines.

In the main text the first names of the authors should be given upon first mention; in general, the titles of the books/articles are not provided, but if mentioned, they should be given either in italics or quotation marks, respectively.

If a paragraph contains several references from one and the same source following each other, the later ones might be marked as (*Ibid*, 10).

In-text references should be given in round brackets, start with the author's last name followed by the year of publication and, in case of a direct quotation or very exact reference, also the page number(s).

- a) Probably it is true that "the fundamental question of the semiotics of culture is the problem of the generation of meaning" (Lotman 1997: 9).
- b) While the semiotics of culture focuses on the generation of meaning (Lotman 1997: 9), cultural studies could have other interests.

If the name of the author referred to has been already mentioned in the text, it does not have to be repeated in the reference.

Juri Lotman (1997: 9) understands the problematic nature of meaning generation.

In case of referring to several sources, these should be separated by semicolons; if sources by the same author have been published in the same year, the letters *a*, *b*, *c* etc. are added to the year of publication.

[...] (Lotman 1972a; Lotman 1972b)

If different authors have the same last name, initials must be added.

[...] (M. Lotman 1998; J. Lotman 1999).

In case of three or more authors, the first author's last name and *et al.* is used:

A thorough overview of Finno-Ugric semiotics already exists (Randviir *et al.* 2000).

If the source text is anonymous (such as guidelines, laws, ordinances etc), the title of the document must be referred to, or the reference should start with the first words of the source text.

(Guidelines 2018)

If the referred or quoted papers cannot be accessed, also references via other sources are allowed, in which case both of sources should be marked, the one that is intended to be referred to as well as the one through which the original source is referenced. A paper that could not be accessed should not be referenced. In the list of references the work that was actually used will be marked.

Lotman, Juri 1992. *Kultura i vzrõv*. Moskva: Gnozis, 167 — *cited in* Veidemann 2000: 1821.

Referring to an encyclopaedia or dictionary, the title or abbreviation of the source text is mentioned, followed by the year of publication and *sub* (which refers to the word/term referred to from the dictionary). The word or term itself should be given in bold. In the following example, EE stands for the Estonian Encyclopedia.

In principle, all information exists and is preserved in memory in the form of a text (EE 1996 *sub text*).

The reference in brackets must be given in the same alphabet as the referred source. Therefore, in case of a Russian source, the reference will be in Cyrillic. If that is technically impossible, the transliteration scheme of *Sign Systems Studies* should be used.

## 2.8. List of References

The list of references should contain all the materials used and referred to. The list is not numbered. All the references should be in the language of the source.

All the information about the publications has to be taken from the title page. If the information is lacking or partial, other parts of the publication/source can also be taken into account.

All references should be given in alphabetical order taking into consideration the last names of the authors; several publications of the same author are presented in the order of publication time (from older to more recent), using a dash in place of the name, e.g.

Lotman, Juri 1997. Culture as a subject and an object in itself. *Trames* 1(1): 7–16.

— 2005. On the semiosphere. *Sign Systems Studies* 33(1): 205–229.

— 2011. The place of art among other modelling systems. *Sign Systems Studies* 39(2/4): 249–270.

In case of multiple authors, all names have to be given, in the order that is provided on the title page or its reverse. If the author mentioned on the title page is a collective (e.g. a scientific institution), this institution should be referred to as the author, while a shorter version (an

abbreviation of the name of the institution) may also be used. If the authors are not mentioned on the title page, but only the editor(s)(-in-chief) or compiler(s), the latter will be referred to. If there are more than three of them, follow the above-mentioned scheme.

The place of publication should be written in full (*Tallinn, Tartu, New York, Frankfurt am Main*). If the place of publication is unknown, it should be marked as *s.l.* (*sine loco* 'without place'). If there is more than one place of publication, then only up to three should be marked followed by *etc.*

If the year of publication is unknown, it should be indicated as *s.a.* (*sine anno* 'without year'). If it is necessary to mention also the year of the original publication, it should be given in square brackets [...], e.g.

Jakobson, Roman 1981[1935]. The dominant. *Selected Writings III. Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*. The Hague, Paris, New York: Mouton Publishers, 751–756.

In case of compendiums, journals, or series of books, and articles in newspapers data must be given both about the separate article and the publication from which it is taken.

Compendium article:

**Author's last name, other names year. Title. In: Editor's surname, other names (ed. or eds), Book Title. Place: Publisher, article pages.**

Baer, Eugen 1984. How do reflexive systems communicate? In: Pelc, Jerzy; Sebeok, Thomas A.; Stankiewicz, Edward; Winner, Thomas G. (eds.), *Sign, System and Function: Papers of the First and Second Polish-American Semiotics Colloquia*. (Approaches to Semiotics 67.) Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1–11.

Journal articles should be formatted according to the following scheme:

**Author's last name, first name year. Title. Journal title issue no: article pages.**

Lotman, Juri 2011[1967]. The place of art among other modelling systems. *Sign Systems Studies* 39(2/4): 249–270.

Newspaper articles should be formatted according to the following scheme:

**Author's last name, first name year. Title. Newspaper title date of publication, issue no: (page).**

Kukk, Kalev 2000. Euro pole häda midagi. *Sõnumileht* 3.05.2000, 101: 2.



**APPENDIX 1**  
**Title Page Example**

University of Tartu  
Department of Semiotics

Author's name

**Title**

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Prof / PhD

Tartu

2022

**Non-exclusive licence to reproduce the thesis and make the thesis public**

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