

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE FINAL PAPER

The minimum requirement for the final paper is 20 (undergraduate) to 25 (graduate) pages of typed text (approximately 300 words per page), including the bibliography and footnotes or endnotes (11 or 12 point font). The paper must use a recognized citation format (e.g., Turabian, American Psychological Association, Chicago Manual of Style) for footnotes, endnotes, and the bibliography. Formatting and style will count in the final assessment of the paper.

The paper should begin with an overview and summary of the student's research or public service project (2-3 pages). The paper must also develop a 'theoretical' dimension by incorporating the assigned (at a minimum) and selected readings and it should incorporate basic facts and statistics where pertinent to the analysis. Students must follow the guidelines below in preparing the final paper.

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF PAPER

The structure of a policy paper can vary from project to project, but in general it will be composed of the following sections as appropriate to your particular project:

Title page
Table of contents
List of Tables
List of Figures
Executive Summary or Abstract
Introduction
Literature review
Methodology
Results or Findings
Discussion and Analysis
Conclusion or Recommendations
Bibliography
Appendices

TITLE PAGE

The title page is the first page of a term paper. The title page is not numbered (and does not count toward the minimum page requirements). The title page contains details of:

- the title of the paper
- the title of the seminar and the course instructor's name
- the author's/ authors' name(s) and email address(es) or other contact details
- the date of submission.

A *good title* is

- focused and tells the reader what to expect of the paper, and

- it awakens interest in the paper.

The use of a sub-title is sometimes necessary in order to fulfill both criteria, but overly elaborate, complex, or convoluted titles are generally unnecessary and pedantic.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

There are “good” and “bad” tables of contents. For example:

Unacceptable table of contents:

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Categorization
3. Results
4. Evaluation/Discussion
5. Literature

The first question you should ask yourself is whether all the necessary parts of a table of contents are present in the table of contents. In the example above, the answer is “no,” because there is no executive summary or review of previous literature. It is missing a section on methodology, while the section entitled “categorization” should be a sub-point of a chapter on methodology. It is also missing a conclusion and/or policy recommendations. Finally, there is no appendix, which would include the data collected in an empirical study or include copies of significant documents, laws, regulations, etc. referred to in the paper. In addition, no page numbers have been included in the above table of contents.

A more suitable Table of Contents is provided below on the next page below:

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LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The executive summary should not be longer than one or two pages and it should follow a “bullet format.” The executive summary should focus on the *findings and recommendations* and not the analysis and data contained in the body of the text. In other words, it briefly summarizes what comes at the end of the paper’s analysis. The executive summary appears first in the order of presentation, but it is nearly always the last thing you write, since you cannot summarize the paper’s findings until the paper is done.

Policy papers always have an executive summary, although a purely academic seminar paper will generally have a 150-200 word abstract instead of an executive summary.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction follows the executive summary or abstract. It is technically the first page of the paper which is numbered with Arabic (as opposed to small Roman) numerals. The items to be addressed in the introduction include:

- **Purpose of the research**

Why are you conducting this research or doing this project? Is there a gap in the existing research, are you attempting to replicate someone else’s results (for verification purposes or to diffuse a policy solution), or is it to solve a pressing local problem? You should address both the theoretical and practical importance of the research. This section should be kept brief in the introduction - the literature review provides a further opportunity to argue for the theoretical significance of the project.

- **Question or Task posed in the paper**

Tell your reader what the paper is about - i.e. what is the research area or the public service project? What question is raised in the paper?

- **Brief details of research conducted**

What research method was employed in the paper? Who were the informants? Only brief details should be given at this point.

- **Paper structure**

The point of detailing the structure of the paper is to guide the reader. You know what is coming next but the reader does not know it. Tell him/her what to expect in the paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An academic paper should reflect a wide reading of the subject area and a good understanding of key concepts and previous findings in the field. The use of examples, “name dropping,” and direct quotes are some of the best ways to exhibit your familiarity with important concepts and it also enhances the reader-friendliness of the paper. You are expected to be critical in your reading of academic papers. In other words, you should demonstrate that you are aware of previous research findings but also that you do not believe everything you read, but rather look critically at each study, especially those of primary interest to your research task. Even the most rigorous

research has its limitations due to methodology, research technology, conceptualization, definition of the problem, and data availability. A critical awareness may be demonstrated, for example, by referring to contradictory findings from different researchers, by highlighting the failings of previous studies (e.g. limited analysis/less than ideal methodology, etc.), and also by showing an awareness of the questions which remain unanswered by previous work in the area.

You should organize your literature review as clearly as possible. Make sure to select only those studies most *directly* related to the question at hand. You should not simply provide a summary of each study but rather tie together the results of the studies so that their relevance is clear. When conflicting findings are reported in different studies, suggest possible explanations. Finally, in line with the introduction, make the case that the research area reviewed is incomplete or requires extension. This establishes the need for research in the area, or in the case of a public service project, the need for action.

METHODOLOGY

The method employed in an empirical research project should be explicitly detailed in the methodology section, along with major data sources, or techniques of data collection. If the research project relies on elicited data, then the relevant methodological details include:

- *informants chosen* (how many?, average age?, male/ female ratio?, mother tongue?, foreign/ second languages ...? Usually the more homogeneous the informants, the better the research design).
- *research instrument employed* (choice of instruments?, reasons for choice of particular instrument?, design of instrument?, etc. A copy of the materials used (e.g. questionnaire) should be included in an appendix.
- *data collection procedure* (when was the research conducted?, in what setting?).
- the *strengths and limitations of the methodology* employed.

RESULTS

The project results, or research findings, in a policy paper should be presented in a reader-friendly manner. The objective of applied policy analysis is not to impress an academic audience, but to inform and/or persuade policymakers, the media, and the general public. The use of tables and graphs is recommended when appropriate. Tables and graphs should be included in the main text or alternatively (if they are large in number) included in an appendix. In the latter case, however, the appendix must be referenced in the text (e.g., see, Appendix A) otherwise the reader will not know to look there for the data).

As well as presenting the results, it is also your task to guide the reader through the results in a clear and logical manner. This does not mean that every detail included in a table/graph should be commented on in the text, but it does mean that the most interesting results should be highlighted for the reader. Don't assume that your audience will actually read the entire report as opposed to skim it.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section follows the results or alternatively it may be integrated into the results section, which is quite common. This section should not merely present the findings or results, but discuss the findings or results by referring to the original question(s) posed in the introduction. In addition, it should serve to compare your results to previous research findings (i.e. do the present findings reflect/ refute previous findings?). You should also demonstrate an awareness of the limitations of your study in this section.

CONCLUSION OR RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of key components to include in the conclusion or policy recommendations section. These include:

- summary of question posed
- summary of findings
- summary of main limitations of the study at hand
- details of possibilities for related future research (academic paper only)

OR,

- a list of policy recommendations, or actions taken, and
- an analysis of how these recommendations or actions follow from the research and findings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OR SOURCES CONSULTED

From the very beginning of a research project, you should be careful to note all details of articles, websites, books, documents, etc. specifically for the purpose of keeping track of references. There is nothing more frustrating and time consuming than trying to track down references to quotes, data, etc. when you had that information available while doing the research. Compile a list of references as you work. The bibliography should contain ALL references included in the paper. References not included in the text in any form should NOT be included in the bibliography. The key to a good bibliography is consistency. Choose a particular bibliographic convention and stick with it.

It is also important to document your knowledge of the area by citing different types of sources. Sources of information and data could include:

- academic or theoretical literature (books and journal articles),
- legislation, treaty, administrative or judicial decision,
- government (or other) data source,
- government documents,
- documents/study by a non-governmental or parastatal organization,
- document/study by non-profit think-tank, private consulting firm, political party, or interest group, (i.e., 'grey literature' policy research),
- newspaper article,

- magazine or trade journal article,
- key informant interview(s),
- public opinion surveys,
- speech(es) by public figures, office holders, and decision-makers, and
- governmental or non-governmental websites (including interest group websites).

APPENDICES

Appendices are normally lettered from A to Z (e.g., Appendix C) or, in more complex appendices, a combination of capital letters and numbers may be utilized (e.g., Appendix C.1, C.2). Appendices are used to reference items such as survey questionnaires, transcripts of interviews, copies of important documents, etc. and for tables and graphs not included in the main text. These items are not included in the main text because they are subsidiary in nature, divert the reader from the overall flow of the argument with too much detail, or due to space constraints in the main text. These are items you want to make available to the reader, but you do not want to distract the reader from the flow of the presentation.

Although the appendices should be listed in the table of contents, it should be remembered that the appendices are usually read parallel with the main text and not following it. The reader cannot, however, be expected to know exactly when each appendix is relevant and must, therefore, be told when to refer to what appendix. To do this a simple (see, Appendix A) should be included at all relevant places in the text even if the same appendix is referenced multiple times. All appendices should be clearly labeled.

STYLE/ACCURACY

While a policy paper should be reader friendly, it should not be written in a casual or conversational style. They are professional papers and, therefore, should be written in a semi-academic style.

Some points to note:

- When *referring to yourself* in the paper, you should try to avoid the use of “I” (although this convention appears to be changing somewhat recently). The paper should focus on the facts and not on you. Alternatives to “I” include the use of the passive voice (e.g. “The questionnaire was distributed to 30 informants”) or constructions, such as “the researcher,” “the Consultant,” “the principal investigator” (e.g. “The researcher was present at all times during the data collection”), where the author refers to himself/herself in the third person.
- Do not start a *new paragraph* unless you wish to introduce a new point or idea.
- Never include *vague statements* such as “Many researchers” without mentioning the researchers in question. Another mistake is using phrases like “All history proves” – “all history” is not known to anyone and therefore it cannot not “prove” anything.

- When including *numbers* in your paper, note that the numbers up to ten should be written out (e.g. five magazines). Over ten, the figure itself may be included (e.g., 20 newspapers).
- All *abbreviations* used should be introduced in the first instance with the word written out in full. Also, if a number of abbreviations are used, a list of these should be included on a separate page following the list of tables.
- Please try to avoid *spelling mistakes* in the paper. It is advised that you use the the spell check function included in your word processing package. However, do not rely exclusively on spell checks, because it will not identify word confusion (e.g., hear vs. here or there vs. their), nor will it catch truncated words (e.g., typing a instead of an). Instead, read the paper yourself after a spell check and preferably ask someone else to read it through for you.
- *Punctuation* errors are also common. If unsure, consult a reference book.

PRESENTATION/FORMAT

Attending to the formal appearance of your paper is also an important aspect of writing policy papers. The following are some general guidelines:

- Papers should be submitted in a *neat* manner. Pages should be bound together in some manner - the use of a folder, staples, or binder is recommended for this purpose. Use of a word processor and a good quality printer also adds to the quality of presentation.
- Double spacing is recommended using Times New Roman 12 as the font size. Left and right margins of 1.25 inches are recommended with a similar margin for top and bottom of the page.
- *Occasional use of lists* set apart from the main text (as a table or insert) is also a welcome relief to the reader. They are clearer and are also quicker to read than the same list included as part of the main text.
- *Main headings and sub-headings* should be given in different sizes in the main text.
- *Bold print, italics and bulleting* can also be employed to enhance the clarity of organisation and structure of the paper. However, avoid overusing them. In the main text, generally speaking:
 - **bold print** should be used for **headings and sub-headings** (and for titles of graphs/ tables)
 - **bulleting** can be used for lists.
 - *Italics* can be used for *examples*.
 - Underlining can be used for emphasis.

- All *tables and graphs* should be *clearly numbered* and given an *appropriate title*.
e.g. Figure 1: Massachusetts Municipal Fiscal Effort Index, FY 2007.
e.g. Table 1: Municipal Chief Administrator Salaries, FY 2007
- All *sections* should be *numbered* as in the table of contents.

Examples

It is recommended that you occasionally include examples to illustrate and explain larger points. However, do not turn the paper into a list of stories, anecdotes, and “so and so said.”

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is when you knowingly use the intellectual work of others without acknowledgement. It can take the form of direct copying from the writings of others or the presentation of the ideas of others in a paraphrased form - without acknowledgement. If you like the ideas of a researcher, you may of course refer to these ideas or indeed quote from the writings of this person as long as you formally acknowledge their work, but you may not simply adopt his/her ideas as your own.

What about internet materials?

Internet materials that are used in a paper should be cited like all other sources, but should identify the date the materials were posted (if available) and the date the materials were accessed by the user.

Major pitfalls of writing term papers:

- ***Lack of focus***
Before writing a term paper, you should ensure that you have a question that you are attempting to answer or a specific problem you want to solve. This question should be kept in mind throughout the paper.
- ***Poor structure***
Your text should flow from one sentence to the next, from one paragraph to the next, and from one section to the next. In other words, you should attempt to hold your reader’s attention at all times, from the beginning to the end of the paper. Generally speaking, you should not introduce a new paragraph unless you are addressing a new point - and if you are, ensure you do use a new paragraph. Put yourself in the reader’s position or better still, ask someone else to read your text before you submit it (preferably someone not familiar with the area) - can they follow your line of argument?; do the different sections link well?
- ***Assuming expert knowledge of the reader***
Do not assume that your readers are experts in your area of research. Instead, imagine them to be familiar with the area but not with the specific details of your specific question/ topic. Make your paper reader-friendly. Interpret your data for the readers and discuss it in a reader-friendly manner.

- **Carelessness (spelling, formating, ...)**

Before submitting a paper, you should spell-check your document for typing errors, although keep in mind that spell check misses many common errors (e.g., their instead of there, or a instead of an). Ensure your paper is formatted in a consistent manner:

- Have you used the same spacing throughout the main text?
- Are all headings/ sub-headings formatted consistently (size/ italics/ bold/ font/ ..)?
- Have you consistently either left a space between paragraphs or not left a space?
- Are all your bibliographical details complete? From the beginning of your research efforts, you should ensure that you take exact notes of researchers' names, titles of articles, edited editions and monographs, place of publication details, details of the relevant publishing house, and also page number for articles.
- Are your bibliographical details formated in a consistent manner? The bibliography is the easiest part of a paper to write, but also that part which is often the most careless part of students' term papers.

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING THE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

At the end of the second semester, students will present the results of their research or public service project. The powerpoint presentation should be approximately 20 minutes long, but no longer. The presentation must utitize Powerpoint or a similar type of electronic presentation format. The presentation should:

- clearly identify an issue or social problem,
- identify the major offical and unofficial actors, including their sources of power or authority,
- identify key arguments and data pertinent to a proposed policy solution,
- identify key decisionmakers in the policy process,
- identify key legislation, judicial decisions, or regulations that govern the process or that are the object of policy debate,
- identify the policy tools involved in the policy process,
- describe program design or proposed policy design(s)
- identify project outcomes; what was the result?