



**Institute of
Strategic Management**

**Univ.-Prof. Dr.
Waldemar Kremser**
Head of the Institute

Institute of Strategic
Management

Office:
Silke Desl

T +43 732 2468 7961
ism@jku.at

jku.at/ism

GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC WRITING



Institute of Strategic Management
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**JOHANNES KEPLER
UNIVERSITY LINZ**
Altenberger Str. 69
4040 Linz, Austria
jku.at
DVR 0093696

Introduction

Academic writing is a crucial component of your studies, and the professional development of your seminar paper, bachelor's thesis, or master's thesis. It is important to not only focus on the content quality but also the formal layout and citation system. The structure, argumentation, and methodology of your work must be clear and comprehensible.

These guidelines provide you with information on how to write a proper academic paper at the Institute of Strategic Management. Feedback on these guidelines is welcome to help improve them.

Theme and Objectives

The theme of your academic work can either be assigned by the Institute (for seminar papers) or chosen by you individually (for bachelor's or master's theses). Regardless of its origin, the theme must be stated clearly to define the scope and direction of your work.

The theme is then concretized by defining one or several objectives. These objectives determine the focus of your research in the academic work. Objectives are critical elements that shape the direction, structure, and content of your work, and they also form the basis for your methodological approach. It can be helpful to formulate research questions as a way of specifying the objectives. These questions provide specific details and help you approach your work systematically.

The detailed specification of the theme can be a time-consuming process, but it is crucial for the success of your work. Problems may arise if the theme is too broad, and the objectives are too complex or vague. It is preferable to focus on a narrow theme in depth than to superficially cover a broad theme.

Note: Objectives must be formulated clearly, comprehensibly, and unambiguously.

Structure

A clear structure is the foundation of a good academic work. It serves as a "roadmap" and provides an overview of the themes and sub-themes of your work. To develop the structure, you need to conduct an extensive literature analysis in relation to your objectives.

Consider the following issues when forming the structure:

- What themes and sub-themes are relevant?
- What themes take priority?
- Are there any interdependencies between the themes, and if so, what are they?
- What chapters and sub-chapters result from the above considerations?

The structure should be meaningful, consistent, and plausible. It should reflect the contents and priorities of your work. Start by defining the main points and then the relevant sub-points. Ensure the logic of the structure is clear and avoid repetition. Headlines should be short, concise, and provide a clear summary of the contents. This is also an opportunity to formulate the preliminary title (subtitle) of your work, which should be precise enough to provide relevant orientation.

Tip: Mind-mapping is a useful tool for structuring your topics and sub-categories. Possible interdependencies can be systematized in an organized manner. There is also software available online to assist you.

Sections of a Scientific Work

A scientific work typically consists of the following sections:

- Title page
- Signed statutory declaration (exception: seminar papers)
- Executive Summary
- Table of contents
- List of figures
- List of tables
- Abbreviations (if necessary)
- Introduction
- Main part
- Conclusions/Résumé
- List of references
- Appendix/appendices (if appropriate)

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary provides a short overview of the work, including problem statement, objective(s), procedure, theoretical foundations, results, and conclusion.

Introduction

The introduction section of a scientific work provides an overview of the problem statement, objective(s), method and procedure, and structure and content of the work.

- **Problem Statement:** The theme of the work is clarified and its relevance is established, both theoretically and practically.
- **Objectives/Research Questions:** The objectives of the work are defined and stated as clear research questions.
- **Method and Procedure:** The methods used to reach the objectives are described and

their consistency with the objectives is emphasized. In the case of an empirical work, such as qualitative or quantitative surveys or case studies, the research design must be described in detail, including methods, case selection, data collection, and analysis.

- **Structure and Content:** The chapters of the work are described and their interrelationship is explained, if necessary. A figure or illustration may be useful for complex themes to provide an overview.

Main Part

Important elements are:

- **Description of Notions/Definitions:** Clearly define the key concepts and terminology used in your work. If multiple definitions are relevant, explain them in a concise and understandable manner.
- **Theoretical Foundations - "State of the Art"** Provide a comprehensive overview of the current understanding and research on the topic. Focus on the aspects that are crucial to achieving your objectives in the work. Your arguments should not be superficial or abbreviated, and should not simply repeat information from sources. The current state of scientific discussion on the topic should be demonstrated.
- **Methods and Empirical Results:** Describe and justify the methodology used and present the empirical results of your work. Ensure that the theoretical foundations and empirical results are consistent.
- **Discussion of Theoretical Foundations and Interpretation of Results:** Draw meaningful conclusions from the empirical research and clearly show the theoretical foundations your work is based on and the empirical results that were obtained.

Conclusion / Résumé

Important elements are:

- **Summary of Insights/Findings:** Present the most significant insights and findings of your work. Offer critical comments if necessary.
- **Outlook on Related Themes and Further Developments:** If appropriate, provide an outlook on related themes and potential avenues for future development.

Literature Search

Conducting a thorough and systematic literature review is essential for a high-quality academic work. To gain an understanding of the current state of research in the field, it is necessary to consult relevant academic journals. Utilizing [online databases](#) provided by the University of Linz Library is an efficient way to access this information. The most relevant databases are:

- EBSCO ([Business Source Premier](#))
- [Web of Science](#)
- [WISO](#)

Examples of relevant journals on topics of strategic management are:

- Academy of Management Journal (AMJ)
- Academy of Management Review (AMR)
- Administrative Science Quarterly (ASQ)
- Creativity and Innovation Management
- Die Betriebswirtschaft (DBW)
- Futures
- Harvard Business Review (HBR)
- Industrial and Corporate Change
- International Journal of Innovation Management
- Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS)
- Journal of Management
- Journal of Management Studies
- Journal of Product Innovation Management
- Management Science
- Managementforschung
- Organization Science
- Organization Studies
- Schmalenbach Business Review
- Schmalenbachs Zeitschrift für betriebswirtschaftliche Forschung (zfbf)
- Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal
- Strategic Management Journal
- Technological Forecasting and Social Change
- Wirtschaftswissenschaftliches Studium (WiSt)
- Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft (ZfB)

Top ranked journals (A+, A, B) should be preferred (see the [VHB Jourqual 3](#) for an orientation)

It is important to approach your literature review in a systematic manner and to organize and document the information found. It can be challenging to determine which information and sources are relevant for your work, but this process is crucial in determining the overall basis and direction of your research. To start, consider reviewing standard literature (e.g. handbooks, textbooks), and then move on to advanced academic journal literature.

Tip: Start your search with standard literature (handbooks, course books) and on this basis, continue to search the advanced and state of the art scientific journal literature.

Scientific Writing

The principles of scientific writing include honesty, independence, objectivity, verifiability, comprehensiveness, and clarity. Ensure that your arguments are clear and consistent, and use the following strategies to support the development of your work:

- Formulating clear introductions to present your arguments
- Crafting transitional passages to connect your arguments
- Summarizing your work and, if necessary, explaining how it relates to your theme and objectives.
- Critically reflect on your work, both theoretically and empirically. Avoid making unsupported statements, and always provide rationales or factual explanations for your claims.

A well-written scientific work should not only have strong content, but also have formal coherence and a clear writing style. Use concise and precise language, avoiding long and complex sentences. Adhere to the rules of spelling and grammar, and avoid using informal language, poetic expressions, cliches, and unnecessary filler words.

Design

The Format of the Work:

The standard format of the work is DIN A4 paper with 1.5 line spacing and a font size of Arial 11 or Times New Roman 12. Paragraphs should be used to structure the text and make it easier to read and understand. It is advisable to visually separate different lines of thought by using paragraphs.

Use of Figures:

Meaningful figures can be effective in providing an overview, interrelationships, etc. It is important to ensure that figures are clear and easily understood. The figures should also be explained in the text. Avoid using figures just to fill pages, and make sure to include a title for each figure and to properly cite the source.

Proofreading:

It is crucial to proofread the work carefully to eliminate all orthographic, grammatical, and other mistakes. Proofreading is an important step in ensuring the quality and clarity of the text.

Citations in text

The [APA 7th edition citation guidelines](#) should be followed for references and quotes. The citation method is an essential aspect of scientific writing, and it requires clear and thorough

referencing of all sources used. To ensure consistency, it is necessary to use a uniform citation method.

List of References

Correct citation of sources is a critical component of scientific writing. At the end of your work, a list of references must be included in alphabetical order of the authors, using [APA 7th Generation Citation Rules](#).

Note: When using electronic sources, a printout of the material must be made available at the institute upon request. A professional bibliography and citation tool, such as "[Citavi](#)," is available on the University of Linz library's website, and can simplify the citation process.

Grading

The following criteria are the basis for assessing and grading your scientific work:

- Executive Summary: Does it contain the key issues of the work?
- Is the problem statement comprehensible?
- Are the objectives clearly defined?
- Does the content structure correspond with title and objectives?
- Is the theme covered in a substantial (depth) and comprehensive (scope) way?
 - Theoretical part
 - Practical part (in case of an empirical study)
- Is the style of writing appropriate for a scientific work?
- Is the argumentation logical and comprehensible?
- Are the objectives attained?
- Extent and quality of used scientific literature (especially scientific journals)
- Résumé: Is there a clear reference to objectives, methods and results?

Tip: It is highly recommended that you seek feedback from your supervisor regularly throughout the writing process to ensure that you are on the right track. This can greatly enhance the quality of your work and improve your grade.