

Create value and help the reader to understand something better that they want to understand well.

Assessment sheet for written assignments

Name: _____

Matriculation number: _____

Course number and title: _____

Semester: _____

Topic of the written assignment: _____

Date: _____

Form

	points	achieved
Cover page and declaration of good scholarly practice	2	
Table of contents	2	
Layout	4	
Language	6	
Citations and references	6	
Transliteration	8	
List of sources (including tools)	6	
Length	3	

Content: introduction

	points	achieved
Justification of the relevance and value of the topic	6	
Formulating a research question	6	
Overview of the structure of the text	4	

Content: main part

	points	achieved
Addressing and dealing with the research question	10	
State of research presented in a way that is relevant to the topic	12	
Breadth and depth of treating the topic	15	
Use of adequate methods	10	
Use of adequate sources (including tools)	10	
Logic and stringency of the arguments and ideas	12	
Independence	10	

Content: conclusion

	points	achieved
Summary of the research question and the results	6	
Reflection of the results	8	
Discussion of possible consequences	2	

Remarks

Assessment

Maximum achievable points: 148 (100%) [form: 37 (25%), content: 111 (75%)]		
Achieved points:	Relative achieved points: :148 x 100 = %	Grade:
4,0 (50-54%) 3,7 (55-59%) 3,3 (60-64%) 3,0 (65-69%) 2,7 (70-74%) 2,3 (75-79%) 2,0 (80-84%) 1,7 (85-89%) 1,3 (90-94%) 1,0 (95-100%)		

Date, signature, stamp _____

Legend for the assessment sheet for written assignments

Form

- Cover page and declaration of good scholarly practice: Does the cover page contain all important information (author's name, topic, course title, semester, instructor, study program, author's address, submission date)? Does the author declare to have written the assignment independently according to the standards of good scholarly practice?
- Table of contents: Is there a clear table of contents with page references?
- Layout: Is the typeface clear, consistent, and legible (sufficient margins, line spacing, structuring by headings, indents)?
- Language: Is the expression appropriate, are spelling and grammar error-free?
- Citations and references: Are sources cited completely, correctly, and consistently? Are literal quotations correctly identified?
- Transliteration: Has the transliteration of a non-latin script been applied correctly (according to a common variant from Studies of the Middle East) and consistently?
- List of sources: Are the sources presented completely and correctly? This includes tools, too.
- Length: Is the length within the agreed limits (+/- 10%)?

Content: Introduction

- Justification of the relevance and value of the topic: Is the choice of the topic justified and the objective clarified?
- Formulating a research question: Is a precise and workable research question developed?
- Overview of the structure of the text: Is an overview of the text given?

Content: main part

- Addressing and dealing with the research question: Does the text systematically work towards answering a previously formulated research question?
- State of research presented in a way that is relevant to the topic: Is the state of research presented coherently and relevant to the topic, so that the references to the topic are clear?
- Breadth and depth of treating the topic: Is the research literature relevant to the topic reflected and understood? Does the text exhibit a consistent depth of explanation? Does the paper avoid digressions that contribute little to the topic?
- Use of adequate methods: Are adequate analytical and/or empirical methods used to address and deal with the topic? Is the methodological approach described and justified?
- Use of adequate sources: Are adequate, i.e., citable (not only popular science!) sources used to address the topic? Is the selection of sources described and justified? This includes tools, too.
- Logic and stringency of the arguments and ideas: Is the argumentation coherent, logically structured, well-founded and comprehensible? Is there a common thread in the text? Are the results derived logically and comprehensibly?
- Independence: Do the phrasing and argumentation make clear the independent engagement with the topic? Is there a critical examination of the topic? Are own conclusions drawn or approaches to solutions developed?

Content: conclusion

- Summary of the research question and the results: Are the research question and results summarized in relation to each other?
- Reflection of the results: Is the significance of the results discussed in light of the current state of research?
- Discussion of possible consequences: Are possible consequences and implementation possibilities of the results described and discussed?

Some guidelines for writing a compelling text

Some blunt pieces of advice

Disclaimer: I don't want you to simply conform to certain guidelines or "good practices" of academic writing. Discover your styles in your different options of writing a text (in academia).

Some of the best pieces of advice I internalized:

- **Stop thinking about rules.** Good (= valuable) writing – in academia or elsewhere – is not achieved by following an instruction manual.
- Accept that **nobody cares about your thoughts**. Presenting your thinking process in writing may not be the most interesting, valuable, or compelling text to read. Noting your thoughts is one of the many steps towards writing a text with value to a reader – it seldom is the last step unless you want your paper to be exactly that: your train of thoughts in writing.
- **Brilliant writing** is organized, clear, persuasive – but **without value to the reader, it's useless**.
- Think about your **readers first**. Think about how your texts **change the way your readers see a topic**. Maybe you want to inspire, maybe you want to inform. These both require changes from how the reader sees the world right now.
- **Stop explaining**. Explaining creates stability. Instead, question and destabilize accepted knowledge.
- **Stop working with background information**. Background is supposed to stay stable. Instead, **introduce stasis** as the source of the problem, so knowledge which your readers may think is stable and commonly agreeable, but is not stable at all.
- **Write the way you like to read**. This "like to read" can be accomplished in various ways.

Aspects of texts with value to the reader

The following aspects apply for (shorter) texts which prioritize value to the reader with the idea in mind that with your text you want to help readers understand something better than they want to understand well.

In such a text, you – the writer – are not in the center of attention and you won't embrace contemporary (or traditional?) academia's proneness to self-indulgence.

Ideally – of course only one of many ideals –, the final text will be designed with:

- a captivating first sentence/paragraph – catch your reader, most likely by creating an instability, uncertainty, tension in their thinking;
- framing the group of readers to whom the text is addressed; not *everyone* or *anyone* is your reader;
- a clearly formulated problem, research question, or objective that will be solved, answered, reached throughout the page – your readers don't want to read about anything;
- a clear statement on what you are writing: if you want to summarize something, write that you summarize; if you want to compare something, write it. If you want to present to your reader your train of thoughts, make this explicit. If you want to revolve around a topic in an essayistic style (e.g. without necessarily presenting definite answers), tell the reader exactly that. In this way, your readers know exactly what to expect from your text and can decide whether they read it or not (or whether or not it adds value to their thinking);
- stasis: stasis is the kind of background information that you introduce to destabilize it through your arguments.
- a sense of defiance or questioning of the state of research;
- curious independence;
- reflecting the results as well as their relevance (to the reader, the field, or broader public).

Some guidelines for writing a compelling text

What's your problem?

A "problem" in the center of an academic texts, needs three components:

1. an instability;
2. the consequences of that instability: (a) the costs of leaving this instability unstable, (b) sometimes the benefits of stabilizing it;
3. readers as a community of discourse; such a community may be defined by a common interest in a topic.

A "problem" in the sense of advancing a community's understanding of a topic or field may not simply be a gap in the community's knowledge, because the gap has no consequences: leaving the gap unfilled has no costs for the readers; filling it has no benefits.

Also, a "problem" may not generally be an instability in the world; it has to be an instability in the readers.