

Institut d'études européennes

Vade Mecum for the Final Dissertation
Executive Master in European Union Studies
(MEUS)



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THE STRUCTURE OF A RESEARCH PAPER

a. Front page

Any paper has to be presented with the standard front page from Institute for European Studies available on the “Students’ Corner”.

b. Table of contents

Any paper must include a table of contents. It includes the titles and subtitles with the numbering as it appears in the body text. It also includes the bibliography and appendix. For each title or subtitle, there must be a corresponding page number. The table of contents can be automatically produced in Word or any equivalent software. In order to do so, each title will have been previously identified as a ‘style’ (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) and each title will be associated with a specific style.

A list of tables and figures (with the corresponding page numbers) can also be included if judged relevant, as well as a list of acronyms and abbreviations (ranked alphabetically, without page numbers).

c. Summary

A summary of maximum one page must be included. It must summarise the research design and the major findings of the paper. It has to be written with care, as it will be the first overview of the work.

d. Introduction

The introduction constitutes an essential section in any paper. The introduction presents the research design. It includes the topic and an overview of the research puzzle. The introduction should not exceed 10% of the total amount of pages of the paper. One should therefore avoid the temptation of excessive contextualizing.

e. Body text

Any paper has to be divided in distinct sections and subsections. The reasoning must unfold logically, step by step, section by section. Each section and their articulation must be directly linked to the research question.

Each section and subsection must have a clear, relevant title. The aim is not to arouse curiosity or to show literary elegance (it is a paper, not a novel), but rather to give the

main idea that will be developed in the section. A good title is short, precise, and articulates with the general demonstration.

Titles and subtitles that structure the paper must be numbered in a clear and coherent way. It is advised to choose one of the two models presented hereunder to number the titles, without mixing them. For instance, a title “1.A” must be avoided.

f. Conclusion

The conclusion comes back on the main findings of the research. It generally includes a reminder of the research question and an outline of the reasoning adopted. The conclusion should underline the main contribution of the research, by repeating the findings of each section, always in regard to the research question. The findings have to be compared to the existing literature and their contribution to the current knowledge should be underlined. It is necessary, in the conclusion to remind the readers of the dimensions that were set-aside in the research. It amounts to identifying the limits of the research. Choices had to be made, and these choices have to be explicit and conscious. Besides, being conscious of the limits of the research opens new paths: the research could be expanded by looking at other dimensions not tackled in the paper.

g. Bibliography

Any scientific work must contain a bibliography. It must contain all the sources used in the research and mentioned in the paper, and the other way around (all sources that appear in the bibliography must be used in the paper). The bibliography is not there to impress the reader but rather to enable him/her to find back the references used in the paper. Being able to check the content of a research is essential to its scientific character.

h. Appendix

Some of the documents used to write the paper can be put in appendix, such as a particular edition of a text, a survey protocol, the transcript of an interview, the copy of an archival document, etc. Photographic illustrations are only justified if they offer an added value to the research.

THE FORMAT OF A RESEARCH PAPER

a. Printing and binding

The IEE recommends printing on both sides of the page, preferably on recycled paper. It is also recommended to avoid plastic binding and covers, and to prefer glued binding.

b. Formatting

The presentation of a paper has an influence on how it will be received by the reader. Some basic rules should be followed:

- a) Use *Times New Roman* 12 as the norm (except for footnotes: TNR 10);
- b) Use a 1.5 spacing (except for the preliminary pages, footnotes, bibliography and appendix);
- c) Apply normal margins (2.5 cm left and right);
- d) Justify the text (alignment left and right);
- e) Number pages at the bottom right;
- f) Use italics only for words and expressions in another language (including Latin);
- g) Limit the use of abbreviations and acronyms; always use the full word for the first mention with its abbreviation between brackets.

c. Style

The written style of an academic paper differs from that used in essays, editorials or official documents. One should avoid expressing any personal judgment that is not scientific or theoretically supported.

d. Tables and figures

Tables, figures, pictures or graphs can be inserted in the paper's body text. They must be numbered and given a title. The content of the paper must directly refer to the table or figure via its number. If the tables are too big to be inserted in one page, they must be put in appendix. In all cases, the source of the table or figure has to be clearly mentioned.

e. References

References to readings or data are an essential part of academic research and condition its scientificity. In order to identify a source in a paper, a reference must be added in the text and listed in the bibliography at the end of the paper.

There are numerous styles available for referencing, each with their own rules regarding references in the text and in the bibliography. One should always mention its sources, but also be coherent in the presentation of its references. In order to facilitate coherence throughout the paper, the use of reference management software is recommended. Some, such as Zotero (recommended by the ULB library), are free: <http://bib.ulb.ac.be/fr/aide/nouveaux-outils-dexploitation-de-linformation/logiciels-de-gestion-bibliographique/index.html>

Zotero has the advantage of allowing presenting references according to a set style chosen among thousands of available styles (<https://www.zotero.org/styles>). Among the available styles, the Department of Political Science recommends the use of the Harvard Style.

f. References in the body text

Using references allow the reader to make itself an opinion on the research strategy adopted in the paper.

References should not only be used for textual quotations. They must systematically be used when borrowing an idea, information, element of analysis, or concept from another author.

The use of references alone does not prevent from plagiarism. Will be considered as plagiarism:

- 1) A quote without quotation marks;
- 2) Ideas borrowed from another author without clear reference;
- 3) Ideas translated from another author without a clear reference.

Plagiarism, in all cases, implies that the student will fail his evaluation since it does not meet the minimum requirements of scientific rigor expected by the Department. Besides, any case of fraud is transmitted to the Dean of the Faculty, who will take the necessary disciplinary action after hearing the student, according to the procedure and terms of the disciplinary actions as specified in the article 20 of the *Règlement*

disciplinaire relative aux étudiants de l'Université libre de Bruxelles (Disciplinary regulations regarding ULB students).

To know more about plagiarism and how to avoid it:

<http://www.bib.ulb.ac.be/fr/aide/eviter-le-plagiat/index.html>

g. Bibliography

Any paper has to include a list of references at the end of the paper. It must include all the sources used in the paper. All references should be presented according to the chosen presentation style (for instance: Chicago Style).

References should be organised by category:

- Scientific books
- Scientific articles
- Book reviews
- Working papers (papers presented at conferences)
- Official documents
- Press
- PhD dissertations or Master theses
- Web sites

In each category, references should be ranked alphabetically. For a same author, references can be ranked chronologically.

h. Submitting the paper

Any paper should be submitted by the deadline in two formats:

- Electronic format: the paper must be sent by email in one single attachment (word or pdf) to the relevant authority
- Paper format: the paper must be printed (following the guidelines) and submitted in hands to the relevant authority