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## General Guidelines for Writing Essays at the BA and MA Level

### 1 Aim

An essay is an ingenious text about an academic subject. It deals with a distinct phenomenon which can be described from different perspectives and unfolds a subjective chain of thoughts over a few pages. It is supposed to stimulate new thoughts in the reader.

### 2 Title Page

The title page gives an overview of the context, topic and author of the essay. It contains the following information:

#### 2.1 Header

Name of the institution	Ruhr University Bochum
Name of the faculty	Faculty of Social Science
Department	Sociology
Name of the chair	Chair of Sociology/ Social Inequality and Gender
Course instructor (title, name)	Prof Dr Heike Kahlert
Semester	WiTe 2017/18 or SoTe 2018 etc.
Title of the course	e.g. Gendered Excellence
Course number	e.g. 080 200

#### 2.2 Title of the Essay

#### 2.3 Author Information

Full name of the author of the essay  
Full postal address (street, house number, postal code, town/city)  
Telephone number (to contact the author in case of questions)  
E-mail address  
Student ID number  
Semester  
Type of course (seminar, exercise course, lecture, advanced seminar)  
Course of study  
Information about the course of study (basic/main course of study)

#### 2.4 Date of Submission

### **3 Formal Structure**

An essay generally consists of the following parts:

- Introduction (including a reference to the seminar/current example as introduction to the topic, research question(s), problem(s))
- Main part (an account of one's own position/core statement; development of one's argumentation)
- Ending (a summary of the introduced perspectives/arguments; conclusion)
- References (applied references)

Essays are not structured into chapters or subchapters due to their short length.

### **4 Citations, Use of Sources in the Text**

Essays should not include lengthy quotes and should forgo footnotes and side notes for stylistic reasons.

In general, essays do not contain further references to sources or other texts.

### **5 Language, Style, and Critical Distance**

In contrast to strictly academic papers, essays thrive on the author's esprit and inspire refreshing/unique thoughts in their readers.

Make use of the active form, not the passive form! You may use the pronoun 'I' when it is appropriate and done in moderation.

Formulate short and precise sentences! Although excessively long sentences with complicated clauses are highly impressive, they do not necessarily contribute to an understanding of the issue described and the messages of the text.

### **6 Layout and Extent of the Essay**

Pay attention to the manuscript's legibility (spacing, title layout...).

Font size: at least 12 pt.

Line spacing: 1.5

Margins (left and right): at least 4 cm

Number of characters (including spaces): 6,000 characters

The page count starts on the title page which does not, however, contain a page number. The pagination starts on the first page of the text and continues until the last page.

## **7 Dates and Certificate of Successful Participation**

### **7.1 Submission Date**

In general, deadlines set by the instructor are binding. Changes require a prior agreement with the instructor and are only possible in exceptional and justified cases.

Essays should be completed for the session which will deal with the essay's topic and handed two days in advance at the latest. More information on that will be found on the syllabus.

Essays, along with a signed declaration of authenticity, must be sent as either a PDF or Word document (one document) to the instructor and/or tutor via email. In exceptional cases, they may be handed in to the secretary's office (Universitätsstraße 134, Room 3/3.02) or sent to: Prof. Dr Heike Kahlert, Ruhr University Bochum, Faculty of Social Science, Chair of Sociology/ Social Inequality and Gender, Room 3/3.14, Universitätsstraße 134, 44801 Bochum.

### **7.2 Review of the Essay**

The instructor usually finishes correcting the essay by the next seminar session.

### **7.3 Certificate of Successful Participation**

The successful participation is certified electronically (currently via VSPL/CampusOffice).

Date of last update: 01/2018