

Department of Communication and Media Research **DCM**

Guidelines for Writing Seminar Papers and Theses at the DCM

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1. Formal Structure of Academic Papers

To ensure readability and to facilitate the correction process, the following standards apply to papers submitted at the Department of Communication and Media Research:

- The title page of the paper must include the name of the University and the Department, the type of paper (seminar paper, thesis), the title of the seminar (if applicable), the supervisor's name, the title of the paper, the date of submission, and the author's name, postal address, email address and student number;
- The paper must contain a table of contents listing the chapters and subchapters with their corresponding page numbers;
- Line spacing of 1.5 lines for the main text; single line spacing for footnotes and longer direct quotations;
- Justified alignment for the main text;
- Page margins: at least 2.5 cm on the left and right, and 2.5 cm at the top and bottom;
- Page numbering: Page 1 is the first page of text, i.e., usually the introduction; the title page and table of contents are not numbered;
- Recommended font for the main text: e.g., Times Roman in 12 pt or Arial in 11 pt or 12 pt;
- Headings should be set in **bold** and numbered consecutively;
- Words to be emphasized should be set in *italics*;
- ALL CAPS (all words in capital letters) should be used sparingly;
- It is best to place notes at the bottom of the main text, i.e., on the same page as the section of text to which they refer. This is because footnotes are easier to read than endnotes, as they reduce the need for page-turning.

2. Declaration Requirements

A **signed declaration of honor** must be submitted with **all** papers. The form provided by the faculty must be used for this purpose:

- English:
https://commonweb.unifr.ch/EcoDean/Pub/site_ses/formSiteWeb/Declaration_honneur_E.pdf
- German:
https://commonweb.unifr.ch/EcoDean/Pub/site_ses/img_online/A_2014/d%C3%A9claration_%202020_D.pdf

The **use of artificial intelligence (AI)** in the preparation of written work (seminar papers, final theses) must be transparently documented. To this end, at least the **AI applications used, and the purpose of their use** must be specified on a **separate page at the end of the paper**.

3. Academic Citation

In academic work, all external sources (quotations, opinions, findings, concepts) must be documented. This serves to disclose the information on which the arguments are based. Quotations (= verbatim or paraphrased reproduction of a statement) are identified as such within the text, and all works from which quotations are taken are listed at the end of the paper in the reference list with full bibliographic details.

In the Department of Communication Studies and Media Research, the citation style according to the guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) is used (<http://www.apastyle.org>). APA citation style has been established as the international standard in social sciences.

3.1 In-text Citations according to APA

3.1.1 General Rules

Following a quotation, a brief reference comprising the author's surname(s), year, and page number(s) from which the quotation is taken is inserted in brackets after the quotation as follows: (*surname, year, page[s]*).

Two authors are separated by '&'. In the case of **three or more authors**, only the first author's surname is given in the short citation, followed by 'et al.'.

(Boyle & Haynes, 2024, 91)

(Otto et al., 2017, 136)

If a passage of text is quoted that spans **several pages** (which can happen particularly with paraphrased quotations), the first and last pages of the passage to which the quotation refers should be stated:

(Otto et al., 2017, 136–138)

If **several works by the same author from the same year** are cited in the paper, a lower-case letter in ascending order (a, b, c, ...) is added to the year in the short citation. This letter is also added to the year in the entry for the respective work in the reference list:

(Smith, 2020a, 15)

(Smith, 2020b, 5)

The full bibliographic details are listed only in the reference list at the end of the paper. For works with more than two authors, all authors' names are listed there (and only there!).

3.1.2 Direct (verbatim) Quotations

Direct quotations are enclosed in opening and closing quotation marks and, where possible, preceded by an introductory sentence that clarifies the context. This method of quotation should be used sparingly: direct quotations should be limited to concise and important statements.

Examples:

Restrictions on press freedom have also been observed in Western European countries: "In Switzerland, the situation is comparatively positive, but issues such as banking secrecy and inconsistent transparency laws still restrict journalistic work" (Wyss et al., 2026, 49).

Although the situation of press freedom is considered more positive in Switzerland than in many other European countries, "issues such as banking secrecy and inconsistent transparency laws still restrict journalistic work" (Wyss et al., 2026, 49).

Omissions in a direct quotation are indicated by [...].

Restrictions on press freedom have also been observed in Western European countries: "In Switzerland, [...] issues such as banking secrecy and inconsistent transparency laws still restrict journalistic work" (Wyss et al., 2026, 49).

Additions made by the author to a direct quotation are also placed in square brackets:

Restrictions on press freedom have also been observed in Western European countries: "In Switzerland, the situation is comparatively positive [compared to other European countries], but issues such as banking secrecy and inconsistent transparency laws still restrict journalistic work" (Wyss et al., 2026, 49).

Where **text is emphasized**, it is indicated whether the emphasis is already present in the original ('emphasis in the original') or whether it has been added by the author of the paper ('emphasis added'):

Restrictions on press freedom have also been observed in Western European countries: "In Switzerland, the situation is comparatively positive, but issues such as *banking secrecy* and *inconsistent transparency laws* still restrict journalistic work" (Wyss et al., 2026, 49; emphasis added).

3.1.3 Paraphrased Quotations

As direct quotations should be used sparingly, the ideas, opinions, or research findings expressed by other authors are usually paraphrased, i.e., put into one's own words. In doing so, the content of the original must be reproduced faithfully, without interpreting it or placing it in a misleading context. Paraphrased quotations are not placed in quotation marks.

If an entire paragraph in the paper refers to the same source, the source may be cited at the end of the paragraph. However, if the author's name is mentioned in the text, the brief reference is usually placed immediately after the name is mentioned, with only the year and page number given in brackets.

Examples:

Academic writing is particularly strongly associated with frustrations and fears of failure (Boehncke, 2000, 68).

According to Boehncke (2000, 68), academic writing is closely linked to frustrations and fears of failure.

The **page number may be omitted** from the reference if the quotation does not refer to a specific page but rather to **findings from the work cited in general**.

Dohle and Vowe (2006) describe various levels of mediatization in sports that indicate how sports are altered to better fit into the media, especially television.

A mix of entertaining content and hard news from the political and business worlds is seen as appealing by young social media users (Slettebakk & Storm-Mathisen, 2018).

If a passage of text refers to **several sources** (e.g. where statements coincide across several independent sources, or in a summary of findings from various studies), a **collective reference** may be used, in which the various sources are listed **one after the other within the same set of brackets** and separated by **semicolons**.

Information about current developments of social relevance is regarded as the core business of journalism (Bosshart, 2007, 17-18; Görke, 2007, 93).

Working conditions of journalists in Switzerland have been investigated in various studies since the 1980s (Saxer & Schanne, 1981; Marr et al., 2001; Keel, 2011; Dingerkus et al., 2018).

3.1.4 Quotations within a Quotation

If the passage you wish to quote refers to another important source that is difficult to access, you should use a secondary citation in the short reference, following the format: original source → 'as cited in' → page reference. Both the original source and the work containing the page reference must be included in the reference list. However, such a secondary citation should only be used in exceptional cases when there is no direct access to the original source.

Example:

The term 'news value' was first used in the 1920s (Lippman, 1922, 348, as cited in Kunczik & Zipfel, 2005, 246).

3.2 Complete Bibliographic Details in the Reference List

In the reference list, all texts used in the paper are listed alphabetically by the surnames of the authors or editors. If there are several texts by the same author, solo publications are listed first, followed by those with co-authors, in chronological order from newest to oldest.

3.2.1 APA Rules for the Main Text Types

Monographs:

Author's surname, initial [, & surname2, initial2] (year of publication). *Title of the book. Subtitle of the book.* Publisher.

Example:

Boyle, R. & Haynes, R. (2024). *Streaming the Formula 1 rivalry: Sport and the media in the platform age.* Peter Lang.

Chapters/Articles in edited volumes:

Surname of the author of the article, initial [, & surname2, initial2] (year). Title of the article. Subtitle of the article. In editor's initial, editor's name [, & initial 2, name2] (ed(s).), *Title of the book. Subtitle of the book* (page numbers of the entire article). Publisher.

Example:

Sletteameås, D. & Storm-Mathisen, A. (2018). News consumption among young people in Norway. In Y. Andersson, U. Dalquist, & J. Olsson (eds.), *Youth and news in a digital media environment: Nordic-Baltic perspectives* (pp. 115–123). Nordicom.

Articles in scientific journals:

Author's surname, initial [, & surname2, initial2] (Year). Title of the article. Subtitle of the article. *Name of the journal, volume of the journal*(issue no.), page numbers of the entire article. DOI (= Digital Object Identifier)

Example:

Otto, L., Glogger, I., & Boukes, M. (2017). The softening of journalistic political communication: a comprehensive framework model of sensationalism, soft news, infotainment, and tabloidization. *Communication Theory*, 27(2), 136–155. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12102>

Information from websites and articles in online media:

As with other sources, references to websites and articles in online media should include the author or publisher, the year and the title. In addition, the full web address (URL) should be included, as well as the date of consultation if the page cited is not dated. Furthermore, the reference must clearly indicate the type of text in question (journalistic article, academic essay, information from companies or administrative bodies, legal text, etc.). The reference must therefore contain the following elements:

- Name of the author of the online document; **if this information is missing:** the name of the organization or institution responsible for the website, or the title of the web page.
- Year of creation or year of the last update; **if this information is missing:** 'n.d.'. If the exact publication date is known, e.g. for daily news articles, this is stated immediately after the year.
- Title and, where applicable, subtitle of the web document; **if this information is missing:** a description of the website ('personal homepage', 'company website', etc.).
- For articles and essays, a reference to the medium in which the document was published and/or further details regarding the nature and context of the publication.
- Full URL (Uniform Resource Locator = web address).

The date of consultation is only mentioned if the website is not dated or is regularly updated. As with other sources, only the author and year of publication are given as a short reference in the text.

Examples:

BBC (2026). *A BBC for all. BBC Group annual report and accounts 2025/26*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/documents/bbc-annual-report-and-accounts-25-26.pdf>

Saieed, Z. (2026, 10 August). Malaysia was confident in its social media ban, but kids are still logged in. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/10/world/asia/malaysia-social-media-ban-delayed.html>

3.2.2 Documents Containing Detailed Guidelines and Further Information

Detailed guidelines on how to cite different types of text in a reference list in accordance with APA guidelines are available, for example, in the following documents:

- APA Style and Grammar Guidelines:
<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines>
- APA 7 Referencing Style Guide from the University of Western Australia:
https://guides.library.uwa.edu.au/ld.php?content_id=48459791
- A short guide to APA 7 from the Institute of Journalism at the University of Mainz (in German):
https://ifp.uni-mainz.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/906/2025/09/APA7_Kurz-Manual.pdf

4. How to Present Results in Tables and Graphs

4.1 General Principles

Tables and graphs serve to provide readers with precise information about the results obtained. They must therefore be self-explanatory and transparent; in other words, all the information required to understand the table or graph must be included in the presentation.

Tables and graphs must be formatted consistently throughout the paper, numbered consecutively and clearly legible. If there are more than five tables or graphs, there should be a corresponding list of figures and tables, including page numbers, which is usually placed between the table of contents and the introduction.

4.2 Tables

4.2.1 Table Formatting

No unedited output from SPSS, R or similar statistical programs should be included in the thesis. To best meet the criteria set out below regarding table labelling and structure, it is recommended to prepare the results tables using a suitable program. It is best to create a reusable template for this purpose.

4.2.2 Table Labelling

Tables must contain the following information:

- Table number
- Table title, and subtitle if applicable
- Frame of reference/data set (if not the same for all results, the differences must be explained in footnotes; for example, if a specific age group is not included and the number of cases therefore differs)
- Explanatory notes, if applicable

4.3 Graphs

Graphs must include the following information:

- Figure number
- Figure title, and subtitle if applicable
- Frame of reference/data set
- Explanatory notes, if applicable
- Reference to the base table for the values shown in the appendix
- Axis labels (content and unit of measurement) [if not apparent from the caption/reference framework]