Formal requirements in academic texts

1. Why formal requirements are relevant

In term papers and final theses, you need to demonstrate that you possess fundamental academic skills, such as developing a topic, finding the necessary sources, the identification of relevant information and coming up with an outline. In addition, you should demonstrate that you can apply formal guidelines. These serve to ensure that your text is readable, transparent and clear. Since non-compliance with these formal requirements leads to deductions in your mark, it is important to take a close look at them.

2. Which formal requirements need to be met?

The formal requirements for academic texts at the University of Konstanz vary depending on the discipline, faculties and individual lecturers. It is therefore necessary to familiarize yourself with the respective requirements early on in your work. Materials given in lectures and seminars (such as handouts and slides) and conversations with lecturers often provide answers about the formal requirements. However, some lecturers do not give specific instructions. The following table lists the points you need to observe and gives examples of what this could mean for your paper.

3. Relevant formal requirements

	Points to observe	Example
General	– Is there a deadline by which the text needs to be submitted? – Should the text be submitted in a specific form? – Does a "declaration of independent work" need to be attached?	– The deadline is the 15th of April. – The text should be submitted in a stapled or bound form. In addition, an electronic version should be provided. – The "declaration of independent work" from the department website needs to be included.
Structure	– How should the text be structured? – Some lecturers have precise ideas about the structure of the individual chapters of the text.	– Cover page with title & author details – Table of content with page references – List of figures, tables and/or abbreviations, if applicable – Introduction (starting on page 1) – Main part, divided into subchapters (attention: do not call it "main part") – Conclusion – Bibliography – Appendices, if applicable – Declaration of independent work

Formatting in word processing software	- Formatting requirements regarding page margins, title page, table of contents, font, line spacing and paragraph	- All page margins 2.5 cm - Title page and table of contents do not contain page numbers. Lists of illustrations, tables and abbreviations are marked with Roman numerals. - Font Times New Roman in font size 12 - 1.5-line spacing - Justification formatting
Desigining the main text	- How should paragraphs be marked? - How should the headings be designed? - Can there be lists in the text? - How should relevant information be marked (underlined, bold, italic)?	- Mark paragraphs by including blank lines - Headings are to be marked in bold - No lists instead of main text; complete sentences - Do not emphasise parts of the text by underlining, bold, colourful etc. marks, rather: find a wording to convey your point.
Formatting of figures and tables	- Are there any guidelines for the design of figures and tables?	- Heading / title - Number of the figure / table - Source of the illustration - The text needs to refer to the illustration / table - All graphic elements need a legend.
Use of the university logo	If you intend to use the logo of the university, you need to adhere to the guidelines. Information on these and a sample title page can be found on the website of the Examinations Office: Notes on the use of the logo of the University of Konstanz on examination papers.	

Schreib-Zentrum