

Chair of International Economics

Guidelines for Term Papers

Spring Term 2025

Two Options

Students interested in writing a term paper (“Semesterarbeit”) at the Chair of International Economics should choose one of the following two options.

A. Empirical macroeconomic country brief

Imagine you are an IMF economist assigned to evaluate the “macroeconomic health” of a particular economy. For this purpose, you will write a so-called “country brief” about a country of your choosing. As a good example, consider the IMF’s [2019 Albania brief](#). The objective is not to produce an extensive 80-page report. Instead, you provide a short overview of the key macroeconomic variables, identify particularly important “macro health problems”, and focus on one of them in more detail. In the case of Albania, this could be the persistent current account deficit.

The cornerstone of a country brief is the effective visualization of macroeconomic data to support your assessment. All figures should be generated using R, and the corresponding R code must be included as an integral component of your term paper. With the help of the figures, your theoretical training in macroeconomics, and the relevant literature, you identify possible macroeconomic problems and risks and explore possible policy changes or reforms that could address the identified issues. Finally, you focus on one particular issue, carry out a more detailed analysis, and then derive a concrete policy recommendation for the country’s government (or a relevant international organization).

B. Short research paper

Alternatively, students may opt to write a short research paper addressing a scientific question of their choosing. Such a short research paper is akin to a condensed version of a Bachelor’s thesis. Students interested in pursuing this option are advised to refer to the guidelines for research proposals applicable to Bachelor’s or Master’s theses. Similar to option A, all empirical figures must be produced using R, with the R code constituting an integral part of the term paper.

Procedure

The procedure for writing a term paper at the Chair of International Economics is as follows.

1. Submission of proposal

Submit your proposal to julia.fischer@unilu.ch by the deadline of Sunday, March 16, 2025.¹ Any proposals received after this date will unfortunately not be eligible for consideration. Your proposal must align with one of the two options previously outlined and should not exceed four

¹ This deadline applies to WF students.

pages, including references. Typically, both the proposal and paper should be written in English—except a topic calls for German (e.g., because it relates to a specifically Swiss issue).

2. Review, notification, and kick-off

Proposals will be reviewed based on their quality. Students submitting satisfactory proposals will be assigned a supervisor, invited to a kick-off meeting, and eventually granted permission to submit their term paper. During the kick-off meeting, students will receive detailed feedback on their proposals. Authors of proposals deemed unsatisfactory will not be allowed to submit a term paper to the Chair of International Economics for the year 2025. Decision notifications regarding the proposals will be communicated swiftly.

3. Two submission deadlines

During the kick-off meeting, the student and supervisor will set two deadlines: one for the submission of the paper's draft version and another for the final version. The draft version allows the supervisor to offer feedback and guidance, which the student can incorporate before submitting the final version. Along with the final version, students are required to submit the code used to generate the figures, tables, and statistics within the paper (as detailed below). Students should ensure proper grammar in their submissions. All submitted documents will routinely undergo plagiarism checking.

Code Submission

The code file must be saved as *lastname_firstname.R*, and the data must be in the format that matches the data import command in the code (as shown in the example below). Before submitting, students are asked to check whether the code runs without an error message (also on a different computer). The code needs to be commented on (using #) and structured in a way that makes it intelligible to other R users. Here is an example of how the start of the code file could look like:

```
setwd("") #leave this one empty in your final submission code
getwd()

data <- read.csv("data.csv", sep = ";") #if the data file is in CSV format
```

Please submit a Zip folder including the code file and the data file(s) needed to run the code. The Zip folder should be named *lastname_firstname.zip*.

Further Guidelines

Structure

The structure of the term paper follows a standard format. It includes a title page, featuring the paper's title, student's personal details, supervisor's name, and submission date; a table of contents; a list of figures and potentially tables; a list of abbreviations; an introductory section; one or more main sections; a conclusion; a bibliography; and, optionally, an appendix. Additionally, a signed "Declaration of Independent Work" must be included in the submission.

Length

The central components of the term paper, including the introductory section, main section(s), and conclusion, should be confined to a maximum of 25 pages, using a 12-point font size and 1.5 line spacing. It is important to prioritize quality over quantity!

Figures and tables

Generally, figures should be integrated within the text. However, those that are not key to the main argument may be placed in an appendix. Place figure captions above the figures and any accompanying notes (such as data sources and explanations) below them. Ensure that figures and tables are numbered consecutively throughout the paper. For tables, avoid using unformatted outputs directly from statistical software. Instead, format them in a manner consistent with standard practices observed in economics journals.

Quotation, referencing, and AI

The correct citation of existing work you use in your term paper is imperative. Keep in mind that plagiarism can have serious consequences, including the term paper being rejected. When incorporating an argument or idea from another author, always include the appropriate citation, even when repeating the argument or idea in your own words (paraphrasing). Direct quotations should be exact copies of the original text and clearly marked with quotation marks. Please use the [Harvard referencing style](#) and consider organizing your literature with the help of a reference program (such as Mendeley or Zotero). When using AI tools (such as ChatGPT) to improve your grammar, to streamline your argument, or to make your R code more efficient, mind that such tools may “hallucinate” and always thoroughly review the results before implementing them.

Faculty guidelines

It might also be helpful to have a look at the corresponding [faculty guidelines](#).

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