

Information sheet for students preparing their *Prüfungsleistung*, BA thesis and MA thesis

- I. General information**
- II. Suitable resources**
- III. Formal requirements**
- IV. Assessment criteria**
- V. Options for a *Prüfungsleistung***
- VI. BA thesis / MA thesis**

I. General information:

An academic paper (be it a *Prüfungsleistung*, BA thesis or MA thesis) demonstrates that the author is able to think through and work on a specific didactic question, considering already existing theoretical and empirical findings from academic literature. For this purpose, a question should be developed on the basis of topics discussed in seminars (or otherwise closely discussed with the respective supervisor). For your BA or MA thesis, you have to submit a proposal to your first reader. We strongly recommend submitting a proposal for *Prüfungsleistungen* as well. If your proposal is accepted, this is followed by researching, selecting and evaluating literature, and developing a conclusive line of argument. We expect papers to be free of linguistic and stylistic errors as well as formal mistakes. That is, we expect you to check the grammar and lexis carefully, and to use the appropriate technical terms. Read your paper through when it is finished to make sure that there are no problems of coherence (the flow of logical connections in your text and arguments) or of cohesion (the use of grammatical and lexical features to create meaningful links in sentences, clauses and paragraphs). Please also make sure that you have quoted, cited and referenced your sources correctly.

II. Suitable resources

Printed books and articles by relevant authors and from relevant academic journals should be the main sources for your paper. It is a good idea to first look for additional texts by academics you have come across during your seminar or studies, since researchers will most likely have published more than just one article in their specialist field. Please make sure you look for current publications on your topic in order to reflect the most up-to-date state of theory and empirical findings. When defining terms, refer to academic reference books. Sources such as *Duden* are too unspecific to define even basic terms in scientific fields. You will be able to find a number of academic publications online as well. Please refrain from googling and instead make use of the library's online search, the online versions of journals or GoogleScholar. Other places for you to start might be the FIS *Bildung Datenbank*, ZFF (*Zeitschrift für Fremdsprachenforschung*), FLUL (*Fremdsprachen Lehren und Lernen*) and, if applicable, your seminar bibliography (e.g. look for other works of the authors mentioned there). More practically oriented journals such as FUE (*Der fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch*) or PFU (*Praxis Fremdsprachenunterricht*) can be a starting point for teaching material and resources. Some limitations apply to using international sources: you should make sure that information you find there is transferable to the German context of EFL. Whenever possible, refer to renowned authors strongly connected to specific concepts and terms when defining and explaining those terms (e.g. refer to Byram for Intercultural Communicative Competence, to Hallet for the Bilingual Triangle, to Johnson/Johnson for Cooperative Learning etc.). Most private blogs, forum entries, websites etc. are not suitable resources.

Be critical of literature! While peer-reviewed articles are subjected to strict criteria before being published, bear in mind that researchers' work is to posit, test, further develop and, if necessary, reject hypotheses. Compare statements and findings especially if they seem unclear, excessive (“There can be no doubt that...”) or if indications are given that a particular position is controversial (“Several studies have shown that... In contrast, my study shows that...”).

III. Formal requirements:

A *Prüfungsleistung* consists of 3,000-5,000 words; a BA thesis amounts to 10,000 words; an MA thesis requires 15,000 words. You have four months to complete your BA or MA thesis, starting with the registration of your topic at the *Prüfungsamt*. Dates to hand in your *Prüfungsleistung* will be discussed in the respective seminar. Whatever paper or thesis you are working on, it needs a cover page, a table of contents with page numbers and the *Eigenständigkeitserklärung*.

Format your document as follows:

- portrait DIN A4 format, font size point 12, line spacing 1.5, standard font, justified margins
- margins 3cm on both sides
- headings and subheadings given in Arabic numbers (e.g. 1, 1.1., 1.2. etc.)
- foreign language words that cannot/should not be translated (e.g. *Prüfungsleistung*) in italics
- verbatim quotes in double quotation marks; quotations within the quoted text in single quotation marks – only use single quotations marks when you de-naturalize a term
- literal quotations of more than 40 words as block quotations with single line spacing, without quotations marks and preferably in a smaller font (e.g. main body in 12pt, long quotation in 10pt) - make sure you put the full stop after the final word of the quotation and not after the parenthetical citation.
- footnotes should be used sparingly, to add information and not to cite sources, and numbered with Arabic numbers at the end of pages¹
- sources indicated by name of author and year of publication in parentheses directly after the referenced information or quotation (e.g. Byram 2013: 57)²
- the period to indicate the end of a sentence placed after the parentheses, except in block quotations
- when referring to more than one source, sort by chronological order (most recent first)
- when works have three or more authors, all authors are listed at the first mention, then indicated as et al. (e.g. Legutke/Müller-Hartmann/Schocker-von-Ditfurth 2009 becomes Legutke et al. 2009 whereas Byram/Hu 2013 would be used continually)
- tables and figures with short, meaningful titles (above the table, below the figure), numbered consecutively and referred to as such (e.g. Table 3)
- references in alphabetical order at the end of your work; several works by the same author should be listed chronologically (oldest first)
- online sources must be provided with exact URL (no hyperlink) and a retrieval date

¹ This is an example for a footnote.

² There is more than one way to correctly reference sources. If you have learnt another way of giving references (e.g. APA) and would like to continue using that, please ask your lecturer whether you can do so.

Example:

- Byram, Michael & Hu, Adelheid (eds.) (2013): *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning* (2nd edition). London: Routledge.
- Caspari, Daniela; Klippel, Friederike; Legutke, Michael K. & Schramm, Karen (eds.) (2016): *Research Methods in Foreign Language Didactics: A Handbook*. Tübingen: Fool.
- Maley, Alan (2009): "Creative writing for language learners (and teachers)". Teaching English - British Council & BBC. www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/creative-writing-language-learners-teachers. (Retrieved: 15.05.2020).
- Meißner, Franz-Joseph (2016): Interkomprehension. In: Burwitz-Melzer, Eva; Mehlhorn, Grit; Riemer, Claudia; Bausch, Karl-Richard & Krumm, Hans-Jürgen (Hrsg.): *Handbuch Fremdsprachenunterricht* (6. Aufl.). Tübingen: Narr, 234-239.
- Wenk, Anne Kathrin; Marx, Nicole; Rübmann, Lars & Steinhoff, Torsten (2016): Förderung bilingualer Schreibfähigkeiten am Beispiel Deutsch – Türkisch. *Zeitschrift für Fremdsprachenforschung* 27: 2, 151-179.

IV. Assessment Criteria:

Your work will be evaluated on three levels: content/argument, form/style and academic merit. They are explained here in the form of questions that you can use as a checklist before handing in.

- 1) content/argument: reproduction, application, reflection
 - Have you produced enough content?
 - Have you combined this content into a stringent argument?

It may be the case that you have produced enough content (e.g. different theories of second language acquisition), but that you have not combined them in an argumentative way (e.g. comparing theories, pointing out similarities and differences).

- Is there an appropriate balance between reproduction (e.g. summarizing theories), application (e.g. comparing theories, putting theory into practice, applying models) and reflection (e.g. a conclusion, an evaluation, a critical summary)?
- Does reproduction take up between 30 and 50 per cent of your paper, and no more?
- Is there a coherent argument from your introduction, where you pose a question or issue, through the main body, where you elaborate on it, to the conclusion, where you summarize your findings and assess the process?
- Is your work comprehensible, consistent and logical?

- 2) form/style: structure, paragraphs, proofreading

- Do all paragraphs consist of at least three sentences?

If not, the idea expressed is most likely underdeveloped and should either be enriched or combined with another paragraph.

- Do your chapters and sub-chapters make sense?
- Do your paragraphs make sense?
- Do they start with a 'topic sentence' which helps the reader know what this paragraph will be about (and then actually is about it)?

Different chapters must deal with different aspects of a topic. In the same way, each paragraph should have a different topic and advance your argument, each following the other logically. Pay attention to your linking words and phrases (e.g. besides/despite; on the one hand/on the other hand; for/against etc.) – our recommendation is to get acquainted with “Auntie Alligator’s List of Don’ts” that also warns against overusing and misusing certain words and phrases (e.g. “therefore”).

- Are there no spelling, grammatical or punctuation errors?

Please proofread your work and use the automatic spelling- and grammar-checking tools of your writing software.³

3) Academic merit: literature, terminology

- Do you follow the guidelines for quotations (see above)?
- Have you used a sufficient number of sources (even for an early *Prüfungsleistung*, there should be no fewer than five different sources)?
- Do you always correctly and completely reference a source when you refer to a statement, finding, theory, model etc. that you have read about?
- Do you write like a researcher writing a research article? I.e. avoid generalisations or normative statements as to the best way to do something unless you can refer to a reliable source to back up your statements.

If not, at best, your paper/thesis does not meet the standards of academic work and will be marked poorly. At worst, you are handing in plagiarized work and will fail the course/your examination.

- Have you distinguished between different types of text (if applicable)?

Example: You might want to discuss administrative tests such as *Lehrpläne*, *Bildungsstandards* or articles from newspapers in your work. These are not the same as theoretical texts or academic sources. Please also do not confuse *Lehrpläne* with empirical data from studies – just because something is mentioned in a *Lehrplan* does not mean all teachers comply with it (or do so in a particular way).

- Whenever you paraphrase a thought, is your paraphrase concise and correct?
- Does your work present a good balance of quotations, paraphrases and your own words?
- Is there a good balance between academic wording and comprehensibility?
- Do you use academic terminology and register rather than everyday language throughout?

V. Options for a *Prüfungsleistung*

Depending on the seminar, the exact form of a *Prüfungsleistung* will differ. Please refer to your lecturer for more specific information. You might be asked to adapt and/or reorganise teaching material, e.g. from a standard school coursebook, in the light of theories, models and research findings you have learnt about in the course. Task-based language learning, drama pedagogy, action- and production-oriented methods as well as cooperative learning might be especially useful to consider when commenting on existing material and adding/redesigning tasks and activities. You might also be asked to draw on your acquired knowledge to develop ideas for a lesson or series of lessons by explaining the major features of a particular teaching approach and why you consider it appropriate

³ Please note that your work will not be graded based on your English language proficiency, but we expect you write a coherent and comprehensible text, using the correct terminology and an appropriate academic style. If the number of mistakes you make affects your argument, i.e. the mistakes obscure the meaning or make sentences incomprehensible, this will result in your work being marked down.

for the teaching situation described. You are not expected to hand in detailed lesson plans, but should discuss how the activities you describe would promote language acquisition. Your teaching ideas should also include comments on the role of the teacher and the specific learner group for which the lesson is being planned. Such *Prüfungsleistungen*, while being practical applications of theoretical knowledge, also need to adhere to the formal standards listed here (references, quotations, structure etc.).

VI. BA thesis / MA thesis

The topic for your BA or MA thesis respectively cannot be decided on all by yourself, but will have to be discussed with your first reader. This is to ensure you do not spend four months working on an unsuitable topic and/or applying unsuitable methodology. You will spend more time on your BA or MA thesis than on other academic papers. This is why you should consider a topic that you found interesting during your studies, that left you with open questions and/or that relates to an up-to-date issue of teaching English that you have come across. Both BA and MA theses may come in the shape of an empirical study or a theoretical conceptualisation.

Your BA thesis will illustrate that you have learnt and internalized the principles of academic work. The thesis usually consists of a structured literature research and the application of the scientific method to an issue relevant to your field. You are expected to discuss a question or problem, referencing different theoretical approaches or empirical findings. If you would like to conduct an empirical research project, make sure to design an appropriate small-scale project that will be workable within the scope of a BA thesis. For this, it is important that you are competent and feel confident both in subject matter knowledge as well as in research methodology. Your courses will prepare you for your BA and MA theses, but we urge you to seek assistance (additional courses, colloquiums, lecturers' office hours) to further enhance your competence. Your MA thesis differs from a BA thesis not only in length, but also in the expectation that it contributes to academic research. You are expected to advance a new point of view, often based on original research of existing literature or an empirical study.

Examples for BA theses from the past:

- Evaluating „Memrise“ on the basis of second language acquisition theories („Memrise“ is a vocabulary-learning app)
- Grappling with „Green Book“ - exploring the principles of film aesthetics and reflecting on racism in the EFL classroom (theoretical work with suggested lesson plans)
- A qualitative investigation of using songs for vocabulary teaching in the primary EFL classroom (*Leitfadeninterviews* with two teachers, *inhaltsanalytische Auswertung*)
- Supporting learners with special needs - an analysis of an English text book for grade 5 and proposals for adapting it to an inclusive EFL classroom

Examples for MA theses from the past:

- Autonomous reading in the primary EFL classroom – examining its impact on reading motivation of pupils in year 3 (planning and teaching of a lesson, evaluation with the help of classroom observation and pupil questionnaires)
- English teachers' attitudes towards using youth adult fiction novels in the EFL classroom (four teacher interviews, analysed and interpreted with *Dokumentarische Methode*)
- Learning English from social media? Developing a concept for using the potential of informal digital learning processes in the EFL classroom. (theoretical work)
- English teachers' views on challenges and potentials of the transition from primary to secondary school (six *Leitfadeninterviews*, *inhaltsanalytische Auswertung*)