

**MYKOLAS ROMERIS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES
INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**METHODICAL GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION AND DEFENCE OF COURSE
PAPERS IN PSYCHOLOGY**

ANNOTATION

Methodical guidelines for preparation and defence of course papers in psychology are intended for both students and teachers. The main aim of the guidelines is to help systematically prepare course papers, to summarize and evaluate the knowledge of the study program and its relevant course paper topic, to develop student's scientific research skills, independence, active thinking, to help to prepare for the defence of the course paper, and to formulate objective requirements for the defence of course papers.

1. Purpose and aims of course paper

A course paper is an individual, analytical paper, which aims to develop student's ability to study selected scientific and practical problems, to use scientific literature, to systematize and analyze it. The course paper aims to broaden student's knowledge in the subject field of the course paper. The course paper in psychology is a theoretical work, in which students should reveal their ability to define, discuss and reasonably analyze a scientific problem and related scientific theories, to present diverse perspectives and opinions, to systematize and evaluate them.

A student is expected to:

- present selected problem, describe the relevance of the chosen topic and problem;
- analyze scholarly literature on the topic: both theoretical viewpoints and empirical research;
- present her opinion on debatable issues of the topic;
- present conclusions of a course paper;
- make up a detailed reference list according to the requirements;
- follow the requirements for processing and submitting a course paper.

A teacher is expected to consult, guide, and encourage a student to work individually, creatively and originally in unfolding the chosen topic of a course paper.

2. Choosing a topic for course paper

Topics for course papers are presented to students by the deadline set in the Regulations for Assessment of Study Results at Mykolas Romeris University. For regular students the deadline is the beginning of the second stage of registration for studies, i.e., the 15th of January. The second-year bachelor students can choose their topic for course paper in the period from the 15th to the 30th of January. Students who want to suggest their own topic for the course paper should present the topic to the head of the Committee for Master Study Programmes in Business Psychology, Legal Psychology, Social Psychology and Work and Organizational Psychology no later than the deadline for the second stage of registration for studies for the spring semester. After confirming that the suggested topic is in line with the requirements for the course paper, the Committee enters the topic in the electronic system “Studies” and assigns the student to the topic.

3. Structure of a course paper

The structure of a course paper is the following: title page, table of contents, introduction, body part, conclusions, references, abstract and annexes.

TITLE PAGE. It should include the name of the university where the work was prepared, faculty, institute, the name and surname of the author (in uppercase letters), the name of the study program, topic of the paper (in uppercase letters) and the type of the paper (i.e., course paper). The degree, pedagogical title, name and surname of the supervisor should also be indicated, as well as the city and the year the paper was prepared (see Annex 1).

TABLE OF CONTENTS. It should include titles of all structural parts of the paper and their respective pages (only a number of a page).

INTRODUCTION. This part should reveal the main idea of the paper. It should present motives for choosing a particular topic and arguments behind the problem analyzed in the paper. The main authors in the field may be named, a general context of the work, as well as its relevance, usefulness and novelty should be presented. A student should formulate questions that will be analyzed in the paper. The aim of the work and 2-3 tasks to achieve it should also be stated in this section. Research method and theses defended in the paper may also be named. In general, introduction should take up to 2 pages.

BODY PART. This is the main section of the course paper, which usually takes up around 80% of the whole paper. The purpose of this section is to systematically and reasonably present analysis of the problem, define the main concepts, and reasonably reveal the aims. It is a focused review of thematic scholarly literature, that helps the author to answer the questions raised and to present the arguments.

This section should include a descriptive (describes previous theoretical and empirical work with regard to the problem) and evaluative (evaluates previous work) components. The main text begins with a literature review. It is carried out based on qualitative factors: the main claims of the authors, their links or contradictions, generalization. Review concludes with an evaluation. Ideas and considerations in the text should all be logically argued and illustrated with scientific findings. Preferably, each chapter and subchapter, if possible, should end with a short generalization.

This section is divided into smaller parts: chapters and subchapters. Each chapter should discuss particular aspect of the problem, each subchapter – one dimension of that aspect. Chapters and subchapters should be coherent and make a sound logical structure.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. This part consist of short and generalized answers to the main questions of the paper and a concise evaluation of the aims. Conclusions best reveal the scientific level, professional and intellectual capacities of a student. Conclusions should be numerated. Following the conclusions the author may provide practical recommendations for professionals dealing with the problems related to the topic of the paper. These recommendations have to be logically linked to the conclusions of the paper.

REFERENCES. Reference list should follow the requirements of the APA6 style, summarized in the 5th section of these guidelines „The use of literature in a course paper“.

ABSTRACT. A short summary of the work should be included. It should present the problem analyzed in the paper and the main findings of the analysis. An abstract should take up to around 600 characters without spaces.

ANNEXES. In this section the author can present supplemental material that illustrates the text, e.g., statistical data, etc.

4. Processing of course paper

The length of a course paper should be 15 to 20 pages, excluding the title page, table of contents, reference list and annexes. Course paper must be computer-typed, printed on an A4 size paper and bookbinded. Text of the paper must be printed one-sided with 1,5 line spacing, using 2,5cm left, 1,5cm right, 2cm top and 2cm bottom paragraph margins. Font size should be 12pt, *Times New Roman* style. It is recommended to insert page numbering on the

right side at the bottom of a page starting from the title page. Page number should not appear on the title page.

Course paper must be written in correct English. It is recommended to write it in the first person plural and passive tense. It is allowed to use abbreviations that are universally acceptable, such as: for example - e.g., et cetera – etc. Abbreviations of well known names (such as institutions, countries, etc.) can be used only after providing the full name and a respective abbreviation in brackets at the first instance of use.

Tables and figures should be numbered and have titles (see Annex 2 for examples).

5. The use of literature in a course paper

Scholarly literature in psychology must be used in a course paper. Scholarly literature in psychology consists of primary and secondary sources. Research articles that are published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, scientific conference materials and classical scholarly works in psychology are considered to be primary sources. Handbooks, textbooks, guides, encyclopedias, reviews, monographs are considered to be secondary sources. It is important that at least 50% of the literature used in a course paper are primary sources.

References to the literature used in a paper should be presented following author – date principle. When a reference to the source is presented in the text, the date of the publication should be placed immediately after the author’s name, which must be spelled in original language (Pavardenis, 2008). References with two or more authors should include both authors’ last names (Pavardenis & Taskaitiene, 2013). If there are three to five authors, all names are included in a reference when citing for the first time (Petraityte, Juozaitis, & Bulota, 2008; Smith, Perkins, & Jost, 2005). However, when cited later such reference should include only the first author’s name and “et. al” presented in brackets (Petraityte et. al., 2009; Smith et. al., 2005). When there are six or more authors in all cases there should be only the first author’s name and “et. al” presented in a reference.

References with unknown author should include organization’s name or title of the literature and year (Oxford Essential World Atlas, 2001). When there are several authors with the same last names, authors should be listed by their last name followed by initials. When citing a few different authors and their separate works, there should be a semicolon put between the names and years (Pavardenaitis, 2008; Pavardenis, 2008), and the order of the sources should be alphabetical. Publications that are published by the same author in the same year should be separated with a letter (Pavardenis, 2008a, 2008b), and publications by the same author published in different years should be presented in chronological order (Pavardenis, 1999, 2007).

Quotation marks should be used when citing exact words from other sources, and in

such cases a reference should also include a page number (Pavardenis, 2008, p. 11). There should be no more than permissible amount of citations in a paper and citations should be presented only when necessary. When citing from another source it is important to cite exactly as it is, keeping the same words and punctuation. If there is a need to shorten the citation, multipoint must be put instead of the word that is missing.

When citing from a secondary source (which means that the words cited originally belong to a different author) it is necessary to indicate that the citation is taken from a secondary source, for example: Smith argues (cited from Perkins, 2005) that...

Reference list which is presented at the end of the paper must contain only the literature that was directly used by the author of the paper, which means that the author has read and analyzed that literature and has placed relevant references in the text. Scholarly literature that the author of the paper got to know of only from secondary sources must not be included in the reference list. In this case a reference in the text should indicate that this is a citation from a secondary source and then only the secondary source must be included in the reference list.

Reference list must be formed in an alphabetic order. Publications of the same author must be listed chronologically. References of publications that are written in Cyrillic should be listed after the publications in Latin.

Publications with unknown authors (for example: dictionaries, guides etc.) should be listed by the first letter of the title.

The APA6 style should be followed when creating a bibliographical entry of every publication in a reference list. According to the APA6 style a bibliographical entry should follow this order: 1) article entry includes author's last name, first name's initials, publication year, publication title, title of the journal, volume (number) and pages; 2) book entry includes author's last name, first name's initials, publication year, book title, publication city, and a name of a publisher; 3) an entry for an article published in a book includes author's last name, first name's initials, publication year, publication title, editors first name's initials and last name, title of the book, pages of the article in a book, publication city and a name of a publisher; 4) online document entry includes not only the above mentioned information, but also full internet address of the document. Examples of a book, article, online document and other bibliographical entries are presented in Annex 3.

6. Submission of a course paper

A student must hand in a paper to the supervisor until the of an exam session of a respective semester. Course paper must be defended till the end of session. A single printed copy of a course paper must be handed. After a course paper has been registered, a copy is returned to an author.

2. Defended course paper is registered in the Institute of Psychology.

7. Defence and assessment of a course paper

1. Finalized work is presented to the supervisor of the course paper until the start of the exam session. The work is defended during the exam session. The paper should be accompanied by a declaration of independence of the work, which states that the submitted work has been prepared independently, without plagiarism and following the requirements for academic writing.
2. An author has to prepare a short presentation (up to 5 min.) about the work, pointing out the problem analyzed, the aims, tasks and results of the work. Afterwards, student answers questions of an assessing lecturer.
3. The course paper is assessed based on the criteria and form established by the Senate decision No 201, dated 13th of April, 2000, and by the following criteria:
 - a. Introductory part is assessed by the following criteria: clarity of the problem, argumentation of its relevance; compatibility between the problem, aims and tasks of the work.
 - b. Body part is graded by the relevance of its content to the problem, aims and tasks of the paper; analytical depth; the sustainability of its structural components; the compliance between the body part chapter (subchapter) titles and their content; the strength and argumentation of the claims, usage of the most recent literature and primary sources;
 - c. Conclusion must meet the following criteria: clarity of the findings; their compliance with the problem of the paper; clarity of the theoretical implications of the findings; presentation of recommendations and questions for future research;
 - d. The quality of the defence: during the defence the student's ability to briefly describe the nature of the work, formulate the problem, interpret the results, and answer the questions are assessed;
 - e. Compliance with the formal requirements: the size of the paper is no less and no more than required, the paper matches structural requirements, language is used correctly, the concepts are accurate; bibliography is presented appropriately.
4. Course paper is graded by the supervisor of the paper. The paper is assessed on a 10-point grading scale for the quality of the work and the ability to defend it.
5. If a student fails to defend a course paper until the end of the exam session, it incurs an academic debt. The academic debt due to the failure to defend a course paper may be

corrected following the same regulations as an academic debt related to an academic subject.

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STUDENT'S NAME, SURNAME
(TITLE OF THE STUDY PROGRAM)

TOPIC

Course paper

Supervisor of a course paper –
scientific degree, pedagogical title; name, surname

Vilnius, 2014

Annex 2. Examples of tables and figures.

Table 1. Internal consistency coefficients of questionnaire subscales.

Subscale	Number of items	Internal consistency coefficient
...
...
...

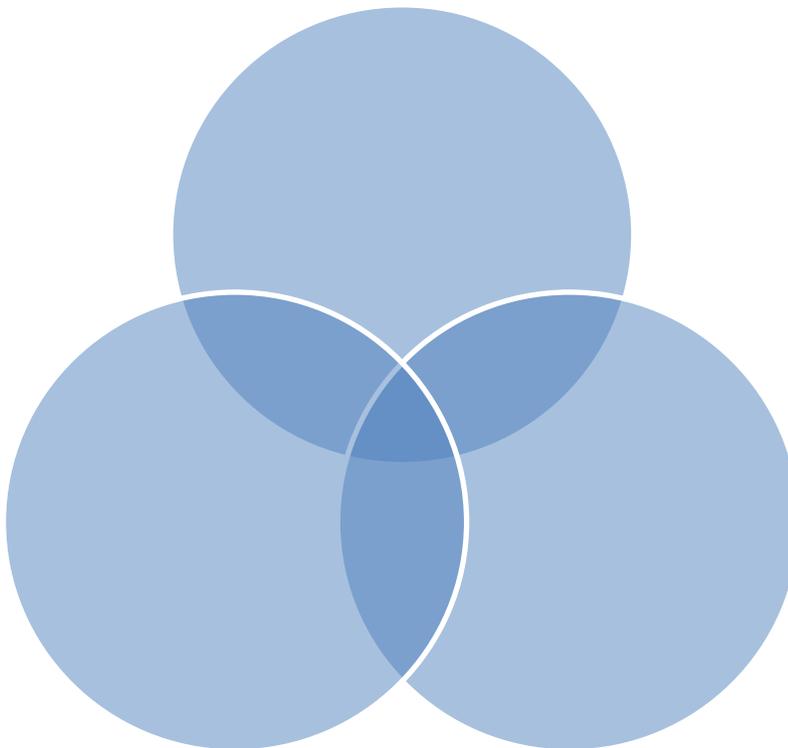


Figure 1. Theoretical model.

Annex 3. Examples of bibliographical entries.

Scholarly article in a scientific journal

Gallagher, M. W., Lopez, S. J., & Preacher, K. J. (2009). The hierarchical structure of well-being. *Journal of Personality*, 77(4), 1025–1050. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2009.00573.x

A book

Kroger, J. (2007). *Identity development: Adolescence through adulthood*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Scholarly article in a book

Kark, R., & Eagly, A. H. (2010). Gender and leadership: Negotiating the labyrinth. In J. C. Chrisler, & D. R. McCreary (Eds.), *Handbook of gender research in psychology* (1st ed., pp. 443–469). New York: Springer.

Electronic document

Korkeila, J. J. A. (2000). *Measuring aspects of mental health*. Helsinki: National Research and Development Center for Welfare and Health (STAKES). Retrieved from <http://groups.stakes.fi/NR/rdonlyres/5DD0D44F-9B09-480E-A668-4E9285C10976/0/measuringaspectsofmh.pdf>.

More examples are provided online at www.apastyle.org and in an APA6 manual: *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.)*. (2010). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.