Last Update: January 2019

Open Public Administration Commons-Platform:

Writing Concept

Summaries of research-based teaching results for the OPAS platform.

Created by: Ines Mergel

Contact: ines.mergel@uni-konstanz.de

Summaries of research-based teaching results are published on the OPAS platform to make the results of these studies accessible to an interested, expert public. A specific goal is to support administrative practitioners in their decision making by informing and arguing as well as showing possible courses of action – in the case of problems in administrative practice. This concept of writing serves student authors in describing their final or semester work in a short and generally understandable summary.

Guidelines

Important: Nobody writes good texts straight away. All good texts are created in a process from planning – raw texts – feedback- revision. These guidelines should serve as a guide through the writing process of your OPAS summary. However, you as the author must decide which information is important for the target group and how it can best be put together.

Basic tips

- The entire article should be able to stand on its own, even if it summarizes the contents of a longer thesis or a more detailed study. The basic argumentation and evidence (e.g. the master's / bachelor's thesis) should be part of the shorter article.

- Ideally, the OPAS summary distils the key information from the study briefly and concisely – these key points can be illustrated particularly well through examples.

- Each study refers to a concrete theory and a specific empirical context. Therefore, your study should be very specifically related to one case.

Length and format

- Length: approx. 800-1000 words

- Submission of the article as a Word file

- In German (or English)

Structure of the article

1. Abstract (take-aways of the paper briefly)

- Max. one paragraph, which can stand alone and contains the most important information

- Short introduction with the aim of the article

- Outline the problem, the used case and problem solution

- Hint: You may want to write this part at the end to get a better overview of the important points

2. Context

- Short introduction to the problem and aim of the article (theoretical and/or practical)

- Introduce and explain any important terms

- Clarify the relevance of the topic for reader

3. Method

- Brief explanation of the study procedure

- Case selection

- Data collection and analysis (generally understandable)

4. Results

- Present central contents of the work clearly in paragraphs → structure in clearly arranged individual sections consisting of four to five sentences, clear transitions from one argument to another (3-5 main points)

- Sort the line of argumentation by importance (most important arguments first)

- Integrate subheadings, conclusions of a section (make it clear to the reader that you are starting with the next thought)

5. Theoretical & practical implications

- Clarify positive and negative implications of the findings

- Weigh up the various options for action where appropriate

6. Key Points (max. 1-2 sentences each)

- Summary of the key messages, pointed conclusion

- Highlight the practical relevance of the findings

  → Make potential recommendations for action (What? When? Management options/ decision options/ recommendations for certain actions)

- Suggestion for further discussion at the end

7. Literature (max. 3-5 relevant sources)

Additional tips for the revision phase

Support from writing tutors

The writing tutors will help you with the revision of your text. We will discuss your text with you to find answers to any questions and problems that may arise. The focus of this feedback will be on the structure and general coherence of your text, not on the spelling correction. However, we will help you to find a solution for questions regarding stylistic-linguistic aspects. After you have revised the structure and content of your text according to the guidelines above, you can now focus on the following aspects on a stylistic-linguistic level:

- Plain language:

    - Short to medium length sentences
    - Clear sentence structure instead of nesting
    - Name central contents in the main clause
    - Construct sentences in such a way that parts of sentences that belong together are as close as possible (subject and predicate, auxiliary verb and verb)
    - Avoidance of nesting and run-on sentences
    - Use as simple and common words as possible instead of loanwords and explain scientific terms (unless it can be assumed that they are common in administrative practice)
    - Formulate more actively than passively, avoid nominalizations
    - Avoidance of acronyms and shortcuts

- Try to make your text as gender equitable as possible [1]

- Check your text before submitting for correct commas, spelling, grammar, etc.

Links and citations

Links in the text can lead the reader to additional explanations, examples, newspaper articles, etc. (for illustration purpose) → Open Access content should be preferred; insert hyperlinks at the appropriate points in the argumentation (preferably the direct link in Word)

- Short list of key references (3-5) at the end of the article should be provided (where possible) via links to the texts used.

---

[1] Here you will find information on this topic: https://www.uni-konstanz.de/en/equalopportunities/gender-equality/standards/gender-equitable-language/

Images, graphics, and tables

- One or more images matching the article (with reference to the source) desired, if the appropriate rights are available for images– also the student editorial team supports authors in finding suitable images from the university archive

- Images and graphics are preferred over tables, as they are quicker and easier for readers to interpret

- In all cases the raw data for graphs and tables should be attached in Excel format

- Each graph should be clearly titled, and the underlying units of measurement should be clearly stated

Biography and author picture

- For our authors to receive the recognition they deserve, they should send the student editorial team three to four lines of information about their academic background, their current position, and their research interests.

- Photos of the authors are optional (but desired!), for this purpose the authors should send us a small color photo in JPEG format (approx. 90x150 px).

- In addition (if available) a permanent URL to a homepage or LinkedIn profile as well as Twitter ID + e-mail should be provided.

Link to original documents

- If desired, your original thesis (BA/MA thesis) can be linked on the platform

- Alternatively, we will forward requests from potential readers to you by e-mail so that you can choose whether you want to share your entire work.