

# Small writing tasks

## Preparation for and alternatives to term papers

The following collection of ideas comes from instructors who have shared their experiences with the Writing Centre and Department. Information on the required number of pages and the like are also based on the tasks originally set and should be understood as examples. Additions and further suggestions are welcome (schreibberatung.ling@uni-konstanz.de).

### 1 Annotated Bibliography (three to four sources)

- as a first step in choosing individual topics for presentations and term papers
- with feedback from instructors and students during the seminar (group work)
- Beyond grasping the most important aspects and connections between the sources, critical examination can be encouraged.
- Evaluation can be included in the final grade.
- **variant** with e.g. five sources possibly suitable as an alternative to term papers
- **advantage**
  - early search for topics and research
  - thus less fear of writing
  - early review of the suitability of the literature by instructors
  - fruitful exchange between students on similar topics
- **noteworthy**
  - The brief summary of each of the sources alone may not make it clear what the topic is and how the sources contribute to it.
  - A **variant** with a short introductory paragraph may therefore be recommendable.
  - Beware of plagiarism (e.g. copy-paste of content summaries on Amazon).

### 2 Exposé (one page)

- as an intermediate step from presentation to term paper
- with feedback from instructors, alternatively students
- **advantage**

Instructors get an insight into whether students have chosen an adequate topic and suitable literature and can already give formal advice (writing style, uniformity of bibliography, etc.)
- **noteworthy**

Students need precise information on the text type in advance.

### 3 Annotated bibliography and conducting a small study in group work

- as preparation for an individual short term paper (five pages)
- support by tutors
- **advantage**
  - great learning increase concerning academic work and writing
  - correction of large numbers of term papers made easier by members of a group having the same topic; efficient correction with standardized feedback form possible
- **noteworthy**
  - possibly difficulties with teamwork
  - possibly loss of time in the seminar with poorly organized groups

## 4 Linguistic analysis in the target language of an extract from a foreign language textbook

- key aspects: methodological principles, content, grammar, links to the communicative approach and lexicon
- **advantage**
  - critical examination of the learning material
  - training of writing skills in the foreign language

## 5 Squib on self-chosen topic on aspects of the seminar

- about five pages, character of a laboratory report (documentation of a mini-experiment, including introduction, theoretical framework, hypothesis, method, results, conclusion, bibliography)
- **advantage**
  - Students learn to structure experimental papers.
  - Students become familiar with Praat.
  - well to correct and evaluate due to clear structure and manageable length
- **noteworthy**  
Set the task early (more than four weeks before the end of the lecture).

## 6 Essay

- at least four pages, e.g. as part of take-home
- one source given, another one to be found independently
- formalities and structure as for term papers
- **advantage**
  - good control over existing skills in structuring a paper as well as paraphrasing, citing and bibliography
  - good comparability of performances, as all work on the same topic
- **noteworthy**
  - partially digression from the topic, possibly due to the topic
  - thus a **variant** with two or more topics to choose from may be recommendable