**Guidelines for assessing Term Papers (RU course code REMA-LC1404, UvT course code 880041)**

The term paper forms part of the Research MA programme *Language & Communication* and has a study load of 6 EC, or 168 hours. The essay is a preparation for the MA thesis later in the programme, and focuses on the development of original research questions based on a thorough literature review and a sketch of the appropriate methodology. The student is not asked to actually carry out any of the proposed studies and collect and analyse new or existing data.

More specifically, this means that the student:

* + can place a specific problem in a broader theoretical context;
  + can find the literature relevant to the topic, incorporate it critically and determine its relevance to his/her own specific research;
  + can formulate a clear research question and make a reasoned choice of research method that is most suitable for answering the question;
  + can look ahead to how to interpret possible findings, not only in the light of the research question, but also in a broader theoretical context;
  + and lastly, can write a clear research report that presents all the relevant information.

The paper should have a length of 15 to 20 pages (line spacing 1.5, Times 12 pt font) and appr. 7,000 words (excluding tables and references).

The paper is assessed per component, based on the criteria set out below. Each component is allocated a score on a scale from 1 to 10. Individual components may be lower than 5.5, as long as the overall grade is high enough The paper is assessed by the supervisor, and the completed form is shared with the student and the course coordinators.

The components listed below can be regarded as the starting point for the assessment, even though they partially overlap. The sequence does not indicate level of importance – in other words, no. 7 could be just as important as no. 1. When making the assessment, the programme/teacher should bear in mind the nature of the paper (practical focus or more theoretical/academic). This means that certain components will weigh more heavily when it comes to deciding on the final grade.

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| Component | Questions to consider | **Summary of your evaluation** | **Assessment** |
| 1. Research question | * Is the topic clearly delineated? * Is the central research question introduced in a clear and analytically skilful way? * Is the problem clearly formulated? * Are the terms clearly formulated and defined? * Is there an effective justification of the scholarly relevance of the research question? * Is there an effective justification of the choices made when formulating the research question? * Is the research question relevant, anchored in current discussion, and original? |  |  |
| 2. Theory and literature | * Is the theory relevant in the context of the research question? * Is the literature of recent date? * Do the sub-questions relate to the research question? * Is the theory representative? * Is it sufficiently academic? * Is there evidence of a critical attitude in the treatment of the literature (identifying relationships, contradictions, gaps or inconsistencies in the literature)? |  |  |
| 3. Proposed method | * Is the description of the method(s) clear and satisfactory? * Is an explanation given as to why this method was preferred over others? * Is the research design sound (i.e. valid) and sufficiently specific, in view of the research question? * Can the material be gathered in a satisfactory way (are the selected literature and sources relevant to the theme, operationalisation of terms, instrumentation, research techniques, choice of empirical field)? |  |  |
| 4. Conclusions and discussion | * Are the conclusions clear and well-founded? * Does the sketch of the potential results provide an answer to the research question? * Do the conclusions refer back to the theory? * Have interconnections been established? * Do the conclusions give a clear answer to the different (sub)questions and hypotheses? * Has the paper yielded new insights? * Is any attention given to the generalisability of the results, and to the practical and theoretical implications of the conclusions? * Is there a critical attitude towards the study and its results? * Are recommendations made and new research questions suggested? |  |  |
| 5. Structure and development | * Is there a clear introduction to the issues, the existing literature, the method used and the structure of the text? * Is there a clear and logical structure to the paper and its parts? * Is there a clear relationship between the parts? * Does each part have a clear, balanced structure? * Is there a clear distinction between main and secondary issues? * Is there a proper balance between the overall length of the paper and its actual content? |  |  |
| 6. Form and presentation | * Does the length conform to the prescribed standards (approx. 7,000 words excluding table of contents, bibliography and appendices)? * Is this length proportional to the content? * Is the text clearly and fluently written? * What is the quality of the writing (style, choice of words, spelling, etc.)? * Is proper use made of notes and/or appendices? * Are the quotations, references and bibliography consistently formatted and complete? * Is the paragraph and section division consistent? * Does the text satisfy the requirements of level C2 (the highest level) of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)? |  |  |
| 7. Process | * Has the student shown initiative, made a substantial personal contribution and worked independently on the various parts? * Did the student make sufficiently decisive and rapid progress? |  |  |

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| Final grade/  mark: |