

Academic Text Consultation - one stepping stone toward a better-written thesis

Academic text consultation is provided as a complementary service for Åbo Akademi University students (both in Åbo and Vasa) who would like opinions about, and assistance with, the language of their theses before submitting them for a language check. Service began in 2004.

Text consultations were originally intended for those in the process of writing their master's theses, but are now also offered to those writing doctoral theses. Students may be offered up to three consultations.

During the consultation, students will receive comments about the language of their text along with advice as to how to proceed in revising it.

The aim of the consultation is in part to identify and correct problems within the language of a text and in part to offer students a sounding board for language issues.

N.B. Academic Text Consultation is not intended to serve as a proofreading service.

Information about text consultations is disseminated in various ways including:

ÅAU's Language Centre webpages

e-mails from the Language Centre to faculty offices

e-mails to thesis supervisors

brochures

word-of-mouth amongst students

Students wanting a consultation are instructed to contact one of the Language Centre teachers:

- Ream C. Barclay (social sciences, law, theology, natural sciences)
- Iris Lindahl-Raittila (biosciences, pharmacy, chemical engineering, information technology) + online course 2018
- Daniela Mattsson (business, logopedics, psychology, humanities)

Students in Åbo will be given a time for a face-to-face consultation. For those in Vasa, the consultation generally takes place **electronically**, at times incorporating Skype or video conferencing.

Academic areas frequently represented in consultations

Psychology

Logopedics

Business

Peace studies

Paper & Pulp technology

Energy technology

Chemical engineering

Computer science & computer engineering

Students are asked to submit 10 pages of the thesis they currently are writing (Times New Roman, 12 point font, 1.5 spaces between lines)

We suggest a review of the abstract, introduction, conclusions and any other sections of the thesis that the student may have questions or concerns about.

Text should be submitted 5 working days prior to the consultation.

Using the same marking abbreviations as applied in thesis language checking, the 10 pages are reviewed, and comments added.

During the consultation, the text will be examined page by page, highlighting needed changes, corrections, modifications as well as comments on overall register and style.

Consultations are meant to last no longer than 60 minutes.

At the end of the consultation, a summary as to how the student is to proceed with the remainder of the thesis should be provided.

need for article – ART

mix of British & American English –
BR/AM

capitalization – CAPS

contraction – CONTR

deletion – DEL

hyphen needed – HYPH

italics – ITAL

lower case – LC

plural word form – PL

possessive form – POSS

preposition – PR

punctuation – P

singular word forms – SING

spelling – SP

style inappropriate, *e.g.* too informal
– STYLE (*i.e.* register)

lack of subject-verb agreement – S-V

meaning unclear – ??

verb form/tense – VF

word choice – WC

word form – WF

word order – WO

missing word or text – ^

separation of words – /

At the end of the consultation, teacher and student may agree on a time for a second consultation, or...

the student may wish to wait and see how much progress with the remaining text he makes and then decide whether he wishes a second consultation.

In certain cases (*e.g.* well-written texts), the teacher may feel no need to offer a second consultation.

Subsequent consultations follow the same steps as the initial one, albeit with 10 pages not previously reviewed.

How are text consultations accommodated in a teacher's annual work plan?

- Annual work plan comprises 1600 hours of which the majority are for teaching advanced-level courses
- Each teacher is also assigned a specified number of hours for thesis language checking and text consultations largely based on his/her teaching load – these hours are not designated specifically for either task.
- Hours for 2017/18: Iris (10) – Daniela (60) – Ream (156)
- Teachers keep track of the hours spent for both language checking and consultations. Example: the checking of a master's thesis is equivalent to 1.5 hours, a text consultation counts as 3.5 hours (reading text & meeting student) – we notify Language Centre administration when our hours have been filled

How many consultations given annually?

Number of consultations / R.C.Barclay

2010/11 – 17 consultations – 14 students

2011/12 – 15 consultations – 10 students

2012/13 – 27 consultations – 19 students

2013/14 – 39 consultations – 34 students

2014/15 – 30 consultations – 20 students

2015/16 – 34 consultations – 25 students

2016/17 – 23 consultations – 16 students

Consultations thus far 2017/18

Daniela – 6

Iris – 9

Ream - 6

Percentage of students having consultation whose theses pass the first language check

2013/14 – 28 of 34 students = 82%

2014/15 – 18 of 20 students = 90%

2015/16 – 21 of 25 students = 84%

2016/17 – 12 of 16 students = 75%*

*NB – 3 theses have yet to be submitted for language check

By comparison, in 2016/17 approximately 57% of master's theses passed the first language review without having had text consultation

Miscellaneous

- Students don't necessarily have to meet with the teacher who holds courses for their faculty/department
- We can ask a student to arrange for a consultation if his thesis does not pass the language check – it is an option in our evaluation
- Prioritizing language checking over consultations due to workload and time constraints

Miscellaneous

- The Language Centre in Åbo offers courses in Academic Writing Skills in English each academic period. Students in Vasa can take an equivalent course at the Vasa campus of the Hanken School of Economics (*Svenska Handelshögskolan*).
- “Double dipping” – those seeking consultations from more than one teacher
- Online booking of consultations