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Term papers will be expected to have a clearly defined subject, a precise guiding question, an overview of existing research in the respective field, and a substantial basis of secondary sources which shows that they both invested time and effort and can identify which are the key contributions. If primary sources are used where secondary materials are unavailable this may be commended but there is no per-se bonus for using them. Online sources should be the exception, not the rule.

Most important are the quality of the argument, the structure of its presentation, and the precision of the analysis; mere factual history may be enough for a pass grade but not much more. Top papers should also show a degree of original thinking, obviously within the confines of the possible given the paper's bizarrely short length. With an eye to the papers' training students for the MA thesis I would suggest we also take into account formal concerns such as language, prose style, citations, and formatting. A perfect paper should be perfect on all counts.