

Guidelines for writing a doctoral research proposal for the public presentation at the Faculty and **evaluation criteria** for research proposals

Directorate of Studies 40

Writing your research proposal is a crucial step on your way to successfully completing your dissertation project. It requires a thorough examination of the topic of your intended thesis, the subject-specific literature, the material basis and the methods to be applied. A comprehensible, promising research proposal is the prerequisite for a positive recommendation by the respective doctoral advisory board. Please observe the following guidelines when writing your proposal. If possible, consider all of the following points. Discuss your research proposal with your supervisor, as different disciplinary cultures may require slight changes to the guidelines.

Your proposal may not exceed 4,000 words (without bibliography).

Please enclose an abstract (not longer than half a page) and a CV with your research proposal.

1. RESEARCH SUBJECT

Defining the research topic:

What should be the focus of the academic examination? Describe the envisaged subject for study; for empirical research: also the envisaged example case.

- Which data and material do I collect for the issue relevant for my research?
- Which information on this topic can I find in the relevant (specialist) literature?
- In what way does my thesis contribute to the existing literature?
- Which contribution would I like to make to which part of my research field exactly (narrowing down the topic)?

E1: How relevant is the contribution the doctoral project would make to the current research of this discipline or topic?

2. RESEARCH CONTEXT/PROBLEM PERSPECTIVE

Outlining the theoretical approach:

From which discipline- or topic-related perspective should I analyse the research subject?

Refer to one (or more) research context(s) found in the **literature**:

- Which relevant **problem perspective(s)** are there for my topic?
- Which **theoretical (generalisable) aspects** can be identified?
- Which authors are relevant? Which studies are available? Which results/findings already exist?

E2: Does the dissertation project cover the current debate (state of the art) within the discipline or on the topic to an appropriate extent?

3. OBJECTIVE/QUESTION(S)/HYPOTHESIS/HYPOTHESES

Describing the research objective:

Why should the doctoral project be carried out?

- Which "**issue**" and which **specific "problem perspective"** would I like to focus on (feeding back into the specialist literature)?
- What is the **specific scientific objective** of my intended thesis?
- What are my **central questions/issues**/if applicable, hypotheses?

E3: Are the research question(s) worded clearly? Do the questions match the chosen theory and problem perspectives? Do the theory and problem perspectives and/or research question(s) encompass innovative aspects? If yes: which ones?

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Choosing a method, previewing the research process:

How should the study be organised?

- Which research strategy would I like to pursue (e.g. driven by or generating hypotheses)?
- Which methodology do I choose? Will I carry out a quantitative or a qualitative study? Do I want to apply triangulation?
- Which **method(s) for collecting and analysing data** will I use (content analysis, survey, observation, experiment, literature or document analysis, etc.)?
- What do I base my choice/combination of methods on? Are the methods for collecting and analysing data compatible?
- Which material basis should be used to apply the methods (describe as exactly as possible, check accessibility)?
- Which procedures should be used to analyse/interpret the empirical data/texts? (Indicate these procedures as exactly as possible and state whether you are familiar with them.)
- From today's perspective, how is the **research process** structured (e.g. time frame, sample, field access, etc.)?
- Which problems may arise during implementation? How could they be solved?

E4: Does the chosen methodology match the standards specific to the discipline or topic? Are there any innovative aspects concerning the methodology? If yes, which ones? Is the methodology suitable for solving the problems and answering the research questions?

5. COMPOSITION/STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

- Initial **schematic structure**, describe the intended order of chapters more closely
- Time schedule

E5: How realistic is the presented work and time schedule? Is the structure reasonable? How can the dissertation project be evaluated in general?