



Research Proposal for Master Thesis

Write a research proposal, based on the consultation with your supervisor(s) and preferably within a period of a month. Your proposal is to be 5 to 8 pages (no more than 10 pages). It will have to contain the following explicit information:

Front page:

Here, you need to put:

- The (working) title of your thesis. (Keep it short and clear, and do not use any company or brand name.)
- Your personal data (your name, student number, e-mail address, postal address)

For USW:

- Your master's programme (exact curriculum version, subject focus, title of your environment-oriented restricted electives).
- The subject in your curriculum to which to master thesis will be assigned.

For SD:

- The specialization track you followed.
- The name of your supervisor(s):

For USW: This has to be a professor. You can also suggest a name of a co-supervisor.

For SD: This has to be at least one professor of the entrance university. You should also suggest a name of your external supervisor (second reader).

1. Problem definition, and its relevance.

Describe the problem you are going to address in your master thesis research. Here, you need to provide a summary of the current state of scientific knowledge related to the problem. Also reflect on the relation between your project and the challenges of environmental system sciences.

2. Research objective, and/or research question.

You need to identify a gap of knowledge which provides the foundation for your research objective and/or your research question. Indicate explicitly what research question you will be focusing on in your project. In order to do this, divide your main research question into several sub-questions. Furthermore, indicate the scientific and societal relevance of your research question.

3. The methodological foundation of your research plan.

Here, you need to address following two main questions: Firstly, which scientific theories or concepts are of interest for your problem; and which will you employ in your research? Secondly, what empirical methods will you apply in order to create own new scientific knowledge in regard to your research question(s)? Here, you need to describe the planned quantitative and/or qualitative research methods that you chose for your analyses (for instance a survey, a case study, an



experiment, or maybe something else). How are the methods interrelated; what is the sequence? Who will be involved in your research, e.g. how and from what population will you take a sample? In which cases will you study and why did you choose these cases?

What kind of methods and tools will you apply in order to collect and subsequently analyze data? How will you be able to answer your defined research question(s) and sub-questions – based on the results and conclusions of that data analysis? Please also provide reasons why you chose this method or set of methods, and not alternative ones.

4. A strict time schedule.

Here you need to be accurate: Plan your work in terms of full time weeks. Remember that 30 ECTS credit points stand for 750 working hours, which correspond to 19-20 weeks working full time. The time needed can be more, if you also still plan to do courses during the research period. You have to detail this in your time planning as well. Preferably make a time planning in a table showing all steps in the research and additional courses or other activities (short holidays/conference visit etc.) in the rows and the weeks in the columns. Include in your planning the main phases and milestones in the process of doing the research, e.g. research proposal, literature research, method design, preparing empirical work; data collection, statistical analysis, discussion, conclusions, final editing of report.

5. The preliminary structure of your thesis.

Apply a numbering scheme for the sections of your thesis, starting with “1 Introduction”. When you divide your main sections into sub-sections (e.g. into 1.1 and 1.2), please consider that you always need to have at least two sub-sections. You cannot divide a section in one single sub-section. Limit the structure to two levels of sub-sections, i.e. up to three levels all together (e.g. 1.1.1). The headings of the sections always need to provide correct first information on the content of the specific section. A logical structure of your thesis is one of the main prerequisites for an excellent thesis.

6. The preliminary list of literature.

Add to your research proposal the current version of your list of literature. This does not count to the page limit.



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