

How to write a proposal for your thesis¹

The proposal serves as an “agreement” between you and your supervisors regarding the content, outline approach and timeline of your thesis. It helps to illustrate a better picture of what shall be researched and achieved with the thesis.

Furthermore, a properly written proposal is a helpful start to getting started with the thesis – while reading about the topic, brainstorming on ideas and approaches you familiarise with the research topic and are able to develop a research question which builds the core of your thesis.

The proposal should be 3 to 4 pages long (excluding references) and should include the following parts:

Title proposal

1. Background of the topic, including research gap
2. Research objective, including research question
3. Methodological approach
4. Expected results
5. Timetable for working on the thesis
6. First outline of complete thesis

1. Background of the topic, including research gap

- What is the content of the topic?
- Why is the topic relevant?
- Relevant definitions
- What is the research gap?

2. Research objective, including research questions/hypotheses

- General statement of research objective, hypotheses or research questions (and sub-objectives/questions if applicable)

3. Methodological approach

- Explain, how you want to address the research objective and according sub-objectives
 - Literature review, simulation model, survey, interview, descriptive data analysis, mixture of methods ...
- Where do you want to get the research data from?
 - Collect your own data (primary data)? Use existing secondary data (from where?)
 - In case of a literature review, what kind of review? What is your search strategy (your search terms / search string?)

4. Expected results

- Describe what results you expect to find out and how they will help to address your research question or hypothesis

5. Timetable for working on the thesis

- Shows the different phases or activities in different time blocks (e.g., 12 * two week blocks)
- Can be adjusted in the course of process but shall give an overview work ahead

6. First outline of complete thesis

- Based on the above, develop a first structure (table of content) of your thesis

For guidance have a look on the provided exemplary proposals and as a second step approach your supervisor.

¹ This guideline heavily draws from materials from Prof. Dr. Christine Wieck, University of Hohenheim