

## Instructions for Preparing an Exposé

The **exposé** should outline the following points on 3-5 pages (Bachelor) or 5-8 pages (Master):

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### Research Problem

Which topic do you deal with in your thesis? In the first section of the exposé, you first explain the relevance of the overarching topic of your thesis and develop a specific research problem that you will tackle in your thesis. The research problem can arise either from scientific debates and controversies, or from empirical "puzzles" for which no satisfactory theoretical explanations have yet been found in the literature.

### Research Question

An appropriate research question should neither be trivial, i.e. it should not be possible to answer it from an everyday understanding without a scientific investigation, nor should it have already been conclusively answered. In other words: In your thesis, you should work independently on a particular research problem. The clearer and more precise you formulate the research question, the easier it will be for you to work on the topic. In this case, it is useful to concentrate on a single research question instead of raising several questions at the same time, which can at best be touched upon and ultimately not be answered.

Also pay attention to what you can really work on in the time-limited framework of a thesis. It is therefore advisable to postpone all too ambitious and excessive research projects in favour of "workable" and limited questions. Avoid anything that does not directly serve to answer your question.

### State of Research

Which studies relate to your topic? Which studies have already analysed the same or a similar research question? On the basis of which cases and for which periods of time? This section presents relevant research papers and explanatory approaches as objectively and balanced as possible. An important task, however, is also to point out the limits and weaknesses of previous work. Here you can, for example, refer to the theoretical argumentation, the research design or the empirical data. The justification for your own work results from the deficits of the state of research.

### Working Hypotheses

What correlations of effects do you expect for your object of research? Even if you often cannot formulate differentiated theoretical expectations at the time of the exposé, it is helpful to form preliminary working hypotheses on the basis of the state of research. What correlation is expected for the relationship between independent and dependent variables? Are there intervening variables? Which combinations of conditions are necessary and/or sufficient for the occurrence of the outcome to be investigated?



## Research Design

How will you methodically address your research question? Do you intend to carry out a statistical analysis, a comparative study of several cases, or an individual case study? Will you use analysis programs such as SPSS, STATA, fsQCA, MAXQDA or other software for your work?

Regardless of whether you want to investigate one, several or many cases, you will need to justify your case selection in the *Research Design* section. What is the selected individual case exemplary for? To what extent are your cases suitable for systematic comparison or statistical analysis?

Finally, you will discuss the data on which the empirical part of your work is based. Which primary and secondary sources would you like to use? Which additional data would you like to collect yourself in the form of interviews or questionnaires?

## Outline

In this section, you outline a draft of your structure in descriptive or table form. This facilitates further work and gives you a basic framework for the further procedure, which you can refine and modify step by step. When planning your work, it may be useful to specify the expected scope of the individual sections in page numbers.

## List of References

In the bibliography, you list the primary and secondary literature that you have already reviewed or which you wish to use for further work. As a rule, quality before quantity also applies here - an intensive examination of some relevant and influential studies on your question will be more fruitful for your thesis than an attempt to consider a large number of sources of different relevance.

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