

Studieren und Forschen in Deutschland

How to Write a Research Proposal

Goal: to convince the academic community, that you have:

1. identified a scientific problem and
2. a methodical approach to solve the problem
3. within a realistic time frame and at reasonable expenses

1. General Information

- ⤴ Length: between 4-15 pages (minimum 1.500 words)
- ⤴ Good legibility and conciseness
- ⤴ Proper layout: typeface, line spacing, table of contents, page numbers

2. Citation

The research proposal has to be written by you. Any passage/ sentence from another source or author has to be appropriately cited. Plagiarism will result in your disqualification!

3. Title Page

- ⤴ Personal data: name, academic title (if applicable), position at your own university (e.g. junior lecturer), date of birth, nationality, work and home address including phone number and e-mail address
- ⤴ Title of your planned dissertation → brief, but accurate, clear and understandable
- ⤴ Research area (e.g. Political Science)
- ⤴ Timeframe: should normally not exceed 3 years (PhD)

4. General Overview of Research Area and Literature

The proposal needs to show that you are fully conversant with the ideas you are dealing with and that you grasp their methodological implications!

- ⤴ Short and precise overview of the current state of research related to your own research project
- ⤴ Name the most important contributions of other scientists
- ⤴ Clear and logical discussion of the theoretical scope or of the framework of ideas that will be used to back the research
- ⤴ Research review should indicate an open problem, which will be the motive for your project

5. Key Research Questions and Objectives

This section should establish the relevance and value of the proposed research and justify the research effort!

- ⤴ Write brief and clear:
 - What do you intend to find out?
 - What objectives you want to achieve?
- ⤴ Research questions in the form of hypothesis that can be tested against a specific set of criteria

6. Methods (most important and longest section of the proposal)
 - ✦ Detailed information:
 - How do you intend to answer your research questions?
 - What sources (scientific literature) will you consult?
 - What analytical techniques will you employ?
 - How much time will you need (timetable)?
 - ✦ Define suitable research strategies, depending on your discipline and topic:
 - e.g. description of the intended methods of data gathering, of the controls you will introduce, of the statistical methods, of the type of literature or documentary analysis
 - ✦ Ethical issues as well as anticipated difficulties in collecting the data
7. Tentative Timetable (table format)
 - ✦ Give information about the research phases and the time required for each phase
8. Research Bibliography
 - ✦ List those academic works that you have mentioned in your research outline
 - At least some of them should be recent publications
 - List only publications that you have used for the preparation
 - Do not copy bibliographies from other papers
 - In case important publications are not available in your home country, list them separately and make clear that you had no opportunity to read them
9. Text Editing
 - ✦ Check grammar and spelling
 - ✦ Check that title, short description and content do correspond with each other
 - ✦ Let someone within the academic community proofread your proposal in order to make sure it conforms to international academic standards
10. Checklist
 - Table of Contents
 - Abstract
 - Introduction to the General Topic
 - Problem Statement and Justification of the Research Project
 - Hypothesis and Objectives of the Study
 - Literature and Research Review
 - Research Method(s)
 - Data Collection, Analysis and Evaluation of Data (empirical research)
 - Analysis of Texts and Documents
 - Expected Results of the Study
 - Bibliography
 - Appendix, e.g. Tables, Graphs, Questionnaires, etc.
 - Timetable