



Guidelines for Master's Thesis

January 2021

Objective:

The objective of the Master's thesis is to show that the candidate can work independently on a problem from their subject within a certain time period, using scientific research methods. It is expected that the student will deal with the relevant, state-of-the-art research. During the course of the thesis, the candidate's approach to solving the research problem, the motivation behind choosing it, and what distinguishes it from existing research must be made evident.

The writing of the Master's thesis involves the following essential steps:

- Development of one's own (original) problem/question
- Formulation of a relevant hypothesis
- Knowledge and analysis of state of the art on the topic/question
- Development of an original approach with justification
- Application of the appropriate methodology, reflected in the operationalization of variables, employment of analysis tools used, etc.
- Processing of the problem with empirical sources of data, including primary (if applicable) and secondary data
- Reflection based on the results obtained in the analysis, including implications, recommendations, etc.

All written assignments (Essays, Hausarbeiten, Exposés, Theses) are regularly checked for plagiarism.

Requirements:

The Master's thesis can be written in either English or German, but the chosen language is to be used consistently.

- The page limit for the master's thesis is 80 pages.
- What is included in this page count:
 - o An abstract, having a maximum of 200 words.
 - o The main body of the text, including tables.
- What is *not* included in the page count:
 - o Bibliography
 - o Appendices
 - o Title Page, Declarations, Acknowledgements, etc.
 - o Table of Contents, List of figures, etc.
- The thesis must adhere to all the **official Masterarbeit guidelines**, available in the *Prüfungsordnung für den Masterstudiengang Politikwissenschaft*.

Please check the institute's website for more information: <https://www.sozphil.uni-leipzig.de/institut-fuer-politikwissenschaft/studium/modulpruefungen-und-abschlussarbeiten/>



If you wish to write a Master's thesis with supervision of the IR department:

- Please approach the supervisor at the IR department and arrange an appointment *at a minimum of 4 weeks before registration is due at the Examinations Office.*
- It is mandatory to have at least one meeting before the submission of a topic.
- Please submit an exposé of your planned project one day ahead of your consultation. This is a mandatory requirement.
- The guidelines for writing an exposé are given below.

Formatting/Citation guidelines (Master's thesis and Exposé)

- Times New Roman is the standard font that is to be used consistently over the document.
- Font Size: 12
- Line spacing: 1.5
- Margins: 2.5 cm on all sides (default margins in Microsoft Word)
- The citation style has to be used consistently over the document. Our preferred style is the Chicago Manual Style (Author-Date system), 17th Edition. Please get in touch with your supervisor if you wish to use other style manuals.
- The guidelines specific to the Chicago style can be referred to in the Writing Style guide.

Exposé Guidelines

An exposé is meant to clarify the questions your work intends to pursue and how it proposes to answer these questions. One *central question* should be evident in your exposé.

- The exposé should be between 900-1500 words of pure text (excluding bibliography/ appendix).
- The same formatting guidelines as that of the master's thesis (given above) should be followed.
- The exposé should contain the following sub-parts:
 - o **Introduction:** Short introduction to the topic - Introduction to the problem, also justification of the problem
 - o **Literature discussion** on the problem: Identification of gaps / problems in existing scientific literature
 - o **Research question** and argumentation
 - o **Method selection AND justification**
 - o **Case and material selection:** approach, empiricism, hypotheses
 - o **Preliminary outline and timetable**
 - o **Bibliography**



A few tips for writing an effective exposé:

- Define a **relevant and clear research question**
 - o Justify the relevance of your research question
- Make your topic, the subject of your investigation, clear in the exposé. It will guide you through the entire writing process.
- Research about the state of the art: which aspects of your topic have already been covered and how, and which have not? Does my project address **potential gaps in research**?
 - o The relevance of your research question can be made clear by the research gap(s) from the literature discussion.
- Always keep an eye on the **maximum length of your thesis** and write down the **number of pages** you have planned for each chapter beforehand - can your project be realised in 80 pages of master's thesis?

The **Academic Lab at the University of Leipzig** regularly offers courses and individual methodological advice on writing academic papers, exposés and the general planning of theses. Find more information here: <https://home.uni-leipzig.de/academiclab/>

Literature (in German, available as E-Books in UBL-catalogue):

Eco, Umberto (1993): *Wie man eine wissenschaftliche Abschlußarbeit schreibt. Doktor-, Diplom- und Magisterarbeit in den Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften*. Heidelberg: Müller.

Hildebrandt, A., Jäckle, S., Wolf, F., & Heindl, A. (2015). *Methodologie, Methoden, Forschungsdesign: Ein Lehrbuch für fortgeschrittene Studierende der Politikwissenschaft*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Sauer, F., & Masala, C. (2017). *Handbuch Internationale Beziehungen* (2. Aufl. 2017). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Styckow, P., & Vrdoljak, T. (2020) *Politikwissenschaftlich arbeiten*. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink.