

Recommendations for writing an Exposé

The exposé is one important milestone in a doctoral/Ph.D. study program and is an important step in the planning of the doctoral/Ph.D. project. An exposé contains a concise description of the main content and methodological approaches of the dissertation project, a bibliography and a time- and work plan. Moreover, it is an important tool that will help you to successfully complete the multi-year dissertation/Ph.D. project. The clearer you define the research question, procedure and goal, the easier the project is to implement.

The exposé does not stipulate that the dissertation/Ph.D. project has to be carried out exactly the outlined way. Of course, the focus and/or approaches (methods) can change in the course of dealing with the topic and (artistic) research. A dissertation/Ph.D. project is always a process in which many things develop during or through work. However, the exposé is a clear starting point for the (artistic) research project of the dissertation/Ph.D.

The exposé is part of the dissertation/Ph.D. project agreement, which has to be completed within the first year after enrollment for Dr. phil., Dr. rer. nat. and the Ph.D.-in-practice and delivered to the Registrar's Office for approval of the Vice Rector for Teaching and Promotion of Early Stage Artists/Researchers. For the doctoral study in Architecture (Dr. techn.) a confirmation of supervision and an exposé is already required before the admission to the Dr. techn. program.

Recommendations to the Exposé

The scope of the exposé depends on the particular discipline-specific practice, but should not exceed 30,000 characters (about 10 DIN A4 pages) (excluding bibliography and time and work schedule). An exposé usually contains the following points:

- Working title of the dissertation/Ph.D. project
- Abstract (up to 2000 characters)

The aim of the abstract is to give a quick overview of your planned dissertation. The abstract briefly summarizes the main (artistic) research questions and aims of your Ph.D. /dissertation project, the research context and the methodology. In general, the abstract is written at the end of the exposé writing process.

- Content description of the dissertation/Ph.D. project with clear research questions

What is the core issue of your dissertation/Ph.D.? What is the focus of the dissertation/Ph.D. project? How is the topic to be dealt with embedded in a larger (artistic) research question/in your discipline/your subject? Where are points of contact with other research fields? But also, where are you delineating your dissertation/ Ph.D. project?

- Central research questions and goals

Which research questions should be investigated in detail in the dissertation/Ph.D. project? Try to cluster individual questions in groups and put a central thread through the work. Why are you interested in these questions and why are they important for your research field/discipline? How does your research contribute to the development of knowledge in your field?

- Overview of the state of the art

Which (theoretical and/or methodological) concepts and central references will you use? Which authors are relevant? Which works/studies are available? Which results/findings exist? What is the starting point of your research? How do you position your dissertation/Ph.D. project vis a vis this state of the art?

- Presentation of planned methods and research design

In order to answer your research question(s) you need to describe specific (methodological) approach(es) and the sources/materials (research corpus) to be used. If the development of a method is part of the dissertation, describe your general approach: How do you want to tackle the research project? Is it a theoretical work, will you work empirically? Is there a combination of projects/empirical work and texts? How are these related to each other? Is there a certain type of investigation, such as interviews, observations, archival research or project visit? How do you analyze/interpret your sources/material?

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- Relevant literature

You don't have to list all the literature you will use, but the central literature that you have identified as the starting point for your dissertation. This bibliography is also used to recognize how you position your work theoretically and methodically.

- Time and work plan, possibly resource plan

Plan realistically, consider how much time you need for each step and how much time you have available for the dissertation/Ph.D. project (for example, if you are holding a paid job). Present this plan in a rough time frame, which includes the overall planned duration for your dissertation/Ph.D. (3 years, 4 years, etc.). Please note that several months (4-6) have to be considered between the submission of the dissertation/Ph.D. project and the defense due to the review process.

- Possibly: special features

If necessary, explain features such as co-authors or projects into which your dissertation/Ph.D. project is embedded.