

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The main purpose of the project description is to ensure that the project has scientific relevance, a suitable workload for the project period and clear milestones. It is an important part of the application process to show that you are able to effectively plan, clearly communicate and commence your Doctoral studies.

If the rest of your application explains your ability to do a Doctorate, the research proposal demonstrates the actual research project you plan to do. It presents your core idea/questions and expected outcomes with clarity and definition – **the what**. Moreover, it also makes a case for why your question is significant and what value it will bring to your discipline – **the why**.

It is important to show your ability to be coherent and therefore essential for you to stick to the structure and adopt the numbered headlines.

LAYOUT & SCOPE

Insert your name & short project title in the header or footer for all pages of the project description!

min. 4 - max. 6 numbered pages (not including bibliography)

HEADING & TITLE

Applicant's & 1st supervisor's name and institute as well as the precise & descriptive working title in German and English

1. DURATION & FEASIBILITY

State date of project start – date of planned project end.

Make sure you have a realistic time schedule. Doctoral studies can take 3-4 years of full-time study to complete. If you are doing your Doctorate while working part- or full-time, the time schedule must be adjusted accordingly (in general, this should not exceed 6 years).

Attention: Official start of the Doctorate is the date of acceptance by the Doctoral Committee – therefore you declare the date you started to work on the research project!

2. FINANCING

State the acronym and briefly explain the financing of your doctoral project (e.g. funding institution, type of funding, part of a third-party funded project) in order for the Doctoral Committee to better assess your project.

3. BACKGROUND & STATE OF THE ART KNOWLEDGE

Start by outlining the precise area in which you intend to work and name potential research gaps, shortcomings, etc. which you intend to answer with your project showing that you have a strong understanding of the key topics, significant studies and relevant academic research leading directly to point 4.

4. CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND/OR WORK HYPOTHESES & RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Present your central research questions (the what) and challenges derived from the gaps in knowledge/problems that you want to address in order to give an insight into the projected goals of your work (the why). These questions set the framework for your dissertation as “the red thread” and provide the basis for your argumentation. Furthermore, they constitute an essential element of your approach.

Moreover, you can provide concrete hypotheses of possible answers to your research questions. Please ensure the proper “if-then”-structure when phrasing hypotheses. A research hypothesis is a statement that predicts a relationship between variables. It must be empirically testable, falsifiable and generalizable.

Explain the scientific foundation as well as the approach you will use stating how it relates to the expected research contributions by providing an overview of the methodology and techniques (e.g. empirical, analytical or other methods) in order to give a rough outlook on the possible results and outcome/impact of your project.

Describe your ambitions of reaching beyond the state-of-the-art and address briefly the impact of an overarching aspect (e.g. improved climate protection, optimization of plant protection, prevention of accidents, etc.).

You may also want to highlight potential limitations you anticipate, feasibility within time and other constraints, and how you will address these.

You don't need to identify every specific outcome of your project but you should think about what some potential outcomes might be.

5. WORK SCHEDULE & TIME TABLE

Give a broad working schedule for your project and show how you plan to complete the dissertation (for a cumulative dissertation also include papers) within 3-5 years by

- a) briefly describing the work packages, their systematic structure and sequence. Each work package should have a caption or title assigned to it which must be listed in the Gantt chart.
- b) creating a Gantt diagram (showing the project duration and listing the work package titles as mentioned above) in DIN A4/landscape format.

For Gantt chart examples click here: [Gantt Diagramm Vorlagen in Excel und anderen Tools | Smartsheet](#)

8. LITERATURE REFERENCES

Provide a list of references (max. 1 page) for your project description.

9. SIGNATURES

You and your 1st supervisor have to sign the project description to confirm that it has been discussed and approved. Please add the date of signature.