

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 PhD.

If the rest of your application explains your ability to do a PhD, the research proposal demonstrates the actual research project you plan to do. It presents your idea/question 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 follow the structure and numbering below.

1. LAYOUT & SCOPE

Insert your name & short project title in the header

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

2. WORKING TITLE

Precise & descriptive working title in German and English with the applicant's & 1st supervisor's name

3. DURATION & FEASIBILITY

Make sure you have a realistic time schedule. A PhD can take 3-4 years of full-time study to complete. If you are doing your PhD 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 research project is the date of acceptance by the Doctoral Committee – therefore you declare the date you started to work!

4. 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.

5. BACKGROUND & STATE OF THE ART KNOWLEDGE

Start by defining your research question (the what) explaining how it contributes to current work in your field (the why) with a few essential and current references showing that you have a strong understanding of the key topics, significant studies and relevant academic research.

Demonstrate why your research question is worth asking and how it adds to, improves or challenges the existing body of knowledge. In doing so, outline the precise area in which you intend to work and name potential research gaps, shortcomings, etc. which you intend to answer with your project leading directly to point 6.

6. CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS / WORK HYPOTHESES & RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Present your central research questions 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. 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. Explain their 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.

7. WORK SCHEDULE & TIME TABLE

Give a broad working schedule for your project and show how you plan to complete the dissertation within 3-5 years by

- a) briefly describing the work packages, their systematic structure and sequence
- b) creating a Gantt diagram (visualizing the project duration together with the work packages mentioned above) in DIN A4 format

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

8. LITERATURE REFERENCES

Provide a list of references (max. 1 page) that you've made throughout your project description.

9. SIGNATURES

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