Research proposal

The research proposal (aka exposé) is the backbone of your MA thesis. It should be used as a basis for your thesis. Its aim is to show that you have planned your study well and that you have a clear idea of the objective(s) of your research project and the ways of achieving those; that you are aware of possible difficulties/problems, and that you know how to tackle them. Put simply, a proposal presents the what, why and how of your future study. A proposal should be between 3,000 and 4,000 words long (excluding bibliography/references and any appendices). Format: A4-page, Times New Roman, 12pt font size, 2.5 cm margins, 1.5-spaced.

Think about the following:

- What do you plan to do in your study, and how (topic, research focus, theory, methodology, data, analysis)? Try to choose a relevant topic for your profile area with a clear rationale.
- Why do you want to carry out the study or research project (motivation, need for this research, research gap / open questions or controversies)? Draw up 2-4 research questions.
- What do you plan/expect to find out, considering potential preliminary results/findings? Draw up one or more hypotheses if applicable.
- What do/will the findings mean (interpretation, conclusion)? Or, in case you analyse literary texts or films: What will be the topics, themes, perspectives that guide your analysis, or what will be your main argumentative line?
- Do you expect any obstacles and challenges related to your research?

How to write a research proposal

- Briefly describe your research project; i.e. the topic, research focus, theoretical approach.
- Present a brief research literature review, possibly with gaps in previous research, present your research question(s) and hypotheses (if applicable); show how your study will help in filling the gaps (if applicable).

For Linguistics (including multimodal linguistics), Language Learning and Teaching, Cultural History: Inform on your research methodology, methods of data collection and time frame (if applicable); present your data, e.g. corpus and/or experimental data. Present expected or preliminary results/findings of your study and discuss/interpret those (if applicable).

For Literary and Cultural Studies, Cultural History (including film analysis): Briefly describe your selected works, why you chose them, and how they form a research corpus together (a common denominator).

- Inform on potential problems if applicable (e.g. with individual issues, theory or methodology, ethical considerations, anticipated challenges and limitations).
- Provide a (preliminary) list of references (i.e. a select bibliography).
MA thesis

The MA thesis is basically a substantial extension of the proposal plus the presentation of research and analysis in the main part. Structure your MA thesis as follows:

1. **Introduction** (description of topic and research focus; its context and relevance for research in the respective field, e.g. gaps or controversies; possibly research questions and hypothesis)

2. **Theoretical approach/framework** (if applicable) and review of the pertinent research literature

3. **Methodological design**, procedures of data collection and methods of analysis (if applicable)

4. **Historical, cultural, contextual background** for your study (if applicable)

*Note*: Sections 1-4 should take up no more than approx. 1/3 of your whole thesis.

5. **Main Part** (can be subdivided into several subsections)

   - For **Linguistics (including multimodal linguistics), Language Learning and Teaching, Cultural History**:
     - analyses that are clearly documented in a transparent way with reference to relevant research methods and theories
     - description and analysis of the results of the research, using descriptive and inferential statistics if suitable and necessary
     - interpretation of the findings in the light of the research questions and hypotheses.

   - For **Literary and Cultural Studies, Cultural History (including film analysis)**:
     - divide into subsections according to topics, perspectives, themes with which you read the works
     - analyses of works that are clearly documented with reference to relevant research approaches and theories and with reference to your research questions
     - address also narratological aspects or aspects of film techniques and their effects for the reader/viewer; address possible criticism of the text.

*Note*: This is your major research/analysis and should take up approx. 2/3 of your whole thesis, including the conclusion.

6. **Conclusion** (summarize your arguments and research findings, reflect on challenges/limitations of the study, give possible view as to further research on this topic)

   - The MA thesis should be approx. between 60 and 80 pages long, excluding bibliography/references and appendices (if applicable). Format: A4-page, Times New Roman 12 pt. font size, 2.5 cm margins, 1.5-spaced.
   - Please consult your supervisors if there is a minimum number of required sources and/or special formatting and notation conventions (the profile areas have different style sheets). **Format according to the style sheet of your profile area. Pay attention to the respective referencing and notation conventions and bibliographical style. Use this style consistently!**
   - Carefully proofread the whole thesis, do not allow any typos or outright lexico-grammatical errors. A high level of academic English and a clean form is most important beside intelligent and informed argumentation and research!