



Guidelines for Preparing a Doctoral Research Proposal at the Faculty of Human Sciences, University of the Bundeswehr Munich

Formal Requirements and Structure

The preparation of the proposal should – in consultation with your supervisor – follow the standards commonly used in the field (e.g., DFG, APA, or DVS).

1. Formal requirements

- **Character limit:** 10,000 characters including spaces (excluding timeline and references)
- **Font:** Times New Roman (12 pt) or Arial (11 pt)
- **Line spacing:** 1.15
- **Margins:** top, right, and bottom 2.5 cm; left 3 cm
- **Citation style:** according to the relevant guidelines (e.g., APA, DVS); as agreed with your supervisor

2. Outline

- Cover page
- 1. Theoretical framework and problem statement
- 2. State of the art / literature review
- 3. Objectives and research questions
- 4. Methodology / research design
- 5. Timeline
- References

3. Possible doctoral degrees

- Doctor of **Philosophy (Dr. phil.)**
- Doctor of **Natural Sciences (Dr. rer. nat.)**, provided that at least one examiner holds the **Dr. rer. nat.** degree or has the corresponding *venia legendi* or a professorial appointment in this field.

4. Submission

The final proposal must be reviewed and signed by the supervisor. Submit the proposal electronically as a PDF via email to **dekanat.hum@unibw.de**. Please observe the relevant deadlines to ensure consideration at the desired meeting of the Faculty Council; please submit **no later than one week beforehand, in the morning**. After review, you will receive a decision within a few weeks.

It is advisable to conclude a **supervision agreement** with your supervisor that transparently sets out the content and timeline of the supervision relationship, providing planning certainty for both parties and enabling the joint project to be completed to a high standard within a reasonable period of time.

Template: <https://www.unibw.de/forschung/nachwuchsfoerderung/promovieren-und-habilitieren/betreuungsvereinbarung-unibw-m.pdf>



University of the Bundeswehr Munich

Faculty of Human Sciences

Institute of Psychology

Title of the Dissertation Project

for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. phil.)

Submitted by: Maxi Muster
Email: maxi.muster@unibw.de
Date of submission: January 1, 2026
Supervisor: Univ.-Professorin / Univ.-Professor

1. Theoretical framework and problem statement

In the first chapter, introduce your research topic and articulate the research problem. Provide the background to your proposed dissertation: what object of study or phenomenon will you examine, and in what *context* is it relevant? Specify clearly and precisely the *problem* or knowledge gap you aim to address and explain why this topic matters. The goal is to engage readers and establish the project's significance. Indicate *for whom or for which domain* the expected findings may be meaningful (e.g., the scholarly community, professional practice).

2. State of the art / literature review

In this section, provide a critical overview of the current state of research on your topic. Indicate *what is well established* and where substantive *debates* persist in the relevant literature.

- **Literature review:** Synthesize the principal *theories, empirical studies, and findings* pertinent to your topic. Highlight *unresolved questions*, contradictory results, and methodological limitations. Identify the **research gaps** articulated in the literature. Demonstrate critical judgment by comparing and evaluating divergent positions rather than merely listing sources.
- **Rationale for your own research:** Derive the need for your project from the literature review. By the end of this chapter, it should be clear which gap your dissertation will address and how your **research question(s)** follow(s) from it.

3. Objectives and research questions

Building on the identified research gap, formulate - as precisely as is feasible at this stage - the research question(s) that will guide your dissertation. Articulate any overarching research objectives: *what* do you aim to explore, and *why*? Where possible, briefly delineate the anticipated scope and limitations of the project (e.g., target population, methodological constraints).

4. Methodology / research design

In this chapter, explain **how** you will address your research question(s). Describe your planned **methodological approach** in sufficient detail to demonstrate why the selected methods are appropriate for answering the question(s). Cover the following points where already known:

- **Design and approach:** State whether your study is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. Indicate whether it is an empirical study (e.g., experiment, survey, interview study, field research) or a theoretical/analytical project (e.g., literature review, meta-analysis). Briefly justify your approach.
- **Sample and materials:** Describe *the data or materials* you will examine. For empirical work, specify who or what you will observe or survey (e.g., number and characteristics of participants, selection of interviewees, text corpus). For laboratory or field studies, name the instruments, facilities, and experimental setups. For theoretical/analytical work, transparently justify the selection of your corpus (e.g., inclusion/exclusion

criteria, guiding questions, particular perspectives).

- **Data collection:** Explain *how* you will collect the data - for example, for surveys: questionnaire design/development and administration; for interviews: interview protocol and transcription; for experiments: procedure and manipulation of variables; for observations: observation scheme. Also specify any measurement instruments and software.
- **Data analysis:** Indicate how you will analyze the data. For quantitative studies, state which statistical procedures you will use (e.g., ANOVA, regression models). For qualitative studies, specify the analytic approach (e.g., content analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis). Briefly justify your choices, especially where alternatives exist.
- **Preliminary work:** If you have already conducted pilot studies, preliminary analyses, or data collection, note them here.

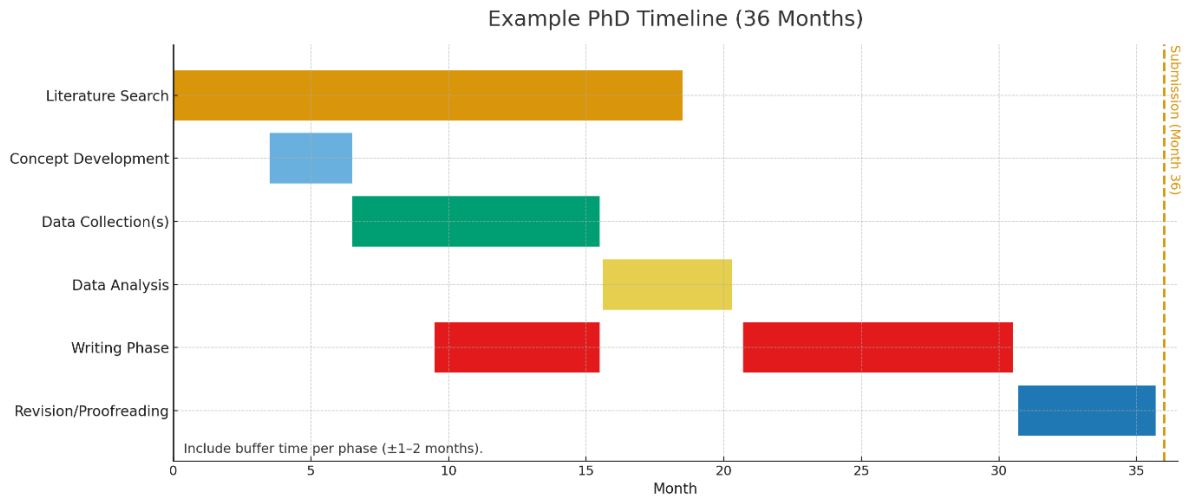
Practical tip: Develop the methods plan in close consultation with your supervisor, as it is central to feasibility and success. It is often helpful to structure the design into sub-studies (e.g., Study 1, Study 2, Study 3), each specifying the design, sample, instruments, and procedures.

5. Timeline

Prepare a **work plan and timeline** for your doctoral research project. The timeline should reflect a *realistic assessment of tasks and durations* and serve as your internal guide.

- **Overall duration:** Use the *standard time to degree* as a baseline (typically 3–4 years full-time). Divide this period into coherent phases.
- **Milestones:** List the project phases with time frames - for example, literature review (months 1–3), conceptual development (months 4–6), data collection (months 7–15), data analysis (months 16–20), writing (months 21–30), revision and proofreading (months 31–36). A table or chart can help to visualize the schedule.
- **Buffer time:** Include contingencies for unforeseen delays and necessary iterations. The plan should be ambitious yet *feasible*.
- **Publications:** If applicable, indicate when you plan to submit manuscripts or conference papers (e.g., a paper after year 2).
- **Submission and examination:** State the *target dissertation submission date* (month/year) and any subsequent steps (defense/colloquium).

Illustrative example of a graphical schedule: compared with the example above, activities may overlap (e.g., the literature review continues during data collection, and the writing phase starts earlier).



References

At the end of the proposal, provide a references section. List all sources cited in the text, formatted consistently in a citation style agreed with your supervisor.

- **Completeness:** Every source cited in the text must appear in the references; conversely, do not list items that are not at least mentioned in the proposal.
- **Quality of sources:** Prioritize the *most relevant and up-to-date* publications for your topic. A proposal need not - and should not - catalog every conceivable source; what matters is that your selection covers the *core foundations of the existing research*.

Place, date & signature
of the applicant:

Place, date & signature
of the supervisor:
