

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS PREPARING A RESEARCH PLAN

The structure and content of the research plan are determined according to the research project. These instructions are suggestions, not 'the only right way' or 'the best way' to prepare the plan. However, it would be an advantage if the plan addressed all the matters discussed here, as necessary.

Say what you need to say, and be concise. Do not pad out your text; your plan should not be any longer than is really necessary. The absolute maximum length for a postgraduate research plan to be submitted to the expert committee is 20,000 characters. Think of it like this: What would you like to know if you did not know anything about the research project and you were required to evaluate whether it was feasible – assuming that you are in a hurry and reading about many other projects at the same time?

COVER

State the following:

- your name
- the title of your research project
- whether the research plan is aiming for a degree of Doctor of Music or Licentiate of Music (choose one)
- the school in which you intend to complete your degree
- your contact details, at least your phone number and e-mail address

Give careful thought to the title of your study so that it will accurately reflect exactly what you want to do.

SUMMARY (max 1 page)

The summary comes after the cover and before the contents list in the plan. In the summary heading, state the following:

- your name (yes, again)
- the title of your research project (again)
- the school in which you intend to complete your degree

Then very briefly explain:

- your research question (no more than one sentence)
- your approach (scientific discipline or subject)

Then briefly describe:

- key concepts
- data

on which the study will be based

- the questions to which answers are sought with those data
- the research method (methods of collecting and analysing data)

Then you may briefly discuss:

- the hypotheses or baseline assumptions of your research
- the applicability and social relevance of your research, i.e. why this study should be carried out

Finally, include a list of keywords (2 to 5); often these will be terms that you have already used in explaining the core content of your proposed study.

0 PLAN CONTENTS

with page numbers

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the introduction is to give the reader an overview of your study. Right at the beginning, state what it is that you are going to research. You may apply the structure of the Summary to the Introduction as well. Include everything that was in the Summary but also include any key points which you could not fit into the Summary and which will help the reader understand your research plan. However, do not include too much detail at this point. The research question should be as concise and accurate as possible, and you should formulate it as a single sentence. If the research question requires more than one sentence, it is probably not as specific as it should be. The Introduction is like an aerial photo centred on the research question; in the Introduction, you can place the research question in a wider context and provide a background to what will follow.

2 RESEARCH TASK

2.1 DEFINING THE RESEARCH SUBJECT

- research subject
- research data

In this chapter, you should outline your research subject in as much detail as possible. Where and how does your research subject exist (ontological perspective)? Key concepts delimiting your research subject should be defined here in relation to each other and to the real world, and also in relation to earlier research literature on the topic, if there is any. Note that the research subject is not necessarily the same thing as the research data; in many cases, we are obliged to approach the research subject indirectly through the data available (epistemological perspective). Therefore the questions to be asked regarding the research data are not necessarily the same as the actual research question. The questions to be asked regarding the research data will be returned to later.

2.2 FURTHER SPECIFYING THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Now that the research subject has been defined, you can discuss your research question in more detail and at length: what is it exactly that you want to find out about the aforementioned research subject? Also, provide the reader with more details about where your research question comes from and what supplementary questions it may prompt (supplementary questions are questions that must be answered first to be able to answer the research question itself). You may present the questions to be asked regarding the research data and discuss how they relate to the research question.

2.3 SELECTING A PERSPECTIVE

This follows on from the previous section. What is your perspective on the research subject? What scientific discipline does your perspective fall into? At this point, you should discuss the theoretical background and baseline assumptions on which your research and perspective are based. Why choose this perspective in particular? What research has previously been done on this topic in this

discipline? Also remember to consider a cross-discipline approach. You may also explain why you did *not* choose another possible perspective, if you feel this is necessary. It is not a good idea to start by creating an entirely new scientific discipline.

3 RESEARCH DATA AND HOW THEY ARE COLLECTED AND ANALYSED

3.1 EXAMINING THE RESEARCH DATA TO BE ACQUIRED

- research data selection
- questions to be asked regarding the research data

This section is for describing in more detail what your research data consist of. Following on from the above (sections 2.1 to 2.3), you should also explain why this particular set of data would be the best for addressing your research question. You may further specify the questions to which you believe the data will provide answers. In other words, this section is for describing the questions to be asked regarding the research data in more detail and for explaining why and how the answers gained will help to address your research question.

3.2 METHOD(S) TO BE APPLIED

- research data collecting method(s)
- method(s) for analysing the collected data

The subject of this section is often neglected. It is important to try to understand **how** *the subject defined above* can yield information on the basis of which it is possible to address *the research question defined above* from *the perspective defined above*. The two important points in the 'methods' chapter are thus: 1) how the research data are collected and 2) how the research data are analysed. At this point, you should give critical thought to why in particular the chosen methods for collecting and analysing data are the best for achieving the goals stated earlier. You may also briefly discuss the limits to the applicability of the method chosen, its weaknesses, and so on. It is important to consider this with great care (as indeed all other parts of your plan).

You should also discuss ethical issues related to materials and methods (such as whether the method is ethical, informed consent of human subjects, anonymity of human subjects, etc.), research permits and how they will be applied for.

3.3 RESULTS

You may speculate on expected results in this section.

At the very least, however, you should explain what the benefits of your research are likely to be. How could it point the way for future research? What are its communal / societal / cultural dimensions?

4 RESEARCH RESOURCES AND IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 PRESENTATION OF YOURSELF

Describe your strengths and development needs in relation to how the proposed study may be successfully conducted.

4.2 RESEARCH TIMETABLE AND FUNDING

Try to be realistic about both of the items in the section title. This section may then be of use to you later too. Even the simplest of tasks will often prove to require more time and resources than anticipated.

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Do not list all the books you have ever heard of. However, list at least those books to which you refer in your plan. You may also compile your bibliography in three parts:

- actual sources
- books related to the subject which you have read but which you do not specifically mention in your text
- books you consider to be related to the subject which you have not read but intend to at a later date