

Proposal Bachelor's/ Master's Thesis

University of Cologne - Chair of Energy Economics

Name:

Surname:

Student ID Number:

Course of studies:

Semester:

Please fill out the required sections according to the guidelines provided at the end of the document.

Title

Research Question (one sentence)

1 Motivation and background of the research question (max. 250 words)

2 Methodology and Data (max. 250 words)

3 Literature Review (max. 250 words)

4 Table of Contents (including page numbers)

5 References (max. 500 words)

Writing a Proposal

A proposal briefly summarises the background and motivation of your thesis. The proposal centres around the formulation of a clear research question that is answerable within the mandatory scope of the thesis.

This proposal serves as a working basis for you, your supervisor and the examiner. While the proposal is finalised together with your supervisor and the examiner, it pays-off to put in the effort. What follows is a guide as to how this form is to be filled out. The requirements for academic writing specified in the *Guideline for Academic Writing at the Chair of Energy Economics* on the chair's homepage have to be followed.

When writing your proposal, adhere to the designated word count in the respective sections! Anything that exceeds the designated word count will be cut off.

Title

Determine the preliminary title of your thesis. The title can be changed until the thesis is registered with the examination office. After the registration process is concluded, no further changes are possible.

Research Question

The preliminary research question (RQ) describes the main focus of the thesis. Important criteria for a good RQ are unambiguity and focus. Before a valid RQ is found, several revisions may be necessary. In finding a research question, it may be helpful to start from a broad approach on your topic of interest and then successively narrow down the main focus of the RQ. You should avoid contradictory, misleading or suggestive questions. A good practice of determining the unambiguity of the RQ may be to check if your RQ answers all *Wh-Questions* (What, When, Which, Where, Who, Why).

Motivation and Background

The relevance of your RQ should be discussed with respect to the current state of research in the field. Keep in mind, that your thesis should add something new to the literature! Hence, it is important to discuss if your RQ was raised before or to what extent other research has contributed to an answer so far. Motivate your RQ by outlining how your approach may enhance existing knowledge: Most importantly, discuss the gap in the literature that you aim to fill¹.

Methodology and Data

Explain how your RQ will be investigated by a description of the utilised datasets and the applied methodology. Be as specific as possible with a short description of the most important variables and concepts that have to be consulted. If your RQ revolves around an analysis of existing research, describe among which criteria the assessment will take place. If your RQ is rather complex, the introduction of auxiliary hypothesis to guide the discussion may be advisable. Keep the interpretational limits of your methodology in mind and consider how well your RQ fits your methodological approach. Why does your methodological approach make sense in light of your RQ?

¹Depending on your methodology, various explanations are possible here: An econometric study may contribute to the literature through the application of a new estimation method or the use of a new database. A literature-based study might contribute to the literature by means of a critical discussion of published research and the disclosure of new pathways for further research.

Literature Review

Give an overview of the most important research that has been published and that is connected to your RQ. It might be helpful to structure your review by a top-down approach: In which field of economic research does your RQ fit? What are the most important references that have to be made? Which methods have been applied so far?

Table of Contents

Write down the preliminary structure and line of thought that you want to follow in your thesis. It is advisable to include the number of pages you are planning to spend on the various sections of your thesis. Having a rough idea of how many pages you want to assign to which part will help your supervisor and examiner to assess the feasibility of your approach. Keep in mind, that a bachelor's (master's) thesis should not exceed a total of 30 (60) pages. The preliminary table of contents is also meant to help you in structuring your work.

References

Give an overview of all references used in your proposal. Consult the "Guideline for academic writing at the Chair of Energy Economics" for the required form of your References. A list of references is a mandatory part of all scientific work.

Good luck!

We are looking forward to your application.

The notes on "Writing a Proposal" are solely attached for informational purposes. Only pages 1-4 have to be submitted as part of the application for a degree thesis.