

Guideline for Drafting a Proposal for a PhD Project

The following guideline is intended to support applicants for the structured PhD program of the Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy Graduate School of Law in drafting a proposal for the application procedure.

Due to the variety of topics and projects, this guide can only provide a general overview, offer recommendations, and give suggestions. Your project may require it to adapt the proposed structure, to differ from it in certain points, and to change it in accordance with your (and your project's) needs.

The Scope

The proposal should not exceed 4 pages. To include an abbreviated form of citations as well as a short bibliography (in the end of the text) may be recommended.

Outline of the Exposé

1. Brief Introduction/Summary

Outline your project in a few lines. Briefly introduce to the field of study, your projected research questions and hypotheses, research methods, aims and objects. Summarize the innovative character of your research and its significance to your field of study by giving a short outlook on the expected outcomes.

2. Topic of the Project & State of the Art in your Field of Study

Introduce to the subject matter of your research and outline the current state of the art in your field of study.

3. Central Research Question(s) and Hypotheses

Based on the above made considerations on the current state of the art in your field of research, outline the precise area in which you intend to work and name potential research gaps/shortcomings/etc. which you intend to fill with your project.

Describe your central research questions to give an insight into the projected goals of your work. These questions set the framework for your future thesis as they shall form its red thread and provide the basis for your argumentation. They furthermore constitute an essential element of your approach and provide(s) a condensed summary of it.

Provide also hypotheses of possible answers to your research questions in order to give a rough outlook on the possible results of your project.

4. Outline

Give a conclusive outlook on the intended line of your argumentation. The reader shall get the opportunity to understand how you intend to answer the stated research questions in the course of your thesis and what the expected outcomes are. In order to do so, you could also provide a provisional structure for your thesis and reason your choice of this structure.

5. Innovativeness and Significance

Outline how your research will contribute to the existing literature in your field of study. Show how it will be beneficial and which insights can be expected as an outcome of it. Do so by describing what will be new and innovative about your project (methodology, expected outcomes, new insights into a topic, (interdisciplinary) approach, questioning of established knowledge, etc.) and by addressing the significance of its outcomes for the area of study.

6. Methodology

Describe the methods you intend to use to achieve the projected aims and to answer the stated research questions in order to show that your project is feasible. Outline in more detail how you intend to address and answer the research questions by explaining what the steps are which you intend to take in the course of your study, on which data/sources your research will be based, and what the exact approach is that you intend to pursue.

7. Projected Schedule / Work Plan

Give a broad working schedule for your project and show how you plan to complete the dissertation within three years. Name important milestones in your research and when you plan to achieve them.