

Guidelines for MA thesis proposals at the IGN

Supervision of master's thesis

Research at IGN covers a thematically broad area and we offer supervision for master's thesis for various topics, which in the broad sense are part of our research area.

- In preparation, we advise students to familiarize themselves with our subject areas and our relevant publications.
- We are happy to assist with specifying the research topic; however, we expect students to invest some initial thoughts and work in finding a suitable topic before approaching us.
- A master's thesis is supposed to be a piece of original academic work, which means that students conceptualize and work on it in an independent and self-reliant manner.
- A master's thesis normally comprises 20,000 words and deals with a clearly defined *research problem*, which is operationalized into clearly defined *research questions*.
- Students should formulate research questions in such a way that they can be answered or meaningfully pursued within the scope of the thesis.
- The academic supervisor's role is to assist mainly in the phase of developing and strategically structuring the thesis.
- The academic supervisor gives advice in specifying the research problem, formulating the research questions, contextualizing the topic, finding relevant literature, choosing appropriate methods and research strategies and in the development of a clear structure of the thesis.
- The academic supervisor reads and comments on a draft of the introduction and one further chapter.
- Students are entitled to repeated written feedback and to repeated discussions of their work with their supervisor. Specific queries can always be directed to the supervisor via email.
- A master's thesis should typically be finished within a period of six months.
- In order to safeguard academic independence, the supervisor should read the finished work only after the student has officially handed it in.
- The academic supervisor does not do a pre-correction of the master's thesis.
- To provide a meaningful evaluation of the thesis, the whole spectrum of grades **(1-5)** are taken into consideration. Only theses that are **very** well written in terms of both formal and substantive criteria will be graded with the grade very good **(1)**.
- Should any written guidelines of the student's specific MA programme not be compatible with these guidelines, the guidelines of the student's MA programme take priority.

Formal Requirements

Your proposal should be **at least 1.000 words** long and include the following:

- Working title (1 line max.)
- Relevance of research topic and research interest
- Research questions (4 max.)
- Methodology
- Preliminary list of references

- Preliminary structure of thesis (6 sections max., 1. Introduction, 5. Conclusion and 6. References; 1 heading level below max.)
- Preliminary work schedule

Content-related Requirements for Proposal at the IGN

When developing your proposal, you should take a few questions in account:

What is driving your thesis?

What is your research interest? Is there a problem, a misconception, a research gap that you identify? Answering this question will lead to your research topic and research question(s)

How do you want to achieve your research objective?

How do you want to resolve that problem or fill the knowledge gap? Following this question will lead to your research steps and the heading structure of your proposal.

What method should you use?

If you are interested in conducting a primarily empirical study, please make sure that you have successfully completed one of the methods courses at WU.