

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

Middle European Interdisciplinary Master Programme in Cognitive Science / Skupni interdisciplinarni študijski program druge stopnje Kognitivna znanost

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A MASTER THESIS PROPOSAL

Guidelines may be adjusted to fit particular research approaches.

Formatting

Font: Times New Roman, size 12; references may be size 11

Length: including references from 3 up to 5 pages or 8100 to 13500 characters (including spaces).

Line spacing: 1,5.

TITLE

The title summarises the gist of your thesis. It has to be specific and it has to reflect the research problem/question. The title should be short, up to 150 characters in length and avoid unnecessary terms, such as *researching*, *meaning*, *finding*, etc. Favour broad terms over lists, use technical terms when it is justified. Acronyms are strongly discouraged.

ABSTRACT

The abstract presents the topic of research as a whole and includes: definition of the research problem, justification of its importance, general hypothesis, methods and expected findings. Also, it should include expected theoretical and practical contribution of your research. Length: up to 350 words.

KEYWORDS

Keywords are descriptors of research area. Generally, they span from 5 to 6 words or phrases and are arranged from general to specific (social sciences and humanities) or alphabetically (natural sciences).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the introduction, the student presents the importance of the research problem and explains why she decided to research it. The introduction should not include a review of existing research.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This part includes an overview of the narrower field of research and the justification of the relevancy of the proposed research topic. The student should present, compare and evaluate the most important theories / models and simulations related to the proposed topic. Furthermore, she should present an (meta-analytic) overview of relevant research from other authors, their findings and conclusions.

Areas and/or aspects of cognitive science, student's work is based on, should also be spelled out. The thesis must be interdisciplinary – it should encompass at least two fields/disciplines.

Furthermore, the student has to spell out what is already known and what hasn't been researched in the scope of the proposed topic and indicate the "place" of the proposed topic and its relevancy in this framework.

3.0 PROBLEM

This part should include specific questions and the topic of research. The researched problem must be stated clearly, thoroughly and concisely.

4.0 GOALS, HYPOTHESES AND/OR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research goals should be consistent with the research problem. They represent a framework / direction of research. Hypotheses or research questions should be formed according to the stated research problem.

Hypotheses should be specific and stated concretely. They should refer to expected differences or relations between data (in case of empirical research) or analysed ideas (in case of theoretical research). The formation of hypotheses depends on the theoretical framework, previous research or one's own reflected experience. In accordance with this, the student must state what her hypotheses are based on. If the proposed research (or a part of it) is qualitative or it does not compare groups of people or relationships between variables but rather describes and analyses the state or understanding, the student should state research questions instead of hypotheses. Similarly, this is the case with less developed fields of research where it is difficult to form a hypothesis based on previous findings or when the main method of the proposed research will be philosophical analysis.

5.0 METHOD

First, type(s) of research approach(es) should be stated. If the proposed research topic is theoretical and does not, in its main parts, build on empirical methodology, this section should include: the procedure of gathering sources, a description of analysed sources (ideas, literature or works of art, documents, archives, etc.), a justification of used methods (e.g., historical, phenomenological, comparative, etc.).

If the proposed research topic is based on empirical methodology, this section should include: a description of (the sample of) participants, measuring instruments, the procedure for gathering and analysing data. These subsections should be appropriately labelled.

5.1 Participants

The choice of participants or method of sampling, the size of the sample and its basic characteristics should be stated and justified.

5.2 Measuring instruments (materials, apparatuses, etc.)

The student should briefly describe by whom and when were instruments created, how answers were evaluated, etc. When presenting measuring instruments, student's own contribution (e.g., authorship, adaptation and calibration) should be especially emphasised. Also, the student should state the measurement characteristics of instruments. In case these have not been tested yet, the student should state how they are going to be tested.

5.3 Procedure

The student should provide a brief description of the procedure and conditions for gathering data – application of measuring instruments on the selected sample of participants or ways of observation and/or kinds of interviews. If a pilot study is planned, the student should describe its purpose and procedure.

5.4 Analysis

The student should state which kinds of data analyses will be used, their purposes and which hypotheses they will test or which research questions they will answer. The choice of methods must be adequate with respect to the research problem, hypotheses (research questions) and type of data.

5.5 Interdisciplinarity

In this part, the student should state how she intends to synthesise findings of different disciplines or approaches used in her research.

6.0 EXPECTED RESULTS

The student should state expected results. If preliminary research has been carried out, extrapolate from these results. Also, the student should explain how expected results contribute to current theory and practice of disciplinary field(s).

7.0 REFERENCES

Only key sources should be stated, of which most should be contemporary. List of sources should not exceed 25 items, as this is not a systematic review of the field. Literature should be cited in the standard way of the disciplinary field of the proposed topic. Only references used in the text should be stated.

TIMELINE

Main phases of preparation of the master thesis should be specified. The phases should be arranged in a timeline that outlines the start and end of the work, duration of each phase, their sequence and possible overlap.

Prepared by: Simona Tancig

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