



PHD THESIS PROPOSAL AS PART OF THE PHD THESIS WRITING PROCESS (Practical tips - updated)

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STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENTATION

- **WHAT IS AND **WHAT IS (NOT)** A DOCTORAL THESIS**
- **CHOOSING A TOPIC**
- **CHOOSING A MENTOR**
- **CHOOSING A TYPE OF DOCTORAL THESIS**
- **GOOD THESIS PROPOSAL**
- **ELEMENTS IN THE THESIS PROPOSAL**
- **DEFENDING THE PROPOSAL**
- **COMMUNICATING WITH ACADEMIA**
- **WORKING ON THE PHD THESIS**
- **WORK, LIFE, HEALTH**
- **SOURCES**



WHAT IS DOCTORAL THESIS

- Original contribution to science !!!
- In picture: <http://matt.might.net/articles/phd-school-in-pictures/>
- A result of a long working process (YEARS!)
- What is **not** DT



CHOOSING A TOPIC

- Professional interest (related to your work)?
- Part of the existing research project (Young researcher contract)
- Work with the chosen mentor (his/her research interest)
- Personal interest (contributing to solving a particular social problem, interest in personal growth..)
- Get in touch with the heads of **research projects** that you think are relevant to your PhD thesis;



CHOOSING A TOPIC - continued

- What do you want to study? (personal interest!)
- Why do you want to study it?
- Which gaps in the literature/which puzzle will you address? (**Novelty!**)
- How will you address them (**Novelty?**)
- The research model / qualitative narrative argument
- What will it cover and what will it NOT cover?
- **Think of the feasibility of your PhD project!!!!**



CHOOSING A MENTOR

- References
- Projects
- Networks
- Reputation as a mentor
- Personal compatibility
- Obligations of a mentor, obligations of a student (

<https://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/docs/default-source/doktorski-studij-3-stopnje/obrazci/rules-on-doctoral-study-program-humanities-and-social-sciences.pdf?sfvrsn=4>)



CHOOSING A TYPE OF DOCTORAL THESIS

- A monograph
- Academic articles with an overall introduction and overall conclusions



GOOD PH D THESIS PROPOSAL

- Preliminary research – a breath of reading!
- Authorship!
- Writing a good PhD proposal –represents **40% of the work** invested in writing the PhD thesis
- The potentially negative consequences of having a not-so-good PhD proposal approved
- Assurance and protection of a PhD candidate



ELEMENTS IN THE THESIS PROPOSAL

1) INTRODUCTION

- Title of the PhD thesis
- Abstract of
 - the main idea – thesis statement
 - the particular topic
 - the research approach and
 - what makes it unique



ELEMENTS IN THE THESIS PROPOSAL - continued

2) CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE:

- Summarise the main research streams
- their research achievements and
- the current gaps,
- puzzles

Ensure your own „added value“!!!



Literature review:

- do this while taking care of conceptualisation („words“/terms)
- do this in line with the relevant ways of **assembling** sources and presenting them in a **summarised** form!
- **Your original** contribution should already be clearly stated here! (the current literature reviews!! + updates + an original approach to the overview of the existing literature ...)

Your (first) academic article in the process of your doctoral studies?!

Reputable journals for doctoral students at the Faculty of Social Sciences
<https://vodici.fdv.uni-lj.si/subjects/guide.php?subject=IF>



Literature review – continued:

– How to do it? Some **tips and samples**:

- <https://library.concordia.ca/help/writing/literature-review.php>
- <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/literature-reviews/>
- <https://libguides.uwf.edu/c.php?g=215199&p=1420828>



ELEMENTS IN THE THESIS PROPOSAL – continued

RESEARCH DESIGN

- A broad research approach
- Theoretical, conceptual framing
- A more detailed research model
- Selection of research methods/techniques
- Planned sources of data
- Own field work



Disposition of the doctoral dissertation includes:

- proposal of the **title** of the dissertation in Slovenian and English;
- **scientific field** of the topic of the doctoral dissertation;
- review of the **narrower scientific field** and a description of the content that the doctoral student will deal with;
- definition of a research problem, comprising:
 - overview of **current research** on the topic,
 - clearly presented **hypotheses or research questions** with a brief explanation,
 - design of research and description of **methods of research**,
 - definition of expected results and the **original contribution to science**,
 - short structure of doctoral dissertation in the form of **a table of contents**,
 - **list of relevant** literature in the subject area.

The disposition must be written and edited in accordance with the **Instructions for Writing** and

Designing Professional-Scientific Works of the FSS, and comprise **3 to 7 p.**

(not counting the literature and structure of the dissertation in the form of a table of contents).



RESEARCH DESIGN-continued

- unit(s) of analysis
- selection of cases
- the time scope
- a spatial definition of the research scope
- other limitations (social aspects...)
- selection of the relevant research methods/
techniques...
- a comparative approach!



RESEARCH DESIGN-continued

Testing the design:

- with mentor, co-mentor (together), experts for particular research methods...
- with the doctoral committee (midterm informal meeting!)
- with peers;
- in conferences (feedbacks to your paper);
- in methods school;



ELEMENTS IN THE THESIS PROPOSAL – continued

ETHICAL ASPECTS

Ethical limitations:

- **Do not cause harm** with your research!
- Apply for approval /an opinion from the Ethical commission in time!



ETHICAL ASPECTS -continued

Academic integrity

Plagiarism (~~using the ideas, methods, written words of another, without acknowledgment / presenting them as own!!!~~)

- Get to know what exactly P is
- and what P is not
- **When in doubt - cite!**



ETHICAL ASPECTS -continued

The use of AI tools

- ERA living guidelines

Link to publication:

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2b6cf7e5-36ac-41cb-aab5-0d32050143dc_en?filename=ec_rtd_ai-guidelines.pdf

- University of Ljubljana guidelines and recommendations

Link with sublinks: <https://www.uni-lj.si/en/research/ethics-and-integrity-in-research>







ETHICAL ASPECTS -continued

Acknowledgements

- Research projects: if your PhD is part of a particular research project, cite this in accordance with the agreement of the project leader and the head of the research centre
- Use of others' data (citations etc...)
- Referees: for their comments on your conference papers and other presentations
- Doctoral thesis edited for publication.



TECHNICAL ASPECTS

- Respect the **technical rules** for a PhD thesis proposal (structure, ref.- citations, edit., length, etc.)
- Guidelines for writing and editing professional and scientific works at the Faculty of Social Sciences (2023)
- **Administrative support:**
doctoral.studies@fdv.uni-lj.si



WORK PLAN

- **Details** - thesis structure, format, length...
- **Timeline** – milestones, anticipated dates of completion..
- **Jobs** (theoretical framework, field-work, writing articles...)
- **Academic interactions !!!** (meetings with a mentor, committee, conferences, summer schools – content/methods..)
- **Ensuring that failure is unlikely**



DEFENDING THE PROPOSAL

- Doctoral presentation
- Preparations
- What to expect
- Participation at other students' seminar
- What happens after the doctoral presentation at the faculty and (if successful) at the university level.



EVALUATION OF THE PROPOSAL

- Elements
- Procedure
- Article 44: evaluation report

RULES AND REGULATIONS:

<http://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/en/study/study-at-the-FDV/doctoral-programmes/instructions-regulations-and-forms/Instructions-and-regulations>



Article 44 (evaluation criteria)

- **title** of the proposed doctoral dissertation topic in Slovene and English;
- suitability of the proposed topic title and the **field of the dissertation** ;
- **scientific relevance**;
- suitability of **hypotheses and research questions**;
- suitability of the envisaged **research methods and their feasibility**;
- **literature cited adequately supports** the proposed research
- **independent and original** contribution to the research field;
- **suitability of the supervisor** and the potential co-supervisor;
- **the form** of doctoral dissertation;
- whether the **consent of the Research Ethics** Commission needs to be obtained;
- suitability of the draft research **data management plan**;
- **assessment of the cited literature**.



COMMUNICATING WITH ACADEMIA

- Get involved
- **STAY FOCUSED!!!**
- Plan your academic networking linked to your Phd thesis writing
- Summer schools
- Examples



WORK ON THE PHD AS A PROCESS – SOME PRACTICAL TIPS - from the beginning!!!

- Obtain a broad grasp of the existing literature, but don't forget the most recent debates which are available at the preliminary stages of publication (conference papers etc.);
- Make notes!
- Prepare list of references and sources as you read them



- Invest your intellectual effort in designing your own research from the very beginning (criteria for literature review+)
- Make a detailed plan on the structure and length of the thesis
- **Power of a group!**
- Contact the mentor and the board during the process of writing
- **More is not necessarily better**



WORK, LIFE, HEALTH

- Tips of writing a brilliant thesis

(<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08164622.2024.2413706#d1e156>)

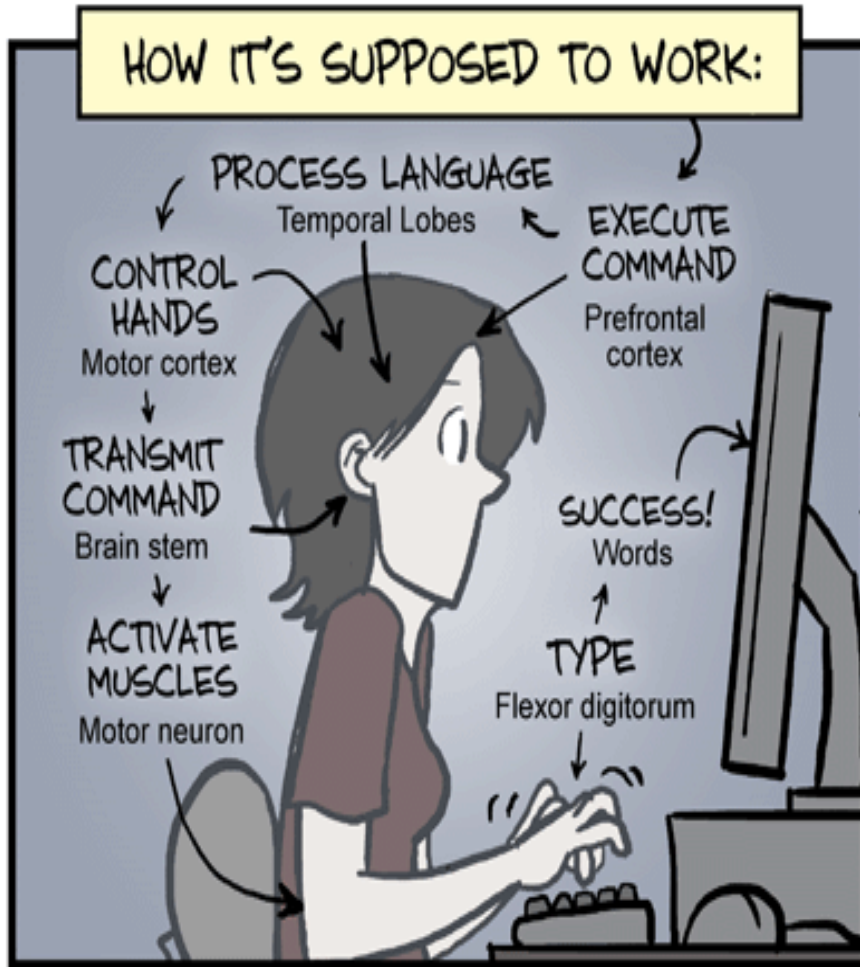
- Work-life balance
- Socializing (peers +)
- (Mental) health issues
- Help
 - - burnout
 - anxiety, depression.. (see e.g. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>)

- **Humor** 😊

- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/phd-journey-embracing-humor-challenges-personal-growth-biopatrika/>
- https://phdcomics.com/comics/most_popular.php

THE NEUROBIOLOGY OF WRITING

HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO WORK:



JORGE CHAM © 2014

HOW IT USUALLY WORKS:





Take care of yourself!



SOURCES ON WRITING OF PHD THESIS PROPOSAL AND PHD THESIS

- Books/Practical tips freely available on-line/
 - <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/10-tips-writing-phd-thesis>
 - <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/surviving-dissertation-tips-someone-who-mostly-has>
- Patrick Dunleavy (2017): *Authoring a PhD: How to Plan, Draft, Write and Finish a Doctoral Thesis or Dissertation*, Bloomsbury Publishing
- Guidelines of various universities (available on-line)
- How **NOT** to write a PhD thesis
 - <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/how-not-to-write-a-phd-thesis/410208.article>