

How to submit a proposal for a Master's Degree Thesis in Financial Management

Prof. Giuseppe Marzo

A two-step process

A Thesis proposal can be submitted with the aim of exploring any of the topics of the course. The proposal can be submitted through a two-step process. First, a general proposal must be sent through email to mrzgpp@unife.it with the general topic of interest. Second, once your general proposal has been accepted, a structured proposal must be produced and sent to the same recipient.

The structured proposal

The proposal has to be structured as follows:

1. Introduction / Thesis topic

What is the topic of the thesis? What is the general background and context of the thesis topic? How is the topic related to the contents of the course? Why is this topic of interest?

2. Research aim / Research questions

What are the concrete aims and objectives of the thesis? What is the central research question? How is this research question related to a specific research context? Why is the research question relevant within this scientific context?

What a Research Question is

A Research Question is a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied.

Research question should not be too general nor too specific. For example:

“To understand financial policies of a SME” is a too general research question. What does “financial policies” mean? What kind of SMEs are under investigation?

Again, research question should not be trivial. For instance,

“How many SMEs are located in Ferrara” can be answered through a simple search on internet.

How to set the research question

To set your research question, choose a general topic of interest, and conduct preliminary research on this topic in current periodicals and journals to see what research has already been done.

Understanding what has been already done on the topic is useful for:

Avoiding carry out again the same research (re-inventing the wheel)

Having some tips on how to carry on your own research on the basis of how previous researches have been carried out

3. Literature review / Current state of research

What research has been done on your topic? Where are gaps in the existing literature?

What new aspects does the thesis focus on?

4. Theoretical framework

What theories and theoretical approaches are you planning to work with? Why? Do alternative approaches exist?

5. Research methodology

What kind of methodology will be used to answer your research question and why? What kind of sources or documents or data will be analysed? How those documents and data will be collected? How will they be analysed? What potential problems are expected to arise with those documents and data (e.g. missing data for some fields).

Any kind of accepted methodology is allowed, both qualitative and quantitative.

Usually the following methodologies are used for a thesis in Financial Management:

- Case study methodology (See Robert K. Yin, "Case Study Research: Design and Methods")
- Research based on questionnaires
- Research based on the analysis of available financial data (e.g. from AIDA)

6. Thesis structure

How will the thesis be structured? What main sections, chapters and subchapters do you want to include? How do they relate to each other?

Lenght

Thesis proposal should have a length of 2.000 to 3.000 words (without considering references)

Resources

Many resources are available for students to prepare their thesis and their thesis proposal. Here are some of them.

References:

Useful references can be found using search engines such as: Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.it/>), Scopus e ISI (through Unife Access or VPN), SSRN (www.ssrn.com) o Repec (www.repec.org).

Methodology:

Many websites offer tips and insights into research methodology:

- The Research Assistant (<http://www.theresearchassistant.com/>) is a comprehensive source of tips, tools, and information to navigate the world of behavioural science research, from formulating your question to getting your proposal funded.
- Writing guides are available on [Writing@CSU](https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/index.cfm) | The Writing Studio web-site (<https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/index.cfm>), which are the result of a joint effort of the Writing@CSU project and the Colorado State University Writing Center.
- The Purdue Online Writing Lab (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>) offer free resources on writing and research and other.

The structure of the Thesis

The final Thesis will usually contains the following sections:

- 1. Introduction / Thesis topic**
- 2. Research aim/ Research questions**
- 3. Literature review / Current state of research**
- 4. Theoretical framework**
- 5. Research methodology**

What kind of methodology will be used to answer your research question and why? What kind of sources or documents or data will be analysed? How those documents and data will be collected? How will they be analysed? What potential problems are expected to arise with those documents and data (e.g. missing data for some fields)

- 6. Results/ Findings**

What could be the outcomes and results of your thesis? What hypotheses or arguments could your thesis support or disprove?

- 7. Problems/ Open questions**

What problems did you encounter while planning your thesis? Were you able to solve them? What problems and open questions remain unsolved?

- 8. References**

Provide a bibliography of all the literature you have referred to in your thesis proposal.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is not allowed. On plagiarism and on how to avoid plagiarism see:

- <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>
- <http://www.plagiarism.org>

Plagiarisers will be deferred to the disciplinary committee (See here for more information: <http://eco.unife.it/it/cp/insert-md/altre-news-studenti/plagio>).