

PhD Political Science

Guidelines for writing the exposé and the dissertation

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1 Legal framework and grading

According to the curriculum for the "Doctor of Philosophy" doctoral programme in Political Science (please see current complete version of the curriculum on the [programme profile page](#)), the "preparation, submission and discussion of the exposé" (§ 6, Section 1) is a compulsory part of the PhD programme.

A dissertation is a scientific work which serves to demonstrate the ability to deal with scientific issues independently. The topic of the dissertation is to be taken from the field of political science. Students must choose a team of supervisors for their dissertation consisting of at least two supervisors (main supervisor, second supervisor) and communicate the topic and the supervisors in writing before starting work on the dissertation ([see registration of the dissertation](#)). The topic and the supervisors are accepted if the Program Director, representing the Director of Studies, does not prohibit this within one month (see § 7, sections 3 and 4 of the curriculum).

Two reviewers must be nominated in good time before the dissertation defence. Students submit the dissertation using the following form (https://www.uibk.ac.at/fakultaeten-servicestelle/pruefungsreferate/forms/einreichung_diss_phd_neu_universitaetsstrasse.doc). In this process, two suggestions for potential reviewers can be made. At least one reviewer must come from outside the University of Innsbruck. A maximum of one member of the supervisory team can act as a reviewer.

The dissertation is assessed and graded as soon as possible, but within three months of submission at the latest. The spectrum of grades ranges from "Very good" (1), "Good" (2), "Satisfactory" (3), "Sufficient" (4) to "Not Sufficient" (5). Please see Section 5 of this document for grading criteria.

2 Content requirements of the exposé

The purpose of an exposé is to briefly present the dissertation topic, including the research design, the time schedule, and the reasons for the choice of supervisor. The exposé should have a length of 3,000-4,000 words and contain the following elements:

- Author, title, names of supervisors
- Abstract in English
- Political science problem statement
- Guiding question(s)
- Brief overview of the state of research
- Theoretical and methodological framework
- Hypotheses
- Relevant literature
- Time schedule and work plan
- Information on planned funding (if relevant)

In addition to the supervisors, the lecturers in the compulsory module "Dissertation Seminar" (§ 6, Section 1 (1)) and in the elective modules "Scientific Writing I and II" (§ 6, Section 2(3) and 2(4)) also support the students in the preparation of the exposé.

3 Content requirements of the dissertation

3.1 Monograph

If the dissertation is written in the form of a monograph, it should have a length of 70,000-90,000 words, and contain the following elements:

- Cover sheet ([see recommendation](#))
- Table of contents

- Abstract
- Introduction (incl. political science problem statement, guiding question(s), detailed discussion of the current state of research, theoretical and methodological framework, hypotheses or expected results, approach, etc.)
- Main part (with detailed argumentation)
- Conclusion (with summary of results and topics for further research)
- Bibliography (including all sources used and therefore also cited)
- [Signed declaration of own work](#)

3.2 Cumulative dissertation

A cumulative dissertation represents a collection of individual scientific works, which in their entirety can be evaluated as an achievement equivalent to a monograph, and which address a common topic, which, however, has to be analysed from different approaches and without major redundancies.

Candidates who submit several scientific works instead of one scientific monograph must submit at least three (3) individual papers that, taken as a whole, meet the requirements for a doctoral degree. Of these, at least two (2) individual papers must be single authored. In the case of co-authorship with the dissertation supervisors, the candidate shall be the first author.

At least one (1) of the single-authored papers must have been published or accepted for publication in an SSCI or AHCI indexed scientific journal (definite acceptance from the journal editor when submitting the dissertation). The other papers submitted for the dissertation must be evaluated by the reviewers to be of such quality and meet the formal criteria of scientific journals that there is nothing to prevent their publication in a journal indexed in SSCI or AHCI.

At the conclusion of a cumulative dissertation, the candidate must submit a framework text. The framework (an introduction and a conclusion) consists of a substantive classification encompassing the submitted writings, in which the underlying epistemological interest of the dissertation, the central research questions, individual questions and, if applicable, hypotheses derived from them are presented and justified against the background of the state of the art in research and literature. The central

results of the dissertation project should be presented in an intersubjectively comprehensible way – in the case of empirical work to be supported by presenting the primary data sets (when research ethics does not prevent this) and related code books – and the results of the research should be balanced in the light of the introductory questions and the presented writings. The framework text should comprise 10,000 to 20,000 words without appendices.

3.3 Submission

For information on writing your dissertation in gender-equitable language, please refer to the information and links provided by the [Office for Equality and Gender Studies](#) on this topic.

The completed dissertation must be submitted in quadruplicate, in bound and electronic form (as a PDF on a CD or a USB stick) to the Examinations Office (Universitätsstraße 15, SoWi). All details on submitting the dissertation can be found in the following [information sheet](#).

4 Funding for the dissertation

The possibility exists to apply for both university-internal (e.g., a doctoral scholarship) and external (e.g., the Academy of Sciences, Tyrolean Science Fund) funding for the pursuit of a PhD as well as for travel expenses in the course of the dissertation. To this end, it is advisable to contact the research coordination at the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology and to obtain comprehensive information about the individual research funding opportunities in a timely manner (forschung-sopo@uibk.ac.at).

5 Evaluation criteria

The PhD will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Introduction, statement of the scientific interest and the course of the investigation:
Does the author outline and defend the overall academic interest? Does the author present the course of the investigation in a comprehensive way?

- Summary of the state of the literature: Does the author present the state of the art exhaustively? Is the research question clear and does the author make the topic interesting for the reader? Does the author present a clear outline and explain the logic of the outline?
- Does the dissertation mark a reasonable advancement of the state of the art in the field concerned?
- Justification of the research question against the background of the selected theoretical concept: Is the theoretical approach of the dissertation clear? Does the author discuss the most important texts within the selected theoretical approach(es)? Does the author explain why the approach(es) used in the dissertation is/are more fruitful than other theoretical approaches? Does the author make clear what their contribution is to the development of social scientific theory?
- If applicable, does the author develop guiding working hypotheses based on the selected theoretical concept(s)?
- Method: Does the author fully explain the dissertation's methodology? Does the author make a convincing argument for the choice of methodology? Does the author discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methodology and its advantages over alternative methodologies? Does the author refer to the most important texts for applying the type of methodology used in the dissertation? Does the author make clear how they operationalize the key terms/topoi/concepts?
- Empirical Chapters/Papers: Does the author discuss the empirical results in view of the guiding hypotheses? Does the author show to what extent the empirical analysis supports or contradicts the theoretical framework? Is it clear how the selected theory/ies might need to be modified in light of the empirical data? Does the author show that they applied the methodology in a fruitful manner?
- Case Studies: Provided the dissertation contains case studies or a case selection for empirical analysis: Is the case selection justified in terms of its representativeness?
- Conclusion: Does the author explain how the chapters relate to each other? Does the author show how the dissertation contributes to the scientific discourse? Does the author highlight the implications of their findings?

- Writing Style: is the dissertation well-written in terms of grammar, spelling and writing style? Is the text easy to follow even for an academic who is not an expert in the field? Does it contain proper references and citations?
- Plagiarism check: In all cases, PhD students must provide a negative plagiarism scan.