

Writing a Thesis Plan

Master's Thesis Seminar 1

in English

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Task 2

Think of a topic or subject you are interested in and prepare to present *the core idea in one or two sentences (draft statement)*:

Compose a simple sentence or two in which you state your area of curiosity and explain why the topic is significant, relevant, and worthy of study.

Task 2...

Think of the following questions in connection to own work/interests when preparing your statement (esp. if the MA Film or practice aspect of your thesis is unclear):

- What is the subject? Why did you choose this topic?
- What do you want to investigate in this project?
 1. What is your own interest in it?
 2. and more broadly, how is it related to your own field of practice/study?
- Is there a more specific aspect that interests you in this topic?

Task 2

Remember that this is a practice assignment and the topic you now choose does not have to be your final topic.

Rather you can use the topic to rehearse how to plan for your thesis and the research you will conduct, if it turns out that you wish to change your topic later on.

Aalto ARTS guidelines

- available at into: [Completing your master's thesis](#)
-> **masters thesis guide**
- “designed to serve as a mental organisation tool helping both the student and the thesis advisor(s) in grasping the thesis process”
- The plan is written either independently and/or in the thesis seminar of the programme.
- In our majors: first draft during the seminar (intensive week assignment) + finalising the plan together with the supervisor

Thesis plan content according to Aalto guidelines

- topic and tentative title of thesis
- extent of thesis
- goals set for the research of the thesis
- description of the artistic component if the thesis is an artistic work
- definition of the thesis scope
- methodological choices (a tentative plan on the ways of seeking solutions to the research questions)
- language, planned timetable, financing plan if relevant

Defining your project

Things to consider BEFORE starting

Why have I decided to do some research?

- You have to do the research because ... you have to.
- You have found a topic that fascinates you and you really want to research that.

How to stay motivated and remain interested in my research?

What to do if I lose the motivation?

- Find a working method that suits you
- Ask for advice, talk to others
- Try different ways to work (learn to know yourself!)

Defining your project

Things to consider WHEN starting

- Take enough time to think about the issues involved, search and read something that concerns your topic, get to know some main aspects related to it.

Ask and answer these following questions:

WHAT?

- *What is your research about?*

WHY?

- *Why do you want to do the research? What is its purpose?*

Defining your project

WHO?

- *Who will be your participants?*

WHERE?

- *Where are you going to conduct your research?*
- *E.g. If you're going to conduct interviews or focus groups, where will you hold them?*

WHEN?

- *When are you going to do your research?*
- *Is the project possible within your own / your participants time scale?*

Summarize:

After answering to these five questions, define your project:

- Sum up in one paragraph what you are going to do/ask /research.
- What is your topic/main question?
- Why does it matter?
- What is the context?
- How do you plan to approach the analysis?

Get feedback:

- Ask other people to read and comment your project idea.
- Use peer support: Do others understand what you want to do? = Let them ask questions, try to answer → answering questions is often the easiest way to make an understandable research plan.



8 steps to a thesis plan

By Liisa Ikonen, transl. Tua Helve

Step 1: Facts

Check these and make sure you have them correctly:

- Name of the thesis
- Name of the student
- Thesis supervisor/advisor(s)
- Program and major (don't guess, check)
- Extent of the thesis 30 ECTS

Step 2: Approach the thesis plan as an entity

- Instead of listing main points or collecting (disconnected) phrases related to your thesis topic, aim at writing a 'full story'.
- accurate word choices and balanced content in each sentence and section
- bridging the introduced aspects (how to continue from one thing to the next one)
- focus on the flow of the text
- Thesis plan shouldn't be a set of answers to questions posed by the school but a complete stand-alone text that anticipates both the style and the content of the thesis-to-come.

Step 3: Introduce and justify your topic

- While introducing the topic of your thesis, connect it to your own motivation. Why does this topic interest you? Why did you choose it?
- Justify the significance of the topic, both to yourself and to your field.
- Open up the research and other goals of your research. These can include e.g. producing new/expanding previous knowledge, articulating a marginal phenomenon, contributing to a specific line of previous research... Alternatively, this information can be placed in the end of your thesis plan.

Step 4: Introduce the components of your thesis

- Explain the reader which are the parts or elements of your thesis. What is their order and how do they interrelate? Why these? What are their characteristics and qualities? Share your vision of how you weigh these parts in the thesis.
- If you have an artistic component in your thesis, contextualize it within the broader field of arts.

Step 5: Establish the frame of your work

- Let the reader know which part of the chosen topic you intend to investigate and from which viewpoint. How do you frame your research?
- Introduce your research questions or, if these are not yet clear, the more general areas of interest that you plan to approach.
- If your research is based on any specific data (research materials), introduce this material.

Step 6: Introduce your methods

- Introduce the methods that will support you to answer your research questions. Usually, one should have a method (or several) for data collection and another method (or several) for analyzing this data.
- Alternatively/additionally, introduce the starting point, aims, and other relevant aspects that guide your artistic part.

Step 7: Reveal the rest of the facts

- At the end of your thesis plan, summarize rest of the facts for your research:
 - language
 - timetable
 - possible funding
- Budgeting/plan for funding -> can also be added as an appendix.

Step 8: Start compiling references

References/bibliography

- Find sources discussing your topic, methodology, relevant theory etc.
- Start collecting (preliminary) bibliography that includes sources relevant for your research. Types and number of sources vary from one research to another. Always aim at reliability.
- Be punctual in documenting the sources: full details are needed!

You will write a preliminary research plan as a pre-assignment for the intensive week based on:

- the info and tips given in this lecture (things to consider + 8 steps) + all the tasks you have been working on this autumn
- the thesis plan instructions given in the MA thesis guide

The exact assignment details will be given in our next meeting on January 30th.

Task 3

for next time 29.1.2024

Five sentences about my thesis

Think about the thesis topic that interests you and answer the questions. Reply to each question with at least one sentence.

Send your answers to these questions to susanna.suurla@aalto.fi by 9 AM on Monday 29.1.2024

- What is my topic/research question?
- Why do I want to study this topic or why is it worth studying?
- What kind of source material am I going to use here? Do I have experience-based knowledge about the topic? Has the topic come up in my own artistic work?
- What answers I will get to my question?
- What else do I want to say on the subject?