

How to write a pre-proposal for your Excellence Scholarship application

The pre-proposal for your Master's thesis is an important part of your application for an Excellence Scholarship, along with your grades, your motivation letter and the letters of recommendation. Through your pre-proposal, the selection committee assesses your ability to think through a scientific topic independently and to design a research project.

The Master's thesis is written in the final semester of a Master's degree programme, building on the coursework of the previous semesters. The final topic of your thesis will be defined during your Master's studies in collaboration with your tutor. The pre-proposal can be considered as an outline of a possible Master's thesis that will serve as an input for the process leading towards the topic of your Master thesis. Please describe your current idea for your thesis in max. 500 words on a separate sheet.

The keywords given below provide some hints on how to organize your pre-proposal. You may deviate from this structure if the logical development of your project requires this. Divide your text into different paragraphs to give it a clear structure. Feel free to use subheadings to make it more reader-friendly.

Title

Define a short, significant title which summarizes the contents of your pre-proposal.

Introduction

Give a short introduction to the subject. Establish a context for your research and explain why it is important.

Objectives and goals

State the main research question(s) you want to address.

Methods of investigation / implementation

Explain the methods and techniques which you plan to use for your project. These methods will vary a lot from one subject to another: e.g. with respect to field work, lab experiments, modeling techniques, interdisciplinary collaboration, data acquisition, infrastructure needed, software needed, etc.

Background / prior work

List the main relevant work by others and/or results you have achieved in your previous work investigations.

Timetable and milestones

Consider that the Master's thesis has to be completed within a given time (4-6 months, depending on the Master's programme – check the duration in the Master's programme you are applying for in the corresponding programme regulations). Thus, the results of your project must be achievable in the given time. Think about the timetable of your project and the milestones you want to achieve.

References

List papers and publications you have cited in your pre-proposal or which you have collected for further reading. Use established scientific citation practice.

Please note:

The pre-proposal for the Master's thesis must be developed independently by yourself. If you refer to work already done at ETH Zurich or elsewhere, this must be properly referenced. All forms of plagiarism are unacceptable and will disqualify your scholarship application.

As part of the evaluation of your application, you may be interviewed by one of our professors or scientists; in this interview, your project proposal may also be discussed.