

Instructions for writing a concept paper for Bachelor's and Master's theses at the teaching area of Computational Social Sciences

What is the purpose of a concept paper?

The preparation of a concept paper serves three purposes:

- the early submission of the concept paper should ensure that you select a thesis topic in good time and start working on your thesis at an early stage.
- the concept paper serves to plan your thesis, in particular the development of a research question. You should set out your ideas clearly and rigorously in writing for the first time. The concept paper also makes it easier to work on your thesis in a targeted manner later on.
- the concept paper enables the supervisor to assess the clarity of the research question and the feasibility of the planned work and to advise you accordingly.

What does a concept paper contain?

The concept paper has the following structure:

Title Page

- Name, LMU e-mail address, date, subject of study, semester
- Preliminary thesis title

Chapter 1: Research question (approx. ¼ - ½ pages)

- ✓ Specification and explanation of the research question and the aim of the work to narrow down the topic (the “what” question): Which question / problem does the work want to shed light on?
- ✓ Explanation of the motivation (the “why” question): Why is this question relevant in the context of computational social sciences (given the current state of research)? What is its social relevance?

Chapter 2: Empirical approach (approx. 1 - 1 ½ pages)

- ✓ For bachelor and master theses at the teaching area of Computational Social Sciences, both descriptive as well as causal questions can be addressed. Furthermore, hypotheses to be tested as well as explorative research questions can be investigated empirically. Finally, theses can also include replications of past studies. In this section, briefly explain which empirical approach you intend to use.

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- ✓ Depending on your empirical approach, specify one to a maximum of four hypotheses to be empirically tested or research questions to be investigated. The hypotheses or research questions should be derived from theories with a reference to existing literature. For the concept paper, an outline of the main arguments is sufficient.

Chapter 3: Research design (approx. 1 - 1 ½ pages)

- Name the data (sources) that you would like to use to empirically investigate the research question. Only suggest data that you ideally already know or that you think you will be able to obtain and work with independently.
- Briefly explain how you will measure the key theoretical constructs (independent X and dependent Y variables) and how the selected data make this possible.
- Explain briefly against the background of the data structures (e.g., scale level, textual or numerical data) which analysis methods you would like to use.

Chapter 4: Bibliography

Only list the literature that you cite in the concept paper. Make sure to use consistent citation norm throughout all references (e.g., APA).

Revision of the concept paper

If necessary, a revision of the concept paper will be suggested during the first interview. Registration of the thesis is only possible based on an accepted concept paper.