

Handout for an exposé

(Application for acceptance at the Center for Doctoral Studies in Sustainability Sciences)

To be accepted at the Doctoral Center, an application for acceptance as a doctoral student must be submitted. This includes, among other things, an exposé. This handout provides information on how to prepare the exposé.

The exposé should plausibly describe the planned doctoral project, in particular show its scientific relevance and feasibility (scope max. 10 exclusive bibliography, font 12 pt, 1.5 line spacing). In addition to the working title of the project, an exposé contains statements on:

- Research context: Background, relevance and description of the problem with the resulting interest in knowledge. This leads to a
- Research question: This is the **core question**. It outlines (on the basis of the current state of considerations) what should be the subject of the work; i.e. to which question the thesis **is supposed to provide** an answer.¹ At the same time, this defines what should not be the subject of the work.
- In addition, the state of research must be presented insofar as it is relevant to the core question.
- The answer to the core question is the **scientific contribution of the work**. This can also consist of pointing out the need for further research (as concretely as possible).
- The project is to be located in the sustainability sciences². The exposé is intended to show whether, where and to what extent conflicting goals can be overcome in the subject of the thesis³ and what significance this has for the design and methodology of the thesis.
- Against this background, you explain the chosen research methodology and justify your approach.
- Work, time and resource planning of implementation and access to the resources necessary for the work; a scope of approx. 3 years of full-time equivalent can be seen as the basis;
- research experience and own preliminary work;
- Selected Literature.

In short: The exposé explains why the thesis wants to investigate what in which steps; and what the "contribution to the further development of scientific knowledge" should consist of (§ 6 para. 1 sentence 1 in conjunction with § 5 para. 1 letter e of the Doctoral Degree Regulations).

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- ¹ With the core question, you determine the standard that is to be applied to the work.
 - ² This refers to the scientific examination of the goals of "sustainable development" in various disciplines, including those formulated by the United Nations in the "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs). *[If you are already studying at the h_da, you can also [in Moodle on a glossary](#) .]*
 - ³ It is advisable to go through the following questions:
 - Which trade-offs are relevant in the subject of the thesis (e.g. with recourse to the SDGs of the UN)?
 - What interests or social concerns are behind the conflicting goals?
 - What mechanisms apply in Germany or in Europe (or in the region in which the subject of the thesis is located) to deal with these conflicting goals?
 - What relevance does this have for your investigation concept?
 - To what extent are approaches from other disciplines to be taken into account?