A research proposal is not an essay but a description for a research project which has not yet been begun. Instead of advancing a certain thesis, it should rather: identify a research gap, raise a research question and advance reasons why an answer to this question is not only interesting but also how it supplements or improves the current research in its field. The most important feature of a research proposal is an original idea.

The aim of the research proposal in the MEAS application is to demonstrate your academic skills, interest and prospective focus within the master program. The proposal has to cover a topic within the regional and disciplinary range of the program.

A) Opening

Title
The title should capture the most important features of a research proposal; it should be straightforward and easy to understand.

Abstract
The abstract should outline the essence of the whole research proposal in short and simple sentences. It should not be longer than 300 words.

Introduction
The introduction should not be longer than two paragraphs and explain i) the research topic in question, ii) justify its importance, and iii) account for its relevance in contrast to current research.
B) Main Part

State of research
This section should mention the most important works on the topic of the research proposal and state the most important results in the field. Moreover, it should identify the research gap this project intends to fill.

Research question/hypothesis
This is the heart of the research proposal. This section should explain the research question and/or the hypotheses put forth with the research proposal. The main aim of this section is to explain its significance and novelty. The literature surveyed in the “state of research” is a major point of reference for this section, while the research gap serves as a starting point. How does your project contribute to the previous knowledge in the field? How does it extend the understanding of particular questions or topics? Be precise when formulating the research question and/or hypotheses. You may also state sub-questions and/or sub-hypotheses. Explain what exactly you want to examine and why it is important. It is not enough to say something is interesting, let the reader (and the academic community) know why they should pay attention to your research.

Method
This section will sketch the method(s) employed in the research and its theoretical framework. How will you answer your research question and/or proof your hypotheses? Which sources will you use and how will you analyze them? For example: Will you do quantitative or qualitative interviews with exactly whom and why? You have to explain why your methods can answer your research question and/or proof the hypotheses. This part of the research proposal should also show that your research project is feasible.

C) Bibliography

D) Optional Sections

Ethical considerations (for instance in research concerned with interviewees)

Conclusion

Writing Style

Use a clear, simple and objective language. The proposal has to be written in English, make sure there are no writing mistakes.

Writing a research proposal is also about structuring your arguments in a meaningful way. The text leads the reader through the story, from argument A to B to C, using logical connectives such as „therefore“, „thus“ etc. properly. Read to your text again to make sure that every chapter, every paragraph is a package of coherent information explaining one specific aspect to the reader. All sections of the research proposal should be marked by headings.

For question on formatting, references and writing style you can also have a look on our “Guidelines for Writing Seminar Papers & Master Theses”.