



## Guidelines for Writing a Concept Paper for Bachelor and Master Theses

### What is the Purpose of a Concept Paper?

1. To ensure early engagement with your final thesis and selection of a feasible topic.
2. To plan your thesis, particularly to develop a research question and clearly articulate your ideas for the first time. This facilitates focused work on the thesis later.
3. To allow your supervisor to assess the relevance and clarity of your research question and the feasibility of your planned work as well as to provide guidance throughout the process.

### What Does a Concept Paper Contain?

Write a coherent text without bullet points. The structure of the paper includes a title page, and separate chapters on the research question, empirical approach, research design as well as a bibliography.

#### *Title Page*

- ✓ Includes your name, university email address, date, course of study, and semester.
- ✓ Provisional working title

#### *Chapter 1: Research Question (about 0,25 – 1,5 pages)*

- ✓ Specify and explain the research question and the goal of your thesis to narrow down the topic (the “what” question): What question / problem does the work want to shed light on?
- ✓ Explain the motivation for your question: Why is this question interesting in the context of social inequality and social structures (against the background of the existing state of research)? What is its social relevance?

#### *Chapter 2: Empirical Approach (about 1 – 1,5 pages)*

- ✓ Specify one to a maximum of five empirically testable hypotheses, identifying the independent variable X and dependent variable Y for each. Include the moderating variable for "interaction effect" hypotheses and the mediating variable for "mechanism" hypotheses.
- ✓ Hypotheses should be derived from theories and existing literature. For the concept paper, a brief naming of the main arguments is sufficient.
- ✓ Specify only hypotheses that you can empirically test with the selected dataset and familiar multivariate analysis methods.

#### *Chapter 3: Research Design (about 1 page)*

- ✓ Name the data sources you plan to use for empirical investigation. Only suggest data that you are already familiar with or know that you will be able to obtain and work with independently. Keep in mind that acquiring some datasets may require a certain lead time and need to be requested (depending on the dataset). Your supervisor can assist you with the application process.

- ✓ Explain how you intend to measure the central theoretical constructs (independent X- and dependent Y-variables) and how the selected data will enable this.
- ✓ Briefly explain the analysis methods you intend to use, considering the data structures (e.g., scale level, textual or numerical data).

#### *Chapter 4: References*

List the literature you cite in the concept paper.

#### **Revision of the Concept Paper**

Revisions may be suggested during the first meeting. Registration of the final thesis is possible only based on an accepted concept paper.