

Guidelines for research proposals in applications for Ph.D. studentships in musicology, Uppsala University

The research proposal is considered an important element in the application for Ph.D. studentships. It should consist of an overview of the proposed research topic, an assessment of the expected challenges, and a description of how the applicant intends to pursue the project.

The research proposal shall be no longer than 18 000 characters and contain the following:

- Title of project
- Name of applicant

Moreover, you shall attempt to answer the following questions:

- What is the main aims and objectives of the research project?

This could be summed up in a paragraph or two, stating your overall intentions as regards what you hope to find (see hypotheses and theories below), and argue the relevance for the topic within the scholarly area in question, but also its extended relevance within musicology as a whole.

- What is the main research questions of your research project?

This can in its most brief form be phrased as a set of questions, which – if asked to the relevant material, and with theoretical considerations (see below) – could further the state of knowledge in the scholarly field in question. Outline why you think these questions can open new vistas to your topic.

- Is there a clear hypothesis, or a number of hypotheses?

If you are already operating with a hypothesis (or several hypotheses), please state them clearly in the research plan, and link them to your research questions (see above) and/or to relevant material (see below). This does not apply to all projects in equal measure, but scrutinize your own understanding of your area of study and try to see if hypotheses may offer the directions needed for successfully answer your research questions. They can (and will probably) have to be reevaluated throughout, as the project progresses.

- What material will the project drawn upon?

This concerns what extant sources, repertoires, artefacts and, in some instances data sets (statistics, surveys etc.) that you will draw on for your reasoning, analysis and conclusions. Be as specific as possible, in order to show that there is a possibility to answer your main research questions (see above). If you plan to generate material ethnographically (e.g. by field studies, questionnaires, interviews etc.), you should describe how you intend to do this under methods (see below).

- How does your research project fit in the larger context of previous knowledge in the field?

This is a place to outline your understanding of the scholarly literature in the context of which your project will be situated. Give a brief outline of the field to demonstrate understanding and familiarity with previous research, and possible lacunae and assumptions that you think ought to be assessed or reassessed.

- What are the theoretical foundations for your research project?

All interpretations, conclusions, and deductions rely on a theoretical background, that is the viewpoint from which you overlook the field. This can be the case either implicitly (when you take some factors or axioms for granted) or explicitly (when you describe more in detail how you think that something can be known, to what degree it can be known, and how it could be seen differently depending on your viewpoint, in relation to those of others). Try to describe how you think that a specific theoretical viewpoint can shed light on what you intend to study. You may wish to link this to theoretical foundation in other studies, drawing from previous literature.

- How will you go about to ask, and answer your research questions (see above)?

The methods you use, i.e. how you practically go about working with previous literature, primary material (the abstract or concrete objects studied) and your set of assumptions and research questions, affect how you will be able to arrive at new conclusions and deeper understanding of your topic. Try to be as specific as possible, e.g. 'I will then study the writings/music of XXX with the aim of excerpting all notions of XXX', or 'in identifying relevant issues in this large field, I will choose a number of case studies according to the following criteria....', or similar precise descriptions of your approaches.