

Criteria for MFS-applications within the Humanities and Social sciences

Criteria set October 2, 2024, evaluation group for HUMSAM

1. Question/purpose

Central to a good application is that you have formulated a question that you can answer. The question must be *clear, researchable* and *linked to research*. By clear we mean that it should be "simple" in the sense of easy to understand. Avoid complicated wording. Please start your application with your question, so that those who will read and assess your application will understand what it is you want to do straight away. That it must be researchable means that it needs to be answerable by conducting research in the country you want to go to. It also means that your question needs to be answerable through a study that includes approximately eight weeks. Linked to previous research, finally means that you should have done some reading (articles or books) about the topic or problem you want to research. This can of course be literature you have already read in a course at university.

2. Implementation of the project

Under this heading, you must report which methods you will use and why these are suitable for reaching answers to your research question. Consequently, it is not enough to say that you are going to do interviews, but you need to say which categories of people you are going to interview, what kind of questions you envision they will answer and why. If you are conducting a quantitative study, you should make your sampling clear, and why you think it is an appropriate sample, and if you intend to make your own qualitative observations, you must show where, how and why this should be done. You also need to show that the material you intend to collect is of a reasonable size not only for your research question but also for the time you have to carry out your work. Whatever you do, you should refer to methodological literature that supports your data collection choices. To further strengthen your application, you can report the names of key persons and organizations in the field you will work with. You must, of course, also justify why these particular people or organizations fit your study. Should your work be potentially dangerous for yourself, you need to report your action plan here, and if it poses a danger to others, you need to discuss this under an ethics heading.

3. Background, local context and theoretical grounding

The application must include a research overview and a theoretical framework. This means that you present previous research results of relevance to the thesis' purpose, that you show that you are familiar with literature relating to the region, and that you account for the theoretical perspectives and concepts that serves as a starting point for the thesis. The structure of these parts of the application may differ somewhat across different disciplines. But when compiling previous research, it is important that you describe how your study can contribute, especially in terms of generating new knowledge about the overall research problem (again, how your research question is linked to previous research). In your research overview you also need to make a clear connection to your specific case, especially with regard to local context. This involves a contextual description based on the factors that are relevant to your study, for example political climate, economic development, local traditions, etc. While it is difficult to quantify how much research you are expected to engage with in your application, but as a minimum you should use and refer to 4 to 5 scientific articles.

4. Ethical considerations

When doing fieldwork, it is crucial that your study does not harm other people or put anyone at risk in other ways (the "do no harm" principle). Reflect on and discuss the specific ethical problems and dilemmas that could arise during your study. How do you plan to deal with these problems so that your study does not harm or place other people at risk (including yourself)? Two concerns are of particular importance. First, ensure that research participants are not exposed to reprisals or social stigma due to meeting you, or being interviewed by you. Second, do not re-traumatize people who have previously been involved in traumatic events. Note that it is inappropriate to work with children under the age of 18. Other ethical issues that may be relevant for your study are for example informed consent, voluntary participation, privacy concerns, data usage and storage.