Research plan

When applying for the doctoral programme

- Research plan is a key document.
- It is usually appr. 5-8 pages (line spacing 1.5, 12 pt)
- Research plan also includes:
  1. Your schedule for the completion of the required studies (40 ECTS)
  2. Your schedule for doctoral thesis work
  3. Your plan for funding
  4. In case you plan to include an artistic component or product development project: work plan and schedule
- Write your research plan completely by yourself.
- Research plans are treated as confidential in the evaluation process.
- Here are some general instructions for writing a research plan. They are not compulsory – the research plan is free of form. You can find other instructions on the internet, see e.g. [Academy of Finland research plan instructions](#).

Guidelines for writing a doctoral thesis research plan

The title should capture the essential of the research in just a few words.

Doctoral thesis titles often include an explanatory subtitle in addition to the main part. For example Louna Hakkarainen’s doctoral thesis: Caring for technology. Evolving living lab collaboration

Abstract should crystallize your research research question and how you plan to approach it. It’s length can be only a couple of sentences, but it usually is half a page and shouldn’t be more than one page. Imagine that your are writing for someone who doesn’t know anything about your topic. Try to entice your reader. Abstract is a public document, other parts of the research plan are treated as confidential.

Also remember to mention your name and contact information at the start of the research plan.

Introduce the topic of your research, its general objectives, and the main research question. Specify what is your aim and what is your hypothesis. It is helpful to present subquestions related to your research topic.

Explain the research already done in your research topic. Refer to earlier research or artistic productions and literature and present their focus shortly. Also share your own earlier activities in the area (e.g. Master's thesis in the topic).

With a literature review you may show your knowledge of the topic. Through it you can present your theoretical background or your viewpoint to the topic. Also point out what has not been researched yet and why it should be researched.

The methods you plan to use specify how you will answer your question. Explain how you plan to collect your material (interviews, literature, archives, creating your art etc.) and how you plan to analyse it (data analysis). Outline your material carefully – you cannot include everything.

Present a plan for storing the data and who has the rights to use it. Also view the ethical questions related to acquiring and using your data.

If you want to include your own art productions or design projects to your doctoral thesis present a plan for artistic components. Explain when and how you plan to have your exhibition etc., how many will there be and what is their role in your research.

Present a schedule for the doctoral studies which includes the required studies (40 ECTS), time needed for the doctoral thesis and the possibly included artistic components or product development projects.

Full time studies take appr. 4 years and part time studies 4-8 years, plan your schedule accordingly. Be realistic.

Suitable timeframe is to present the plan by academic terms (autumn and spring).

It is not necessary to list all the studies in course level, often credits are enough. E.g. autumn 2022, studies in the research field, 10 ECTS. You may also explain why you need studies e.g. in some specific methodology in order to complete your thesis.

Mention if you plan to include studies from other Universities to your degree or if you plan to undergo a research period away from Finland. If you don’t plan to live in the Helsinki region for the whole duration of your studies, explain what kind of periods you plan to present at Aalto University and how you plan to complete the required courses.

Funding: The way you plan to fund your studies affects their length. Present a detailed plan for funding. Especially in the case of productions and exhibitions (artistic components of the Doctor of Art degree), present your budget.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autumn 1</th>
<th>Spring 1</th>
<th>Autumn 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>general studies and studies in the research field 15 ECTS</td>
<td>specific research methods 10 ECTS</td>
<td>studies in the research field 10 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funding applications</td>
<td>general studies 5 ECTS</td>
<td>transcribing interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>finetuning the research plan</td>
<td>interviews</td>
<td>first article / exhibition</td>
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Describe your expected results and their societal, artistic or other significance. You may also present possible practical applications of research results. Do you have a plan for publication and other dissemination of research or artistic results?

List of the most important research literature. Only sources used in the plan should be listed.
It's important to keep your research plan up to date after the start of your studies as you might need it for applying for grants etc. Each funding agencies can have its own instructions for the form and length of the research plan, check them out before applying for funding.

During your studies you may ask comments for your research plan from your advisor.