DAAD Online Scholarship Workshop 2020

How to Write a
Motivation Letter and Research Proposal

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Aim of Todays' Workshop

Overall aim:

Provide you with the necessary information how to write a competitive motivation letter and research proposal.

After the workshop you should know:

- What are the relevant criteria of the reviewer?
- What information do I need/ do I not need to include in my motivation letter or research proposal?
- How can I organize my proposal writing process in a efficient way?

… and most importantly you should use the chance to ask any question you have left.

Key Criteria of Reviewers
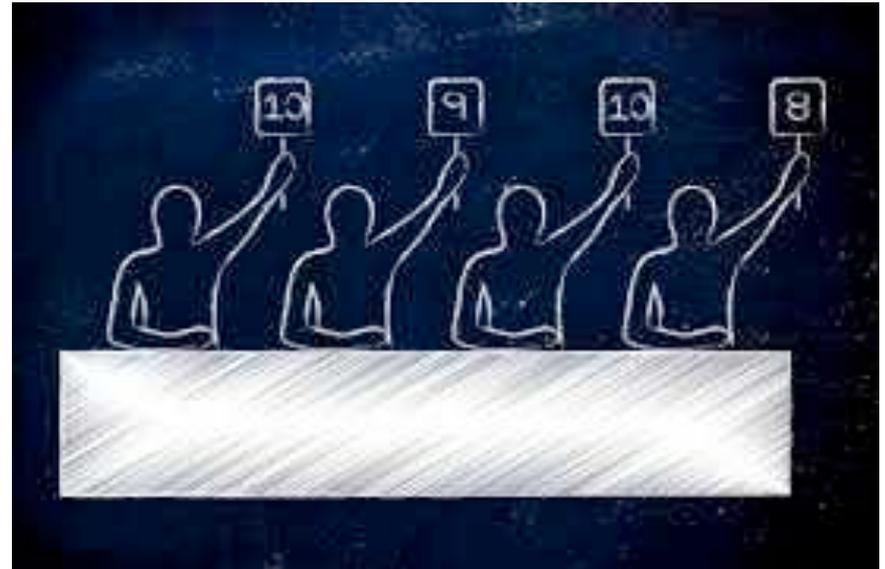
Quality of study/ research project
- Excellence and ambition
- Academic quality
- Preparation and feasibility

Suitability of the candidate
- Academic achievements
- Scientific qualification

Review situation

Language skills

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Most importantly,….

The purpose of including CVs in a study/ research proposal is to convince funders and reviewers that you have the **requisite education, skills,** and **experience to carry out your study/ project successfully**.

Should be provided in tabular not text form and include:
- ✓ Personal information (full name, current affiliation, contact details)
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Professional experience
- ✓ Skills
- ✓ Honors and awards
- ✓ Publications (only most important ones, provide link to full publication list, if applicable)

-> Be rather short and highlight the experiences that are relevant to your project

Example Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Name, Title

Personal Information

Affiliation

Contact

Scientific Education and Academic Degrees

Year	Ph.D. in ???, University, City, Country
Year	Master in ???, University, City, Country
Year	Bachelor in ???, University, City, Country

Professional Experience

Month/Year - present	Position title, University/ Company, City, Country
Month/Year – Month/Year	Position title, University/ Company, City, Country

Teaching and Supervision Experience

Teaching of bachelor and master courses in ???
Supervision of bachelor and master students
Co-supervision of doctoral students

Reviewer Service

Evaluation of proposals for ???
Peer-reviewed journals:

Languages & Other Skills

Awards and Funding

Year	Name of award
Project period	Name of project + funding agency + amount of money

Publications

Full publication list can be found at: -> website

DAAD Study Scholarship
Import Dates and Required Documents

Important dates 2020
Submission deadline: October 1, 2020
Interview: End of November 2020

Documents to be uploaded to the DAAD portal:
Online application form
- ✓ Full curriculum vitae in tabular form (max. 3 pages)
- ✓ Statement about academic and personal reasons for the planned study project in Germany - Letter of Motivation (max. 1-3 pages)

- ✓ Letter of admission to a study programme
- ✓ Recent reference letter from a university teacher (hand-signed, no digital or scanned signature)

- ✓ Degree certificate(s)
- ✓ Other documents (certificate of employment, internship,….)
- ✓ Certificate of knowledge of German/English language

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Letter of Motivation (DAAD Study Scholarship)

Most importantly,….

The purpose of your letter of motivation is **to convince the reviewer** that your are the **right person** to receive the scholarship. State **academic** and **personal reasons why** you would like to study in a specific Master's programme in Germany. Note, it is **not** a simple **written description of your CV.**

Structure of a Letter of Motivation

A letter of motivation is usually divided into **separate paragraphs** but **does not include headings**. These paragraphs should address:

1. Brief introduction of yourself and the programme you apply for
2. Body text
   - State your qualifications and skills that are linked to the Master's programme
   - How would this specific Master's programme support you in achieving your academic, personal goals
   - Explain why you would like to study in Germany
   …
3. Conclude with a short paragraph why you are the right candidate

Motivation Letter: Questions to Reflect on

✓ What is your professional goal? In which sector would you like to work after obtaining your Master's degree?

✓ Why do you apply for the chosen Master's programme? Which of the courses offered in this programme are particularly beneficial in pursuing your professional goals?

✓ Why do you think you are the right person for this programme?
- - List relevant knowledge and skills, professional experience
- - State experiences as a member of e.g., students association, NGO, political party, … (submit proof of your membership)
- - Highlight experiences, skills that make you stand out from the crowd
- - Emphasize relevant personality traits

✓ Why do you want to study in Germany? Reflect on differences between Republic of Korea and Germany and how you could profit from them and how Germany/ Germans could profit from Korea/ you

General Advice – Letter of Motivation

1. Read example letters of motivation to get ideas.
2. Reflect on the named questions and take notes.
3. Talk to other people about your letter of motivation.
4. Use your letter of motivation to tell a story in which the next logical step is the Master's programme you are applying for.
5. Start early to allow enough time to put your work aside and get some distance.
6. Proofread by reading it aloud and on a printed copy.
7. Let the letter of motivation be proofread by a native English/ German speaker.

DAAD PhD/ Postdoc Scholarship
Import Dates and Required Documents

Important dates 2020
Submission deadline: October 1, 2020
Interview: End of November 2020

Documents to be uploaded to the DAAD portal:
Online application form
- ✓ Full curriculum vitae in tabular form (max. 3 pages)
- ✓ List of publications (max. 10 pages), if applicable
- ✓ Research proposal and a description of previous research work (max. 10 pages)

- ✓ Confirmation of supervision (German university teacher)
- ✓ Letter of enrollment in doctoral programme, if applicable
- ✓ Time Schedule of planned research project

- ✓ Diploma or degree certificate(s)
- ✓ Other documents (certificate of employment, internship,….)
- ✓ Recent reference letter from university teacher (hand-signed, no digital or scanned signature)
- ✓ Certificate of knowledge of German/English language

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Research Proposal (DAAD PhD/Postdoc Scholarship)

Most importantly,….

The purpose of your research proposal is to convince the reviewers that
- you have an **excellent research question(s)/ objective(s)**
- you have the **requisite knowledge and skills**
- you are a **responsible and competent researcher**
- the German institution offers **necessary facilities**
- the **project is ambitious** but the **timeline realistic**

Structure of Proposal

1. Abstract

2. Theoretical Background and Description of Own Previous Work

3. Research Objectives/ Questions

4. Methods

5. Ethical Issues and Anticipated Problems

6. (Preliminary Outline of Thesis -> Humanities)

7. Project Timeline

8. Summary

9. References

Abstract – First Chance to Stick Out

Most importantly,...

Reviewers often have more than enough proposals to review. The abstract of your proposal is your **first chance to catch the interest of the reviewer** to your project.

- ✓ Describe the project in a concise way
      What is the problem?
      What are the objectives?
      How will it be done?
- ✓ Highlight the significance of your research
- ✓ Should stand on its own and should not be longer than 250 words

Avoid
- ✓ Review of past accomplishments
- ✓ Any information not covered in your proposal
- ✓ Graphs, images, citations

Theoretical Background

Most importantly,...

This paragraph contains the theoretical framework of your research project. It introduces and describes the theory that **explains why** the **research problem under study exists**. It reflects that you have an **overview of the current state of research**. It **leads directly to** your **research questions/ objectives**.

✓ Use the first few sentences to embed your topic in a more general setting (e.g., population aging, climate change, intercultural exchange...) to highlight its significance

✓ Describe and emphasize your own previous work

✓ Choose your literature/ references based on their relevance for your project

✓ Use also recent publications to reflect that you are aware about the newest developments in your research field

✓ Use graphic charts to support your argumentation (if applicable)

Research Objectives/ Research Questions

Most importantly,...

Your research objectives or questions should **ideally evolve when reading your theoretical background** paragraph. They are the **fundamental core** of your research project. They focus the study, determine the methodology, and **guides all stages of the project** as data collection, analysis, and reporting.

- ✓ They should be of interest to a broader range of people than only you
- ✓ You should
    - ✓ formulate them in a clear and focused way
    - ✓ list them in a logical order

What is a Good Research Question

Why did the chicken cross the road?

How many chicken crossed Broad Street in Durham, NC, on February 6, 2014?

What are some of the environmental factors that occurred in Durham, NC between January and February 2014 that would cause chicken to cross Broad Street?

-> This question can lead the author to identify significant factors that play a role, and allows him to argue to what degree specific factors are beneficial or detrimental.

Checklist for a Good Research Question

✓ Is the research question something I/others care about? Is it arguable?
✓ Is the research question a new spin on an old idea, or does it solve a problem?
✓ Is it too broad or too narrow?
✓ Is the research question researchable within the given time frame and location?

For Natural and Social Sciences…

Is your research question addressing one of the goals?

1. Define or measure a specific fact or gather facts about a specific phenomenon.
2. Match facts and theory.
3. Evaluate and compare two theories, models, or hypotheses.
4. Prove that a certain method is more effective than other methods.

Methods

Most importantly,…

The Methods section reflects **how you plan to tackle each of your research objectives/ questions.** It will provide your **work plan** and describe the **activities necessary for the completion of your project**. It should contain **sufficient information** to convince the reviewer **that the methodology is sound.**
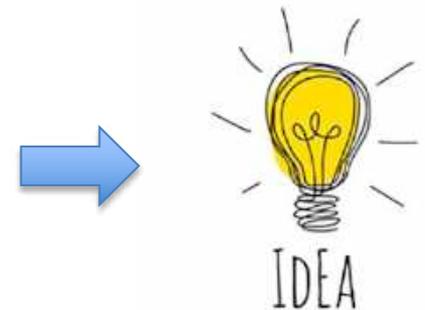
- ✓ Avoid overly complex explanations
- ✓ Justify why you choose the respective approach
- ✓ Emphasize that the institution/ university is capable of providing you with the necessary equipment
- ✓ Use graphics if applicable

Challenges and Ethical Issues

Most importantly,...

The purpose of this section is to reflect that you conduct your **research in line with ethical standards and research procedures**. In addition it should also outline which **problems** could **potentially arise** and how you would **tackle** them. All in all this section should show that you are a **responsible and competent researcher**.

Most importantly,...

The purpose of the project timeline is to **clearly communicate** the important **milestones and tasks**. It outlines the **major deliverables** of a project and puts them in a **chronological order**. It is an essential tool for **successful planning** of your research project.

✓ Use a graphical presentation of your project timeline.
✓ Should be uploaded as an extra file (-> DAAD).
✓ Include a short description of the timeline also in your research proposal.

Example Time Schedule

Year (Quarter)	2016	2017				2018				2019		
Tasks	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
Optimizing experimental & intervention protocols	■	■	■									
Pilot experiments		■	■	■								
Recruiting adolescent & young ADHD patients (Study 1a/2a)			■	■	■	■	■	■				
Study 1a MPH modulation–ADHD				■	■	■	■	■				
Study 2a tDCS modulation-ADHD						■	■	■	■	■		
Recruiting healthy adolescents/young/old adults (Study 1b/2b)		■	■	■		■	■	■				
Study 1b MPH modulation–Healthy individuals				■	■	■	■	■				
Study 2b tDCS modulation–Healthy individuls					■	■	■	■	■			
Study 3 tDCS-&-MPH modulation in healthy young adults							■	■	■	■	■	
Data analyses						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Manuscript preparations									■	■	■	■

Summary – Final Statement

Most importantly,...

The summary **reiterates the significance of your proposal**. This section should be **only one or two paragraphs long**, emphasizing:

Why the research objective/question is **worth investigating**.
Why your approach is **unique**.
Why you are the **right person** to execute the project
Why the institution/ university in Germany is the **right place** to go

How to Cite Correctly

Most importantly,...

Acknowledging or referencing the sources of the quotes, theories, ideas, etc. you've used in your work **avoids accusations of plagiarism**. Many different ways of giving references are used in academic publications. **All systems are acceptable**, provided they are **applied consistently**.

✓ References may be given in the main text, or in a footnote or endnote.
✓ Numbers, e.g. [1] or [1] OR
✓ Author's surname, date of publication, page number(s), e.g. (Wiggins 1997, p. 251)
✓ Quotations must be supplied with page references
✓ Referring to an author's text in general terms -> page numbers not required
✓ Full details of all the works to which you refer must be supplied in a list of references or bibliography at the end of your proposal

Reference managing:
RefWorks
EndNote

Open source/ free software:
Zotero
Mendeley
CiteULike

Tips How to Revise Your Proposal

Avoid redundancies as for example:

final outcome
new innovations
particular interest
summarize briefly
shorter/longer in length

already existing
completely eliminate
basic fundamentals
estimates roughly at
period of time
true facts

Use simpler vocabulary:

A large number of	=	many
Along the lines	=	like
As a general rule	=	generally
Exhibits the ability	=	can
On the occasion of	=	when
Is equipped with	=	contains
In the light of the fact	=	because

Tips How to Revise Your Proposal

Use shorter sentences

Developing effective vaccines to prevent infection and to treat chronic infection or cancer remains a formidable challenge primarily because we do not fully understand how memory T and B cells develop during immune responses. (34 words)

We do not fully understand how memory T and B cells develop during immune responses. This knowledge gap creates a formidable challenge to develop effective vaccines to prevent infection and treat chronic infection or cancer. (15+20 words)

General Advice

1. Talk to other people about your proposal, experts but also friends and family.
2. Start early to allow enough time to put your completed proposal aside and get some distance.
3. Put a decent amount of effort into formatting your proposal.
4. Ask an expert and a non-expert to read your proposal.
5. Proofread your proposal by reading aloud and on a printed copy.
6. Let the proposal be proofread by a native English/ German speaker.
7. Take part in a review process to experience the "other side".

DAAD PhD/ Postdoc Scholarship
Import Dates and Required Documents

Information about DAAD Scholarships   funding-guide.de

Study Scholarships: daad.de/go/en/stipa50026200

Research Grants: daad.de/go/en/stipa57135739

DAAD Scholarship Database

https://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/scholarships/

Questions?

Contact

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