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Economics and Social Development

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Latvian University of Life Sciences and Technologies

Faculty of Economics and Social Development

Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities



LBTU
Ekonomikas un sabiedrības
attīstības fakultāte

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING AND DEFENDING STUDY PROJECTS

Instructional aid

for students from the academic bachelor's programme **Sociology of
Organizations and Public Administration**

*Developed by Associate Professor of the Institute of
Social Sciences and Humanities Dr.sc.soc. **Ginta Kronberga***

Jelgava 2025

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1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Guidelines is to familiarise students from the academic bachelor's programme Sociology of Organizations and Public Administration (hereinafter SOPA) delivered by the Faculty of Economics and Social Development, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (hereinafter LBTU) with the requirements for writing, formatting and defending study projects.

According to the SOPA bachelor's programme plan Sociology, a study project is a compulsory course, which includes the theoretical and empirical parts, and is worth **6 CP**. The aim of the course is to practically apply the acquired theoretical knowledge and skills in conducting research, defining the research problem and selecting proper theoretical concepts and research methods.

A study project is an independent assignment **aimed** at integrating the knowledge, skills and competences acquired during the theoretical courses into empirical research on problems and issues urgent for society or organizations. By producing a study project, the student demonstrates the ability to conceptually use their theoretical knowledge in sociology and practical research skills by selecting, systematizing, analysing data, using proper sociological research methods, drawing conclusions and coming up with proposals based on the research conducted.

The study project must show the student's:

1) **knowledge** of various concepts and terms of sociology, as well as the fact that the student can navigate the classical and modern theories in sociology of organizations and public administration;

2) **skills** in independently selecting and identifying social research problems, as well as in developing a sociological research design and discussing the research results. The student can obtain, collect, process, analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative research data, as well as present the research results, formulating reasoned, logical conclusions and proposals;

3) **competence** in creatively and independently developing a theoretical and methodological framework for sociological research, conducting empirical research, as well as to critically analysing and synthesising theoretical insights and the research results. The student can integrate the acquired theoretical knowledge and conduct empirical research following the principles of sociology research methods and professional ethics.

A copy of the study project (in printed format) shall be stored at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities (hereinafter SOHU) after its defence. The study project must be stored for 5 years. The procedure for appeals is governed by the LBTU Regulation of Studies.

2. WRITING AND SUPERVISING A STUDY PROJECT

2.1. Choosing the topic of the study project

The student may choose a topic for the study project depending on their scientific and professional interests, level of theoretical preparedness and availability of information and data, which is agreed with the supervisor appointed by the Director of the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities.

The topic of the thesis must be aligned with the content of the bachelor's programme, focusing on the following research priorities:

- 1) administration of organizations and society;
- 2) important social processes in the regions of Latvia and rural areas or in other countries if a comparative study is performed;
- 3) current problems and processes in society or organizations abroad.

When choosing a topic, the student is advised to continue their research on the problem that their previous independent study papers have been written about: essays and reports, thereby expanding or deepening the examination of the problem.

In case the topic chosen by the student is not relevant or there could be difficulty in completing the study project, the topic may be recommended by the director of the institute, or the student may choose another topic by mutual agreement with the supervisor.

2.2. Submitting a topic for the study project

A copy of the study project application form shall be completed **electronically** (see Annex 1) after being agreed with the supervisor, then submitted for approval to the programme director and also uploaded on the Moodle platform course **Sociology Soci3032**, within the timeframe set by the programme director.

The study project supervisor and the topic are agreed with the SOHU Director, as well as approved at a SOHU Institute meeting. **Changing or modifying the topic** after being agreed with the supervisor and the programme director is allowed only until the study project is defended.

2.3. Functions of the supervisor

A study project may be supervised by a faculty member with a master's or doctoral degree. The responsibilities of the supervisor include advising students on issues related to conducting the research:

- drawing up a work plan,
- making the structure and research design of the study project,
- selecting literature and other sources of information,
- selecting proper research methods.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to examine individual parts and the entire study project and to indicate the necessary changes and additions; however, the supervisor must not directly influence the content, form and defence of the study project to an extent that it interferes with an unbiased assessment of the student's own knowledge, skills and contribution to the study project. If the student, together with the supervisor, believes that it is necessary to involve an advisor, it may be done. The name of the advisor is indicated on the title page of the study project, which is signed by the advisor.

If the supervisor believes that the research conducted by the student meets the requirements in content and form, the supervisor signs the study project, and it may be submitted to the SOHU Institute and for defence.

2.4. General structure of the study project

The study project has the following **structure**:

- title page;
- abstract in English;
- abstract in Latvian;
- table of contents;
- introduction;
- main part, divided into chapters and subchapters ;
- conclusions;
- proposals;
- list of references in alphabetical order;
- annexes.

The length of the study project is 30 to 35 pages up to the list of references.

2.4.1. Title page

The title page is the first page. It indicates the name of the higher education institution, the name and surname of the author, the topic, the name and surname of the supervisor, the scientific or academic degree and academic position, the place and year (see Annex 2).

In Latvia, Latin abbreviations of scientific and academic degrees are used, which are supplemented with an abbreviation of the particular science. The abbreviation Dr. is used to indicate a doctoral degree, Mg. – a master's *degree*, e.g. *Dr.sc.soc*, *Ph.D.*, *Dr.oec.*, *Dr.habil.oec.*, *Dr.paed.*, *Dr.agr.*, *Dr.sc.ing.*, *Mg.sc.soc.*, *Mg.paed.*, a bachelor's degree - *Bc.sc.soc*. The abbreviations must be used in italics.

Academic positions are abbreviated as follows:

- professor – Prof.;
- associate professor – assoc. Prof.;
- assistant professor – Assist. Prof.;
- lecturer – lect.

2.4.2. Abstract

An abstract is a brief summary (1 p.), which, in the form of an overview, indicates the aim and specific research tasks (objectives) of the study project, research questions and/or a hypothesis, research methods, as well as the main results and conclusions given concisely.

The abstract must include:

- author of the study project and the title;
- aim and specific research tasks (objectives);
- research questions and/or a hypothesis;
- research methods used;
- author's contribution to an assessment of and solution to the problem researched;
- most important research results and conclusions;
- total numbers of pages, tables, figures, literature sources used and annexes.

The abstract must be written in such a way that it could be used separately from the rest of the study project. In the abstract, it is customary to begin sentences as follows: The study project developed, examined, identified, concluded etc.

The study project **requires two abstracts**: in English and in Latvian.

The pages of the abstracts **are not numbered, but are counted** in the total number of pages.

2.4.3. Table of contents

The table of contents shall indicate all the components of the study project up to the annexes (see Annex 3). The headings of chapters and subchapters must be identical.

The title page and the contents page **are not numbered, but are included** in the total number of pages. Page numbering starts with the next page after the table of contents.

2.4.4. Introduction

The Introduction shall represent a business card of the study project, which should be of interest to the potential reader, providing an understanding of the content and the results. The Introduction shall briefly describe what other authors have examined in the field of the chosen topic and related problems and issues and the scope of their examinations. It shall also specify the period and scope of the author's research.

The Introduction shall specify:

- problematic situation and a justification for the relevance of the topic;
- research problem, as well as its scientific significance;
- research limitations (if necessary);
- brief insight into how widely the problem has been researched in general (in Latvia, in the world);
- research aim;
- specific research tasks (objectives) to be performed to achieve the aim;
- hypothesis put forward (if any) and/or research questions;
- research approach and methods for obtaining information;
- theoretical framework/background (a brief description of the most significant literature sources used).

The relevance of the research and the definition of a research problem is the starting position of any research study. The justification for the research problem and relevance of the research must be based on the latest practical and theoretical knowledge. *A research problem* is a situation that is identified as a complex theoretical or practical problem or task that needs to be examined. In sociological science, the problem is some kind of contradiction in a situation that can be examined and solved using an appropriate theory.

Based on the relevance of the topic, it is necessary to formulate the aim of the study project - a stated or predictable result of the research. A study project has one aim, and its wording should be as short and specific as possible, focused on the result.

Achieving the aim of the study project is revealed by the specific research tasks (objectives) to be performed. The tasks are certain methodological actions that are subordinate to the aim and reflect the course of its achievement. The tasks reflect the content of the study project (usually each task is dedicated to a chapter).

Research methods are tools for performing the specific research tasks. The study project should indicate the research approach (quantitative, qualitative or combined) and methods of obtaining information. The quantitative approach tests the hypothesis, the qualitative approach creates the hypothesis.

A hypothesis is a provable assumption about the existence of some causal association in a scientific theory (reveals the probability of the causes and associations of the phenomenon researched).

If the idea is not confirmed by a theory or previous research studies, a research question is raised instead of a hypothesis.

Fundamental scientific research, as well as research papers in international journals, original contributions by sociological theorists, industry encyclopaedias and explanatory dictionaries, scientific and educational literature serve as sources of information for the study project. National and foreign legal acts and government decisions, policy documents, statistical data, periodicals, unpublished materials from enterprises and organizations, researcher handbooks, press materials, previously conducted published research studies, unpublished studies and reports, Internet materials etc. may also be used. Special surveys conducted by the author (e.g. a survey) may also be sources of information.

2.4.5. Main part of the study project

The main part of the study project consists of two parts: the theoretical part with a referential analysis and the empirical part.

The main part is divided into chapters. It is useful to divide large chapters into subchapters. The number of chapters and subchapters is not restricted – it follows from the size and content of the study project. It is recommended to structure the study project into 3-4 chapters. A chapter may not have only one subchapter. To avoid fragmentation, a subchapter cannot be shorter than two pages.

The first chapters usually involve **a theoretical discussion**, thereby summarizing a comparison of theories put forward by various authors and facts, based on which an analysis of the problem is performed, giving a comprehensive insight into the theoretical and empirical studies of the problem to date and the latest published results of research and discussion. The theoretical part explains the concepts related to the topic and theoretical principles and gives insights to the problem researched.

If necessary, a separate chapter or subchapter could include an analysis of the legal aspects of the topic. It is also recommended to summarize international experience in solving the research problem, thereby emphasising the positive aspects or shortcomings. In the theoretical part, a critical review of literature and information sources is of great importance and, in case the author's opinion differs significantly from the opinions found in the literature, a convincing justification for his or her opinion should be provided, i.e. which conclusions by other authors (discussion participants) the author agrees with or does not agree with and why. The theoretical chapter may not be simply a compilation of the findings made by other authors, and it is also imperative to show the opinions of and assessments by the author him/herself. The theoretical chapter cannot take the form of an abstract or retell the literature sources read. All chapters must relate to each other, thus making logical transitions to each subsequent chapter/subchapter. At the beginning of the chapter, the author can insert a few paragraphs of a general text that explains the issues to be dealt with in the chapter and links the chapter to the rest of the text.

In the empirical part, the author must demonstrate the ability to independently conduct research and analyse empirical data. Its **methodological** part:

- justifies the research approach,
- justifies the choice of the research instrument and describes it,
- provides a sample justification,
- describes progress in fieldwork,
- gives a description of respondents;
- gets informed consent in the case of a qualitative study (see the *Agreement* in Annex 4);
- describes the principles of professional ethics.

the part of the data description and analysis, which shall be entitled as far as possible based on the content of subchapters. Statistical methods used in sociology, standard application programs and other scientific methodologies should be used for processing empirical materials. Particular attention should be paid to the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained. The data shall, if necessary, be presented in tables and graphs, necessarily performing an analytical assessment of the information contained therein and the trends and causal associations identified.

At the end of the empirical part, there is a section Conclusions, which highlights the research results based on the theoretical concept(s) covered by the study project and indicates pathways for further research.

2.4.6. Conclusions and proposals

Conclusions and proposals are the final part of the study project, which plays the most important role in the defence of the study project. Conclusions and proposals shall be written in the form of *theses and numbered with Arabic numerals*. In the conclusions, the author shall demonstrate that the research aim has been achieved, and the specific research tasks (objectives) have been performed.

Conclusions shall:

- be directly associated with the research aim and tasks;
- include the most important findings derived from the study project's content;
- be supported with the most important data and facts presented in the study project.

It is advised to draw 1-2 conclusions for each chapter, and more for the empirical study.

Proposals shall be:

- based on the data analyses, surveys and conclusions made in the study project;
- reasoned, specific, addressed to a particular entity and feasible in practice.

They must not contradict each other.

Proposals shall stress the recommendations aimed at solving the problem, avoiding drawbacks or using positive experience.

Proposals shall not be defined in an undetailed and general way, for example, "*to make amendments to the legislation*", "*create a favourable environment for the organization*": the author must specify – What to do? Who has to do? When to do? Why to do?.

2.4.7. List of references

A list of references represents a list of all books, research papers, texts and other information referenced (drawn up following the requirements of *the Guidelines for Writing and Defending Study Projects*) in the study project in the language in which this information is available (original language).

!! The minimum number of literature sources used in the study project is 15. **In a study project, it is mandatory to use the results and findings of fundamental scientific research**, as well as research papers published in international journals. References to Wikipedia and unpublished lecture materials are not allowed in the study project.

2.4.8. Annexes

Documents and data shall be put in annexes if they are too detailed and voluminous to be included in the main part of the study project.

Annexes must be drawn up following the requirements of the *Guidelines for Writing and Defending Study Projects*.

Annexes must necessarily contain a sample(s) of the primary data acquisition tool(s):

- sample(s) of the primary data acquisition tool(s);
- completed questionnaires, e.g. from each respondent group*;
- examples of interview transcripts* (all expert interviews + at least three interviews from the interview group(s);
- content analysis matrice(s*);
- spreadsheets used to perform calculations, but not included in the text;
- completed document forms, instructions, regulations etc.

*** All other transcripts and/or completed questionnaires must be in a separate data file or folder that the student takes with him/her for the defence. The defence committee and the reviewer have the right to request the presentation of materials related to the primary processing of data.**

3. SUBMITTING AND DEFENDING A STUDY PROJECT

3.1. Submitting a study project

When completed, the study project (one copy) is bound in a soft cover. There is the following procedure for submitting a study project:

- fully completed, approved by the signature of the supervisor, the study project must be submitted to the SOHU Institute before a meeting of the defence committee;
- according to the work plan developed by the programme director, the study project shall be electronically uploaded on the Moodle platform, course **Sociology, Soci3023**, the file shall be saved with a name consisting of the student's surname, name and matriculation number, for example: **Liepina_Ilze_SZ12345.pdf**. The name of the file shall use the letters of the Latin alphabet without diacritical marks.

A study project **may not be approved for** defence if:

- its length is inadequate;
- it has not been written following the requirements of the Guidelines for Writing and Defending Study Projects.

3.2. Defending a study project

By decision of the director of SOHU, a defence committee is approved for the defence of study projects. The defence committee shall consist of at least three faculty members. The study project is defended in an open meeting, in which supervisors and students are invited to participate.

For the defence of a study project in Sociology, the student prepares a presentation (7-8 minutes long), in which s/he justifies the relevance of the topic and existing problems, presents the aim and specific research tasks (objectives), as well as research questions and/or a hypothesis. During the presentation, the student mainly focuses on the theoretical framework and the results/findings, the problems identified, emphasizing the most significant conclusions and proposed solutions.

The presentation is illustrated with the research results (graphs, tables, and the most vivid interview quotes).

The presentation is followed by a discussion (committee questions). The author must give short, accurate and exhaustive answers to each question. The level of knowledge and skills acquired by the student during the learning process, as well as whether the study project has been produced independently, are revealed during the defence. A good presentation, good knowledge of the material, convincing answers to the questions of the members of the defence committee and demonstration of visual aids are proof that the student has completed the study project independently.

The defence committee shall evaluate the study project during a closed part of the meeting (10-point system). The chairperson of the defence committee (in case of a disagreement or tie) shall have two votes.

3.3. Evaluation criteria for a study project

The following criteria are considered to evaluate a study project:

1) Quality:

- relevance of the topic, the ability to accurately formulate the research problem;
- cross-compliance of elements of the research design, quality of formulations;
- structure of the study project and the theoretical framework;

- application of specific sociological theories in research;
- selection of scientific research methods, the quality of empirical research;
- performance of the specific research tasks (objectives) and the achievement of the research aim;
- emphasis on the main values of the study project (innovative research approaches, relevance, practical usefulness);
- accuracy of citations and references and compliance of the study project with the requirements of the Guidelines for Writing and Defending Study Projects;
- contribution to producing the study project (number of respondents, reach, level of analysis).

2) Presentation of the study project:

- evaluation of the content and design of the presentation;
- ability to publicly discuss and argue one's own point of view;

The student has not successfully defended the study project if earning a mark of less than 4 points (almost satisfactory) or if the LBTU Academic Integrity Regulation has been violated.

ANNEXES

Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies

Faculty of Economics and Social Development

Bachelor's programme

Sociology of Organizations and Public Administration

..... -year full-time/part-time distance learning student

.....
matriculation No.

APPLICATION

Jelgava

..... (date)

To SOPA programme director.....

Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities

Faculty of Economics and Social Development

Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies

Concerning the study project topic

Please allow me to write a study project on the topic.....

.....
.....
.....

Please appoint a supervisor for the study project:

.....

..... (student's signature)

Agreed with the study project supervisor.....

(supervisor's signature)

LATVIA UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGIES
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Vigilante Sunshine
(Name, Surname)

E-SERVICES IN A MUNICIPALITY:
THE CASE OF ZEMGALE PLANNING REGION

(title of the study project)

Study project

Author

(signature)

Vigilante Sunshine, Matr. No.....
(name, surname, matr. No.)

Supervisor

(signature)

Assist.Prof. Dr.sc.soc. Ieva Lapina
(position, degree, name, surname)

Jelgava 20__
(year)

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AGREEMENT
to participate in an interview for the study
"Title of the study"

Person responsible for the study:

Researcher: *Name Surname*, -year student from the Bachelor's programme Sociology of Organizations and Public Administration, Faculty of Economics and Social Development, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies

Contact information: e-mail, phone.

Supervisor/responsible faculty member: Name Surname

Contact information:.....

Aim of the study:

Research methods used:

Role of the participant: by confirming your participation in the study, you agree to participate *in an interview (focus group discussion)*, in which various issues related to [topic]..... will be discussed.

Audio recording: With your permission, the interview will be recorded. You will not be asked to give your name in the recording. The recording of the interview will only be used by the interviewer and/or other researchers for research purposes only. If you have any objections to the recording, you can ask to stop the recording at any time.

Confidentiality: your answers and comments in the interview are confidential and will not be disclosed, indicating your name or other characteristics. You will be assigned a code for the purpose of analysing the information. Anyone who assists in translating your answers from the audio recording into a computer will only know you by this code. Your answers and comments will only be available for further analysis by the researchers involved in the study.

Participation and the refusal to participate: your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop your participation by informing the researcher without further explanation of the reasons. During the interview, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not wish to answer, while continuing your participation in the study.

Results of the study: the information and opinions given by you and other participants will be summarised in the analytical part of the study, which will be disseminated to a wider audience in the form of an academic paper. The paper may use quotes from what you have said, but without revealing your name or other information about you.

You are welcome to ask questions or raise concerns about the content of the study or the methods used at any time.

Participant's name, surname

Signature

Date

Interviewer's name, surname

Signature

Date

One copy of the document remains for the study participant, and the other with the researcher

