

A flash exposé is a shorter version of a full exposé, in which the writer explains the plans for, and current status of, the intended paper. An exposé is usually required to apply for a supervision of a bachelor or master thesis, for admission in a course, or other kinds of scientific writing. Even if it is not required it can, however, aid in guiding the writing process and thus be of great use for yourself.

The flash exposé has two purposes:

- 1) Organizing your thoughts at an early stage of the writing process, and
 - 2) Kickstarting writing by focussing on the most important cornerstones of your research proposal without worrying too much about formalities from the very beginning.
- Therefore, it should be written down as fast as possible and by using your own words. It doesn't have to be perfect – in fact, the flash exposé can help identify missing connections and unresolved questions.

Start by setting yourself a time limit (e.g. 30 minutes), then try to answer each of the questions below in approximately 1-3 sentences (no bullet points, otherwise the connections and transitions will not become clear). Make a note of any uncertainties and questions that come up as you write.

1. Introducing the general topic and providing a brief outline

- What is the general topic of your paper?
- What is the (specific) problem or challenge you want to address?
- What motivates you (professionally or personally) to write this paper?

2. Research question, goal and further questions

- Which question would you like to find an answer to through your work on the paper? (This is just a first starting point and can be specified later in more detail)
- Is there a specific goal that you intend to pursue?
- Are there any other questions that arise in this context?

3. State of research and research gap

- What have other researchers already discovered about your research object?
- Which of these studies appear most striking/relevant for your paper and why?

4. Relevance of the topic

- Why is the topic important in a wider societal context, from a practical point of view, or for finding solutions to challenges that your area of study is trying to provide?

5. Theoretical background

- Which theories/key terms/concepts/studies etc. would you like to use to provide the theoretical framework for your writing assignment?

6. Material and methodology

- Which materials do you intend to use for your writing assignment? What are your primary and secondary sources (e.g. literature/data/manuals/legislation/media etc.)?
- What would you like to do with your material, and what would you like to use it for? (depending on your branch of study, some of these may or may not be applicable):
 - conducting empirical research: qualitative, quantitative or mixed-method triangulation (e.g. social studies)
 - conducting an experiment (e.g. natural sciences)
 - designing a prototype (e.g. technical branches)
 - comparing and contrasting sources from multiple perspectives (e.g. arts and social sciences)
 - creating a guideline or a workshop concept (e.g. educational studies)

7. Project management

- What is your intended time schedule? (Define milestones/subgoals)
- When does the assignment need to be finished?

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You can use your answers to the questions above to clarify the next steps in your research process and as a foundation for your full exposé.

Here are some suggestions for how to continue and to turn your flash exposé into a full exposé with more depth and clarity:

- add a preliminary bibliography,
- make a preliminary outline (ask yourself how you want to organize your material and your arguments: how will these components contribute to answering your research question?),
- expand on your previous answers, and
- try answering the following questions as well:
 - How does your paper intend to connect to other sources/theories etc. in the current state of research?
 - Which aspect of the topic has not yet been researched thoroughly researched in order to obtain a full understanding of (a certain aspect/theory etc.)?
 - How could your research proposal connect and contribute to the current state of research?
 - What specific aspect(s) of your topic do you want to examine? How can you further clarify your research question? (*See handout "Approaching a Research Question"*)
 - What is/are the answer/s you expect to find according to the current state of research?
 - How will you gain access to your field of research and/or research material, and how will you collect and store this information? (e.g. people to be interviewed; warranting data protection, confidentiality and consent)

Don't worry if you find any of the above questions challenging to answer at this point, or if new questions appear. One function of the exposé is to become aware of uncertainties in the research design, subject matter etc. Try to phrase your uncertainties and your own questions as clearly as possible. The exposé can be a great point to start communication with your professors.

Translation and compilation of this handout by Kai Fleischer, Juliane Homann, and Julian Maresch (studierendenWERK BERLIN).

Source:

Grieshammer, Ella, Franziska Liebetanz, Nora Peters and Jana Zegenhagen. (2013). *Zukunftsmodell Schreibberatung: Eine Anleitung zur Begleitung von Schreibenden im Studium*. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, p.184.

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