

Step-by-Step-Instruction for your MA-Thesis Application:

VMA Visual and Media Anthropology

1. Common central topic of your thesis

Here, an introductory overview of the research project should be given in a way that makes it easy for non-specialists to directly think in terms of the topic.

2. Relevance of your thesis

In principle, the relevance can be worked out from the perspective of research or from a practical point of view – ideally from both perspectives. So why is the project important and interesting for research and/or practice? Are there, for example, theories that can be tested in the context of the project (see below)? Is an instrument being examined that has become particularly important from a practical point of view? Can one justify this importance through the use of statistics, a theory or at least by a "strong" literary document?

3. Language of your thesis

The language you will write the theoretical part of your thesis in (not the language of the practical project)

4. Previous papers / projects on the same topic

The work you submit must be newly created for the purpose of finalizing your studies, in its theoretical as well as practical part. It must not have been created previously and already been submitted as an academic achievement or for professional or other purposes. Reusage of projects must be prevented, whereas substantial variations, continuation in new directions etc. of previous work are legitimate, of course. Therefore, you have to disclose if you have already created and submitted any projects on the topic of your Master's Thesis previously.

5. Title of your written thesis

Please spell- and grammarcheck!

6. Boundaries of your thesis

How do you want to narrow down the topic? It is necessary to limit oneself within the framework of a thesis and not to try to explain the "whole world". A limitation can be achieved in at least two ways: a conceptual limitation, e.g. the focus is directed on exactly one (!) phenomenon or aspect of culture, e.g. harvest rituals. A second possible limitation is the regional focus, e.g. harvest rituals on the island Lombok in Indonesia.

Furthermore, you may apply a methodological limitation, e.g. focus on a specific group within a chosen community, e.g. the role of woman during harvest rituals. You can specify your topic more and mainly conduct interviews with women and examine their perspectives, needs, expectations. If e.g. woman are interviewed, it is clear that the focus of interest is women (incl. their needs, expectations, etc.) and

not men. Of course, one should draw conclusions from the perspective of woman (e.g. how the whole community benefits from the role of woman leading the harvest ritual).

7. Research question

Explicit mention of the research question/s is required. Research questions should be formulated clearly. If you formulate several research questions, identify which is the main and which are sub-questions as they often build on each other. Make sure that the questions are actually answered through your research. To do this, the phenomena that are addressed should be well defined.

8. Literature you want to use

Here, you are expected to list selection of relevant literature reflecting your research perspective. For the application, the current state of research (e.g. relevance or topic limitation, see above) should be represented. If your thesis is focused on e.g. social media communication of NGO's, a few relevant studies should be found in the application text. The corresponding entries in the bibliography should show that you have dealt with the previous research. If you use a special method (e.g. expert interviews), you should show that you have already dealt with the methods by listing relevant literature. Basic textbooks (e.g. "Introduction to Anthropology") are usually not part of the "relevant literature" unless they are textbooks that explicitly refer to methods of empirical social research.

9. Hypotheses

Hypotheses often tie in with research questions and further substantiate them. Hypotheses are empirically verifiable, but they must be accurately formulated. Example 1: Variable A has a positive influence on variable B. Or: The larger variable A, the higher the value of variable B (context hypothesis). Example 2: Group A differs from Group B in the expression of variable A (difference hypothesis).

If you have chosen a qualitative research approach, you often do not test any hypotheses, because strictly speaking you cannot test them with a qualitative approach; but you can also see it differently (!). However, you can always use exploratory, qualitative work to develop hypotheses (which may later be quantitatively tested in the context of further scientific work). From a scientific point of view, this is a very interesting result of a thesis.

10. Theories you want to use

This point is very important to judge the scientific foundation of your research project. To be clear: Phenomena – no matter how relevant you personally consider them - are only relevant to science if they can be derived (in one form or another) from established theories. But the theory itself is not completely banal. In case you decide for a film, photography or other media project about Climate refugees, the theory and literature discourse about Environmental Anthropology and Migration is relevant for your project. Because, this can be a lot, it can be important to discuss with your supervisor which theory will be the main focus of your final project. You might only add some literature about Visual Anthropology for your methods chapter. In case you decide to do a film, photography or other media project about the role of woman in harvest rituals, you can decide to focus on the Anthropology

of Gender or on Environmental Anthropology or even on disaster research, if the ritual takes place because of a drought. Your chosen methods Visual and Media Anthropology should always be explained and discussed. A methodological thesis that mainly concentrates on Visual Anthropology is possible of course too (for example “Participatory filmmaking with young adults from the tribe Nage Keo in Indonesia and the relevance for the future of Visual Anthropology”). Here, you can focus mainly on the theory of Visual Anthropology.

11. **Methods**

This applies to both written and visual parts of the thesis. Please describe in detail your chosen visual-anthropological methods and the technical equipment you are planning to use (e.g. filming interviews with a DSLR-camera or smartphone, using a task-cam for sound capturing, documentary photography, immersive-360 degree-scenarios) and your classic qualitative ethnographic methods, e.g. if you plan to do participant observation, writing fieldnotes, what kind of interviews you are planning (biographic, narrative, single or group interviews, structured or semi-structured). Will you be involving your interview partners in ground, sketch, scale or mind-mapping techniques? Are you planning to use multimedia mapping and GIS (Geographic Information System-Technology)? Will you be using quantitative methods, e.g. surveys etc. or participatory methodology e.g. participatory filmmaking? Are certain problems or challenges to be expected? How will they be handled?

12. **Title of your practical project**

(see point 5 above)

13. **Focal VMA-related topic**

Such as: Digital Anthropology, Virtual Worlds and Communities; Social Media Activism; Digital Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Smart devices in Anthropological research, Indigenous Communities and Media; Visualization of Environmental Anthropology; Documentary Photography, Participatory Photography and Filmmaking, Coping with Disasters; Anthropology of Gender; Political Anthropology and new Media; Anthropology and Migration; Kinship and Visual Anthropology; Religion and Anthropology, Mythologies, Education and Media Anthropology, Urban or popular Culture etc.

14. **End product**

Please indicate if you will produce a film, create artwork, curate an exhibition or what kind of medium you will use for the outcome of your practical addition to the written thesis

15. **Methods**

(see point 11 above)

16. **Ethical challenges**

Please describe possible ethical challenges related to your topic and research process (e.g. regarding data collection or data analysis) and how you plan to handle them.