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# Guideline: Content of the Research Proposal for Thesis-PIRM

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These guidelines have been drawn up to support organizations wishing to join the Positive Impact Research Market (PIRM) of Università della Svizzera italiana by submitting their own research proposal for a Bachelor's, Master's or a chapter of Doctoral thesis.

Depending on the level of education, theses will have different timelines and quality requirements. The expected timeframe for Bachelor's theses is approximately 3 months. Similarly, for theoretical papers in the Master of architecture, the time frame is also 3 months. For Master's degrees in other faculties, the expected time frame is approximately 6 months, while for Doctorates, the timeline is defined on a case-by-case basis.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the thesis's outcome is concrete academic research, not a consultancy project.

The Guideline aim to provide a reference point in the preliminary phase of identifying and defining your research proposal.

To submit its research proposal for one or more PIRM theses, the organization should:

- Prepare one or more thesis proposals in accordance with these Guidelines;
- If the organisation does not already have login credentials for the USI Career Gate digital portal, it will be necessary to register and wait for acceptance by the administrators;
- Enter the proposal in USI Career Gate, indicating the faculty to which the proposal is addressed and the level of education required (Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate);
- Each thesis proposal will be visible to USI students once it has been approved by the PIRM Team.

If you require further assistance during these stages, please contact: [thesis.pirm@usi.ch](mailto:thesis.pirm@usi.ch).

## How to propose a PIRM thesis

### 1. Identification of the need or challenge

The organization must identify a sustainability-related need or challenge that is relevant to its own context and suitable for being at least partially addressed or explored in a dissertation written by a USI student.

More specifically, the need or challenge is suitable for a PIRM thesis if:

- Its solution can help the organization make a concrete and positive contribution to at least one dimension of sustainable development (economic, social, environmental),
- Its solution can help the organization contribute concretely and positively to the achievement of at least one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda,
- Its solution can be addressed within the scope of the competences of one of the following faculties at USI: Academy of architecture, Faculty of communication, culture and society, Faculty of economics, Faculty of informatics, finding a point of contact, in terms of themes, approaches and/or methods, with at least one of them.

Please note that the choice of approach and method of analysis, as well as the definition of the detailed structure of the thesis, is the responsibility of the student, in consultation with the supervisor.

### 2. Brief description of the research proposal for the thesis

Organizations are invited to draft a short text (max. 5,000 characters, including spaces) that describes, in clear and non-technical terms, the organization's specific need or challenge. The content must be clear and accessible.

The text must follow this structure:

- Context: explain the organization's role and the significance of the challenge,
- Objective: state what you wish to analyze or improve,
- Possible activities: suggest some activities relevant to the research objective that the student could undertake whilst writing their dissertation.

### 3. Submission of the research proposal for the thesis on USI Career Gate – starting in November 2025

Once the initial phase of registering the organization on USI Career Gate has been completed and accepted by the administrators (if the organization does not already have login credentials for the platform), the thesis proposal can be entered in the section dedicated to Sustainability Theses – PIRM on the digital portal.

### 4. Waiting for confirmation and publication of the research proposal for the thesis on USI Career Gate

Once your proposal has been reviewed and accepted by the PIRM Team, you will receive an acceptance email from [thesis.pirm@usi.ch](mailto:thesis.pirm@usi.ch). From this point onwards, your thesis proposal will be visible to USI students.

### Important notes

Organizations are generally required to submit one research proposal for their thesis to a faculty, covering various aspects of sustainability and, consequently, several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

If you wish to explore the topic of your research proposal in greater depth than the brief description provided on the Career Gate digital portal, you can do so directly with the student selected from among the candidates to whom you assign the research proposal for their thesis.

To give you an overview of the wealth and variety of sustainability-related topics and methods used, here are some examples of theses written in recent years: <https://www.usi.ch/en/university/what-we-do/sustainability/thesis-on-sustainability>.

Below are some examples of research proposal objectives for the four USI faculties.

#### **A) Academy of architecture**

##### **SDG 13: Climate action**

The aim is to develop an analysis of the potential of regenerative/local materials in architecture to extend the life of buildings, discussing possible circular construction practices.

##### **SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities**

The study focuses on the environmental and economic impact of using local construction techniques and materials to reduce transport-related emissions and strengthen community resilience.

#### **B) Faculty of communication, culture and society**

##### **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**

The research aims to identify effective methods of communication (online and offline) aimed at improving and strengthening community involvement in fundraising campaigns to ensure organisational longevity.

##### **SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production**

The analysis focuses on the impact of communication about an organization's sustainability on consumer purchasing behavior.

#### **C) Faculty of economics**

##### **SDG 5: Gender equality**

The organization's long-term goal is to ensure full and effective female participation and equal leadership opportunities at every decision-making level. The thesis asks for an analysis of the economic and governance impact of having both genders in top positions; it is possible to explore tools and policies (quotas, incentives, best practices) to achieve implementation.

##### **SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth**

The study must analyse sustainable investing practices, exploring the link with value creation and economic and financial performance results.

#### **D) Faculty of informatics**

##### **SDG 7: Clean and affordable energy**

How can sensor data analysis and artificial intelligence help an organization monitor and optimize the energy consumption of buildings, especially during summer heat waves?

##### **SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production**

We are asked to explore the use of blockchain technology to create a transparent and secure traceability system, with the aim of supporting the organization in verifying the sustainable origin and ethical practices of products throughout the supply chain.