



March 2022

The Research Proposal

While the regulations regarding the proposal submission have not changed, in the following, you will find a detailed recommended structure for writing the proposal. These guidelines are only suggestions, and the structure of the final proposal should be decided upon and accepted by the thesis supervisor.

A proposal is essentially a roadmap that should help lead you on the path to a completed research study, with sufficient information that allows readers to assess the validity and usefulness of your proposed study. An effective proposal is also judged on the quality of your writing, and, therefore, it is essential that your writing is coherent, clear, and compelling. Language is our principal tool for conveying ideas.

The proposal's objective is to convince the reader and the teaching committee that the student has constructed a decent research plan and can accomplish it within the two academic years' timeframe and the available resources.

Regardless of the research question you are investigating and the methodology you choose, all research proposals must address the following questions:

1. What is the question, and what is its breakdown—what, in other words, are the smaller questions that form part of the whole?
2. **What do you plan to accomplish?** Be clear and concise in defining the research question and what it is you are proposing to research.
3. **Why do you want to do it?** In addition to detailing your research design, you must conduct a thorough review of the literature and provide convincing



evidence that it is a topic worthy of study. Be sure to answer the "So What?" question. The focus here should be on the innovation, or new knowledge, that your study offers and on its significance (the "so what?").

4. **How are you going to do it?** Be sure that what you propose is doable.

Fundamentally, the entire proposal is there to support the question: What the research question is, how you will answer it, why we should care, and how it is related to existing research.

Note that this proposal is not an essay going over everything you have learned about the topic; instead, you must choose what is relevant to help explain the goals for your study.

The document should be no more than 12 A4 pages long, excluding a title page and bibliography; double spaced; Times New Roman or Arial; font 11 or 12; and normal margins (2 cm).

Suggested structure for the proposal:

Title

- Student's personal information
- Names of advisor/s
- Research Title



Presentation of the research question

In this section, you should introduce the issue to be discussed. Approach writing this section with the thought that you cannot assume your readers will know as much about the topic as you do. This includes:

- Most importantly: A clearly articulated research question.
- The historical background of the phenomena you wish to study.
- Descriptions of the main actors.
- Presentations of the theoretical context for the study.
- If necessary, provide definitions of key concepts or terms.

Detailed description of the proposed research

This section aims to present the actual proposed study and give the reader an indication of how the research is to be carried out. That is, to convince the reader that your overall research design and methods of analysis will correctly address the research question and that the methods will provide the means to effectively interpret the potential results. Your design and methods should be unmistakably tied to the specific aims of your study. Therefore it should answer the following questions:

- What are the primary sources?
- Are there any limitations to the data collected?
- What are the research design and methods?
- Why are you using these specific sources and methods?
- Are there any expected pitfalls in acquiring the sources or in the methods? And how the author suggests overcoming them.



Preliminary structure of the proposal

In this section, the author should present the different chapters of the thesis and explain how this structure is connected to the research question and the research plan. That is, you should match between the structure of the thesis and its logic.

Review of relevant literature

In this section, the author presents the main academic writings on matters related to the research topic. While some description of key sources is important, the literature review is not merely a bibliographical list. Its goal is to situate your research question in the existing field of knowledge: How does existing literature help provide background and a basis for your research? On the other hand, what remains unanswered (and perhaps un-asked) in the existing scholarly literature that you hope to address?

Other goals of the literature review include:

- Presenting the student's mastery of the relevant literature. That is, awareness of the current state of knowledge and an understanding of key lines of argument and debates on the topic/issue.
- Presenting the ability of the student to detect the academic fields related to the study.
- Comparing and contrasting the various arguments, theories, methodologies.
- Demonstrating to your readers that your work is original and innovative.
- Explaining the contribution of the current study in relation to the existing knowledge on the topic.



Presentation of the innovation of the proposed research

This section should answer why this research is important, what is its significance, and why should someone reading the proposal care about the outcomes of the proposed study? That is, answer the "so what?" question.

Conclusion

The conclusion reiterates the importance or significance of your proposal and provides a brief summary of the entire study.

Work Plan & Time Schedule

A work plan is an outline of a set of goals and processes by which the student can successfully finish writing the MA thesis in 4 semesters. In the work plan, the student breaks down the entire research into small, achievable tasks and identifies the things needed to be accomplished. While creating the tentative work schedule, students should realize that unexpected things happen and that they need to build space into the schedule to prevent falling behind.

At the end of each semester, students will need to report on their actual progress according to this work plan and time schedule.



Bibliography

As with any scholarly research paper, you must cite the sources you use in composing your proposal. All references in the text should be in the bibliography, and vice versa; the bibliography should include only references cited in the text. Cited works should always use a standard format that follows the writing style advised by the discipline, or that is preferred by your professor.

Signatures: The student, advisor/s, and chair of the Teaching Committee

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Failure to be concise; being "all over the map" without a clear sense of purpose.
- Failure to cite landmark works in your literature review.
- Failure to delimit the contextual boundaries of your research [e.g., time, place, people, etc.].
- Failure to develop a coherent and persuasive set of questions for the proposed research.
- Failure to stay focused on the research question; going off on unrelated tangents.
- Sloppy or imprecise writing or poor grammar.
- Too much detail on minor issues, but not enough detail on major issues.
- Unrealistic, or too simple goals.