

THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

When the student has selected a topic, a formal proposal is prepared and must be approved by the thesis or dissertation committee. The proposal details the student's proposed research and provides the opportunity for review and feedback from the committee. The committee may require revisions prior to approval. Following approval, the student has reasonable confidence that the committee will approve the thesis or dissertation if it is carried through competently according to the proposal. Copies of the approved proposal are to be distributed to the department chair for the departmental file, the major professor, and the student. Any modifications to the proposal require the approval of the student's committee. MFA students please refer to the Thesis and Dissertation Alternate Format Guide for required elements of the Script and Proposal.

Format for the Proposal

Chapter Format - Quantitative Research. Proposals that are written in chapters are the most common but will differ in their content by disciplines and also by the type of proposal (i.e. quantitative or qualitative research). Students should work closely with the research advisor to determine the specific content required for the type of research to be conducted and for the discipline. The proposal is often the first three to four chapters of the student's thesis or dissertation. The proposal is discussed in terms of what "will be" done in conducting the research. Table 1 (page 7) presents an example outline of contents generally found in a proposal for quantitative research organized in chapter format.

Chapter Format - Qualitative Research. Qualitative research proposals may vary considerably, yet they do contain some common features. The specific theoretical framework selected for qualitative studies significantly influences the content of the proposal. Table 2 (page 8) presents a sample outline of components for a qualitative research proposal organized in chapter format.

Alternate Formats. A department may choose to allow the student to submit portions of a thesis or dissertation in a format ready for submission to a journal in the student's field. If an alternate format will be used for the final thesis or dissertation, the student may also submit the research proposal in the form of a publishable article; however, it must include comparable information to the examples given for the chapter formats described above. Furthermore, this format may be adapted as appropriate for historical or analytical research.

The emphasis in this guide is primarily on scientific/social-scientific research reporting. A typical thesis or dissertation in the humanities or arts may not be described in these terms. It is assumed, however, that various parts of a thesis or dissertation in the humanities or arts are mostly analogous to the parts described in this manual. It may be necessary for departments in these areas to assist students in making the necessary conversion in terminology.

Table 1 Sample Outline for Quantitative Research Proposal Using a Chapter Format	
CHAPTER I	<p>INTRODUCTION</p> <p>A. Introduction (provides a brief orientation to the reader)</p> <p>B. Statement of the problem</p> <p>C. Significance of the problem (addresses the importance of the problem to the discipline)</p> <p>D. Statement of the purpose (a clear, concise statement of the purpose of the study)</p> <p>E. Theoretical/Conceptual framework (provides a framework for examining the problem and for linking it to relevant literature)</p> <p>F. Objectives, hypotheses, research questions (to be derived from the purpose and framework and provide specific direction for data analysis and interpretation)</p> <p>G. Assumptions/theoretical limitations</p> <p>H. Definition of relevant terms</p> <p>(subparts E - H are sometimes contained in a single chapter)</p>
CHAPTER II	<p>REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE (Provides an overview of essential information that will guide the study and illustrates that the researcher has a command of current knowledge regarding the proposed problem.)</p> <p>A. Review of relevant literature</p> <p>B. Review of relevant research literature</p> <p>C. Summary</p>
CHAPTER III	<p>METHODS AND PROCEDURES Description of the research design (the general strategy for conducting the study)</p> <p>A. Population and sample (population to which the findings will be generalized and from which the sample will be selected, how the sample will be selected)</p> <p>B. Setting (where the study will be conducted)</p> <p>C. Protection of subjects' rights (illustrates recognition and protection of rights and welfare of subjects)</p> <p>D. Measurement methods (methods of measuring study variables described, including instruments)</p> <p>E. Plans for data collection (the procedure by which the data will be collected, and who will collect it)</p> <p>F. Plan for data analysis (statistical analysis techniques which will be used)</p> <p>G. Limitations (methodological limitations)</p> <p>H. Study budget and timetable (might be in an appendix)</p>
REFERENCES	
APPENDICES	

Table 2 Sample Outline for Qualitative Research Proposal Using a Chapter Format	
CHAPTER I	INTRODUCTION A. Identification of the phenomenon B. Study purpose C. Theoretical framework or philosophy D. Study questions or aims E. Significance of the study F. Identification of assumptions G. Limitations
CHAPTER II	REVIEW OF LITERATURE Relevant literature reviewed (as appropriate for the type of qualitative study planned).
CHAPTER III	METHODS A. Researcher's credentials (demonstration of researcher's ability to conduct the type of study proposed) B. Site and population (description of site for study and population to be used) C. Sample (description of sample and its selection) D. Data collection process E. Data analysis (techniques to be used to analyze data) F. Study budget and timetable (might be located in appendix)
REFERENCES	
APPENDICES	

Formal Presentation of the Research Proposal

Graduate students conducting a thesis or dissertation are required to present their proposal to their committee, providing members the opportunity to evaluate the student's knowledge and understanding of the proposal as well as the student's ability to reason and present logical explanations to questions related to the research.

The presentation is conducted as a scholarly seminar. The student provides an overview of the proposal highlighting salient points of the proposed research. Audio-visual aids may assist in communicating essential points.

Following the presentation, there is normally a period for questions and answers. For example, the student might be asked to explain the rationale and considerations used in selecting particular theoretical frameworks, instruments, or data analysis techniques.

As a result of the meeting, committee members may suggest changes in the proposal and will approve or disapprove the proposal for implementation. A committee may ask for revisions to a proposal before approval.