

Guidelines for the preparation of proposals for the University Graduate School

Format of the Proposal. The formal proposal submitted to the University Graduate School (UGS) should not exceed five pages and a font size of 11 points or larger is required. Title page and references don't need to apply toward the 5 page maximum. Use of an Arial, Helvetica, Times New Roman or Georgia typeface is strongly encouraged. Double spacing is recommended. The proposal must conform to accepted norms in the use of grammar, construction, spelling and punctuation. Proposals that do not meet this requirement will not be reviewed by the UGS and will be returned to the student. Components of the proposal may vary somewhat with the discipline but all proposals must include an introduction and explanation of the thesis/dissertation problem including reference to and citation of the recent scholarly works in the discipline (do not use websites as references). A link to example proposals that meet UGS expectations is found on the University Graduate School website. The major professor and the committee members must read and approve of the revised proposal prior to resubmission to the UGS.

Components of a Proposal: Overall, the proposal should demonstrate that the student understands the work to be conducted, its significance and has consulted and read the appropriate literature in formulating the proposal. The expectation of all thesis and dissertation research is that publishable new knowledge will result.

Introduction/Statement of Problem: A current, concise, and scholarly presentation of the research problem that gives clear evidence that the student has reviewed the current literature relevant to the planned research and has an understanding of the significance and nature of the problem. The introduction should contain a statement of the problem that is outlined in a manner such that a non-specialist will understand the problem and reason it was chosen. This Introduction section will be answering the following questions: What is the problem to be studied? Why is this problem worthy of study?

Background and Theory: This section of the proposal will provide the appropriate detail at a level such that a specialist will be informed of current developments in the field that are important to the understanding and conducting research on the problem. This section should provide specialists sufficient information about the state-of-art or knowledge in this field that they will be able to critically evaluate the proposal that follows.

This Background section will answer the following question: What work has been done by others and is relevant to the proposed problem?

Specific Statement of Research Questions/Objectives: All research problems can be concisely stated in the form of a series of questions or objectives. These serve to define and subdivide the planned work into sequential or parallel

steps that will, in combination, lead to the completion of the research. These questions should be well informed by the introduction and background sections that precede them. They should define experiments, observations, or actions that will be undertaken in the course of the research.

Hypotheses: In many instances hypotheses can be formulated that are based upon the expectations of the outcomes from experiments or observations. Hypotheses should be formulated where there is ample basis for their formulation and they should be clear and supported by the Introduction and Background sections. Hypotheses will often be critically dependent upon the methods and experimental design and conditions.

Methods/Experimental Design/Techniques: This section should include sufficient detail and sophistication to enable an expert reviewer in the field to evaluate if the approaches planned for answering the questions or carrying out the objectives are understood by the author and are consistent with the hypotheses. Instrumentation to be used must be discussed and if it is to be constructed details must be provided. In cases that will involve statistical evaluation of information and data, sufficient information should be provided so that the reviewer can evaluate whether or not statistically meaningful results and conclusions may be based on the design and quantity of data to be collected. A discussion of the validity of possible conclusions must be included in this section.

References Cited: The references cited in the body of the proposal should be included at the end in a format consistent with those of the scholarly journals/publications of the discipline. For citing the internet see UGS internet citation policy.