

PhD Dissertation Proposal Guidelines

The dissertation proposal should be:

- Double-spaced to allow notation by members of the Qualifying Exam Committee.
- A maximum of 25 pages, excluding figures, tables and references.
- Time New Roman as a font size 12 and 14 for titles.
- Numbered on each page.
- Securely clipped.

Title page

The title page of a dissertation proposal should indicate the following:

- candidate's name and number
- title
- name(s) of Principal Supervisor(s)

Proposal content

The content of the dissertation proposal needs to address the following elements, generally in the order as indicated:

1. **Focus of the study (research question)/goals/objective** - candidates should outline exactly what it is they aim to achieve/discover during their course of study. If they have framed a formal hypothesis, which they will be testing, then it should be stated here.
2. **Literature review and scope of project** - this section should indicate that candidates have a good working knowledge of the literature relevant to their field of study. In particular they should discuss the current state of knowledge and its present limitations. Finally, in the context of current knowledge, they should briefly describe the main elements of their proposed endeavors. They should demonstrate firstly how their PhD study will fit into the broad framework of theory and knowledge in relevant fields. Then they should indicate the extent to which their work will result in an original contribution to understanding in those fields.
3. **Methodology** - depending on the discipline and research approach, this section will describe how the goals of the study will be achieved. Hence this section might include a description of experiments to be performed and the statistical principles of their design, data collection method and analyses, anticipated difficulties and alternative approaches to combat them.
4. **Outcomes and significance** - this section should focus on a brief description of the expected outcomes of the work in general terms and the likely significance of these outcomes for the discipline and the wider community. Generally it will not be possible to predict specific answers to questions or hypotheses currently being addressed, but it will be possible to outline the benefits of answering them and the unique contribution to knowledge that candidates expect to make.
5. **Timelines** - a timeline or table detailing the planned progress of the project and provision for time to write up the dissertation must be included. Milestones against which progress can be monitored should be identified.
6. **Figures, tables, references** - the inclusion of explanatory figures and tables is encouraged. References to the literature should be provided wherever appropriate and listed in a separate section at the conclusion of the document.