

Research (Masters and Doctorate) Degrees Guide: Dissertation/Thesis Proposal



2022

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# **A typical structure for a doctorate dissertation proposal should cover the following:**

## **Title**

It should be short, concise, reveals most of what the study is about, main (dependent and independent) variables of interest can be easily identified, and the context of the study (where relevant).

## **Table of Contents**

It covers all/some (as relevant) of the following: Table of Contents (a reference to the main proposal text); List of Tables; List of Figures; List of Abbreviations; List of Symbols; and List of any other Illustrative Materials

## **Abstract**

It sets out the problem investigated, how it was investigated, the expected outcomes, and conclusions.

## **Introduction/Background**

Introduce the area of research and provide a brief summary of the main points and conclusions of your proposal

## **Research Gap/Problem Statement**

* Overview of existing approaches dealing with the problem with focus on the main contributions.
* Review key publications and themes (briefly) in order to specify the research gap(s). Based on this, you can clearly state the problem statement clearly.

## **Research Objectives/Motivation: Justification and Contextualization**

* Why is your research important?
* Is it timely? Does it respond to an existing need? What makes it so?
* Clearly state the research objectives of the proposed work. Avoid stating too many aims; it is highly advisable to concentrate on the main ones. These aims should be linked to the following section (research questions and hypotheses).

## **Research Questions/Hypotheses**

* Research questions enable you to focus on what it about your area of interest is that you want to know.
* Note that the research questions are different from a hypothesis which can be considered a formal speculation about the relationship between two or more variables.
* In setting the research questions, these should be: formulated clearly, researchable, connected with established theory, and logically linked together.

## **Conceptual/Theoretical Framework (Theory) and Literature Review**

* Theory(ies) is an important component since, without theory, there will be nothing to pull the study together; more importantly, there will be nothing to justify why variables are linked together. Thus, theory, in the absolute world, should explain the relationship between the study’s variables of interest.
* Detailed analaysis of current theories and approaches used in solving the research problem.
* Critical review of the Literature and state-of-the-art related to the problem.

## **Methodology**

* Present the proposed research methodology (e.g., research paradigm, methodological approach, methods, techniques, sample size, target populations, equipment, and data analysis, if applicable) and explain why it is the most appropriate way to effectively answer the research question. Have you considered (and disregarded) any alternatives?
* Sample selection and data collection
* Variables measurement (dependent, independent, and control variables).
* Empirical model ..
* If relevant, you need to discuss the “*ethical consideration*” of your research, what you consider to be the key ethical implications of your work, and it should also explain how you will gain access to the research field, i.e., how you will find the information you need.

## **Initial and/or Potential Results**

* Based on a pilot study, or any initial empirical evidence, what are the main results. A discussion of such results is needed.

## **Expected Contribution/ Practical Implications**

* What are the main/principal contributions the dissertation is willing to add to the body of knowledge and practice? How these findings might influence extant research (theoretical implications) and practice (practical implications).

## **Limitations and Contraints (if applicable)**

* ‘limitations’ section: Are there any limitations or downsides of your selected research strategy? How are they counterweighting the advantages?

## **Structure**

* Provide the structure of your dissertation proposal, chapter by chapter. Use one paragraph to describe the contents of each chapter.

## **Timescale/Timeline**

* List the main tasks needed to complete the work. Students can apply Gantt chart for a better presentation for this section. These tasks should reflect the overall structure.

 Aug/20-- Sept/20-- Oct/20-- Nov/20-- Dec/20-- Jan/20-- Feb/20-- Mar/20--

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Task 1 |  |  |
| Task 2 |  |  |
| Task 3 |  |  |
| Task 4 |  |  |
| Task 5 |  |

## **References**

* This is a list of all the books, articles, or websites you have referred to in the dissertation. Quotations should be copied correctly.
* The references style should follow appropriate standards used globally (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago, Harvard). Using a reference manager is highly recommended (e.g., EndNote, Mendeley, Zotero).

## **Appendices (if needed)**

# **A typical structure for a master’s thesis proposal should cover all/some of the following:[[1]](#footnote-1)**

## **Title/Cover page**

## **Table of Contents**

It covers all/some (as relevant) of the following: Table of Contents (a reference to the main proposal text); List of Tables; List of Figures; List of Abbreviations; List of Symbols; and List of any other Illustrative Materials

## **Abstract**

## **Introduction**

## **Literature Review**

## **Problem Statement and Research Objectives**

## **Methodology or Experimental Work (Materials and Methods)**

## **Preliminary Results and Discussion**

### Experimental setup

### Related datasets

### Initial results and discussion

## **Thesis Timeline**

## **References**

## **Appendices**

1. The guide provided in the first section (for doctorate dissertation proposal) can still be relevant, wherever applicable for maser’s proposals. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)