

Research Proposal Guidelines for Applicants

All applicants to graduate studies (Masters or PhD) are required to submit a research proposal with their application. It is recognized that applicants' research paths may shift during the course of their study; at the same time, the research proposal is considered an important part of the application. The Department looks to the proposal both as a statement of intent with regard to the applicants' interest in the program and as evidence of the applicants' abilities to frame their interests in terms of professional social science research.

The following are general guidelines for the research proposal. The proposal should outline a reasonable course of research to be carried out for the degree. Masters and PhD proposals vary mainly with regard to the length and detail expected from the proposal. A typical Masters degree is completed in two years, with one year of course work, one-half year devoted to research (data collection / fieldwork) and one-half year devoted to writing up the thesis. A typical PhD degree is completed in four years with two years of course work, one year of research (data collection / fieldwork) and one year of writing up the thesis.

Length

Masters Research Proposal:	Up to 2,000 words (approximately 5 pages)
PhD Research Proposal:	Up to 4,000 words (approximately 10 pages)

Contents

1. Title:

The proposal should include a short, succinct title that describes the research. Ideally, this should be about three to eight words in length.

2. Statement of the Problem:

The proposal should include a statement of the problem, question or research hypothesis to be examined by the research. Statement of the problem should include a discussion of how the applicant came to identify this as a significant issue and the context in which this problem emerged (for example, from the applicant's personal experience, from social science writing on the issue, or other contexts).

3. Review of Relevant Literature:

The applicant needs to make clear how the research fits into the established literature of contemporary sociology or anthropology. The review of literature should not just go over general social science literature, but should specify how the research will contribute to the specific fields.

4. Proposed Methodology:

The proposal should provide a sense of how the applicant expects to conduct research on the problem identified. This should include a discussion of specific techniques or methods to be used (e.g. surveys, interviews, participant observation, etc.) as well as practical issues such as access that the applicant has to the research site, language ability requirements, etc.

5. Expected Outcomes and/or Impact of the Research:

The proposal should include a discussion of the impact of the research, as a contribution to social science, which may also include a contribution to the people and society where the research is to take place.

6. References Cited and/or Bibliography:

Cited literature should be listed at the end of the proposal. As a rule of thumb, we would expect at least five to ten items for a Masters proposal and at least ten to twenty for a PhD.