

Suggested Components for Thesis/Dissertation Proposal

The components of your thesis proposal may differ based on the type of your research (e.g., an original empirical study vs. an in-depth review paper; quantitative research also differs from qualitative research). Be sure to work closely with your thesis advisor to select the relevant components for your proposal. For example, quantitative research theses may use all these components listed below while qualitative theses may use only the first four components or may involve alternative formats depending on the nature of the work.

All students must submit an initial research proposal when registering for OPT 995 Thesis Research or OPT 997 Dissertation Research. This initial research proposal may contain only the first four items. However, you should submit a complete research proposal, including all (or the majority) items listed below, to your Thesis or Dissertation Committee prior to embarking on data collection, preferably before submitting your IRB proposal.

Items to be included in your research proposal:

1. Title Page:
 - It should include the preliminary title of the study, the student's name, the advisor's name, and the institution.
 - The title should consist of the topic and outcome of your research project.
2. Purpose of the Study:
 - A concise statement of the problem that the researcher wants to know, its importance, and what the researcher hopes to achieve through the study
3. Research question or statement of the hypotheses:
 - Transform the empirical/theoretical problem(s) to specific research questions, which the current knowledge has not addressed (but your research will).
 - A hypothesis is a predicted answer to the research question that can be tested and is based on prior knowledge/research.
 - This will be used to guide the direction of your study design (e.g., your choices of the dependent variables and manipulation of the independent variables)
4. Definition of keywords or terms:
 - Clarification of any terminology in the study that may not be commonly known.
5. Brief introduction:
 - A short overview explaining the background of the problem to be researched on;
 - Relevant literature or theoretical framework critical to the issue(s)
6. Research Design
 - General research design: used to determine the subject group(s) and the testing procedures
 - Subjects: describe the target study population, the determination of the sample size, designation of groups if applied, and the recruitment method
 - Dependent variables: describe aspects of the cases on which data collection and analysis will focus

- Methods of data collection: explain how each variable will be measured under what manipulation condition
 - Plans for data analysis (e.g., the chosen statistic modules for analyzing the data)
7. Timeline:
- list the order for all the major steps of the study and indicate the approximate amount of time needed for each step