



Research Proposal:

A research proposal is a detailed description of the proposed research. It is not the end product of your research, but simply the first step on the journey toward the completion of your research. The proposal suggests to the admission committee that you have a keen interest in research and know what you plan to investigate and how. The emphasis of the proposal should also be on demonstrating the relevance and feasibility of your research.

The research proposal should comprise of the following components:

1. The research question your study will address.
2. How that question is situated in the relevant literature. (Situating your question involves a discussion of how it contributes to or builds on existing literature or responds to puzzles left unexplained or unexplored. There is no need to identify and read everything that has already been written on the topic.)
3. The research design. (You should discuss how the research will proceed and why the approach you are taking is appropriate to address the question you pose. This will vary depending on your topic, subfield, and approach. As appropriate, you should address issues such as your theoretical framework, text selection, approach to textual interpretation, case selection, hypotheses, and research methodology.)
4. A preliminary chapter breakdown.

The entire proposal should be about 8-10 pages long.

Once you actually embark on your dissertation research, it is very common to modify your project. The proposal does not need to be re-approved if this happens, unless the change is significant enough to result in change in composition of the thesis committee. The proposal is simply to get you started. The dissertation is where those modifications will appear.