

Telfer PhD Thesis Proposal Guidelines

GOAL

The thesis proposal is an opportunity for the student to present the thesis project to their committee and to receive advice that will contribute to the quality of the thesis.

The thesis proposal should be completed during the students' 3rd year.

WHAT A PROPOSAL FOR A THESIS BY MONOGRAPH SHOULD CONTAIN

The thesis proposal should include:

- *Introduction*: The purpose of the introduction is to present the goals of the thesis, the rationale, the research questions, and the potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge. It should also include a review of the relevant literature and a clear statement of the hypothesis to be tested, and, in the case of qualitative research, research questions to be addressed.
- *Method section*: This section should provide clear information on participants and sampling procedures, materials, apparatus and instruments to be used, design, procedures, and verbatim instructions if the research involves human participants. The exact content of the methods section will be field- and methodology-dependent.
- *A section specifying the way the data will be analyzed*: This section describes the way the data will be analyzed in order to test the hypotheses or to systematically address specific research questions.
- *A list of references*: All references cited in the proposal should be included in the reference section.
- *Any necessary appendixes*: These sections provide information necessary to replicate the research, including instructions to participants, consent forms, debriefing scripts, instruments that are not copyrighted.

WHAT A PROPOSAL FOR A THESIS BY ARTICLES SHOULD CONTAIN

A thesis by articles should contain 3 articles of publishable quality. All articles comprising the thesis should be written while the student is enrolled in the program for which the thesis is submitted. The thesis proposal should also include:

- *Introduction*: The purpose of the introductions is to lay out the importance and need for the dissertation, the rationale for three-article dissertation approach, and an explanation of how the manuscript articles are linked.
- *Literature review chapter*: This chapter sets the broader theoretical, conceptual, and methodological context for the separate articles to follow.

- *Outline of the three manuscript articles:* For non-empirical papers, this includes a detailed outline of the topics to be covered and an in-depth description of the main argument the student is planning to make; the conceptual framework the student is proposing; and the literature the student plans to cover. For empirical papers, a conceptual framework, and a detailed methodology section which includes information on participants and sampling procedures, materials, apparatus and instruments to be used, design, procedures, and verbatim instructions if the research involves human participants should be included. The exact content of the methods section will be field- and methodology-dependent.
- *Concluding chapter:* This section should relate the separate articles to each other and integrates and discusses the findings within the context of the broader field of study.

PROCEDURE

- The thesis supervisor(s) establishes the readiness of the student to present the written thesis proposal for approval.
- Once the proposal is completed, the student sends copies of the written proposal to each member of the Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC).
- The TAC members have up to 4 weeks to read and evaluate the written proposal. The evaluation pertains to the quality of the elements presented by the student to demonstrate an understanding of the topic and its contribution to the field as well as the relevance, rigor, and feasibility of the proposed methodology.
- The TAC gives their written comments to the thesis supervisor before the proposal defence.
- The supervisor is responsible for scheduling the defence and booking a room if necessary. Proposal defences can also be done virtually.
- The proposal defence is chaired by the supervisor and typically lasts 2 hours. It usually includes a brief presentation by the student and several rounds of questions and discussion. The purpose of the defence is to give the student an opportunity to present their research proposal and to seek approval for this proposal (with or without modifications).
- The TAC will make one of the three following potential decisions regarding the approval of the proposed thesis.
 - 1) Proposal accepted (the TAC may still suggest some changes or improvements to the proposal, especially the methods) but does not need to review the revised proposal.
 - 2) The proposal is accepted in principle but with major revisions. The revised proposal should be submitted to the TAC members for final approval.
 - 3) Not acceptable as is (the student should revise, resubmit, and complete the thesis proposal approval process over again).

- At the end of the process, the TAC members should sign the [Thesis Proposal Approval Form](#). It is the supervisor's responsibility to provide a list of the revisions to the students and committee members.

If the TAC selects **Verdict 2- The proposal is accepted in principle but with major revisions**, they should give the student a deadline to submit their revised proposal.

The TAC members should sign the [Thesis Proposal After Corrections Approval Form](#) to indicate if the revised proposal is acceptable.

- The completed [Thesis Proposal Approval Form](#) is given to the student to submit to the Graduate Office as a *Thesis Proposal Service Request*.
In case of a Verdict 2, the [Thesis Proposal After Corrections Approval Form](#) should also be submitted as *Thesis Proposal Service Request*.

- Any subsequent major departures from the accepted proposal should be approved by the TAC.

AFTER THE DEFENCE

Once the research proposal is accepted at the seminar, the student applies for ethics approval for the research project from the [University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board](#). This approval is necessary for any research project involving human subjects.

Failure to comply with this requirement will result in academic sanctions. For information on how to apply for ethics approval consult their [website](#). The student should also submit a copy of the [Thesis Proposal Approval Form](#) as proof of successful completion of the thesis proposal.