

Template for a thesis proposal

The primary objective of the proposal is to develop an overall rationale for the research to come and to show precisely why this is worthy for your efforts. The proposal highlights the major problem/issue that will be addressed, the research methods to be deployed, a tentative schedule for major phases of work, and possible results of this research. Of course, the thesis committee is well aware that research goes awry, original plans are often scrapped and unanticipated problems or opportunities call for significant changes in both the process and product of the research. So, the proposal does not commit the student to a point by point set of constraints in all phases of this research. Yet, with the proposal should offer a reasonably sound plan for the work that lies ahead. It can be organized with the following structure.

1. Research Problem

In this section the student presents the major task, issue, controversy, or problem within conflict analysis and resolution to be addressed. The objective here is to motivate the reader to the importance of this project. What is the “conventional wisdom” regarding your subject, as appearing for example, in introductory textbooks? And how does your research supplement, contribute to, contradict, or deviate from the standard interpretation? You may take an original perspective to a familiar topic, or simply examine a topic in more detail. You should avoid committing a common error of presenting a research problem that is too broad in scope, too vast in the information needed and too ambitious in its goals. You can organize the section as follows:

- a. importance of the subject matter to conflict analysis and resolution
- b. conventional understanding of the subject matter
- c. Particular focus of the present research—what you plan to show, discover, produce.
- d. Particular limitations of your research—what you are not going to show, discover, or produce. [3-4 pages]

2. Methodology

In this section you should summarize the methodology that you plan to deploy. Methodology refers to both the techniques for gathering and for analyzing information of various kinds. In gathering information, you may resort to different sources, such as interviews, questionnaires, academic research, personal observations, media outlets, professional reports, or published works. You should specify which information source that you plan to access and how you will gather the information. Analysis refers to the process, techniques, and activities related to interpretation of the information, keeping in mind the objective of answering research questions, solving problems that motivate this research, or providing a deeper understanding of the subject matter under examination. You need to be specific about the method. [2-3 pages]

3. Preliminary results

In this section you can anticipate, or even speculate, about the possible results of your research. What exactly do you expect to discover from the information you will gather and analyze? Which research questions do you expect to answer? This sort of anticipation can be loosely grounded on personal observations, experiences, or knowledge of the topic under examination. [1-2 pages]

4. Time Table

You should identify in a table format the major stages of activity leading to the completion of this project. The time table is closely tied to the methodology—it should include stages for gathering and analyzing information. You could also identify the phases for finishing the chapters of the thesis, as well as estimations for committee members reading the first draft, and the student making revisions. Again, this is all tentative, certainly not set in stone. [1 page]

5. References

List some of the references for works you plan to use. This should conform to a standard style, such as APA, Chicago, or Harvard. [1-2 pages]