

Dissertation Proposal Guidelines

Graduate Program in Social and Political Thought

Updated 12 November 2025

Doctoral students must have their dissertation proposal approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) by the end of term nine of their studies, or six months after successfully completing their Comprehensive Examination, whichever comes first. Before reaching FGS, each proposal must be endorsed by the Supervisor, both committee members, and the Graduate Program Director (GPD), according to the procedures outlined below.

We strongly recommend ensuring that the supervisory committee remain intact throughout the dissertation stage. If changes to the committee must be made after the Comprehensive Examination, please record them through the [Supervisor and Supervisory Committee \(SSC\) Portal](#), and allow sufficient time for the committee members, the Graduate Program Administrator (GPA), the GPD, and FGS to evaluate the request. The Supervisor and at least one committee member must be existing members of SPT. New faculty appointments must be approved by the Executive Committee; as a rule, the Executive Committee does not entertain appointments for the sake of supervising a single student and/or in fields where the program already enjoys sufficient faculty expertise.

Content

The proposal should include a title that reflects the dissertation's argument, a 350-word abstract, and five key words.

The text should be coherently organized into paragraphs and sections that cover, in accordance with disciplinary norms, the intervention, the contribution, the method(s), the body of evidence, and the historical and critical contexts, in addition to outlining each chapter. Technical terms ought to be clearly defined. In an interdisciplinary program like SPT, students are expected to pay particular attention to situating their reasoning within and across fields.

The proposal should conclude with a bibliography (i.e., a list of works cited in the proposal) and a timeline for completion. Students whose research involves languages other than English and/or travel for archival research or fieldwork should indicate so.

Students must discuss field-specific norms and expectations with their Supervisor and committee members.

Format

The proposal should appear in 11- or 12-point font. It should range between 20 and 35 double-spaced pages, bibliography and timeline included. All citations must adhere to a single, consistent style, be it MLA, Chicago, or APA.

Submission and Evaluation

Proposal

It is only once the Supervisor and both committee members have expressed their endorsement via email that the student may submit it to the GPD for review.

The program evaluates proposals based on the quality and significance of the proposed work and the alignment between the proposed project and the supervisory committee's expertise. The program review may involve the participation of an expert in the field who is at arm's length of the student. The GPD will either (1) approve the proposal, after which the student will be instructed to upload it through the Proposal Milestone Portal; (2) request revisions, after which the student may or may not be required to submit an updated version to the GPD; or (3) decline the proposal, in which case the student must discuss how to address major shortcomings with the committee. Extensive feedback is provided only when major revisions are requested, or a proposal is declined.

It is the student's responsibility to allow the supervisory committee and the program sufficient time to review materials.

Once the proposal is approved by the student's SSC and at the program level, the student submits the proposal for FGS review through the [Graduate Proposal Milestone Portal \(Flowable 2.0\)](#). Only the proposal itself needs to be submitted through the portal (no ethics documents/TD forms are required at this stage or will be accepted). Upon approval, students will receive an email containing their unique proposal approval number and instructions for subsequent ethics protocol submission to ORE, if applicable.

Ethics

Ethics protocols are to be submitted separately through the [YU Ethics Review System](#). **ORE will begin accepting ethics protocols in the new system on January 20, 2026.**

The ethics protocol must be approved by the SSC and the program prior to submission in the YU Ethics Review System.

In the ORE system, Graduate students must designate the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) as their faculty within the ORE system.

Once submitted to ORE, protocols will undergo coordinated delegated review by the Research Officer (RO), Associate Dean (AD), and then the Office of Research Ethics (ORE).

Please refer to the table below for a breakdown of each research type and instructions on next steps:

Type	Research Requirement	Steps Required for Submission
A	No human participants, no animals, no biohazards and no secondary data analysis	Submit proposal via the Proposal Milestone Portal (Flowable 2.0).
B	Human participants, minimum risk	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Submit proposal via the Proposal Milestone Portal (Flowable 2.0) for approval.2. Submit ethics application via YU Ethics Review System once it launches in January 2026.

C	Secondary Data Analysis not conducted as part of a faculty research project	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submit proposal via the Proposal Milestone Portal (Flowable 2.0) for approval. 2. Submit ethics application via YU Ethics Review System once it launches in January 2026.
D	Research involving Aboriginal/ Indigenous Peoples	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submit proposal via the Proposal Milestone Portal (Flowable 2.0) for approval. 2. Submit ethics application via YU Ethics Review System once it launches in January 2026.
E	Human Participants, data collected under faculty research grant with HPRC Approval Certificate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submit proposal via the Proposal Milestone Portal (Flowable 2.0) for approval. <p>Submission requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis/Dissertation Proposal • Form TD4: Statement of Relationship Between Proposal and an Existing HPRC-Approved Project • HPRC Approval Certificate for faculty's/supervisor's research project • TCPS Tutorial Certificate (*Must complete the CORE 2022 certificate released in 2022)
F	Animals or biohazards (must be under faculty supervision)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submit proposal via the Proposal Milestone Portal (Flowable 2.0) for approval. <p>Submission requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis/Dissertation Proposal • Form TD4: Statement of Relationship Between Proposal and an Existing HPRC-Approved Project • Approval Certificate for faculty's research project: Animal Care Committee (ACC) or Biosafety Committee Approval Certificate for supervisor's research project • TCPS Tutorial Certificate (*Must complete the CORE 2022 certificate released in 2022)
G	Human Participants, more than minimal risk, or Research involving Clinical Trials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submit proposal via the Proposal Milestone Portal (Flowable 2.0) for approval. 2. Submit ethics application via YU Ethics Review System once it launches in January 2026.