

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY STUDIES (STS)

PHD DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[Approved 31 October 2017]

A PhD is intended to demonstrate the ability to undertake and complete independent research that makes a unique contribution to knowledge. An integral part of any PhD is the development of a research proposal to outline the research process. The proposal is meant to provide students with the analytical and methodological framework; it is not meant to be a time-consuming exercise or replacement for a thorough and rigorous literature review. It should outline the research tasks a student undertakes and the preliminary structure of the thesis.

Students are expected to submit a thesis research proposal within three months of completing their comprehensive exams. It should be submitted to the student's supervisor, who will then seek the approval of the supervisory committee and submit it to the GPD and GPA.

Proposal Formatting

- Length: 3500 words max (excluding Bibliography).
- Format: margins should be 1" around all edges; font size should be 12; there should be headings and sub-headings with gaps before and after them

Proposal Content & Structure

The proposal should contain the following elements:

- Title & supervisors
- Introduction: use this space to explain why the topic is important and timely
- Research Objectives & Questions: between three and five objectives is ideal, including several questions that these generate
- Literature Review: an initial review of the existing literature on the overall topic as well as the specific analytical approach to be taken in the research; specify the 'gap' in the literature that the research will fill, and thereby demonstrate the unique contribution to knowledge that it is making
- Research Design & Methods: demonstrate a link between the analytical approach and suitability of the methodological approach and methods used (e.g. anthropology and ethnography, sociology and case study, history and archival work, etc.); outline empirical material, include information on sources, specific methods, sampling, etc. – it is important to be specific (e.g. how many people are you going to interview? Who are they? Why those people?); a discussion of the research ethics
- Dissertation Structure: preliminary outline of the thesis' chapters and their content
- Plan 'B': provide a brief outline of alternatives that could be used if the initial research design encounters significant stumbling blocks
- Timeline of the research
- Bibliography