

CHAD 290
Guidelines for Developing a Thesis/Project Proposal

Your proposal is a brief description of your proposed thesis/project. It includes an argument for the significance of your thesis/project along with a proposed method for completing your study or for implementing your project. Please address the following areas in describing your proposed thesis/project. Your responses should be in paragraph form using the headings below, with APA-style citations and format.

You should expect to go through several drafts of your proposal with review by your sponsor and the CHAD 290 instructor before submitting it to the graduate coordinator or department chair for departmental approval.

1. Introduction

Statement of the Problem or Research Question

State clearly and explicitly the nature of the problem that your thesis/project will address. The goal of this section is to justify to your reader that you have selected a real and worthwhile problem or research question to pursue.

Purpose and Scope of Thesis/Project

After considering the problem laid out in the previous section, describe the specific purpose of your study/project and summarize what will you do in your study/project to address the issue you have selected—what is your specific research/project approach (practical and/or theoretical)? Make your purpose statement as specific and clear as possible. Remember to be clear about the concepts and/or variables your work will address and provide a rationale for how your specific approach will be useful for achieving your aims. A good project addresses a specific practical problem in a given professional discipline through the dissemination of research.

2. Review of the Literature

This section of your proposal will present an argument to justify your proposed study/project.

Background Significance

Briefly summarize how the empirical literature related to your topic has informed the development of your study/project. Define the major areas of research you will be including in your review. Your review of the literature in this section should “make a case” for your research question or project idea. In other words, the sections of your review should overview the current state of knowledge regarding your topic as well as identify a specific gap(s) in knowledge. The gap(s) in knowledge you identify should relate directly to the problem statement you previously described.

Theoretical Approach

Discuss relevant theories or theoretical approaches that guide your study or the development of your project materials.

Research Question(s) or Project Focus

By now, you should have detailed a problem or issue that you plan to address either through an original study or a project. This section should state your specific research question(s), hypothesis, or project goals.

3. Methodological Approach

This section describes the specifics of how will you conduct your study or develop your project materials. The point is for you to explain in detail how you will go about your work so that your readers can properly evaluate the quality, feasibility, and ethics of your approach. Depending on your study, you may find it more suitable to include the following items in a different order or use different headings – please consult your thesis/project sponsor.

For a Thesis:

Remember that your study design, including research participants, data collection and analytical methods should be chosen so that they directly address your research question(s) (i.e., the design should follow directly from your research questions and aims).

Research Design Overview

- Summarize the research design, including your approach to data collection and analysis, and provide a rationale for your approach. If appropriate, summarize your approach to inquiry (e.g., descriptive, critical, interpretive, constructivist, etc.)

Study Participants or Data Sources

- Participants or Data Sources: describe number and characteristics of participants, documents, or events analyzed; include demographic and cultural information about participants, repository and access information for existing data
- Researcher description (more typical of qualitative work): describe your background in approaching the study and relevant aspects of your research background with emphasis on your prior understanding of the phenomenon studied
- Researcher-participant relationship (more typical of qualitative work): describe relevant relationships or interactions with research participants (previous or anticipated) that may impact the research process

Participant Recruitment

- Describe the recruitment process (e.g., flyer, face-to-face), incentives/compensation, consent process, and other relevant ethical considerations
- Describe how you will select your participants (e.g., convenience sampling), including inclusion/exclusion criteria
- Describe the general context of the study (i.e., where will you collect data?).
- If research is archival, describe data selection process for selecting documents

Data Sources and Instruments

- What kinds of data will you collect, and how will you collect it?
- What specific measures or instruments will you be using?

Procedures

- Describe the steps in conducting the study from participant recruitment through data collection

Analytical Methods

- Describe your data-analytic strategy and address your methodological integrity. In other words, explain how you plan to make sense of the data to answer your research question.

For a Project:

Describe how you will develop and implement/evaluate your project.

Project Design

- Restate the problem the project is designed to address
- Summarize the project design (i.e., what will your project entail and how will you develop project materials?).

Target Population

- Describe the characteristics of the group you hope to serve with your project. Include demographic and cultural information about participants
- Describe any additional groups that might find the materials helpful or useful, and why.

Project Development

Describe the steps in developing the project materials, including:

- your approach in gathering materials for your project (e.g., selection process for documents and resources to include as part of your project materials). Include a rationale for your approach.
- how the literature you review will inform your project.
- the procedures and materials used in any needs assessment or other consultation (e.g., experts) you might employ to develop materials

Procedures for Implementation and/or Evaluation

Describe procedures employed in implementing or evaluating your project materials, including:

Participants: Describe the recruitment process (e.g., flyer, face-to-face), incentives/compensation, consent process, and other relevant ethical considerations; Describe how you will select your participants (e.g., convenience sampling), including inclusion/exclusion criteria

Setting: Describe the general context where the project will be implemented or evaluated (i.e., where will you collect data?).

Data Sources and Instruments: Describe the kinds of data you will collect, and how you will collect it. What specific measures or instruments will you be using to evaluate your project?

Analytical Methods: Explain how you plan to make sense of any data collected in evaluating your project.

Researcher's Role

Describe *your role* in the development and implementation of project materials, including (a) your background in approaching the project with emphasis on your prior understanding of the issues addressed in your project and (b) any relevant relationships or

interactions with participants or setting (previous or anticipated) that may impact the project.

4. Implications/Application/Reflection

This section should discuss the potential contribution and significance of your proposed work and/or how the findings could be utilized.

- Describe any theoretical, practical, or clinical implications of your work.
- Describe how the project materials or study results might be disseminated to the population/settings of interest
- Describe how your work would benefit the professional field (project) or field of study (thesis).
- Describe any potential limitations you anticipate given your proposed work.