



Introduction

Proposal writing—whether for your department or a funding agency—is a particular form of writing which requires an understanding of its distinct components and how they interact with one another. This workbook is designed to help you begin the proposal writing process by focusing your attention on these components prior to writing a fully integrated dissertation research proposal. Later this summer, your task will be to use your completed workbook and summer research experiences to draft an integrated proposal for discussion at the fall workshop.

To get the most out of the workbook we ask that you write as succinct a summary as possible within each component section rather than simply cut and paste excerpts from draft proposals that you might already have written.

Here are a few points to consider when completing the workbook:

- Both within and outside of the DPD Program, your work will be reviewed and critiqued by scholars coming from a range of different disciplines, regional foci, and topics of expertise. Describe your proposed project in terms accessible to this broad academic audience.
- If you are unsure about how to address any component in this workbook, space is provided to describe your concerns so that they can be considered in the workshop sessions. Your peers and faculty facilitators will be asked to help you figure out how to evaluate and test your options and to decide upon a resolution that best suits your goals.
- Although we recommend that you complete this workbook section-by-section in numerical order, you may prefer to do so in a non-linear manner, beginning where you feel comfortable. Whichever way you choose, we cannot stress enough the importance of reflecting upon how your stated research goals in the first section are supported by content in all other sections.

Sections in this workbook:

[Section 1: Defining Your Issue](#)

[Section 2: Situating Your Project within a Scholarly Context](#)

[Section 3: Explaining Your Choice of Research Focus, Sources, and Methods](#)

[Section 4: Implementing Your Research Plan](#)

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Section 1. Defining Your Issue

As succinctly as possible, introduce the topic of your dissertation and the problem you want to solve or question that you want to answer through your research. Depending on your disciplinary background, you may characterize this as solving a puzzle, testing a hypothesis, introducing new modes of interpretation, or something else. Regardless of how you characterize your research goals, be sure to explain what your project will do in a way that can be understood by scholars both within and outside of your discipline who may not be familiar with your topic.

Please limit your response to approximately 300 words.

What, if any, issues or challenges did you discover in writing this section that you would like your peers to comment upon and provide suggestions for during the workshop?

Section 2. Situating Your Project within a Scholarly Context

Part I.

Describe how your dissertation will draw upon previous literature relevant to the topic you introduced in Section 1. What scholarly works in your discipline, and perhaps in others, have provided key information, theoretical understandings, and models for research approaches that will help you to carry out your research? Equally important, how will your research contribute to the existing literature on your topic?

Please limit your response to approximately 750 words.

What, if any, issues or challenges did you discover in writing this section that you would like your peers to comment upon and provide suggestions for during the workshop?

Part II.

List up to 20 research publications that have most significantly informed the formulation of your research topic, questions, theories, methods, and modes of analysis.

Section 3. Explaining Your Choice of Research Focus, Sources, and Methods

Describe what you need to learn from your research in order to solve the problem or answer the question you posed in Section 1. In what ways have you chosen to focus your research (be it to study specific groups of people, places, time periods, texts, performances, or other subjects of your investigations)? Why are these choices appropriate given your research question or problem? What sources and methods of investigation will you employ to collect and record the information that you will need to complete your research?

Please limit your response to 750 words.

What, if any, issues or challenges did you discover in writing this section that you would like your peers to comment upon and provide suggestions for during the workshop?

Section 4. Implementing Your Research Plan

Part I.

Describe here how you will organize and carry out your investigations. What is your timeline for your long-term dissertation research? How much time must you be in each of your research locations? What research and/or writing activities will you perform and when?

Please limit your response to 300 words.

Part II.

Describe your summer research plans. Where will you be and what will you be doing? How do you anticipate these activities will contribute to the development of the research proposal that you will write for the fall workshop and your long-term dissertation research plans?

Please limit your response to approximately 300 words.

What, if any, issues or challenges did you discover in writing these two sections that you would like your peers to comment upon and provide suggestions for during the workshop?

Section 5: Analyzing Your Compiled Evidence

Assume that your research methods will enable you to obtain the information or data that you identified in Section 3 as necessary to address your problem or question. How then will you examine and analyze this collected evidence to solve the research problem or answer the question you originally proposed? Here is where you explain how and why you expect to be able to complete your research project successfully meeting your stated goals.

Please limit your response to approximately 300 words.

What, if any, issues or challenges did you discover in writing this section that you would like your peers to comment upon and provide suggestions for during the workshop?

Section 6. Conveying Your Interest In and Qualifications for Conducting Research on Your Topic

Part I.

Explain the origin of your interest in your research project, such as its connection to your biography, personal and professional experiences, and academic pursuits. While this may not be an aspect that you will be asked to address in a dissertation research proposal, your explanation may help workshop participants give you constructive suggestions to clarify and attain your stated research goals.

Please limit your response to approximately 200 words.

Part II.

Describe here the skills you have gained that make you particularly well-suited to conduct your dissertation research. For instance, what languages and investigative or analytic skills have you learned that will be required to carry out your research plans and how did you attain them? What contacts or permissions do you have that you find have been or will be helpful to you?

Please limit your response to approximately 200 words.

What, if any, issues or challenges did you discover in writing these two sections that you would like your peers to comment upon and provide suggestions for during the workshop?

Section 7. Summing It Up: The Abstract

Now that you have completed the previous sections of your workbook, review what you have written and select from each what you think are the most important points a reviewer or committee member should know about this project. The abstract in most instances is the first element of your proposal that your reviewers will read. Therefore, be mindful of accessibility in your description, and take care that your summary accurately reflects the substance of your project. How will you represent the different components in this workbook within this abstract?

Please limit your response to 150 words.

What, if any, issues or challenges did you discover in writing this section that you would like your peers to comment upon and provide suggestions for during the workshop?