Purpose
The thesis proposal defines a transition point in a grad student’s study. This presentation of the thesis proposal typically marks the end of their formal coursework period and the beginning of their thesis research period. The purpose of the proposal presentation is for the student to demonstrate the quality, feasibility, and academic merit of their proposed thesis research and to receive constructive comments and suggestions from the department. The thesis proposal consists of both written and oral components and is graded on a pass/fail basis.

Procedure

Timing:
- The thesis proposal is presented after all graduate coursework has been completed and before a significant amount of research has begun.
- Masters students must present their proposal by the end of the semester after they complete Geog 801.
- Doctoral students must present their proposal by the end of the semester after they complete Geog 850.

Thesis Proposal:
- The student develops a written statement of proposed research in consultation with their Supervisory Committee. Proposals should begin with a concise problem statement outlining the overall issue to be addressed. They should then clearly establish the objectives of the research, outline the theoretical context of the research based on a review of the pertinent literature, describe the methods to be used to meet the objectives, and conclude with a draft outline of the document and a proposed research timeline. Where applicable, proposals should also include a research budget. The proposal should follow the detailed structure given below.
- Before the proposal is considered acceptable for an oral presentation, it must be approved by the student’s supervisor(s).

Oral Presentation:
- Once the proposal is judged satisfactory by the Supervisory Committee an oral presentation is prepared. The purposes of the oral presentation are to allow the Supervisory and Graduate Committees a chance to ask questions of clarification, to make points of suggestion, and to provide these committees with enough information to determine if the proposed research is feasible.
• The oral presentation is scheduled by the Geography Graduate Chair. When scheduling the presentation, the Graduate Chair should ensure that the following people will be in attendance:
  • the student;
  • at least 1 supervisor; and
  • 3 additional Geography faculty members.
Written submissions from faculty members who cannot attend the presentation will be taken into consideration.

• At least 1 week prior to the oral presentation, the Graduate Chair announces the presentation date and the student circulates the proposal to all members of the Geography Graduate Committee.

• The oral presentation normally starts with a 15-20 minute overview of the proposed research by the student and is followed by questions and suggestions from the faculty in attendance (the "Review Committee").

• The Review Committee members will determine, by consensus or majority vote, whether the proposed research is:
  • Acceptable: the student receives a passing grade for the course; or
  • Unacceptable. If the proposal is unacceptable, the Review Committee may recommend that:
    i. The student be given the opportunity to revise their proposal and re-present it. The second presentation must take place no later than the end of the semester following the semester of the failed oral presentation. The student's proposal must pass the examination on the second attempt or the student will be required to withdraw; or
    ii. The student be required to withdraw from the program. This recommendation is made to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and he/she will make the final decision.

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1 The review committee may have many points of suggestion for the student, but if the overall research proposal is feasible the student should be awarded a Pass. This is the expected outcome for most students.
Suggested structure of the Geography thesis proposal

1. General format should follow FGSR thesis guidelines.
2. Front material, including:
   a. Title page
      • short, descriptive title of the proposed thesis project
      • this may be a working title subject to change at a later date
      • include the name(s) of your advisor/co-advisors
   b. Abstract
      • a brief summary of your thesis proposal not exceeding ~250 words
      • includes the key statement of your thesis, a very brief summary of how you want to address the issue and the potential implications of your work, if successfully completed
   c. Table of contents
      • list all headings and subheadings with page numbers, indent subheadings
3. Introduction
   a. a thesis statement.
   b. a brief idea of why the current study is of academic interest; organized to move from general information to specific information; must be summarized succinctly, should not be itemized.
   c. a plain and logical description of the trends in the research field that render the chosen topic worthy of further investigation.
4. Study Area
   a. a description of the study area you propose, and why that area was chosen
5. Literature Review
   a. the goal of this section is to demonstrate how the proposed study relates to existing knowledge/previous studies in terms of both similarities and differences
   b. locate and discuss literature that sets the context for the research you propose; place the proposed study in context through a critical analysis of selected research reports.
6. Research question / Research objectives
   a. specific statements of the goals of the research; directly related to the gaps in existing knowledge identified in the previous section; research objectives cover what the research is attempting to investigate
7. Approach/methods
   Your approach and methods should be derived from your research questions. This section should address as many of the following as appropriate for the project you propose. This material should be presented in sufficient detail to justify the methodological choices you make. You should demonstrate that you understand (and are able to apply) such methods, and that you have carefully considered how you will go from research, data collection, data analysis and interpretation.
   • spatial and temporal scale
   • type of research (qualitative, quantitative, combination, experiment, field, lab, etc)
   • research questions (if qualitative) / what will be measured (if quantitative)
   • operationalization of concepts and their measurement criteria for sample frame; sample size; sampling technique(s)
   • data required, their sources, and methods of data collection
   • how validity and reliability of data will be established or considered
• methods of data analysis (both quantitative and qualitative)
• ethical constraints and/or issues

8. Preliminary results (if appropriate)

9. Work plan including time table (inclusion of budget is optional)
   a. consideration of the time frame required to conduct the proposed research (including formalising the proposed research with an academic supervisor), collect and analyze data and write up a first thesis draft; any timing challenges or roadblocks that are known or anticipated
   b. a tabular format is acceptable

10. Implications of research / Anticipated outcomes
    a. This should be a statement (not more than one page) of why it is important to undertake this research, in terms of the field of study involved and anticipated benefits; you may consider how your research findings might be applied

11. References
    a. appropriate academic format; complete

12. Other items to consider
    a. use of maps and/or figures is encouraged.
    b. glossary of the exact meaning of all jargon, acronyms or other terms
    c. explicit list of assumptions underlying key theoretical or methodological decisions
    d. permits required to undertake research