

Common Structural Elements of a Thesis Proposal

Introduction (leading into your argument):

- ***The background and context of your research problem***
 - Why is your work important?
 - What are some of the issues that concern the research you are proposing?
 - Identify the meaning of any key terms you will be using.
 - You may need to include any of the following:
 - a) historical, cultural, political, social or organizational information about the context of the research
 - b) a theoretical starting point
 - c) personal motivation

- ***Explanation of the need for your study***
 - It may include references to:
 - a) a 'gap' in current literature
 - b) the need to apply certain ideas in a new context
 - c) the significance of your particular topic
 - d) the ways in which the study may be significant for a particular community

- ***A problem definition and approach OR statement of topic***
 - Explain how your topic is related to the background section.
 - Briefly point out why it is a significant topic and what contribution your work will make.
 - State your problem/topic (concisely) in two or three sentences.

- ***Aims of the thesis***
 - Set out specific objectives of the research.
 - What do you want to find out?
 - What contribution will your thesis make to the scholarship in your field?

Literature Review

- ***The literature review should:***

- explain how your topic relates to significant literature and relevant research in your field;
- place your topic within its field of research;
- demonstrate your awareness of significant similar or relevant studies.
- It does not have to be exhaustive.
- It could also indicate which issues/topics you will focus on in your actual literature review (this may change later) to show that you can select issues to focus on.

- ***Theoretical orientation***

- First, state the various theoretical approaches taken in your topic.
- Which one do you propose to use in your research and why?
- Where, tentatively do you stand on the topic?
- If there are various theories on your topic or in your field, which one(s) will you use in your thesis and why?
- Which terms or trends do you wish to follow up from the literature review?
- Do you have any fresh suggestions of an explanatory, interpretative, or programmatic kind?

- ***Other considerations (not always necessary)***

- In view of past theory and research (and your emerging issues), where do you think you will have findings.
- A description of and short rationale for your selection of participants, methods of data collection, and analysis, and the procedures you will use to ensure ethical practice.
- A statement about the limits of the study.
- What other approaches were considered and why your approach is a more effective one.
- What criteria you are using to measure your success.

Methodology

- ***Describe your proposed method in sufficient detail so that the reader is clear about the following:***
 - What kind of information will you using?
 - From what resources will the information be obtained?
 - What resources will you require?
 - What methodology will you be using?
 - Why have you selected this approach?
 - What ethical and safety issues have you identified and how do you propose to proceed?
 - If appropriate, a statement of how you will manage any sensitive data (i.e. information of a personal nature) that you might have access to or create during the course of your research

References

- List all publications cited in your proposal AND those you have consulted in planning your research.
- Use the style recommended by your department (or supervisor).

Other Potential Elements

- ***Timetable/Milestones***

- This section is not usually required for an undergraduate thesis; however, it can be.
- Include when you will start and finish important aspects of your research, including the literature review, required training or attending courses, stages of experiments or investigations, beginning and completion of chapters, reviews, and seminars you will give, and completing the thesis.
- It may take the form of a chart, timeline, list, flowchart, etc.

- ***Materials and support***

- What materials, instruments, facilities, and financial support will you need to carry out your research?
- Describe equipment and software specific to the procedure.
- Make descriptions of apparatus in your proposal relatively brief.

- ***Tentative thesis chapter outline***

- Explains the (potential) sections of your thesis and what you will discuss in those sections.
- Follow the standard sections relevant to your type of research.
- Look at past theses in your area and discuss your ideas with your supervisor.

- ***Significance / expected outcomes***

- Includes the significance and/or expected outcomes of your thesis (these may relate closely to your aims).
- It may be excluded if the rationale for the study has been well developed earlier in the proposal.