

Guidelines for Ph.D. Proposal Preparation

The proposal must contain a summary of the proposed activity suitable for publication, not more than one page in length. It should not be an abstract of the proposal, but rather a self-contained description of the activity that would result if the proposal were approved. The summary should be written in the third person and include a statement of objectives and methods to be employed. It must clearly address in separate statements (within the one page summary): (1) the intellectual merit of the proposed activity; and (2) the broader impacts resulting from the proposed activity. It should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and, insofar as possible, understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader. A Table of Contents should be attached in the second page.

Project Description

The main body of the proposal should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and must include: objectives for the period of the proposed work and expected significance; longer-term goals of the project; and relation to the present state of knowledge in the field, to work in progress by the student and to work in progress elsewhere.

The Project Description should outline the general plan of work, including the broad design of activities to be undertaken, and, where appropriate, provide a clear description of experimental methods and procedures and plans for preservation, documentation, and sharing of data, samples, physical collections, curriculum materials and other related research and education products. It must describe as an integral part of the narrative, the broader impacts resulting from the proposed activities, addressing one or more of the following as appropriate for the project: how the project will advance discovery and understanding while at the same time promoting learning; how the results of the project will be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding; and potential benefits of the proposed activity to society at large.

Brevity will assist reviewers in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description (including Results from Prior work, which is limited to five pages) may not exceed 15 pages (single spaced, font size of 11 and margins of at least 1" on all sides of the page). Visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limitation. The only exception is the List of references which is not included in this 15-page limit. Conformance to the 15-page limitation will be strictly enforced. Additional material may be included as appendices, but not recommended unless it is absolutely necessary for the supervisory committee to have access to such appendix material. The supervisory committee is not required to read the Appendix material.

Any substantial collaboration with other individuals working on the project should be clearly stated along with an explanation of how the proposed research would complement the others' work.

The document should include a section called Results from Prior Work which has a summary of the results of the completed work, including a list of publications resulting from the work, brief description of available data, samples, physical collections and other related research products not described elsewhere; and if relevant, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work. Results must be summarized in fewer than five pages, which would give the balance of the 15-pages for the Project Description.

The project description should also include a proposed schedule for completion of any remaining course work and the research. Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. If the document is available electronically, the website address also should be identified. Proposers must be especially careful to follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the proposal. While there is no established page limitation for the references, this section must include bibliographic citations only and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the main body of the proposal.