

Doing Your PhD.

1. Supervision

Types of Advisor and Student relationships

- Pastoral
- Contractual
- Directorial
- Laissez Faire

Close supervision:	Supervision at a distance:
Regular meetings and regular submission of work in progress. Structured timetable	Student decides when to meet, and what work to hand in.
Advisor has input on most student decisions:	Students works independently from advisor:
Structured program: A timetable is made early in the supervision, and the student must stay within this plan	Unstructured program: There is no overall plan and the student decides what action to take as events arise
Professional: advisor and student keep to formal agreements about the supervision.	Sociable: The meetings are informal, and the student and advisor are casual.
Attention to details: advisor closely monitors all the details of the project.	Relaxed: advisor leaves the minor details up to the students

What to Design in your supervision

- frequency of meetings
- timetable of expected workload.
- specific accomplishments (either books to read, field trips to undertake, or writing to accomplish)
- Reading the student expects the advisor to do
- Other activities the student should undertake, such as courses, training, or conference papers.

What skills should a supervisor have?

- Project and organizational management
- Time management
- Constructive criticism
- Support and Encouragement
- Technical support

Duties

The **Major advisor** has primary responsibility for the thesis.

- S/he determines the main objectives of the thesis
- S/he is the main source for the student
- S/he will decide when the proposal and thesis is ready to defend
- S/he will manage the administrative tasks associated with the thesis.
- S/he will read all the drafts of the thesis

The **Co-advisor(s)** will provide feedback on drafts.

- They will provide an alternative point of view to the major supervisor

- They will assist when the student with the project, and they main be the main source for particular aspects for the thesis.
- They will read material requested by the student

How many advisors are best?

How to manage the three advisors

- Don't get them all to do the same work
- Assign a major – first point of call
- The co-advisors should have limited and clear set of duties
- Get all advisors in communication with each other.

WHAT A STUDENT SHOULD EXPECT FROM THE ADVISORS

- Supervise research.
- Managing the topic.
- Provide adequate time for the student.
- Provide constructive criticism of the project.
- Moral support.
- Manage administrative procedures of the Masters.
- Network support.
- Disseminating research.

WHAT ADVISORS SHOULD EXPECT OF THEIR STUDENTS:

- Discuss openly progress on the work.
- Mutually agreed meeting times.
- Student responsibility for the thesis.
- Student must balance conformity and independence.
- Regularly produce legible written work.
- The student will ask others for advice.
- The student shows initiative, enthusiasm, and originality
- Students read and work on comments made by advisor
- Student don't need to wait on advisor for work

What are some common problems students have with their advisor?

- Advisor takes a long time to read work
- Advisor is never there
- Insufficient feedback from the advisor
- Difficulty communicating with supervisor.

What are some common problems advisors have with their students?

- The student is constantly asking questions and asking for help.
- The student is totally unrealistic about their research plan and the resources that are likely to be available.
- The student does not incorporate ideas and suggestions from the advisory panel.
- The student seems overly dependent on advice and direction.
- The student lacks confidence in themselves and their project.
- The student disappears

Research Proposal for MA and PhD

Introduction

This is an overview of the **topic and your research project**. The introduction will give the context of the issues and a general overview of the main points.

Statement of Research Problem

The ‘problem’ of the research problem is something that needs research to find an answer. Here you locate the gap in knowledge that needs to be filled. This section gives the reason why the research needs to be undertaken. The research must fix this problem by finding out an answer.

Be careful not to confuse a problem in the ‘real world,’ for instance violence or any other violation, with a research problem. A research problem is a theoretical or conceptual problem which your thesis should provide an answer for. A problem in the real world is something that is going wrong and that your thesis will analyze or address. A research problem does not mean something is going wrong, it means there is some issue which nobody knows the answer to, and you plan to find this answer.

Objectives of research

The objectives section you outline what is the product or the output of the research in terms of what knowledge is produced. The objectives is a crucial aspect of the thesis as it summarizes the whole direction you will be taking, and the key issues you will address. The objectives will state what the outcomes of the thesis will be if the research is undertaken.

The objectives are generally stated in terms such as:

To identify ...

To compare ...

To analyze ...

You cannot use broad terms like ‘to explore’ or ‘to think about’ because these do not answer your problem (you will be exploring and thinking regardless of the specific problem). Also, be careful with using terms like ‘to suggest’ or ‘to propose’ because these may be recommendations coming out of the research, and not research findings. Objectives are normally done in point form. Generally a proposal has between 3-5 objective points.

Research questions

The research question is simply the questions that your research will answer. Their purpose is to give direction to your research. Many researchers consider the research questions the foundation of the research.

Research questions can be classified into three types:

- What... looks at describing, classifying, outlining
- Why.... Looks at finding causes, reasons, and proving an understanding or analysis
- How.. looks at how to improve, change, or the effects of intervention

You will need at least one why question; only what questions are too descriptive for university research. Generally, you will have 3-4 questions which focus on the central concerns of your research.

Literature Review

Here you must detail what has been written on the field to demonstrate that you know the field, and have done some thinking about what you want to study. The literature review should demonstrate that you have read and researched what literature is already available, and what research has already been done. You must provide descriptions of relevant texts, analyses of important research, and criticisms of work related to your research.

In this section you should also introduce your theoretical frame which assists understanding of the topic.

The **theoretical frame** is a part of the literature review (found in all PhDs and some Master’s proposals). The frame should show how your explanation of the research is related to other

people's ideas and theories. Further, it should also demonstrate at a basic level how these theories operate.

Research Methods

You must detail your research methods because the readers of the proposal want proof that you will find what you are looking for, if they are ethical, and if you are capable of doing the research. Here you describe the research process, your research tools, and the strategy for using these tools. The size of this section, obviously, depends on the type of methodology; if your research is simply textual then it may only be a paragraph (or not even necessary), but if your research involves fieldwork, interviews and/or questionnaires, this section could be a couple of pages.

Ethical Issues

You need to announce if you may have any ethical research concerns. This may be researching vulnerable subjects, or if there is any risk involved in the fieldwork. Even if there are no ethical issues, you need to declare this in the proposal

References

List of work cited in the literature review and the proposal

Non compulsory sections.

These sections can be added to further clarify your proposal. They are useful but may not be essential.

Significance of research

In this section you detail what contributions the thesis will make. Reasons include practical applications (for example advances in NGO monitoring), contribution to knowledge (for theoretical or social topics), or social. Here you need to think of potential outcomes of the research topic, or where the thesis will be practical.

Hypothesis/Expected Outcomes

You may be expected to give a brief assessment of what you expect to find. This enables you to guess what your research will show, and to provide a theory about why the results will be as they are. Some research designs don't have hypotheses.

Limitations:

These are the factors that will limit your ability to reach your objective, to explore the full scope. Some examples are physical access (roads), language, or political sensitivity. Students often get limitation mixed up with scope, but these are unrelated. The limitations are things that prevent you reaching the full scope.

A GOOD RESEARCH PROPOSAL

What makes a good research proposal?

While there are many different research proposals, there are some basic ingredients which make a proposal good. The committee will be looking at four main aspects of the proposal

1. That the topic is a suitable standard and size (the research question).

The topic must be of a suitable size, is neither too big nor small, vague or specific.

The topic must be a thesis: it must contain an argument. You cannot describe an event, as this is not research

2. That you are going to find what you are looking for (Methodology).

Here the committee will determine if the research methods you suggest will allow you to locate what you are looking for. Without accurate research methods you may not be able to find your data, or to analyze your material.

3. That you know enough about the field to enter it.

This is determined from the literature review. Here you must demonstrate that you have done enough research to show that you will not get lost, and that you can find your way about the issues, concepts, and people; also, that you will be able to stay out of trouble.

4. Project is well coordinated. The objectives of the research, the questions, the literature review and the methods are all focusing on the same aspect of research. You must make sure that the methods answer your research questions, not other questions, and the literature review provides information on your objectives, and so on.

CHECKLIST:

At the proposal examination the committee will basically be looking at the following points:

- Is the research problem of the relevant (master or PhD) size and standard?
- Are the objectives and questions clearly stated?
- Does the literature review demonstrate the student's knowledge of the area?
- Will the methodology provide the tools to answer the research questions?

Structure of the PhD Thesis

Commonly PhDs have around 6-9 Chapters

Each chapter is around 8-15,000 words

PhDs should be around 80,000 words, but anything between 60-100,000 words is fine.

1. Introduction, 6-8,000 words: Introduces topic, the thesis, and includes research problems, questions, and methodology,

2. Literature Review Chapters (or theoretical context), 10-15,000 words: normally 2-3 chapters. Provides background to literature, theories, arguments, and historical, legal or political context.

3. Working chapters, around 8-10,000 words each. Normally 4 chapters. These chapters deliver the data, the analysis, and argument of the thesis.

4. Conclusion, around 1,500-3,000 words. Some advisors see the conclusion as an important part of the thesis bringing all the findings together. Others see it as a basic summary and closing to the thesis – talk to your advisor about this.

THESIS ADMINISTRATIVE PANELS:

Each student has three panels. Often the panels consist of exactly the same people

-Note, all committee members must have at least a PhD and academic publications. All committees are at least 3 people.

Thesis Proposal Defense Committee:

Duties: Examines proposal, and when accepted allows research to begin

Consists of: Major advisor, co-advisor or proxy, and examiner external to IHRP with knowledge in proposal area

Meetings: meeting once in formal meeting

Thesis Advisory Committee:

Duties: advise student on all stages of research project

Consists of: Major advisors and at least one co-advisor.

Meetings: meeting often, no formal meetings

Oral Thesis Defense Committee:

Duties: Examines and passes thesis or asks for further work on the completed research

Consists of: Major advisor, co advisor and at least one external (to university) examiner

Meetings: meeting once in formal meeting