



Guide for Writing Thesis Proposals

This guide is for students who are enrolled in a postgraduate research degree and who have been asked to submit a thesis proposal.

Aims

The aim of the thesis proposal is to convince your school that:

- there is a need for the research; it is significant and important.
- you are contributing something original to the field.
- the topic is feasible in terms of availability of funding, equipment, supervisors, and data.
- the research can be completed in the expected time period. UNSW recommends completing a Ph. D. in 6 Semesters (3 years) for full-time candidates.
- ethical issues have been considered and approval has been given for the research by the University Ethics Committee.
- the topic matches your interests and capabilities.

What is the difference between a Masters and a Doctorate thesis proposal?

Your post graduate coordinator and your supervisor are best placed to give detailed clarification of your school's expectations. While differences are likely to be in the length and complexity of the research, the main difference is that a Ph. D. must contain something new.

Who is my audience?

The proposal will be presented as a written report and is usually presented in a seminar as well. It can be presented to a Postgraduate Committee or to staff more directly involved in your candidature, such as your supervisor, co-supervisor and your school's postgraduate coordinator.

Your goal

The thesis proposal helps you focus your research aims, clarify its importance and the need, describe the methods, predict problems and outcomes, and plan alternatives and interventions.

Getting it done

Preparing your proposal will be an iterative process. You will discuss a number of drafts with your supervisors. You should be writing regularly to have your proposal completed by the due date. This can vary from the first 3-9 months of your candidature.

Originality

Your work will make a worthwhile contribution to the field if it fulfils one or more of the following:

- it provides evidence to support or disprove a concept, theory, or model;
- it contributes new data/information, new or improved solution, analysis procedure or a new improved research methodology;

- it results in a new or improved concept, theory or model.
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See next: **Structuring the proposal**

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