

Dissertation Proposal

Sections A-D of the research plan should be organized to answer the following questions: What do you intend to do? Why is this work important? What has already been done? How are you going to do this work? Specifications for these sections follow:

A. Specific Aims. This section should describe concisely and realistically the specific aims of research described in the proposal and any hypotheses to be tested. This section should be about one page in length.

B. Background and Significance. This section should provide a critical review of background literature supporting the present proposal, and an indication of significance of the research proposed. The student should demonstrate his/her knowledge of existing research and state why the proposed project is important for the advancement of a particular field of study.

C. Progress Report/Preliminary Studies. This section is not required. It is intended to provide preliminary data demonstrating the feasibility of the proposed research. It may also provide support for sample size computations. If, for example, the student is relying on already existing data or patients who are part of another investigation, then it would be appropriate to use this section to provide data from that work which is relevant for the proposed project. Tables and figures should be kept to a minimum, described in the text, and included as an appendix to the proposal.

D. Experimental Design and Methods. The study design and procedures to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project should be detailed in this section. The means by which the data will be collected, analyzed and interpreted should be described in sufficient detail to demonstrate the student's plan for conducting the proposed project. The sample to be studied should be described, as should the specific measures to be employed, including power and sample size calculations. If specific measures have already been developed, they can be described briefly in the text and included as an appendix to the proposal. If new measures are to be developed, then plans for developing them should be described in this section. If questionnaires are to be used, drafts should be included. The plans for analyzing the data to accomplish study objectives and address each specific aim and/or test each hypothesis should be described in sufficient detail to demonstrate understanding of the analytical techniques to be employed. Definitions of all variables to be used for analysis, how they will be constructed from data collected, and precisely how they will be used in the analysis should be included. The detail should be sufficient to allow any knowledgeable reader to determine precisely how the student will analyze the data.

E. Human Subjects/Vertebrate Animals. If the use of human subjects or vertebrate animals is required for the dissertation proposal, it is the student's responsibility to obtain appropriate clearance from the University of Maryland Human Volunteers Research Committee or the Animal Care and Use Committee (IRB) before having contact with study subjects or animals in the conduct of the proposed research.

F. Literature Cited. Bibliographic citations of all literature cited throughout the proposal should be included in this section. The student may choose any standard format for referencing scientific literature.