

MINI-THESIS OR APPLIED PROJECT PROPOSAL FORMAT

"Mini-Proposal Assignment"

As we will discuss in class, your major project for the semester is a mini-thesis or applied project proposal. This proposal should be built from the knowledge that you have gained from your individual assignments for the semester and from your on-going literature review for your area of research or applied project interest. I would suggest that you review the "Twenty Steps to A Proposal", included in the School of Design Graduate Student Handbook, prior to beginning this assignment. We have also shared other "framework" materials that you would benefit from further review. I will also provide a copy and post the "Twenty Steps..." on the class web page.

Your proposal should consist of three major parts (supplemented by title page, abstract and references):

1. Chapter One -- Introduction

Introduces the background to the research/project, defines the problem, establishes limitations and potential contributions, etc.

2. Chapter Two -- Literature review

Establishes format for the literature chapter and includes at least a portion of the primary literature that is the foundation for your study/project. Aim for 8 - 10 sources as a minimum.

3. Chapter Three -- Methods

An outline of the proposed methods for the study/project.

This should be preceded by a **Table of Contents** and a one to two paragraph **Abstract** of the research/project. A **List of References** should follow chapter three.

You will actually determine the format for your thesis/applied project based on the topic and research or design approach. However, to assist you there are two models for you to review:

1. See the Graduate College Format Manual or School of Design Graduate Student Handbook for the generic outline our faculty have agreed upon as a starting point for your work.

2. The following is a generic outline for a thesis. It is not meant to be inclusive of all material that would be included with your work, rather it is a model to work from and expand for your own use. If you are doing a project, the format and contents of chapters would change but could still follow the same "global" organization. A thesis has to adhere to the manual. An applied project may deviate from the ASU style format. The following alternative generic format is from the Graduate School materials here at ASU:

I. Title Page

II. Approval Sheet

III. Acknowledgements

IV. Abstract

V. Table of Contents

VI. List of Tables

VII. List of Figures

VIII. Chapter One - Introduction

- A. Overview
- B. Statement of the problem and identification of study variables
- C. Significance of the problem (potential findings/importance -- need for the study)
- D. Research hypotheses (or objectives)
- E. Definitions
- F. Assumptions and limitations of the research
- G. Research/project justification (from key literature)(could also lead to a theoretical framework for the study)
- H. Organization of the thesis/report (in final thesis; optional for DSC 500)

IX. Chapter Two - Review of Literature

- A. Introduction
- B. Framework for literature review
- C. Sub-section I
- D. Sub-section II
- E. Sub-section III
- F. Sub-section IV
- G. Summary

X. Chapter III - Methods

- A. Determination of research design
- B. Research design (including operational definitions)
- C. Data collection

XI. Chapter IV - Data Analysis and Results

- A. Demographics of the population
- B. Testing of hypotheses (sub-section on each one)
- C. Validity within the study (if appropriate for operational definitions)
- D. Reliability (if appropriate for your study)
- E. Summary

XII. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

- A. Summary
- B. Conclusions
- C. Recommendations
- D. Implications and limits of generalizability of findings

XIII. References

XIV. Appendices

XV. Vita (optional)

Remember that the generic format will vary for each of you! The above noted examples are only a reference or place to start!

While the applied project approach to work may be theoretically different, the generic outline is very similar. The "generic" chapters one and two are very much the same kind of content -- an introduction to the project and literature or case studies that provide background and context. Chapter three is usually some form of methods or approach; chapter four may be results or outcomes or solutions. Chapter five is still a summary and recommendations section. There may be visuals separate from the written documentation and the written documentation may be less lengthy than the typical thesis. Each applied project is very individualistic and, therefore, different!

Your **minimum** document for this assignment should include:

1. Title Page
2. Abstract
3. Table of Contents
4. Chapter One - Introduction
5. Chapter Two - Review of Literature (a working review; may not include all or even most of your proposed review but should be sub-divided into the appropriate sections)
6. Chapter Three - Methods (Outline only)
7. References

The proposal should be prepared according to the style manual that you select -- don't change in mid-stream. Check with your major professor if you are not sure what s/he would like for you to use.

I will be glad to review work in progress prior to the final deadline (see course outline). See me if you have questions!