

Proposed Doctoral Dissertation Prospectus Template, Department of English

The dissertation prospectus is a XXX page document that provides a road map for the proposed dissertation, arguing for its feasibility and significance to the field. Below you will find a template outlining the elements of a strong prospectus. Please be advised that one of the crucial ingredients of a successful prospectus is a willingness to collaborate with, and seek, regular feedback from your dissertation director and members of your committee.

1. Introduction

At a minimum, your introduction must include a thesis statement in which you explain the main topic or question you are exploring. The topic or question you describe should be one that has either not yet been answered, or has been answered inadequately, and that can not only be answered, but deserves a dissertation-length response. You must also provide your own clear and concise response to the topic or question you pose, in a way that advances scholarship in the field, and that orients and drives the structure of the dissertation.

2. Review of Sources (Primary and Secondary) and Methodology

When reviewing your *primary sources*, you must state clearly how and why you are relying on them for your research. You should discuss their location(s) and accessibility, demonstrate your ability to use them in their original languages, and critically assess (where applicable) published editions.

When reviewing your *secondary sources*, you must situate the topic of your proposed dissertation within the context of contemporary scholarship in the field. You must critically assess their approaches to the questions you pose, identifying trends, patterns, or major themes, and evaluating their merits and limitations. You must also comment on the ways in which your own proposed response to the question develops, challenges, departs from, or fills in, the gaps of existing scholarship.

When describing your *methodology*, you must indicate how you will approach the sources that inform your dissertation project. Your methodological approach should be appropriate to both the types of sources upon which you will be relying as well as your proposed thesis. You must also consider the ways in which your methodological approach to the question compares to, contrasts with, or otherwise relates to, the approaches of existing scholarship on your topic.

3. Chapter outline

In this section, you must provide a tentative outline, with brief explanations, of the chapters that will constitute your dissertation. Chapters should be arranged in such a way that demonstrates a logical and progressive argument in defense of your thesis.

4. Bibliography

The bibliography should include both primary and secondary sources. All entries must be formatted in proper MLA style.