

Prospectus Template

The dissertation prospectus is a 20-25 page document that gives 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.

I. Introduction

At a minimum, the introduction must include a statement of the question animating the proposed dissertation. The question posed should be one that has not yet been answered or has been answered inadequately, that can be answered, and that deserves a dissertation-length response. The introduction must also include a thesis statement that directly responds to the question posed, is clear and concise, advances the field, and orients and drives the structure of the dissertation.

II. State of the Question/Literature Review

This section situates the proposed dissertation within the context of contemporary scholarship on point. In this section, you must review and critically assess approaches to the question you pose above, identifying trends, patterns, or major themes and evaluating the merits and limitations of existing scholarship. In this section, too, please 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.

III. Primary Sources

In this section, you must identify the primary sources upon which you intend to rely for your dissertation research. You should discuss the location and accessibility of these sources, demonstrate your ability to use these sources in their original languages, and critically assess (where applicable) published editions of such primary sources.

IV. Method

In this section, you must articulate a methodological approach to the sources that inform your dissertation project. The methodological approach should be appropriate to both the types of sources upon which you will be relying as well as your proposed thesis. You should 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.

V. Chapter outline

In this section, you must provide a tentative outline 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.

VI. Bibliography

The bibliography consists of two sections—one for primary sources and one for secondary scholarship. All entries must be formatted in proper Chicago style.