



Dissertation Proposal Guidelines

The goal of the Dissertation Proposal is to provide the doctoral candidate an opportunity to articulate and receive feedback on the proposed plan of research prior to beginning the research. Unlike the Candidacy Papers, which provide an opportunity to explore the field more generally, the Dissertation Proposal should be focused on the study or studies that the PhD candidate will conduct.

The expected length and scope of the Dissertation Proposal will be determined together by the supervisor and student in accordance with the type of research being proposed; however, they should be a minimum of 25 pages, double-spaced, including references.

Components of the Dissertation Proposal:

The Dissertation Proposal will serve as a research plan that should include at least the following components:

- An introductory rationale for the study that draws on previous research such as that discussed in the candidacy papers;
- Research questions or statements of inquiry that will guide the proposed study;
- Theoretical perspectives guiding methodological choices;
- A description and justification of the proposed methodology that includes: a) research context and participants, b) data collection methods and procedure, and c) possible analytic methods to be used.
- Confirmation that an ethics application from the appropriate university Research Ethics Board is being drafted, if necessary;
- A statement about the potential contribution of the study;
- A list of bibliographic references; and
- Where applicable, instruments such as interview protocols, questionnaires, or measures that will be used to collect data.
- For 3-manuscript dissertations: A description of the three manuscripts to be written and the common problems/questions that tie together the three manuscripts. The components described above (e.g., research questions, theoretical perspectives, methodology, contributions) must be specified for each manuscript. The specific topics of the manuscripts may emerge post-proposal. If this is the case, the student must send descriptions to the committee members.

Dissertation Proposal Process and Timeline:

The PhD candidate should begin working on the Dissertation Proposal after completing and successfully defending the Candidacy Papers. The supervisor should provide feedback on at least one entire draft of the Dissertation Proposal prior to sending it to the Dissertation Advisory Committee. Dissertation Advisory Committee members should be provided with 2-4



weeks to read and provide feedback on the proposal. Although not required, the doctoral candidate is encouraged to meet with the committee to discuss the feedback. The committee may ask the doctoral candidate to revise and re-submit the proposal for further feedback before commencing with the research.

Once the committee has approved the Dissertation Proposal, all committee members must sign the [Dissertation Proposal Completion Form](#) (located on the DISE PhD current student website) and submit the form on myProgress.

Unlike the Candidacy Papers, there is no deadline set by McGill for completing the Dissertation Proposal. However, in order to encourage timely completion of the dissertation proposal, the department suggests that all full-time students should complete their dissertation proposal no later than **August 31 of their third year**.

If applicable, the PhD Candidate is encouraged to draft an ethics research proposal while completing the Dissertation Proposal. Given that it can take some time for the Research Ethics Board to approve a study (at least 3-4 months), candidates are encouraged to start this process as early as possible. The candidate's supervisor should provide specific feedback on the submission of the ethics proposal. Please note the content of the dissertation proposal should be closely aligned with the content of the REB application. This process can be adjusted based on the committee's recommendation.

Evaluation, Feedback and Next Steps:

The Dissertation Proposal is not formally evaluated. However, the Dissertation Advisory Committee must approve the Dissertation Proposal and sign the Dissertation Proposal Completion Form. In addition, all committee members are expected to provide written feedback on the Dissertation Proposal to the PhD candidate. Once the Dissertation Proposal has been approved by the Dissertation Advisory Committee and the REB application (if applicable) has been approved by the appropriate university REB, the candidate may commence with recruitment of participants, data collection, and analysis. It is important to note that although components of the Dissertation Proposal will become part of the dissertation, it is likely that these components will need to be revised once the data has been collected and analyzed.

If the PhD Candidate is conducting research in schools, appropriate School Board approvals will need to be obtained. Depending on the School Board, this can take several months.