

Dissertation Proposal Guidelines

Graduate Program in Theatre and Performance Studies, York University

PLEASE NOTE:

We strongly encourage all students to refer to these guidelines in preparing their proposal for FGS. However, modifications to this format are acceptable if student produces a dissertation proposal in a proposal writing course; in such cases, the dissertation committee and GPD should be made aware of these alternate requirements.

The content of the proposal must be written using full sentences. Jot notes or bullet points are not appropriate.

Length of proposal: 3,000-3,500 words (approx. 12-13 pages, before Works Cited)

WHAT TO INCLUDE:

A. Working Title

B. Project Description and Research Objectives (approx. 2 pages):

Introduce your research topic and state the explicit objectives of your project. Describe your project in a clear, straightforward manner. Avoid jargon wherever possible. Remember that not everyone reading your proposal will be a specialist in your area. This is especially important when applying for grants. This does not mean that you should not use specialized language but rather that you should clearly define your terms and be attentive to what others may/ may not know.

As you describe your topic, make sure to outline the central figures, issues, events, objects, or locations that you plan to examine in order to give us a sense of the scope of your project. Introduce your central research question and suggest related sub-questions. You may also offer a preliminary thesis (although at this stage, the questions are much more important). Consider including a brief, illuminating example.

C. Context (approx. 4 pages):

Situate the proposed research in the context of relevant scholarly literature. Offer a brief description of current work in the field and explain how your project is participating in existing conversations and/or extending previous work. In other words, describe what has been done already and why your project *has to happen*.

Provide a longer history or genealogy of your topic, whether it be a social history or an intellectual one. Place the topic in a larger socio-cultural frame that considers the disciplinary genealogies, the history of ideas, the history of practices, etc.

Introduce varieties of secondary scholarship that have not considered this topic but that you will rectify. For some of you, this may mean consulting sources from different disciplines, i.e. anthropology, cultural studies, history. Identify central debates, principles, theories, or

arguments that you will extend, resituate, revise and/or critique. Make an argument for the significance of your research question by showing how it intervenes in previous scholarship and/or conventional assumptions. Are you filling a research gap? Identifying a blind spot? Offering a new analytical model? Something else entirely? If applicable, situate your project in relation to your previous or ongoing research.

Above all, argue for the significance of this topic as a research area. Explain your contribution to knowledge. Be confident in your project so that those reading your proposal will agree to support it.

D. Methodology (approx. 3 Pages):

Outline the process you will undertake to complete the project.

What methodology or methodologies is/are most appropriate for your project? What exactly will you do? Who will you contact? For what reason and with which questions in mind? Possible methodologies include ethnographic approaches, archival work, practice-based research, theoretical analysis, etc.

If you are planning to visit archives, list all possible archives, indexes, searches, video archives, interview questions, sources at other campuses and libraries, etc. that you intend to consult. What types of analyses will you conduct with these sources? Try to be as specific as possible. Why do these analyses require these sources? You should be equally thorough when discussing other methodologies, e.g. list all sites and potential interview subjects for an ethnographic study.

If you are planning to use a particular theoretical framework—e.g. Butler’s notion of performativity—you should identify this here and provide some description of how others have used it and why such a theory is appropriate for your research.

Above all, make sure to articulate the relationship between your central research question and your methods of research. Make an argument for why your research question requires your methods—an important way of stating your methodology.

E. Chapter Breakdown (approx. 3-4 pages)

Outline the structure of the proposed dissertation by concisely outlining the central topics to be discussed in each chapter. You may find it useful to identify the central research question and discuss key methodological approaches and/or theoretical framework for a given chapter, as well as reflecting on the contribution each chapter will make toward addressing the research questions central to the study.

F. Works Cited (as many as required)

In addition to your 3,500 word proposal, you will include a Works Cited—i.e. all of the works you have directly referenced in your proposal. You should also include a list of additional Works To Be Consulted, which includes 20-25 additional sources. You do not have to specify every book or article you plan to use in your dissertation. However, you should demonstrate familiarity with a range of sources (e.g. listing ten sources doesn’t cut it).

G. Language Comprehension (if required)

If your project requires research in a language other than English, you are required to demonstrate proficiency in that language. Students who are not yet proficient in said language, will be asked to complete graduate level language coursework. For example, a student working in French may be required to take GS FREN 5712: French Reading Course for Academic Purposes [Basic] and GS FREN 5713: French Reading Course for Academic Purposes [Intermediate]. Students who are already proficient in said language may be asked to demonstrate proficiency through a translation exam.

If your project requires research in a language other than English please indicate how you have met the language comprehension requirement.