

Thesis Proposal: Guidelines for DN Students

Overview

The purpose of the DN proposal is to focus and define the student's thesis plans. The proposal should provide a clear, concise description of the proposed project activities. The proposal should demonstrate evidence of plans to make an original contribution to knowledge and communicate an implementation plan that is feasible and worthwhile. Qualities of strong proposals include:

- Identification and linkage of the proposed problem in practice to relevant theory (e.g. substantive and implementation science theory/ conceptual framework), research and policy and whether the thesis is situated in the pre-implementation, implementation or post-implementation stage
- Explanation of the theoretical/conceptual basis of the proposed study
- The application of theory (e.g. implementation science theory/conceptual framework), research and policy analysis to the problem in practice
- Justification of the methodological approach to address the problem identified in practice
- Proposed knowledge translation (KT) plan to disseminate results of the thesis with justification for the KT strategies selected

Due Date

DN students **must** successfully defend their thesis proposal by January 31st of the second year of their program. If the student does not successfully defend the thesis proposal by the April 30th of the second year (including a second attempt, if required) the student will no longer be considered in 'good standing' and a recommendation will be made to SGS that the student's registration in the DN program be terminated.

Proposal Elements

Thesis proposals are normally around 8000-10000 words in length, excluding the list of references, timeline/work plan attachment, and other relevant attachments (e.g. data forms, consent forms). The specific formatting requirements and length of the thesis proposal will be determined in consultation with the supervisor and committee members.

A proposal is likely to contain most of the elements listed below, although the supervisor and/or supervisory committee may require the inclusion or omission of sections as appropriate to the nature of the thesis project. The supervisor and supervisory committee will provide guidance about the required elements and headings to use in the proposal. Normally, a thesis proposal includes the following elements:

- **Problem and Rationale:** A clear description of the study problem including justification for the study, relevance and importance of the study, and an explanation of how addressing the issue will advance the relevant field by addressing the identified problem.
- **Background Information, Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework, and Objectives:** This typically includes a concise and critical review of relevant literature and analyses of relevant policy. Usually, following the literature review, a theoretical model / framework (i.e. substantive and implementation science) is proposed that ties together thesis concepts and/or perspectives, determines the phase of implementation where the thesis is situated and a plan for implementation. A clear purpose statement and project objectives should also be included.
- **Design and Methods:** The study design should be specified to address the stated objectives. The rationale for the design should be provided, including merits and limitations. Data collection methods should be described in detail and justified. Normally, conceptual definitions should be clearly described and, if appropriate, operational definitions should be specified as well as methods of their measurement. As appropriate, how data will be managed, coded, entered, and readied for analyses should all be clearly described. If pilot testing is required, procedural details are provided. A KT plan, appropriate for the stage of implementation, that addresses KT strategies for dissemination of results should also be included.
- **Data Analysis:** The methods of analysis appropriate for the study design should be clearly described and justified, in detail.
- **Ethical Considerations and Approvals:** If the project requires ethical and/or other institutional approvals, the plan for this must be clearly articulated. If appropriate, draft consent forms should be appended to the proposal.
- **References:** Only sources cited in the proposal text should be included. Referencing style for in text citations and the reference list must be according to an accepted style and used consistently throughout the proposal.
- **Timeline / Work Plan:** Students must attach a detailed one-page (maximum) timeline/work plan identifying plans for timely completion of each phase of the thesis, up to estimated time to complete the final oral exam.