

SCHC SENIOR THESIS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

The thesis proposal should make a convincing scholarly case that details, contextualizes, and supports your proposed thesis project. It should be written in a formal academic style, following conventions appropriate to your field of study. It should be thoroughly researched, with sources from the annotated bibliography **incorporated and cited throughout** the main body of the proposal.

A strong proposal will do the following: contextualize your project topic; describe your research question or project idea; detail your research methodology or project approach; explain the stakes or significance of your project; and provide a timeline for its completion.

Proposals should be **8-12 pages in length**, double spaced, and submitted as a PDF or Word document. The length requirement includes the annotated bibliography of at least five sources. Proposals must include each of the sections described below, **with the following section headings included**:

YOUR NAME & THESIS TITLE

INTRODUCTION

The introduction explains the context for your project and captures the reader's interest. Introductions will vary in style. A strong introduction will do the following:

- describe your **project topic**, offering insight into the context by situating the project within ongoing scholarly or expert conversations and drawing on timely, relevant research and practice
- articulate a well-defined **problem statement**, which both
 - makes an argument, states a hypothesis, raises research questions, or articulates the problem motivating your project and
 - offers insight into how you will support your argument, test your hypothesis, answer your research questions, or address your problem through the project deliverable
- answer the “**so what**” question, establishing a need or exigence for your project by describing how the project might contribute to broader conversations within your chosen field or discipline and who could benefit from this contribution (e.g., the audience, academic community, stakeholders, impacted populations)
- define the **scope** of your project
- briefly describe your project **deliverable** if you plan to pursue a creative or applied project

Your introduction should be saturated with citations and references to conversations in the field within which you are working.

If your project is connected to research supported by a university or SCHC grant (e.g., Magellan Scholar or mini-grant, Honors Research grant), please explain in this section (3-5 sentences) how your thesis project will expand upon that supported project. Your honors thesis should be an extension of this research, whether through a more comprehensive write up of the project, an analysis of a separate facet of your data, a proposal about how to expand upon your previous research, a way of re-doing a project that did not pan out the way you expected, etc.

APPROACH/METHODOLOGY

This section describes how you will carry out your project and explains the disciplinary reasoning behind your approach. You will provide a specific, detailed plan for analyzing or exploring your subject, gathering and interpreting evidence, and/or developing your deliverable and explain why this methodology is the best way to achieve your objectives.

A successful methodology section will thoroughly address the following as applicable.
Note: neither the prompts nor the range of methodological approaches represented here is exhaustive. Your project may call for different considerations.

Creative and Applied Projects

Your methodology should address two components: (1) how you will approach developing your deliverable, and (2) how you will approach the research for the written portion of your thesis.

Deliverable

- What methods, processes, or tools will you use to create, build, or produce your deliverable?
- Why is this the best method or format for your project? What makes it more suitable than alternative approaches?
- Are you modeling your approach on existing works, projects, or precedents? What are they, and how will they inform your project?
- Who are the intended audience(s) or stakeholders for this project? How will you research them, and how will your findings shape your approach?
- What are the development stages of the project, and how will you move through them?
- What criteria will you use to evaluate whether the project is succeeding?

Written Component

- What will the written portion (i.e., critical introduction) of the thesis look like, and how will it relate to the creative or applied deliverable?

Research Projects

Research Methodology

- What methods will you use to answer or explore your research question or problem?
- Why is this the best method for your project? What makes it more suitable than alternative approaches?
- Are you modeling your approach on a particular methodological or theoretical framework, or adapting another researcher's methods? If so, which ones, and why?
- Will your analysis draw on disciplinary or interdisciplinary concepts or approaches? If so, how and why you will apply them?

Experimental Design *(if applicable)*

If you plan to conduct an experiment, specify:

- Your hypothesis and how you will test it
- Your independent variable(s) (what you will manipulate or compare) and dependent variable(s) (what you will measure)
- Your experimental design (e.g., between-subjects, within-subjects, pre/post, control vs. treatment) and how participants, subjects, or samples will be assigned or selected
- Your intended sample size or number of trials, and the population or material you will draw from (e.g., undergraduate participants, cell cultures, environmental samples)

Primary Data Collection *(if applicable)*

If you plan to collect your own data (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations), specify:

- Your target population (e.g., college students in South Carolina) and why they are the right group to study
- The number of respondents or participants you hope to reach, and your reasoning for that number
- A draft of the questions or prompts you intend to use, if applicable
- How the data will be collected (e.g., format, setting, tools)

Data Analysis *(if applicable)*

If you plan to analyze data (data you collect yourself or an existing/secondary dataset), specify:

- The data you will analyze and its source (e.g., government repository, published study, institutional archive)
- The variables you are interested in and why
- The analytical methods or software you will use (e.g., statistical analyses, GIS mapping, coding qualitative data) and why are these appropriate for your project

Primary Source Analysis *(if applicable)*

If you plan to analyze existing primary sources (e.g., texts, media, social media posts, legal documents, archival/visual materials), specify:

- The sources you will examine and their scope (e.g., number, time period, geographic origin, genre)
- Your interpretive or analytical framework (e.g., close reading, discourse analysis, content analysis, visual/rhetorical analysis) and why it suits your sources and research question
- A priori codes, themes, or patterns that will drive your analysis or processes you will use to identify and define emergent themes

Stand-Alone Literature Reviews (*if applicable*)

If you are developing a stand-alone literature review as your thesis project, specify:

- The hypothesis, argument, or question shaping your approach to selecting, analyzing, and synthesizing sources
- The type of literature review you intend to do (e.g., systematic review, scoping review, critical review) and why
- The databases or journals you expect to consult and keyword or search strategies you will use
The scope of your review (e.g., demographic, geographic, temporal, disciplinary, or methodological boundaries)
- The criteria you will use to determine inclusion/exclusion in the study
- Key authors, researchers, or titles you plan to include and why

EXPECTED OUTCOME AND PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE

This section describes the expected outcome or findings for your project and addresses its personal significance. It should address the following:

- What do you expect to learn, produce, or create through this project?
- What are some potential pathways/horizons for additional research, exploration, or innovation beyond the scope of this project?
- How will your project be significant for you, personally or professionally? Will you try to publish or present your findings? Will you use it as a jumping-off point for graduate or future research? What skills/insights/experiences do you hope to gain?

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (approximately 200-300 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, which is the annotation.

You have already completed this as another assignment. Here, **you should revise your annotated bibliography** based on the feedback you received. These sources must **also be cited throughout your proposal** to establish the larger scholarly conversation you are entering, to articulate the need or exigence for your project, to describe the theory or framework that will shape your approach, and/or to inform the methods you plan to use. If research from this section is not incorporated throughout the main body of your proposal, including in the Introduction and Approach/Methodology sections, then you will be asked to resubmit.

You may cite sources not included in the annotated bibliography in the thesis proposal. In that case, you should provide a complete citation for additional sources within the Annotated Bibliography section, but additional annotations are not required.

TIMELINE

The timeline provides a tentative roadmap to the completion of your thesis project from now until you defend and submit your project. This timeline is tentative (therefore subject to change) but should be highly detailed and provide a template for establishing deadlines with your thesis director/second reader.

The timeline can be written in any format that best helps you to organize the necessary steps.

Items to include are milestones and regular check-ins, such as meetings with your thesis director and/or second reader, due dates for sections of your thesis or full drafts, a tentative defense date, and other significant dates relevant to your project.

The timeline for **creative or applied projects** may include:

- collecting and studying models
- developing and testing prototypes
- refining deliverables
- drafting the critical introduction

The timeline for **research projects** may include:

- developing research protocol or data collection process
- collecting data or running experiments
- developing a literature review
- analyzing data
- outlining the final report
- drafting and revising various sections of the report