

## **Guidelines for Writing a Doctoral Research Proposal**

At the second stage of the program students are required to submit and defend a doctoral research proposal before an academic committee. Writing a good research proposal is a crucial step on the students' success in completing their doctoral research project. The doctoral research proposal should demonstrate a student's ability to conduct a thorough examination of 1) the topic of the intended thesis, 2) a review of the subject's scholarly literature, and 3) the materials and the methods to be applied to fulfill the task. The proposal must therefore be demonstrative of a promising, achievable, comprehensive research project in order for the student to be granted a positive recommendation by the respective examining committee.

The written proposal must not exceed **4,000 words** (without bibliography and outlines). It must also contain tentative table of contents and a preliminary bibliography.

Please observe the following guidelines when writing your proposal. Try to consider and include in your presentation all of the suggested points below while you compile your proposal. Try also to seek some feedback and advices on it from relevant faculty before you submit it and defend it.

### **1- Defining the Research Topic:**

The proposal must state clearly a description of the topic to be investigated. While describing the main subject, students should take into consideration the following:

- A. describe what data and information that inspired the research;
- B. review the literature and textual information available on the research topic;
- C. demonstrate how this research relates to the existing literature, and specify how this research would provide a unique contribution to the topic (be as specific and focused as possible).

### **2- Outlining the Theoretical Approach:**

The proposal must specify the particular discipline and topic within a particular framework that the student wishes to explore. Students will find it helpful to refer to one (or more) research context(s) in the relevant scholarly literature of the specific area. Consider the following:

- A. describe the relevant perspective(s) on the problem already available related to the researched topic;

- B. identify the theoretical approaches and options in the relevant scholarly field (i.e., authors and published studies and results/findings on the same matter);
- C. in doing this, try to show how your proposed dissertation project is going to cover the current debate(s) within the discipline on the studies topic.

### **3- Describing the Research Objectives:**

Describe the objectives of the intended research; paying attention to the reasons why this doctoral project should be carried out and the parameters for such a study (i.e, why have you chosen this topic from a particular perspective and approach, and why you are not choosing others). While attending to this, discern the following:

- A. be focused by naming the exact issue and specific problem and perspective on which you will concentrate;
- B. try to elucidate the specific scientific objective(s) of your intended thesis by stating some central inquiries or hypotheses you are going to tackle. Make sure that the inquiries are clearly articulated and that they match the chosen theoretical framework you selected for tackling your topic's problem;
- C. make sure you demonstrate in a clear and persuasive way that your inquiries reflect innovativeness and originality and promise of producing a timely research on the chosen topic.

### **4- Choosing a Research Methodology:**

Demonstrate your ability to state in a structured and organized way how the problem is going to be systematically and methodologically presented. Attend to the following:

- A. state clearly the research strategy and methodology you would like to pursue and point at the hypotheses and strategies in other literature that inspire your research;
- B. be as specific as you can about the data-collection and data-analysis method(s) to be conducted (e.g. content analysis, critical observation, philological/semiotic experiment, literature- or document- analysis, textual or conceptual commentary, historical-critical hermeneutics etc.);
- C. explain the logical reasons behind your choice of one specific methodology or your opting for a combination of two or more methodologies for collecting and analyzing your research data;
- D. demonstrate your familiarity with the methods being used and why they are sufficient as opposed to others, in order to produce an innovative, original and timely study on the topic;
- E. demonstrate that the chosen methodology matches the specific standards of the discipline of the subject and it is suitable and achievable to solve the problems related to the research inquiries (e.g. if the subject related to Qur'an or Bible, the method should match the standards of Qur'anic or Biblical studies in academic scholarship, and is not a method that is borrowed from a circle of reasoning that is irrelevant to the circle of reasoning of Qur'anic or Biblical studies)

**5- Concluding the Proposal:**

Conclude the entire proposal with concise remarks, taking into consideration not to open up another discussion, problem or inquiry not touched upon in the previous sections. The 'conclusion' must *conclude* and not pave the way for something that has not been said earlier.

Provide a reasonable road-map and time schedule for completing the dissertation writing, if possible.

Give a general evaluation of the dissertation's topic and its value for the relevant field of study. Be realistic and objective and not hyperbolic.

Finally, include a tentative table of content and a reliable and solidly selected scholarly preliminary bibliography.