

PhD Thesis Proposal Guidelines  
Department of Religions & Cultures  
Concordia University

Upon completion of the comprehensive examinations, the PhD student prepares their thesis proposal. The student should develop the proposal in consultation with their thesis supervisor, following the requirements outlined below. The first draft of the proposal should be submitted to their supervisor within three months of the completion of the comprehensive examinations.

A PhD thesis proposal should be a polished piece of writing that contains the components outlined below. It should be in the range of 15–25 pages, and should be comprehensible to scholars of religion who are not specialists in the field of study.

- 1) **Abstract:** A statement of the key issues or questions to be investigated, and the student's hypothesis.
- 2) **Key questions:** An elaboration of what has been set out in the Abstract. In this section the student should also set out the objectives of the dissertation and contextualize the themes to be examined.
- 3) **Methodology:** A statement on methodology should include a discussion of relevant theoretical issues. The student should set out what is being studied and how it is being studied. What are the primary sources? Will archival research or ethnographic fieldwork be required? Be as specific and detailed as possible.
- 4) **Review of the Literature:** This review should delineate the contours of the field and set out what has been done on the topic. Depending on the nature of the methodology, the literature review may include scholarship that establishes ground breaking theoretical approaches (in broad strokes or in extensive detail, as the case may dictate). It should certainly lay out the previous scholarship on the topic, both defined narrowly and more widely, as the larger context that is relevant for the argument to be made. This section is crucial in order to demonstrate what the dissertation will contribute to the field.
- 5) **Contribution to Knowledge.** The student should state explicitly, given the questions, methodology, and state of the field, what this dissertation will contribute.
- 6) **Outline:** A chapter-by-chapter outline of the entire dissertation. Each chapter description should be at least one paragraph.
- 7) **Timetable:** A timeline for research, writing, and revision.
- 8) **Bibliography:** A bibliography of the key primary sources and secondary literature for the project.

#### Approval and Circulation

- 1) When the supervisor considers the proposal sufficiently developed the proposal is circulated to the committee members for their feedback.
- 2) When the proposal has been revised to the satisfaction of the thesis committee, the proposal is sent by the supervisor to the Graduate Studies Committee for their input (email a copy of the proposal to the Graduate Program Assistant in .PDF, .RTF, or .DOC format). The Graduate Committee may request further revisions. Once the Graduate Committee approves the thesis proposal, the student officially advances to candidacy and may undertake the writing of the thesis in earnest.

I have read the guidelines of the university on Plagiarism and its Code of Conduct at:  
<http://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity/plagiarism.html>

I have read the Thesis Preparation Guide  
<http://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/sgsdocs/handbooks/thesispreparationguide.pdf>

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