



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
MEDIEVAL AND BYZANTINE STUDIES

Guidelines for Preparing a Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal must follow the format set by the University. The University instructions can be found on pages 2-3 of this document and on-line at: <http://graduatestudies.cua.edu/forms/index.cfm>. Further information can also be found at the graduate studies website: <http://graduatestudies.cua.edu>.

In short, the proposal must follow the format set out below. It should address four issues, namely: background, purpose, methodology, and significance. The discussion of background should introduce the topic and situate it in terms of the current bibliography. The purpose section should address the aims of the proposed dissertation. The methodology section should explain how the project will be undertaken. Some Departments and Schools require the student to provide a list of proposed chapters. Because MBS draws faculty from several Departments and Schools, we do not require this. Its inclusion should thus be discussed with each student's committee. If a chapter outline is deemed appropriate, it should be included in the methodology section. Finally, the proposal should address the significance of the project and its contribution to the field. That is, the proposal should address what the problem is the student intends to study, why he/she intends to study it, how he/she intends to study it, and the expected contribution of said study.

Once the proposal has been completed according to these guidelines, it should be circulated to all members of the dissertation committee, together with the MBS Dissertation Proposal Approval Form (included as pages 4-5 of this document). After the committee reviews the proposal and signs the approval form, the proposal will be presented to the MBS Steering Committee, which will vote on approving the proposal.

All students preparing proposals are encouraged to discuss their proposal in its early stages with the Director of MBS and their committees, and to be sure they are following the required format.

12/02/2010

Instructions for Preparing the Proposal

The proposal, attachments and “Request for Approval” form should be *typed*. The proposal should not exceed *two pages*, with at least one-half inch margins, and the typeface should be no smaller than a 12 point Times Roman Font or the equivalent. The first page should be headed by the full title of the proposed research and the candidate’s name. The title should be capitalized, both on the form and in the proposal itself, as it will appear in the final copy of the dissertation. The proposal should be concise, organized in a coherent manner, and include the following information:

1. A ***Statement of the Problem and Background***, which should identify the current state of relevant research and provide important background information.
2. A clear statement of the ***Purpose*** of the sponsored study, and the rationale or intellectual justification for the research. The research questions to be investigated should be clearly stated. If the study involves the testing of hypotheses, these should also be clearly stated.
3. A description of the proposed ***Methodology***. In the sciences, the following should be clearly described when applicable: the population to be sampled and the proposed sampling procedures; significant variables and how each is to be measured; how the data will be obtained and analyzed; and any other information needed to understand the proposed methodology. When the study is in the arts or in the humanities, the following should be clearly indicated: the nature of the data, information, or themes to be studied; the kinds of interpretive procedures to be employed; and the types of supporting evidence or arguments for the question investigated. A plan of scholarship that outlines the possible chapters of the dissertation may be included or attached. The bibliographic materials should inform the methods used.
4. The ***Contribution and Originality*** of the proposed study. The proposed research must be original and the proposal must indicate that identical research has not previously been conducted. The proposal must also clearly state the contribution that the researcher expects to make to the relevant field of knowledge.
5. If the relevant citations are not included within the body of the proposal, a brief ***Selected Bibliography*** containing the most important primary and secondary sources relevant to the study should be attached.
6. When the study involves human subjects, a short section addressing ***Human Subjects Concerns*** should note how subjects are recruited, how they are to be involved, and how the information on subjects will be protected. Additional detailed information is available from the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Services for all research projects requiring review by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects as defined by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46. If the preliminary determination of the candidate and Major Professor is that the proposal falls within an exempt category, please note the appropriate subparagraph under 45 CFR 46, para. 46.101(b), on the proposal form as indicated. Sample informed consent forms and any other appropriate supporting materials should be submitted with the proposal for review.
7. If any proposed committee member is an ***extern***, note that individual’s positions and organization under “Faculty Rank” and attach a resume or curriculum vitae to the proposal. Externs must have the requisite academic credentials and expertise in the field of study. They will be permitted to serve as the Major Professor only in extraordinary circumstances.

The information may be presented in a continuous paragraph format: however, the use of separate sections, clearly labeled as suggested above, is recommended, since this format facilitates the evaluation of the proposal. Additional requirements concerning the proposed methodology, other details of procedure, bibliographic information, etc., may be made by individual departments or schools. First person plural language (“we” and “our”) should be avoided. The researcher, even when investigating as part of a team, completes the dissertation as an individual project. If the dissertation is written in a language other than English, this fact must be noted in the proposal. When completing the proposal form, be sure that ***all*** requested information is provided.

This form with original signatures (Degree Candidate, Major Professor of Proposed Committee, Chair of Department if applicable, and Dean of School) and supporting documents, plus five complete copies, should be submitted to the Coordinator of Graduate Student Services in the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies (116 McMahon Hall). Proposals are accepted for review during the period between the opening and closing classes during the Fall and Spring semesters. Proposals requiring Human Subjects clearance will be forwarded for review to the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Services. Every proposal is reviewed by an anonymous member of the faculty identified by the Dean of Graduate Studies. If changes are required, the proposal is returned to the candidate with suggestions for revision. ***Candidates should not proceed beyond the preliminary stage in the investigation of the topic until receiving a copy of the form signed by the Dean of Graduate Studies.***



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MBS DISSERTATION PROPOSAL APPROVAL FORM

Name of candidate: _____

Title of proposed
dissertation: _____

Dissertation committee members (name, rank, school/department--*not signatures!*):

1. (Major professor, i.e., director of dissertation) _____

2. (First reader) _____

3. (Second reader) _____

Approval of the Proposal

I. By the Committee:

Herewith I certify that I have read the attached dissertation proposal and discussed it with the candidate. The proposal is ready to be presented to the Steering Committee of MBS for further discussion and approval.

Committee member 1 _____ (sign)

Committee member 2 _____ (sign)

Committee member 3 _____ (sign)

II. By the MBS Steering Committee:

The proposal was presented to the Steering Committee on _____ (date) and approved / not approved.

Notes:

III. By the Director of MBS:

Signature of MBS Director: _____

Date: _____

Notes / Comments: