



MBA THESIS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this document is to give MBA students practical guidance about their thesis proposal. In addition to some general comments, the actual structure that should be followed in presenting the proposal is also outlined.

The research proposal can serve many useful functions. The most important is that it helps the student to think out the research project he/she is about to undertake and predict any difficulties that might arise.

For those who are not quite sure what their focus will be, the research proposal can be a space to explore options. Research proposals can be effective starting places to discuss projects with professors, too. A professor who is initially skeptical about a project may be able to imagine it more easily after reading a well written research proposal.

Your research proposal should answer the following questions:

- **What?** This includes problem statement, research question, research objectives and key definitions.
- **Why?** The justification and objectives of the research.
- **How?** Indications of the type of methodology and data the research will use.
- **Whom?** Who will benefit from this research, which audience is it aimed at?

In preparing your thesis proposal, please be aware of the following points:

- **Reading:** in order to write the proposal you are expected to have read at least two or three articles relevant to your topic (to be included in the Bibliography).
- **Writing:** in writing the proposal (and the thesis) you should make an effort to adopt a style similar to that found in the academic articles you have read.
- **Length of proposal:** Up to six pages (one and a half spacing).

2. STRUCTURE OF THE PROPOSAL

(1) Title

Give your project a working title, which may or may not become the title of the thesis

(2) Background and overview

Explain your interest or any previous work you have done on the topic. Also, describe any reading or any personal experience that has led you to want to research on the topic. You should also include a short statement explaining the benefits which you think will be derived from the research you are proposing.

(3) Problem Definition

From the wider background, you have just described you should select a management problem and explain it clearly.

(4) Research Question

Your management problem must be converted into a research question, e.g. the relationship between pricing and certain customer segments or the relationship between IT outsourcing and staff morale

(5) Research Methodology

Discuss the kinds of sources you hope to consult and the methods you will be using to extract and process the information you will be gathering in as much detail as is possible at this stage. As the project is underway you might find the need to revise your methodology. You must explain how you will be collecting the data you need in order to address your research question. If you are conducting questionnaires or interviews you should explain what sample you will be using (size, criteria, method) and also how you will be approaching the people in your sample. You should also give an indication as to whether you will be testing hypotheses quantitatively or using qualitative methods, such as interviews or semi-structured questionnaires.

(6) Problems and Limitations

Describe the problems you expect to encounter and how you hope to solve them. For example, texts might be unavailable, people you hope to interview might be unwilling to participate, you might not have enough time, etc. Try to imagine every possible problem so that you have contingency plans and the project does not become derailed.

(7) Bibliography

List the books and articles that you have already consulted. It is important to keep full bibliographic records of the books and articles that you use and quote in your text, so that when the time comes for writing up you do not waste valuable time looking for such information.

(8) Timetable

Please see example below.

Timetable (an example)

ACTIVITIES/TASKS		TIME (MONTHS)											
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Mai	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	Bibliographic Searches	■	■	■									
2	Photocopy info from non-bibliographic sources	■	■	■									
3	Reading	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					
4	Submission of thesis proposal			■									
5	Fine tune research question and methodology				■	■							
6	Prepare research tools in detail						■	■					
7	Make contacts for interviews/questionnaires						■	■					
8	Data collection							■	■				
9	Data analysis								■	■			
10	Writing up of thesis									■	■		
11	Revision, editing and submission											■	
12	Submission of thesis												■
13	Thesis defense												
14													
15													
16													



Cover sheet for thesis proposal

Master of Business Administration

Intake of March 2009

Thesis Proposal

- Student's Name:**
- Thesis Title (Provisional):**
- Supervisor's Name (Proposal):**
- Submission Date:**