Department of Journalism
Graduate Student Guide for Preparing a Research Paper, Thesis or Creative Project Proposal

Introduction

Before a graduate student may register for RES 697 (3), THES 698 (6), CRPRJ (3 or 6) course credits, a proposal must be written and approved by the student’s adviser or committee. The proposal will serve as a contract between the student and the adviser/committee. When the proposal is approved by the adviser or committee, a one-page abstract of the proposal will be submitted to the Graduate School with a signed Topic Approval Sheet. Sample abstracts and approval sheets are contained in the Graduate Research Procedures “Appendices” available online via the departmental website (www.bsu.edu/journalism). Once the signed approval sheet and abstract are received the Graduate School, the student will subsequently be approved for enrollment in the appropriate coursework (RES 697, THES 698, CRPRJ 698).

Proposal Length and Scope

Although the Graduate School requires only a one-page abstract of the proposal, the typical length of a research paper, thesis or creative project proposal is between 12-20 pages. The desired length of the proposal will be determined by the student’s adviser or chair of his/her committee. The proposal should serve as an indication of the student’s preliminary understanding of the topic and a demonstrated commitment to undertaking the capstone master’s degree research/project. A well-prepared proposal will also enable the student to have a document to guide ongoing required research and writing tasks.

The proposal should contain: 1) A two-page statement of the problem (research paper or thesis) or introduction/rationale (creative project), 2) A six-to-ten-page review of related literature (research paper or thesis) or literature review (creative project), 3) A two-to-four-page discussion of methods to be used to address research questions or hypotheses (research paper or thesis) or the methodology to be used to complete a creative project and 4) A two-to-four-page works cited page.
Format

The proposal should be written in future tense (e.g., “The research will examine the theory of agenda-setting as it applies to social media usage.”). When the final version of the research paper, thesis or creative project is written, the language will shift to past tense (e.g., “The research examined the influence of agenda-setting theory on social media usage.”). The proposal should be double-spaced with a separate one-page abstract attached to the appropriate three- or six-credit Topic Approval Sheet. Sample abstracts and approval sheets are contained in the Graduate Research Procedures “Appendices” available online via the departmental website (www.bsu.edu/journalism). The proposal cover page should include the following information in all caps:

- At the top of the page, a one-to-two-line title should be centered:

  THE IMPACT OF AGENDA-SETTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

- Then the following information should be centered on the page:

  A THESIS PROPOSAL
  SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
  IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
  FOR THE DEGREE
  MASTER OF ARTS
  BY JOHN SMITH
  ADVISER: PROFESSOR WILLIAM JONES

- The following information should go at the bottom of the page:

  BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
  MUNCIE, INDIANA
  MONTH, YEAR*
  (*when proposal is approved)
A contents page follows the proposal’s cover page, as per the following example:

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WORKS CITED

*Sample Proposals*

Sample proposals from previous graduate students are available by contacting the journalism department’s Graduate Studies Director. Students may also contact their adviser or chair of the thesis or creative project (6-credit) committee.

*Approved : November 15, 2011*