

A little about dissertation proposals

Amanda Gable, Ph.D.

School of Materials Science and Engineering

Georgia Institute of Technology

Love 255

amanda.gable@mse.gatech.edu

What your advisor and committee want you to explain . . .

- The problem your research will solve
- Why this problem needs to be solved
(motivate the problem)
- What others have done
 - Showing how your research fits within your field-the literature review
- What your approach will be (the How)
- Why your approach is likely to work to solve the problem (motivate your approach)

And, they also want you to show . . .

- Experimentation/research you have already done that indicates your approach may work
- Your specific plans for future work
- [Any anticipated results/hypotheses]

Common proposal format

Introduction

Problem statement

Background/Literature Review

Project description

Objectives; Approaches

Preliminary Results

Work to be done

Timeline for work to be done

[Anticipated Results/Conclusions]

Mapping proposal format with content information from MSE Handbook

Sections for a typical proposal:

Introduction

Problem statement

Background/Literature Review

[Project description:

Objectives; Approaches]



[Section titles will fit the specific research]

Preliminary Results

Work to be done

Timeline for work to be done

[Anticipated Results/Conclusions]

MSE instructions from Handbook

Executive summary:

Topic and Need for Research

Critical analysis of related lit, including state of the art

Overall objectives of proposed research

Theoretical, fundamental and/or experimental approaches to be used to achieve objectives

Preliminary results & discussion

Detailed project plan/timeline (Gantt chart)

Who is your audience?

Advisor & Committee Members . . .

Who knows all the details about your work?

You need to write to inform all members,
not just your advisor

What is the purpose
of the timing of the proposal?

To get feedback you have time to use.

How to Begin

Order of document
doesn't reflect order of your work

see Weitzlab Handout

* * *

Work on the Problem Statement

Why solve? (how do you know
this?)

What's your approach? (how did
you decide this?)

Toward an Introduction draft

- Outline key concepts and the central characters
[the field and the problem]
- State what's at stake for the reader
[author's claim/solution/contribution]
- Explain what will happen next

Ask your advisor for a good diss proposal example from your lab;

Ask your friends for their diss proposals & their slides from their diss proposal presentation.

Write a good abstract for your presentation—it will be publically posted 😊

You also need to give an approx. 30 min. presentation for your committee.
(Ask your advisor details about length.)

Always have extra slides.

Go to other proposal presentations!

Practice in front of your lab group—many times.

How I Can Help

- Take my Eng. Comm. Class--MSE 6754—the writing assignment(s) can be your diss proposal!
Offered Fall Semesters.
- Appointments with me for questions and advice: I can't read the whole document, but I can help with specific parts or issues.

Campus-wide Resources

- CoE GT Language Institute Coaching for International graduate students: sign up for appts at <http://Mywco.com/GTLanguageInstitute>
- GT Communication Center:
www.communicationcenter.gatech.edu
 - Dissertation Boot Camp—also for proposals

Create your own resource: A Diss Proposal Writing Group

- Start a writing group and set a regular mtg. time—maybe every month or every 2 wks;
- X # of members “present” each meeting;
- Presenters show up with 5 hard copy pages for all;
- Each presenter reads the 5 pages out loud while others read along. (can include graphs which aren’t read, but get comments);
- Members make comments orally: what’s confusing—what needs more explanation—what is really good;
- Benefits: deadlines—only reading & commenting within the mtg. time—people outside yr lab read—you get support and encouragement.