

**SPROTT SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
CARLETON UNIVERSITY**

**PhD in Management
BUSI 6907 – Thesis Proposal**

The PhD thesis proposal should exhibit competence in the research process by applying an existing body of knowledge in the critical analysis of a new question or of a specific problem or issue in a new setting. On the basis of that conceptual understanding and methodological competence, it should demonstrate at least one of the following:

1. The development and support of a sustained argument in written form
2. Originality in the application of knowledge

The thesis proposal has two parts, both of which are evaluated by the thesis committee: the written component and the oral defence. The proposal is defended so that the thesis committee can come together in agreement that the project is ready to go forward before the student begins working on the proposed study.

Upon the successful completion of the proposal requirement, the student will be assigned a letter grade in BUSI 6907 (0.5 credit weight).

Format

The length of the proposal will vary according to the thesis format, the research approach, the area of study, and the supervisor/committee expectations. Students should be expected to write approximately 50 pages (double spaced), excluding the list of references and appendices.

Guidelines for the formatting (font, margins, title page, etc.) of the thesis and proposal can be found at: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/formatting-guidelines/>

Research Ethics

All research involving human participants, with the exception of the use of secondary anonymous (not anonymized) data requires approval by Carleton University's [Research Ethics Board CUREB-A](#).

This includes any research associated with a faculty member (including Adjunct Faculty) or students at Carleton University, research which is conducted at Carleton, off campus (e.g., businesses, hospitals, prisons, schools), or research approved by another academic institution, and may include archival research.

Your thesis proposal should state whether your proposed research will require an ethics review, briefly explaining why or why not. If it will require an ethics review, also briefly explain:

- a) the anticipated risks and benefits of the proposed research for the research participants;
- b) how you are planning to recruit the participants and obtain their informed consent;
- c) whether you are anticipating difficulty in obtaining research ethics clearance because of any specific circumstances (e.g., vulnerable population, nature of the participant relationship to researcher, conflict of interest). If so, please explain how you are planning to address this anticipated difficulty in your research ethics application.

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Proposal Components

The components of a thesis proposal will vary. Some typical components may include (guidelines only):

Section	Components
Timeline	General target dates for anticipated research: ethics submission, data collection, analysis, writing activities, anticipated completion and defence dates (1 page)
Abstract	A synopsis providing the essential topics and proposed research (1 page)
Introduction	Overview of the issue, scope, research objectives, and proposed contributions (5 pages)
Background/ literature review and theory	Context of the research, brief review of the relevant literature (20 pages)
Research questions	Research questions (2 pages)
Methods and Methodology	Description of the proposed research approach, specifics of the methods to be used (constructs and measurements, description of ethics approval needed, samples, recruitment, data collection) (5 pages)
Data analysis	Anticipated data analysis approach (2 pages)
Conclusions and Limitations	Anticipated theoretical and managerial contributions, limitations of the proposed research, future research (3 pages)
References	A bibliography that includes sources cited in the proposal
Appendices	Any additional information pertinent to the proposed research (e.g. proposed survey questions)

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Submitting a Proposal for Examination

When setting up a thesis proposal examination, the student and supervisor are responsible for the following:

1. **Committee and Defence Date:** Securing committee members and setting up a time and date for the examination that works for all involved.
 - The Examination Board consists of supervisor(s) and 2 committee members: one within the research area and one external to the research area (normally faculty members from the Sprott School of Business)

2. **PhD Proposal Examination Approval Form:** Once the Examination Board has agreed on a date and time, fill out the form (attached below) and submit it to the Graduate Administrator to have approved by the Academic Director.
 - **Due at least 3 weeks prior to the defence date**
 - Once approved, the Graduate Administrator will book a room (and arrange a Zoom meeting link, if applicable), secure a Chair, and circulate the Notice of Examination to all committee members.

3. **Proposal Submission:** The student must provide the Graduate Administrator with an electronic copy of the proposal to be distributed to all committee members.
 - **Due at least 2 weeks prior to the defence date (the committee may request an earlier submission to allow for more time with the proposal document)**
 - It is the student's responsibility to provide paper copies of the proposal to any committee member who requests one.

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PhD Proposal Examination Overview

- 1. Welcome**
 - The Chair outlines the process to the student and committee members
- 2. First deliberation without the student**
 - The student is asked to briefly leave the room while the committee discusses the written component of the proposal
- 3. Opening remarks by the candidate**
 - The student gives a presentation with a slide deck ranging from 15 – 20 minutes
- 4. The first round of questions**
 - Questions are one-on-one between the candidate and the member and proceed in the the following order (in general, from the farthest member to the closest to the candidate):
 - i. Committee member(s) external to research area
 - ii. Committee member(s) within research area
 - iii. Supervisor(s)
 - Suggested time is 10-12 minutes per committee member
- 5. The second round of questions**
 - In this round, discussion is more interactive, following the same general order but potentially with group discussion
- 6. Closing remarks by the student (at the student's discretion)**
 - (Optional) The student has the opportunity to make a closing statement
- 7. Second deliberation without the student**
 - The student again leaves the room while the committee decides the outcome of the defence:
 - o Accepted as submitted
 - o Acceptable after minor corrections and modifications
 - o Acceptable after major modifications
 - o Rejected
- 8. Conclusion and presentation of the results of the deliberation to the student**
 - In the case of minor or major modifications, the supervisor will prepare a list of revisions to be given to the student as soon as possible after the defence.