

GGR277
Qualitative Research Methods in Geography
Fall 2017

Research Proposal Assignment

At A Glance:

Draft: 3% of final grade
Due Nov. 8/9 at noon
Final: 15% of final grade
Due Nov. 30th at 11:59pm
9-10 pages double spaced
Including: 7-8 pages proposal,
1 page references, and 1-2 page research instrument
Normal margins, 12 pt. font
Submit via Blackboard
AND to Turnitin via Blackboard

The final assignment for this course is a qualitative research proposal. As mentioned during tutorials, you can choose any topic of interest to you related to *student experiences at UTM*. You can use the topic you have identified earlier in the semester, but you can also change your research question at this point if there is something else that is of interest to you.

While you are writing your research proposal, keep in mind the following three questions throughout your process – they are key questions used in evaluating a research proposal:

- Why should anyone be interested in my research?
- Is the research design credible, achievable, and carefully planned?
- Is the researcher capable of doing the research?

To answer these questions:

- Be practical (practical problems cannot easily be brushed off)
- Be persuasive (“sell” your proposal)
- Make broad links (hint at a wider context)
- Aim for crystal clarity (avoid jargon, assume nothing, explain everything)

Use the ‘Library Resources’ tab on the course’s Blackboard page to identify resources that might be useful to you in the process of writing your proposal.

The entire proposal should be 7-8 pages long plus 1 page of references and 1 page of a research instrument (total of 9-10 pages). All writings should be double spaced with 12-point font and normal margins. The proposal can be written in the first or third person. The following pages outline the different aspects of your research proposal (all page lengths are approximate):

Title and Abstract (1 page)

Your title page should use the following format:

Title (in bold)
submitted to
GGR277
by
Your Name

Abstract: An abstract is a unique style of writing. It is a brief summary of a research article, thesis, or conference presentation that is provided to help a reader quickly ascertain the paper's purpose. Abstracts are usually between 100 and 500 words. Well-written abstracts clearly express the research question and/or thesis, the methods used, and the results or findings. In this case, you will be writing an abstract for your research proposal. You should include the following information:

- *What is your research question and why is it important?*
- *What is your research design?*
- *What are the specific methods you intend to use?*
- *What is the population you plan to study and the sampling strategy you will use?*
- *How will you analyze your data?*
- *What are the major ethical considerations or limitations for the research?*

Your abstract can be a **MAXIMUM of 200 words**. This is a strict limit. You will lose points if it is more than 200 points. Include a word count at the end of the abstract. It should look like this: (173 words)

Introduction (.5-1 page)

Your introduction should clearly introduce your topic and discuss its significance. Your research question should be clearly stated in this section. Although it is not required, a strong introduction will likely include at least one reference to previous research that positions your work in a larger field and/or supports your claim for why this is an important topic worthy of study.

Literature Review (.5-1 page)

The next portion of your proposal is a literature review in which you are expected to position your research in the context of other research. It is unlikely that you will find research that examines your research question at UTM. This is actually a good thing; it helps you establish a 'gap' in the literature. Start by looking for articles asking similar questions to the one you are interested in. Identify what part of their research is similar to what you want to do and what part is different – from content, to methods, to population, to place of study. Then, in your literature review, concisely communicate what is known about your topic, what is still unknown, and how your research is going to fill that gap.

Your literature review should include 5-6 references. Be sure to use proper APA in-text citation and include these references in your reference page at the end of your proposal.

Research Design and Methods (2-2.5 pages)

This is the heart of your research proposal. You have to convince the person reading your research that you are prepared to actually conduct the research you are proposing. You accomplish this by demonstrating that you have thought through all of the details related to your research and that given permission to proceed, you would be ready to jump right in. Everyone's design and methods section will be different based on what they are planning to do, but the following questions should help you make sure you are covering all of your bases:

- What research design are you using? Why is that appropriate for the research?
- What research methods will you use? Why are those methods appropriate for addressing the research question?
- Are there any special considerations due to your select research methods? (e.g. level of moderator intervention for focus groups)
- What population are you planning to study? Why?
- How will you identify and recruit participants? (sampling strategy)
- How will you analyze your data?

In your review of the literature, you may have identified research methods that were used by other researchers to study this topic. If you did, then you are encouraged to cite those methods in this section so as to justify your choice of methods. Alternatively, if you think a different method would complement the methods used by others, this would be the place to justify that rationale as well.

Positionality (.5-1 page)

This is your opportunity to explain your positionality in relation to your research. Are you an insider or an outsider? Why do you say this? How do you anticipate your social location influencing the research process? Try to think about this from as many perspectives as possible.

Ethical Considerations (.5-1 page)

As we discussed in class, ALL research has ethical considerations. In this section, identify the ethical considerations you anticipate in relation to your research project. Remember to consider the three framing aspects of research ethics (respect for persons, welfare, and justice) as you think about the relations of power embedded in your research design. Once you have identified ethical considerations, discuss how they will be addressed.

Limitations (.5-1 page)

It is often easier to know the limitations of a research project after it has been conducted. Your challenge here is to try to anticipate what the limitations are of research you have not done yet. One way to approach this is to think about the limitations of the methods you are using (all methods have limitations). Another way to approach this is to think about the limitations of your particular research (which might be due to your own positionality, access to population, etc.).

References (1 page)

Include a list of the references you have cited on a separate page using APA style referencing. For more guidance on APA citations, see:

<https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=250462&p=1670709>

Research Instrument (1-2 pages)

The final piece of your research proposal is your research instrument. If you are proposing interviews, then you should have a detailed interview guide (the format of which will depend on whether you are planning on doing a structured, semi-structured, or open interview). If you are proposing focus groups, you should also have an interview guide with potential follow-up question. If you plan to do observations, then you should have an observation guide that indicates how notes should be taken during observations. If you plan on doing a survey, then you should include your survey questions.

Note: you should include no more than 5 demographic questions in your research instrument.

If you are proposing a different kind of research (e.g. ethnography), discuss an appropriate research instrument with your TA or Dr. Laliberté. Finally, if you want to propose a community-based research project where the exact research instrument will depend on community input, then your research instrument should be a model of what might be used with a short description of how decisions regarding the final research instrument will be reached.

Note: Your research instrument should be included as ‘**Appendix A.**’ In the ‘Research Design and Methods’ section of your proposal, it will likely be appropriate to point your reader to Appendix A while you are discussing your specific methods.

DRAFT vs. FINAL ASSIGNMENT

You are expected to turn in a draft of your proposal by noon on Nov. 8/9 (depending on the date of your tutorial). Your draft should NOT have an abstract. It also does not have to meet the full page count of the final assignment; however, to get full credit for the draft, you will have to have drafted each section.

The final assignment should meet the above standards and will be assessed using the rubric on the next page.

GGR277 FINAL PROPOSAL RUBRIC

Grade	A: Excellent	B: Good	C: Adequate	D: Marginal	F: Inadequate
Quality of Response to Task	Contains all required elements and sections; no errors in formatting; completes assignment exactly as required.	Contains most required elements and sections; few errors in formatting; completes assignment almost as required.	Contains some required elements and sections; some errors in formatting; completes assignment generally as required.	Contains few required elements and sections; many errors in formatting; significant parts of assignment incomplete or inappropriate.	Does not address question or task; fundamental errors in formatting; wholly mis-understands assignment.
Quality of Introduction and Research Question	Significance of research is clear. Research question is strong, clear, and concise.	Significance of research is addressed. Research question is clear but a bit vague.	Research question is connected to the stated significance of the research, but neither are particularly clear.	Significance of research is not supported and research question is unclear.	No discussion of significance. Research question is not identifiable.
Quality of Literature Review	Research from references concisely integrated to establish context for research and to establish gap.	Research from references applicable to topic, but no clear gap established.	Research from references presented as summaries rather than integrating to establish gap.	Use of references either doesn't justify research or appears very disconnected.	Inadequate use of references – either in terms of number, content, or argument.
Quality of Description of Methods	Methods, population, and sampling method are clearly described and detailed enough to allow duplication of research.	Methods, population, and sampling method are described, enough detail is provided to allow a reasonable replication.	The research method is generally described, but not with enough detail to ensure adequate replicability.	The research method is very superficially described. Specific characteristics of population, and sampling method not explained.	Research method barely described. It would be impossible to replicate research based on write up.
Quality of Discussion of Positionality, Ethics and Limitations	Insightful description of limitations and ethical considerations that engages with all three aspects of research ethics. Insightful discussion of social location and possible implications.	Description of limitations and ethics – goes beyond issues of informed consent. Social location is discussed with some consideration of implications.	Description of limitations and ethics – present but rudimentary. Positionality is discussed in terms of social location as connect to research.	Either limitations or ethical considerations is addressed in a very brief/superficial manner. Social locations are discussed but not connect connected to research.	Either limitations or ethical considerations are ignored. Little if any discussion of positionality.
Quality of Research Instrument Design	Instrument is innovative and well designed. Topics chosen connect directly to research question and have the potential to produce useful and possibly novel information.	Instrument is clear and well designed. Topics connect to research question and will elicit information relevant to question	Instrument has questions of all types and the topics chosen generally relate to research question but are not particularly innovative.	Instrument mostly meets requirements but wording is unclear and questions are generally superficial.	Instrument does not fulfil requirements. Questions do not obviously connect to the main research question.
Writing and Presentation	Writing is eloquent and clear; very few errors that compromise understanding; absence of biased or colloquial language; excellent diction and sentence structure; excellent mechanics and punctuation.	Writing is clear; minor errors that do not seriously impede understanding; a few examples of biased or colloquial language; good diction and sentence structure; good mechanics and punctuation.	Writing is competent; some errors but paper is generally understandable; some biased or colloquial language; some problems with diction or sentence structure; acceptable mechanics and punctuation, but some errors.	Writing is not quite competent; major errors or numerous minor ones that impede understanding in places; many examples of biased or colloquial language; many problems with diction and sentence structure; poor mechanics and punctuation.	Unacceptable writing; significant errors make parts of paper very difficult to understand; frequent use of inappropriate language; serious problems with diction and sentence structure; significant problems with mechanics and punctuation.