



California Institute of Integral Studies

MA THESIS/PhD DISSERTATION PROPOSAL ASSESSMENT

Use this form to request your thesis/dissertation proposal be assessed. Before finishing the proposal, submit this form to your Committee Chair to obtain feedback to refine your work. When it's finished, submit it again to the Chair and to the Committee External Member. Do *not* submit it to the Committee Member.

Student Name and Address: *(please print legibly)*

	CIIS ID Number: _____
	E-mail Address: _____
	Phone: _____

Academic Division: M.A. Ph.D. Dept./Program: _____

Proposed Thesis/Dissertation's Title or Topic: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Committee Chair/Committee External Member:

The External Member is to submit this form to the Committee Chair; the Committee Chair is to submit it to the Registrar's Office, along with the proposal. Make a copy for your records.

Review this form with the student as an introduction to the proposal process. Its rubric is a coherent set of criteria that describe the level of performance the student is expected to develop, as is the foundation for clear feedback. Indicate clearly what, if any, changes must be made for the proposal to meet CIIS and program standards. If you have questions about the criteria, contact your dept./program chair.

CIIS supports and encourages a broad vision of scholarship, including the knowledge of existing research methodologies and/or the creative development of new ones. We frame our scholarly expectations within an integral view of education that strives to embody spirit, intellect, and wisdom in service to individuals, communities, and the Earth.

We value excellence in scholarship. A dissertation proposal should demonstrate that the candidate has both a broad and deep knowledge of the student's field of study and is able to state clearly and support a thesis and conduct a well-defined and meaningful study. The dissertation should make an original contribution to the student's area of scholarship.

We recognize that students undertaking a thesis or dissertation with integral perspectives may face creative tensions pertaining to the relative importance of varying notions: e.g., innovation and tradition; subjectivity and objectivity; creativity and rigor; disciplinary focus and interdisciplinary connectivity; intuitive insight and rational discourse; social transformation and knowledge for knowledge's sake. We encourage students to reflect openly and cogently on challenges as they emerge in their own work: philosophically, theoretically, methodologically, and self-reflectively.

Attentive to the broad contexts that inform research at CIIS, this rubric is designed to serve as a guide and learning tool for students. The rubric helps students and faculty assess the quality of dissertation proposals, during proposal writing or at the point of completion.

Check one box in each row and write in your comments.

1. INQUIRY/TOPI C

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| a. Contribution: | <input type="checkbox"/> Significant | <input type="checkbox"/> Clear | <input type="checkbox"/> Not clear |
| b. Originality: | <input type="checkbox"/> Unique and creative | <input type="checkbox"/> Original | <input type="checkbox"/> Lacks originality |
| c. Relevance: | <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple levels of relevancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance apparent | <input type="checkbox"/> Relevance not apparent |
| d. Definition: | <input type="checkbox"/> Well-defined in multiple contexts | <input type="checkbox"/> Well-defined | <input type="checkbox"/> Ill-defined, fuzzy |
| e. Comments: | | | |

2. RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|
| a. Articulation: | <input type="checkbox"/> Question(s) are clearly articulated and thought-provoking | <input type="checkbox"/> Clearly articulated and researchable question(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> No clear research question; scattered, incoherent, too many disciplines |
| b. Feasibility: | <input type="checkbox"/> Feasible; demonstrates awareness of timeframe necessary to complete the study | <input type="checkbox"/> Feasible | <input type="checkbox"/> Too broad; not feasible for a solo project |
| c. Contribution: | <input type="checkbox"/> Provides original insight to issue; promise of contribution to discipline(s) and/or communities is clear and compelling | <input type="checkbox"/> Obvious theoretical relevancy; grounded in discipline(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Expected contribution not clear |
| d. Currency: | <input type="checkbox"/> Advances the disciplinary and and professional discourse (e.g., by constructing new connections, knowledge, theoretical and methodological frameworks) | <input type="checkbox"/> Clearly connected to current issues and approaches in professional literature | <input type="checkbox"/> No coherent relationship with existing literature and (inter/trans-) disciplinary perspectives |
| e. Comments: | | | |

3. INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND SUPPORT FOR QUESTIONS (REVIEW OF LITERATURE)

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| a. Sufficiency: | <input type="checkbox"/> Critical understanding of literature is evident in style, organization, and context | <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient review of literature relevant to questions and goals | <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient or missing literature section; lists of annotations or sources without critical commentary or running argument |
|------------------------|--|--|--|

- b. Appropriateness:** Mastery of appropriate canon is evident; sources cited are rich and diverse; awareness of appropriate mix of primary and secondary sources for the topic
- A mix of primary and secondary sources included as appropriate
- Exclusive reliance on a restricted set of secondary sources; not enough peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, or book-length studies cited; misuse of online sources
- c. Integration:** Builds more powerful argument; articulates sophisticated relationship with the literature (supporting, extending, refuting, etc.)
- Research literature is integrated into a coherent context framing the research
- Research literature is only sporadically sampled (e.g., only sources that agree with the author)
- d. Breadth:** Comprehensive in scope; multiple citations from diverse literatures are woven together cogently
- Makes use of multiple sources; literature sampled is sufficiently broad
- Insufficient scope; too narrow, doesn't span the range of relevant sources
- e. Depth:** Reframes existing controversies or issues in the literature in novel and distinctive terms; shows promise of being cited by other scholars in the future
- Includes critical and contrary sources; builds an argument in conversation with sources; explains how the thesis/ dissertation will address a gap (or silence) in the scholarly literature
- Superficial engagement with literature; talks "about" rather than building an argument in conversation with sources
- f. Fulfillment Plan:** Clearly articulates rationale and plan for completion of literature review in thesis/ dissertation phase
- Method of review apparent; makes distinction between core literature for the proposal and what the actual thesis/ dissertation will cover
- No clear direction or plan for completion in thesis/ dissertation; no sense of what is done already and what still must be done
- g. Comments:**

4. METHODOLOGY/WAYS OF KNOWING

- a. Relevancy:** Methods (and/or inquiry approach) are (is) systematically suited to the question and context
- Research design (and/or inquiry approach) shows promise of actually answering the main question(s)
- No clear relationship between question(s) and proposed methods
- b. Criticality:** Excellent articulation of researcher's positionality; high level of critical thinking in evidence; researcher able to state and bracket own assumptions of the relevant research methodology
- Satisfactory articulation of researcher's positionality; epistemological bases, context, and assumptions well-articulated
- No or poor articulation of the operating assumptions, biases, and positions of the researcher
- c. Diversity** Clearly addresses and demonstrates an understanding of differing epistemological and metaphysical approaches; understands and addresses the influence of researcher values and bias
- Demonstrates an understanding of differing epistemological and metaphysical approaches
- Does not recognize or address if different epistemologies and types of claims are involved (empirical or supra-empirical/ spiritual/religious or non-empirical)

Qualitative, Quantitative, or Mixed Method Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Only

- | | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|--|
| d. Design: | <input type="checkbox"/> Cogent, elegant, and transparent research design | <input type="checkbox"/> Sequence and nature of procedures are clearly laid out; explication of methods sufficient to task | <input type="checkbox"/> No clear sense of proposed procedures (i.e., what, where, when, who, how?) |
| e. Safety: | <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed research design includes sufficient protection for human subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed research design includes sufficient protection for human subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> Obvious or potential problems with treatment of human subjects (likely not to obtain the CIIS Human Research and Review Committee's approval) |

Theoretical, Humanities, or Philosophical Research Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Only

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|---------------------|--|--|---|
| f. Approach: | <input type="checkbox"/> Methodological approach(es) and perspective(s) are described in a detailed and critical manner showing the anticipated contributions of the research perspective to the development of theory, philosophical framework, or paradigm | <input type="checkbox"/> Methodological approach(es) and perspective(s) are clearly identified and their applications laid out in a critical manner showing the anticipated contributions of the research perspective to the development of theory, philosophical framework, or paradigm | <input type="checkbox"/> Methodological approach(es) or perspective(s) not properly identified; application poorly laid out |
| g. Chapters: | <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensiveness and interconnectedness indicated by chapter outline, indicating detailed steps of the unfolding of a thesis statement (or the exploration of the inquiry) in the dissertation, including how the literature or other material will be used and the anticipated outcomes | <input type="checkbox"/> Clear chapter breakdown describing the general steps of the unfolding of the thesis statement (or the exploration of the inquiry) including how the literature or other material will be used and the anticipated outcomes | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor chapter breakdown; lack of clarity on how the thesis statement will be unfolded in the dissertation; chapters don't illuminate the thesis statement |
| h. Comments: | | | |

5. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| a. Explicitness: | <input type="checkbox"/> Shows clear boundaries of thought regarding the scope and purview of the study | <input type="checkbox"/> States clearly what will and what will not be addressed or attempted | <input type="checkbox"/> Scope of the inquiry and its limitations not properly addressed |
| b. Appropriateness: | <input type="checkbox"/> Elegant, transparent delimitation of inquiry, expected results, etc. at all levels and in all sections of the proposal | <input type="checkbox"/> Author's claims as to relevance, truth, significance, etc. are appropriate (i.e., neither too humble nor too ambitious) | <input type="checkbox"/> No or inadequate engagement with the limits of what can actually be discovered via the proposed study |
| c. Alignment: | <input type="checkbox"/> Mindful and consistent engagement with the limits and promises of the proposed research typical of what one might find in a peer-reviewed journal article | <input type="checkbox"/> Parameters of research design are explicitly addressed, in alignment with recognized practice for a study of this type (re: reliability, validity, generalizability, significance, credibility, confirmability, transferability, dependability, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> No or weak discrimination as to what can actually be discovered by the proposed method(s) |

Theoretical, Humanities, or Philosophical Research Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Only

- d. Response:**
- Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the possible objections; provides appropriate strategy of response; shows a good sense of how to weigh objections and response; takes on the stronger objections
 - Provides adequate understanding of some of the objections and knows how to balance objections and response
 - Unaware of obvious objections or how to respond to them

e. Comments:

6. EXPECTED OUTCOME/RESULTS

- a. Articulation:**
- Promises to contribute significantly and originally to at least one field of inquiry or community-of-practice
 - Explicit and coherent discussion of expected results, findings and/or outcomes sufficient to the task
 - No or inadequate explanation of expected results or intended outcomes
- b. Significance:**
- Answers the question of significance concisely and convincingly for fields cited in the literature
 - Sufficient attention to why other scholars or communities should care about the expected results of the proposed study
 - Insufficient attention to the larger "So what?" for a study of this type

c. Comments:

7. ORGANIZATION AND FORM

- a. Style:**
- Characterized by lucid, mature, idiomatic prose; sophisticated transitions link well-crafted sentences; well-constructed table of contents
 - Sentences, paragraphs, sub-sections, and chapter titles demonstrate the author's control over a range of structures appropriate to the task
 - Sentences are ungrammatical or limited in complexity and variety; notable presence of grammatical, lexical, orthographic and formatting errors
- b. Vocabulary:**
- Adapts working definitions of professional vocabulary critically and masterfully
 - Uses professional and other vocabulary appropriately
 - Inappropriate or non-use of professional vocabulary; limited variety in word choice
- c. Coherence:**
- Document is cogently and elegantly constructed; sections adhere as a whole to tell a compelling "story"
 - Document is complete and coherent; proceeds organically, logically, and rationally through all required sections
 - Document is disjointed, incomplete or incoherent; required sections are missing or inadequately developed

- d. Formatting:**
- Adheres to program's and Institute's expectations re: obligatory sections, format, citations, and appropriate style (MLA, Chicago, APA, etc.)
 - Adheres to program's and Institute's expectations re: obligatory sections, format, citations, and appropriate style (MLA, Chicago, APA, etc.)
 - Does not adhere to program's and Institute's expectations re: format and style

e. Comments:

8. STYLE/VOICE/AESTHETICS

- a. Engagement:**
- Compellingly engages multiple scholarly audiences and/or communities-of-practice
 - Engages at least one specific scholarly audience or community-of-practice effectively
 - Inadequate or incoherent engagement with audience
- b. Style:**
- Strong evidence of a mature, scholarly voice; writing sounds like a someone already writing in the the professional literature
 - Clear evidence of a developing voice or style; shows grasp of the functions and tropes of the proposal genre
 - No or little evidence of a a (developing) scholarly voice or style; inadequate use of proposal genre and register
- c. Interest:**
- The proposal is exciting, novel; writing is eloquent, beautiful, and/or inspiring on multiple levels
 - The proposal in interesting and/or intriguing on some levels
 - The proposal's writing style is not sufficiently clear, concise, and engaged

d. Comments:

Role: Committee Chair Committee External Member

Name: *(please print legibly)* _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

COMMITTEE EXTERNAL MEMBER – SUBMIT THIS FORM TO THE COMMITTEE CHAIR; SUBMIT OTHER FEEDBACK TO THE CHAIR IN WRITING SEPARATELY (E.G., IN THE PROPOSAL TEXT); KEEP A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS

COMMITTEE CHAIR – SUBMIT THIS FORM, THE ONE FROM THE EXTERNAL MEMBER, AND THE PROPOSAL TO THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE.

REGISTRAR'S OFFICE USE
Date Received from Committee Chair: _____

REG: 1/25/19