

Thesis Proposal

Overview:

Your thesis proposal is modelled after the Outline of Proposed Research section of Natural Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) CGS-M grant applications. In your proposal,

Provide a detailed description of your proposed research project for the period during which you will hold the award. Be as specific as possible. Provide background information to position your proposed research within the context of current knowledge in the field. State the objectives and hypothesis, and outline the experimental or theoretical approach to be taken (citing literature pertinent to the proposal) and the methods and procedures to be used. State the significance of the proposed research to a field or fields in the health sciences, natural sciences and/or engineering or social sciences and/or humanities, as appropriate [1].

NSERC demands that you will have a clear and detailed research plan; for the purposes of thesis, however, we recognize that not everyone will have detailed methods or even clear goals as of yet. You should still attempt to formulate as clear and detailed a plan as possible, but be aware that the proposal is a preliminary document, and you can change your plan, or even your topic, if necessary. The goal here is to get started on the thesis, create a document that can be the starting point for discussions with your supervisor, and receive feedback early in the thesis process.

Formatting Requirements:

Margins should be set at a minimum of 3/4 of an inch (1.9cm). Your proposal should use 12pt Times New Roman, or comparable font, and use standard page layout (left-justified). Citations, in the body of the proposal, and references, at the end of the proposal should be provided. You may use an additional page for your references, properly formatted to a standard appropriate for your discipline (such as IEEE or CSE). Your proposal *must be* in prose paragraph form (though it can contain lists), and should contain all of the components mentioned in the description above. Headings are optional, but may be useful in creating clarity. Optimal organization of the components of the proposal will depend on your own topic.

Submission:

Please submit an electronic copy of your maximum 1 page (references on a second page) thesis proposal in .pdf format to Quercus, alongside a copy (in their preferred format) directly to your supervisor with a copy of the fillable proposal rubric, available on the course website. First term (F) and Full-Year (Y) Thesis students must submit their proposal by **October 9th, 2026**. Second Term (S) Thesis students must submit their proposal by **January 15th, 2027**.

Late submissions will be subject to a penalty of 10% per day. Extensions will only be granted for medical reasons or other extenuating circumstances, with appropriate documentation, and if accompanied by an approved term work petition, which are approved by your advisor and the course coordinators.

Workshops:

Online videos on writing a proposal have been posted to the thesis Quercus page. Students applying for NSERCs will also find the instruction useful: this assignment can help prepare you for both activities. These videos will engage questions of content, organization, as well as paragraph and sentence design.

After the lectures, a series of workshops will be held. In these sessions, students will workshop their draft proposals with other students and a communication instructor, with the objective being multiple

perspectives and types of feedback to incorporate into a revision of the document. Please come with a draft, however rough, of your proposal. Students may attend one workshop. The workshops will also be useful for students working through their NSERC applications. The workshops will be held in late September/early October (in January for S thesis students), times and location TBA.

Additional Resources:

Consultations on your proposal - either thesis or NSERC - are also encouraged; tutors can provide feedback on proposals, and can help with framing your topic, identifying clear objectives, and explaining the significance of your work to a specific audience. Appointments can also be booked through the Engineering Communication Program's online system at: <https://ecp.engineering.utoronto.ca/ecp-tutoring-centre/book-appointments/>

[1] NSERC. Instructions to Applicants for CGS-M. Modified: Jan. 27, 2023. Accessed: Jun 16, 2023. Online: https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/ResearchPortal-PortailDeRecherche/Instructions-Instructions/CGS_M-BESC_M_eng.asp