

UAF RESEARCH Essay Proposal Guidelines

RESEARCH ESSAY QUESTION:

Describe your proposed research in less than 500 words. Clearly explain the research question, its importance and your methodology. Provide evidence or rationale for the feasibility of the research project, including demonstrating that the time, methodological, and ethical dimensions of the project are such that you are able to complete it successfully. Include a paragraph explaining how this project serves your personal learning or career goals. Be clear about what you hope to learn or gain from your work on the project. Include a bibliography if appropriate -- it will not count toward your word limit.

HHMI applicants: Please state in the first line if you are applying to the Cascade Mentor program or the research program. If you are a first-year student applying to the Cascade Mentoring Program, you need not write a project description. Instead, please write an essay describing how participating in the program will contribute to your educational goals.

If you are applying for more than one kind of internship or research opportunity, focus your project proposal on your first choice, but briefly mention your other option(s) including how the other options relate to your academic and career goals.

HELPFUL TIPS ON HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR ESSAY:

Organization

Before you start writing your first draft, think through the organization of your proposal. Organize your statement in thematic sections. (As an exercise, you may wish to title the sections and keep the titles for reference as you write. Remove the section titles in your final draft). The sections may consist of one or more paragraphs. (For a 500 word statement, one paragraph per section may be enough). **The order of the sections is not important, as long as there is a flow in reasoning and style.**

Guiding Questions

Address these questions in your essay: **WHAT, HOW, WHY**, as well as **WHEN, WHERE, and WHO**. Follow the instructions given in the application, and be sure not to omit any information that is specifically requested.

Title

Name your proposal. Doing so will help you clarify the essence of your project to the committee. A representative title will also prepare the evaluator for the subject of the proposal and make it easier for him/her to remember it. Consider key words or phrases that most accurately portray your project and purpose.

Introductory paragraph

This should obviously be the first section of the proposal, although you may want to write it last. In a few sentences, it should introduce and summarize your project. Consider stating the **WHEN** and **WHERE** of your project here.

Section stating research question(s) and/or hypothesis/thesis statement

This is a crucial section. What are the questions you are trying to answer? What is the problem that you want to solve? What are your assumptions/premises? What do you think your research can prove? Disprove?

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Section on background, including existing research or literature

What is the history of this problem? What work has already been done on the topic? Are you following in a particular scholar's footsteps or working within a particular theoretical framework? Are you arguing against the conclusions of another scholar, or against a view commonly held in your field? Why is the research important? Depending on how much space you have, you may wish to include this information with your thesis statement. If your word limit allows, you may wish to include a brief literature review. Do not forget to include all the references you mention in your bibliography/list of references at the end.

Section on what you will do and how

This section is the "meat" of your proposal. What will you do and how? What is your methodology? What resources will you use? What/whose guidance will you seek and why? Have you secured access to the resources and guidance you will need?

Section on your own background and preparation

What sparked your interest in this topic? How has your coursework or other experience prepared you for this project? Do you have the relevant skills (e.g. laboratory, language, methodological) to conduct the project?

Section on project in context of personal goals

How will this project help propel you closer to your goals? Will it help you gather data for your senior thesis project? Will it help you gain experience in a particular profession? Will it help you attain knowledge or skills unavailable through the MHC curriculum? Will it compensate for your lack of previous experience? What skills do you hope to gain from the experience? What questions do you hope the project will answer?

Outcomes

Why is your research important in the context of your discipline? What will it contribute to your discipline? If relevant, talk about papers, conference presentations, or any other "products" of your research project. You may work this information into another section.

Bibliography/list of references

List the sources you have used to write this proposal, employing the style most common in your discipline (see, for example, scholarly articles in your field and SAW handouts).

REMEMBER:

The first draft is rarely the best draft. Even the most experienced researchers rewrite their proposals. Be sure to get feedback on your proposal, preferably both from a faculty mentor and peers. CDC advisors and SAW mentors are available to help you.

Writing Style and Structure:

Your writing need not be fancy, beautiful, or elegant. This is not an exercise in creative writing. You should also stay away from jargon. Do not try to be funny or folksy. Your goal is not to entertain. Do make sure that your writing is grammatically correct and your spelling is flawless. Aim for **clarity** and **good organization** – the marks of every great research proposal!

Your Faculty Recommender:

Your recommender should see a draft of your proposal before writing a letter of support on your behalf. Make sure you give them adequate notice.

GOOD LUCK!