

Otterbein University
Guidelines for the Distinction Program Application Proposal

The proposal you submit with your application for the Distinction Program should conform to proposals submitted from your discipline (your project advisor will be a good resource to help you with this). The proposal should clearly introduce your project (this is usually done as a review of the pertinent literature), describe how you will perform your study, and include a literature cited or bibliography that clearly shows that your work is grounded in your discipline. The introduction should do three things: clearly state the objectives and goals of the project, establish the disciplinary framework for those objectives, and explain the significance of your study. Creative endeavors are encouraged in addition to research projects that address a specific question. All completed projects must be original work and ultimately include a written thesis. Other products are welcome in addition to a written thesis, including artwork, music score, computer program, etc., but they cannot be submitted instead of a written thesis.

The proposal itself generally is 3-5 typewritten pages. The following guidelines are general and may vary with discipline, so be sure to work with advisor to develop a proposal appropriate for your field.

Introduction

- State the objective(s) of your study (working thesis statement or argument, research question, creative products, etc.). When applicable, this should include a description of all products that will be produced beyond the written thesis.
- Provide framework or theory for the objective. For research projects, this typically includes a literature review. For creative projects, it may also include a discussion of what themes or ideas will be addressed. Previous work addressing the proposed theme could also be described, as well as other historical or contemporary approaches. If addressing a particular issue, how does the creative work address the issue or add to the “argument?”
- In providing the framework or theory, the significance or importance of your work should emerge.
- The organization of this section is variable. It may start with a statement of the objectives followed by the context, or conversely, start more broadly with the framework/theory, narrowing the specifics of your project.

Methods/Materials

- Describe specifically what methods and materials you will use to achieve your goals. (Creative projects might consider how the materials are significant to the themes/ideas being addressed.)
- Explain how you will know that you have met your objective(s).
- If experimental, include a description of your statistical methods.
- Provide a detailed timeline of when the project will be conducted and the thesis written.

Literature Cited or Bibliography (include one or the other, not both)

- List all sources cited in a Literature Cited section
- List all background sources in a Bibliography

All proposals must have these three sections. In addition, all proposals should follow a style appropriate to the student’s discipline, including text citations, footnotes, headings and subheading, etc. The final written thesis will have a standardized cover sheet (title page) and a table of contents; otherwise, this too will follow a style appropriate to the student’s discipline.