

Dissertation Proposal FAQ

Basics of Abstracts

- An abstract is a short summary of your proposed research.
- It does not have to be fancy... just tell the reader what your work is about and what your main argument is.
- You will want to use the abstract to place yourself in the relevant scholarship, i.e. explain where you are coming from.

What should the abstract contain?

- Write a brief summary of your proposed research.
- Make sure that you include your main argument (or what you expect your main argument to be)
- You might want to include your position in scholarship on the subject of your research.
- It should not be more than 500 words long.

What should I include as the title?

Don't agonise over the title. You can change this at any time. Give a clear title that specifically identifies your research topic and question.

What aims and objectives?

Be as specific as possible of what you are aiming to achieve in your dissertation. You should provide bullet-points here, rather than a long description. Provide no more than 3 bullet-points.

What is a methodology?

Identify the methods and approaches that you will use, as well as any theoretical approaches you expect to need. For example, will you aim for a feminist reading? Will you use demographic models? If so, which ones and why are you choosing them? If you are doing a linguistic analysis, which methodology will you use? If you are doing a commentary, will you do it lemmatically or thematically, and why?

How long should my bibliography be?

- You should provide a bibliography of relevant scholarship and ancient sources. You should include as an absolute minimum 30 items.
- You do not need to have read all the works that you have included in your bibliography (and you may not have access to them all in any case), but it will be necessary to read up on your chosen topic, to make sure that your abstract is informed and that your bibliography is relevant and sufficiently focused (i.e. that is not just full of general works, but includes monographs and articles that are immediately relevant to the topic).
- You also need to ensure that your bibliography includes **at least 2 to 3 pieces of relevant scholarship that is not in English**. Again, you do not need to have read (or be able to read) these works, but you do need to be able to demonstrate that you are able to identify relevant scholarship.

Should I know who my supervisor is?

No, you will be allocated a supervisor.

Do I need ethical approval?

Most of the dissertation topics covered in our subjects tend not to need ethical approval. You will need ethical approval if you are going to be working on sensitive subjects, such as rape, abuse, paedophilia, etc., or doing questionnaires, interviews, observation of people who are alive, use or access personal or confidential information, observation of illegal activities, administer medication, substances or placebos, work with live animals, etc. If you are uncertain, then please do tick the box, and we can discuss it when the proposal is submitted.

Are there sufficient resources available for my dissertation?

Here you need to consider the library and research resources available to you. You need to assure your access to appropriate libraries at tertiary level that hold the materials you might need. Of course, you will be able to use UWTSD's Learning Resources Centre, which should be your first port of call. You should also consider carefully the language(s) needed for you to research your topic, both in terms of scholarship and in terms of the ancient sources. For example, if your topic's primary evidence is inscriptional, and you have no knowledge of either ancient Greek or Latin, you may not be able to research the topic appropriately. Please identify the main resources you will use, such as appropriate libraries or necessary electronic or other specialist resources (for example, access to the LIMC for work on vases).