

Department of Plant Science

Ph.D. Thesis Proposal Guidelines

Ph.D. students must submit a thesis proposal within the first 12 months of their program. The proposal must be submitted to the committee one week prior to discussions by the committee. The student will present the proposal at the next committee meeting (approx. 30 minutes). Committee members may make suggestions to improve the proposal. The student will amend the proposal based upon any corrections or additions as suggested and the committee must approve the corrected proposal within 2 weeks of the meeting at which it has been presented.

The proposal consists of a document of normally 15-25 pages (12pt font and 1.5 line spacing, including figures and/or tables, but not including references) and is typically composed of the following sections:

1. A title of the study project;
2. An abstract of the research proposal;
3. An introduction explaining the rationale for the project, hypotheses, and the resulting objectives of the study;
4. A background literature review that is relevant to the project;
5. The methods proposed (and potential alternatives) to run the project;
6. Any current work and preliminary results;
7. A timeline table indicating the main milestones in conducting the project;
8. Anticipated significance of the work;
9. A table to indicate the proposed course work;
10. If needed, a backup plan in the event of unexpected difficulties;
11. References.