

FACULTY OF LAW



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

THESIS PROPOSAL – A GUIDE

When preparing a proposal, please bear in mind that the HDC needs to be convinced that you are capable of undertaking postgraduate research and that your work will advance knowledge in the subject, or, in the case of masters theses, be at least a significant restatement of the law.

The guidelines given below are neither rigid rules nor are they a requirement that the thesis be fully researched before registration. Especially in the case of subjects in the humanities, precise topics may emerge only as work progresses. Nevertheless, candidates must demonstrate an understanding of how to set about a research project, and, to that end, the proposal is a means for demonstrating that the candidate carefully has considered basic issues. In this way, both the candidate and the supervisor may avoid misunderstandings and save time.

A thesis/dissertation proposal should include the information below.

1. Descriptive title
2. Reasons for choosing the subject
Give both the academic and, where relevant, the practical reasons for undertaking research in the chosen area.
3. Outline of the thesis
The word 'thesis' is used here in its traditional meaning, namely, a proposition that is demonstrated through a sustained argument . The problems and questions to be examined must be clearly outlined, together with a brief elaboration of the argument through its various stages.
4. Major sources
Reference to the major authorities involved, whether precedents, legislation or treaties, and a general indication of the secondary sources to be consulted. Candidates are not expected to supply a full bibliography nor do they have to be familiar with all the literature in the field before they start research. Even so, they should show that they are aware of the main works in the field, and, what is more important, their opinion of these works.
5. Method
Whenever method plays a significant role in the thesis, candidates must show that they are aware of the methodological problems involved. Those candidates who intend to conduct an empirical study by participant observation, statistical survey or some other method used in the social sciences should indicate the relevant methodological concerns and techniques. Where appropriate, they should familiarise themselves with the Law Faculty's Ethics guidelines.
6. Comparative studies
If the thesis is to involve a comparison of different legal systems, candidates should indicate which systems will be compared, with good reasons for their choice . If necessary, they may also be required to show at least a reading competence in the different language(s) involved.
7. Structure of the thesis
The thesis should be presented by way of a division into chapters, each one describing the general field of inquiry.
8. Research schedule
Give a rough indication of how long the initial period of research will last and how long will be spent writing up each section of the thesis. Please remember that at least three months should be allowed for preparation of the final document (ie, working from the penultimate draft through the various stages of printing, proof reading and binding).
9. Topic already covered
Applicants should indicate whether their topics are already the subject of research in a law (or cognate) faculty of another southern African university. The National Research Foundation has facilities to assist in this type of research.