

Department of History MA Thesis/MRP Proposal Guidelines:

The Tri-U History Graduate Program requires that all MA students submit a research proposal for their Thesis or Major Research Project (MRP) during their second registered semester of full-time study. The proposal will be discussed at the student's progress meeting that semester. The advisor should work with the student to develop the proposal. Students should aim to have their proposal to their advisor by mid-March, and to their advisory committee members at least a week prior to the scheduled progress meeting to allow time for them to read the proposal and provide feedback at the meeting.

The thesis/MRP proposal should be a minimum of 5 pages (1-inch margins, 12pt font), not including citations and bibliography. The proposal should include citations and bibliography, conforming precisely to proper style as set out in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The proposal should include several parts, described below. All sections and key elements – research question, historiographical niche, and methods/sources should line up in a coherent way.

1. Introduction and Research Question (roughly 1-2 pages)

The first part of the proposal should introduce your topic and present a statement of your research question(s). It is very important that this include a clear, explicit, precise, and well-worded research question and related questions. You should demonstrate knowledge of details, and by the end of this section we should know exactly and precisely what your research project aims to address—what you will find out and how.

This section should also convince the committee that your project is feasible, that the limits (temporal, geographical, topical) of the research question are sufficiently narrow that the research can be completed within the set time and that the results of the research can be reported in about 100 double-spaced pages (Thesis) or about 50 double-spaced pages (MRP). Students who begin with overly broad research questions, or research questions with vague boundaries, often fail to complete their research, or take many extra months to complete their research, because they become overwhelmed by the project.

2. Scholarly Context (roughly 2-3 pages)

This historiographical section should analyze the scholarly conversations that contribute to your research and those to which your research will contribute. What has been done, and what needs to be done? Who is influencing your project? Who do you intend to influence? For your research to be significant, in a scholarly sense, your thesis or MRP must contribute to the literature by filling a gap in our knowledge, and/or address a subject of legitimate scholarly debate or uncertainty. To convince your committee that your research is significant, you need to discuss the scholarship upon which your research will build. You must do this by critically discussing specific studies that will inform your research. This will not be a summary of secondary sources you will use, but rather a precise description of how your research relates to what has been done before.

3. Sources (roughly 1-2 pages)

In this section you should discuss your methodology and present a defence of your choice of sources—both primary and secondary. Convince your committee that the sources you have identified (especially primary sources) are adequate and appropriate for answering the research question you pose. A Master’s level major research paper or thesis does not require a comprehensive examination of all primary sources relevant to a research question, but it does require that the chosen sources are likely to provide valuable evidence pertaining to your question. You must also demonstrate that you will be able to gain access to the sources/evidence you propose to use.

4. Tentative Thesis/MRP Outline (less than 1 page)

In a paragraph, explain what the chapters of your thesis or sections of your MRP might look like. Remember that a 100-page thesis normally consists of an introduction of 20-25 pages, and a short conclusion of a few pages. That leaves you the option of having four chapters averaging 15-20 pages, or three chapters averaging 20-25 pages. It is very useful for you and your committee to think about what these chapters might look like. For example, are you thinking of a chronological, or thematic organization?

5. Preliminary Bibliography

Your bibliography should include all the primary and secondary sources that you anticipate using in your study.

Students who would like to consult examples of previously completed MA proposals can view them in the “Tri-University Graduate Student Resources” module on Courselink, found under the “Resources” tab.