

Writing a Project Proposal for Cultural Heritage Studies

Guidelines and tips

The goal of a project proposal (PP) is to present and justify a thesis idea you have and to present the practical ways in which your work will be conducted. Here are some of the essential sections required and a handful of tips to write a successful project proposal.

The Cultural Heritage Studies Program expects project proposals both in the field of academic research and in heritage related policy or management and also the combination of these.

Suggested structure for the proposal

1. Introduction

In order to draw the attention to your proposal, you must write an interesting introduction that leads to the formulation of your project idea. You may want to include the topic of your proposed project: a heritage element or a heritage-related phenomenon (e.g. medieval churches in Armenia, Central-European sites on the tentative World Heritage list, musical traditions in South India, terminology of international CH legislation, heritage-related NGOs in New Zealand), your personal motivation, previous studies or experience in that field and then segue into the proposal proper.

2. Identifying the problem and your questions

Narrow down your thesis topic to a specific aspect or problem that is feasible within a 2-year MA program. Justify why it is relevant to address these problems or questions in general and within the CHS MA program. E.g. a fictitious problem: medieval churches in a certain country are not conserved properly. Question: how should the state change its policy to preserve medieval churches as national heritage? Justification: the process is irreversible; unless the state changes its policy, medieval churches will disappear in ten years.

Present your case in a concise, specific and precise manner. This is the core of your application: make sure that it is no longer than a sentence or two, but it contains all the most important elements of your proposed research. The capacity to get your message across in clear, easy-to-grasp concepts and phrases is one of the winning proposals' most important advantages.

Even if you have no idea what the possible answer to your research questions or the solution for the problem will be, you need to demonstrate that you are capable of finding resources and developing a solid plan to solve them during your studies. This is what the next sections will be about.

3. Current state of affairs

The next step in writing your proposal is to prove that you are prepared to research the particular topic or contribute to the policy or management of the specific area of cultural heritage. This section may entail a very short literature review. If the works cited are relatively well known in the field, you

may outline the main strands of past and current scholarship in a few sentences by mentioning the names and titles in your text and provide references in a bibliography. A full bibliography is not mandatory but useful. It can include works both on the heritage element and on the approach or methods.

The literature review may also be able to demonstrate that your chosen field or hypothesis is neither already written up a hundred times, nor something that you will not find adequate source materials for.

4. Sources and Methods

- What are your primary sources or data?
- What actions are you going to take in order to answer the proposed questions?

Once you identify the type of primary sources you will have to demonstrate how you are going to analyse and interpret your data. Your methods may be qualitative (text analysis, spatial analysis, comparative analysis, etc.) or quantitative (statistics, corpus analysis, etc.). While you are not expected to be familiar with all the possible methods you may end up using, you will have to convincingly show that you have a good enough idea about your sources and how they may be analysed.

5. Expected outcome

State, in a few phrases, what will be learned from your research or what kind of changes your policy or management project will bring. Convince the readers that your project will make a difference, and show why that is important to be known. As the program is open to developing both academic (research-based) and non-academic (practice based) theses, you should briefly address the type or genre of thesis you are proposing, which may range from a classic dissertation to a risk analysis of an endangered intangible heritage, a management plan or complex learning journeys, etc.

6. Conclusion

You may return to your personal motivation here and explain how you can channel your previous studies or experience into the proposed project, and how you will benefit from the department's courses, centres and other academic functions. You can also describe what you can bring to the CHSP, how the program and the community will benefit from your acceptance.

Keep in mind:

- Your PP will enter a competition, being read along many other PPs. You have to come up with a document that has an impact upon the reader: write clearly and have a good structure so that your message gets across easily. Use headers if you feel it helps clarity.
- Try to get a fresh point of view upon your chosen subject; make new connections, do not be 100% mainstream. This will make the project even more stimulating for the reader.
- Avoid conditionals and insecure language. Instead of 'I would like to attempt to perhaps partially identify... if possible...', you can just say 'I will identify... where possible.'

- Avoid jargon. The person(s) who will read your research proposal may not be specialists in the very field you are examining.
- Check your English and spelling. Make sure your register is formal and your sentences are clear and straightforward. Be precise and scholarly but do not use 'big words' unnecessarily.
- Although PPs normally do not include footnotes and referencing, make sure to include proper referencing if you do cite any primary or secondary sources. Any referencing styles are acceptable as long as the references provide complete data and are consistent.

How long?

Keep it at about 1500 words (that's 3 pages, 1.5-spaced, with 12 size Times New Roman is 1500 words).

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You can consult the website at <https://medievalstudies.ceu.edu/students-0> to see the topic of projects with which our students applied successfully in the past.

If you have further questions, you can contact as at culther@ceu.edu.