ECSE PROPOSALS

Developed by the Center for Global Communication and Design
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To begin your senior project, you must prepare a proposal of approximately 1000-1500 words (2-3 pages, typed single-spaced) explaining to your project advisor what work you plan to do, why this work is worthwhile, and how you plan to carry it out. Preparing your proposal should also help you to focus your project, plan your work, and receive feedback early in the process. Please use the format described below, being sure to answer all the relevant questions. Bring a double-spaced draft of your proposal to the Writing Center before submitting the final proposal to your advisor. Revise your draft as many times as is necessary to produce a fluent and persuasive proposal.

In writing your proposal, remember that your advisor expects the same attention to research, analysis, and style that one would find in a professional proposal. Also remember that while your immediate audience is your advisor, your proposal should be understandable to others who are familiar with your field in general, but not necessarily with the particulars of this project or research area. (This situation is similar to that of a professional engineer whose reports need to be intelligible not only to an immediate supervisor but also to corporate executives.)

Write your proposal in the form of a memorandum, beginning with the following:

To:
From:
Subject:
Date:

In the body of your proposal, be sure to use headings to indicate the separate sections; that is, don't write two or three pages of unbroken text.

Begin with a one- or two-sentence introduction, summarizing your project and explaining why you are proposing it. Follow your introduction with the sections listed below:

Statement of Problem
(Note: You may need to talk with other people in the field and/or do some preliminary reading before you are able to state the problem clearly.)
Considering the current state of knowledge or technology:

- What is the need or problem that you want to address?
- Why do you want to address this particular problem?
- Why is this problem or need significant?
- Who should care about it, and why?

Provide any examples or supporting evidence (including references) that help to show the nature, extent, or significance of the problem you've defined. Briefly review current work.

Proposed Project and Purpose

State your proposed project, its goals, and your approach.

- Why are you proposing this particular project?
- Why are you using approach X rather than approach Y? (Briefly discuss the alternatives.)
- Why and how will this work meet the need or solve the problem you have previously identified?

Anticipate and respond to any major objections your audience might have to this project or approach. (How will your proposed work be of real intellectual or functional value to you as a student, to others in the field, and to the rest of the world?)

Plan of Activities with Deadlines

List your major activities, and make a schedule for your work.

Mention any special tasks or needs. (Do you need special equipment? Computer space? Technical assistance? Reading material? Will you need to interview experts?)

List specific items you will produce as part of your project, such as devices, test reports, or instructions for operating equipment or running computer programs.

Evaluation

Explain the criteria by which your work is to be judged: How will you or someone else decide how well your work solves the problem you defined? What features are to be assessed– principles of design, cost efficiency, accuracy, ease of operation, feasibility, ease of maintenance, effectiveness, environmental impact, etc.?

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