

The Prospectus and Its Components

The prospectus is a document in which you succinctly present your plans for the dissertation. Its goal is to establish that the research that you propose to undertake is feasible and that it is significant or important. Both in form and in content, there is no set of standards by which a prospectus needs to be written. Each prospectus is unique and requires its author's creative engagement. The chart below lists some of the most typical logical components of a prospectus. Regardless of their order or the ways in which they are phrased, these are the topics that will generally be covered in a successful prospectus.

Introduction of the Subject Matter & Research Questions	An introduction to your subject matter and its importance. What are the research questions that you are raising? What are the problems that you are proposing to solve? Why should scholars in relevant fields care about your proposed research?
Literature Review	A critical review of the existing scholarship on your subject matter. What are the established views, and how are they limited or problematic? Is there a scholarly consensus that your dissertation will contest? How will your dissertation change the ways in which we currently think about its subject matter?
Methodology	How will you approach your subject matter in the dissertation? What theories or methodologies inform the research that you are undertaking? What will the chosen methodology enable you to accomplish?
Sources	What are the sources on which you will rely in your research? Typically, you are expected to discuss primary sources only, leaving secondary sources to the bibliography section. If relevant, along with your the sources, you may address their locations, their accessibility, and the ways in which these factors will affect your research.
Chapter Outline	How would you currently organize your dissertation? What individual chapters have you planned, and how will those chapters work together to support your overarching argument?
Timeline	You may include a provisional timetable for completion of the dissertation. Consider when and how you will conduct archival or field research (is any fellowship application involved?). The timetable may specify your writing goals for each semester.
Bibliography	A list of your main primary and secondary sources. You may separate them in two or more sections.