

This image may be a vague picture at the outset, but it becomes clearer as the study proceeds.

Thus, because a good plan is central to sound mixed methods research, we provide several outlines that may be useful: the structure of a graduate student proposal for a dissertation or thesis, the structure of a final mixed methods dissertation, the structure of an outline of topics addressed in a proposal for federal funding, and the structure of topics to include in a mixed methods empirical journal article. Looking at these various structures, we see some common features of mixed methods research being introduced that we have discussed in earlier chapters in this book. However, the features differ depending on the type of mixed methods design chosen and whether the writing is a plan for a study or the report of a completed study.

Structure of a Proposal for a Mixed Methods Dissertation or Thesis

A proposal for a dissertation or thesis needs to convince graduate committees and advisors that the topic is worth pursuing and that it will be studied in a rigorous and insightful way, and that it is feasible for the student. The proposal needs to be convincing, and when the design is mixed methods, special components need to be included in the overall plan that relate to mixed methods and the type of design. Proposal formats will differ from campus to campus, and students need to obtain copies of past proposals to review, to see how they are structured. Our first recommendation, then, is that graduate students visit with their faculty and ask for examples of proposals from prior dissertations or theses that have been completed. A search through Dissertation and Theses Abstracts using an academic library search or a search engine will also yield mixed methods dissertations to examine. It is also helpful to locate several mixed methods studies and important to design a proposal that contains major elements of mixed methods, as well as information about a specific design.

Examine Table 8.1, which provides a sample outline of the topics generally found in mixed methods dissertation and thesis proposals.

Our discussion here will focus on the sections of the proposal with mixed methods components, and we have simply placed mixed methods components into a traditional format for a proposal:

- The title should be stated so that it foreshadows the mixed method study and type of design. This title should focus on the topic of the study, mention that it is a mixed methods study, and mention the participants and the research site.

Table 8.1 Outline of the Structure of a Proposal for a Mixed Methods Dissertation or Thesis

Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreshadows mixed methods study and type of design
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research problem • Past research on the problem • Deficiencies in past research and one deficiency related to a need to collect both quantitative and qualitative data • The audiences that will profit from the study
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the project (use the scripts in Chapter 5) and reasons for design type • The research questions and hypotheses (ordered to match the design) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Quantitative research questions or hypotheses ◦ Qualitative research questions ◦ Mixed methods research question(s)
Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worldview • Theoretical lens (social science or advocacy)
Literature Review (include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies, if they are available)	
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition of mixed methods research • The type of design used and its definition • Challenges in using this design and how they will be addressed • Examples of use of the type of design (in your field, if possible) • Reference to and inclusion of a procedural diagram in an appendix • Quantitative data collection and analysis • Qualitative data collection and analysis and qualitative data transformation, if used (in exploratory design, place qualitative before quantitative) • Mixed methods data analysis procedures • Validity approaches in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research
Potential Ethical Issues	
Researcher's Resources and Skills	
Timeline for Completing the Study	
References	
Appendixes With Instruments and Protocols and Procedural Diagram	