How to Become a Successful Graduate Student

21st August 2017

SGS, UCC

Goals

- Graduate Studies is to develop in each student an appreciation of knowledge and to provide an intellectual stimulus for advanced study

... Goals

- Graduate education provides students with advanced learning in a specialized discipline or sub-discipline

- Graduate education gives an in-depth understanding such that the student becomes an expert in the sub-discipline

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... Goals

- Graduate Studies equips students with advanced skills
  - Problem-solving
  - Writing
  - Oral presentation
  - Technology

Successful Graduate Student

- Successful graduate student is one who gets as much out of the process of graduate studies as possible

Process of Graduate Studies

Qualities for Success in Graduate School

- Curiosity and exploration
- Self-motivation
- Self-discipline
- Perseverance
- Initiative

… Qualities for Success in Graduate School

- Independence
- Creative
- Hard-working
- Skillful

Proposal Writing

Undertaking Research

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Proposal

- Written offer to undertake a project for designing, creating something new or for changing or modifying an existing procedure, method, system or structure within a specified period of time

Purposes

- Solve a problem
- Alter a procedure
- Find answers to questions
- Offer advice and training
- Obtaining commercial contracts
- Conduct research on a topic of interest

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Types of Proposals

- Structure
  - Formal
  - Informal
- Nature of audience
  - Internal
  - External
- Origin
  - Solicited
  - Unsolicited

Formal and Non-Formal

- Non formal
    - Brief description of suggestions and recommendations
    - Are short and initiate small projects
    - Printed forms, Memo format or letter format

- Formal proposals
    - To initiate projects
    - Require elaborate description and discussion
    - Several sections and sub-sections

Internal and External

- Internal
  - To request or implement change
  - Reorganizing departments, expanding facilities, reducing budgets, improving procedures
  - Request policy changes or approval for funds

- External
  - Are written to audiences outside of own organization
  - May be preceded by an executive summary
  - May be a response to a request for proposal

Solicited and Unsolicited

- Solicited
  - Are written in response to a request for a proposal
  - Are usually written according to close specifications dictated by the audience

- Unsolicited
  - Written without any request for proposal
  - Are initiated by the organization that is attempting to obtain change or funding
  - Are designed to convince the audience that the change or funding is in the best interest of both parties

Elements of Proposal

- ▸ Cover page
- ▸ Abstract
- ▸ Problem statement/needs assessment
- ▸ Objectives/specific aims
- ▸ Methodology/research plan/management
- ▸ Qualifications/technical plan
- ▸ Budget and budget justification
- ▸ References

Cover Page

A
Proposal
For
TITLE
Submitted to
Name of the recipient
By
Proposers name
Designation
Name of the organization

Date

Abstract

- A summary of given words
  - Should follow the same structure as the paper
  - Should provide comprehensive summary of study
- Types
  - Short Abstract
  - Extended Abstract (500 words to 2 pages)

Structure of Abstract

- Introduction/Background
- Theoretical Issues
- Objective(s)
- Sources of Data
- Method(s) of analysis
- Results
- Conclusion(s)/Recommendations

Problem or Need Statement

- Identify and define problem or need
- Indicate importance or significance (show work done and its inadequacy in present circumstances)
- Define scope and limitations of project

Objectives

- Objectives are short-term goals

- Explicit statements describing in concrete terms what you intend to achieve

... Objectives

- To be short, precise and focused
- Could be general or specific – depending upon focus
- Choice and use of words
- Respecting the acronym SMART

Methodology

- Approach
  - Quantitative
  - Qualitative
- Source(s) and nature of data
  - Primary
  - Secondary
- Sampling procedure
- Method(s) of data collection

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Qualification, Technical Plan

- Demonstrate to the reader that you are capable of doing what you propose
- Most proposals contain a summary of the proposing individual's or organization's qualifications to do the proposed work
- This section lists work experience, similar projects, references, training, and education that shows familiarity with the project

... Qualification, Technical Plan

- Describe technically how the proposal would solve the problem
- Available resources, including key personnel and technical resources.
- Describe organization, its purpose, goals and programmes
- Specify the instruments, equipment and materials that would be needed and how all they be utilized

Budgeting

- Itemize and account for costs
- Budget should flow from your project plan
- Justify budget items
- The estimate should be realistic and logical

References

- This should be the works cited
- As much as possible, 70% or more should be in the last 5 years
- Follow the format prescribed if any

Thank you