

General Steps to Preparing to Present a Proposal at an Area Meeting

The purpose of your presentation of your proposal at the Area Meeting is to get faculty approval of your proposal. The process usually involves refining the conceptualization of your project by fielding questions from faculty and peers. These questions are not intended to be adversarial. They are genuine questions people have. Since all scholars must learn how to field questions about their work with respect and intellectual rigor, your preparation for the Area meeting is an important step in your preparation to become a scholar.

Preparing the Proposal:

1. You should first work closely with your committee on the content for the proposal. Respect faculty's time and don't submit drafts that have not been proofread. From the start, all referencing, whether it be footnotes or bibliography, should conform to the Style Sheet of K. Turabian. Please do not submit bibliographies that do not conform to this style sheet at any point in the process.

2. Before circulating the proposal to faculty beyond your committee, you must have a peer review of your fellow students. This can be done in person; over the internet; or by special arrangement, by conference call. Whatever form it takes, this is an essential part of the process.

a. Your peers should double check for correct formatting and conformity to the style sheet.

b. Your peers should anticipate the questions that the proposal raises, in terms of methodology; sources; realistic completion; appropriate complexity, as well as other issues. Don't be afraid to say "I am not quite clear on the question you are asking...can you rephrase that for me, please?"

c. You should practice how to handle questions in a clear, straight-forward manner without getting defensive and without extraneous comments or information. Choose your wording carefully. Don't be afraid with your peers to say, "Let me start again." After all, your meeting with your peers is practice!

d. You should practice your 3 minute oral overview presentation of your proposal at the peer review session. [You will be given about 3 minutes at the Area meeting to give an overview of your proposal. Since 3 minutes is often a challenge to students, practice alone and practice in front of your peers.]

3. Only after you have had your peer session, should you begin to circulate your proposal among selected faculty. Choose only those faculty whose scholarly expertise directly pertains to your topic. Do not circulate or meet with all or even most of the faculty in the Area. There will be time for everyone to discuss your proposal at various times in this process.

4. After you've met with selected faculty, check in with your committee one final time before the meeting alerting them to any changes that have been made.

5. Practice your oral delivery of your presentation and possible questions on your own. Rehearse your 3 minute overview. Rehearse particular questions that you anticipate receiving.

6. Submitting the proposal: Hard Copies of the proposal are due in faculty mailboxes 10 days prior to the meeting. If you live far away, accommodate your schedule to meet this deadline. Sending your proposal to faculty electronically by attachments is unacceptable. However, your student colleagues may be willing to accept your proposals by attachments. Consult with them before you send it. Sending it ahead of time to them allows them time to read and study it.

7. The Area Meeting:

a. You will be given the opportunity to field the questions yourself, at a pace that suits you. You should choose a student colleague to take notes for you so that you can focus directly on keeping your part of the meeting moving along. The Convener will intervene at any point when s/he feels there is a need to move forward in the conversation.

b. You will be given a brief time to offer an overview of your proposal. At most, you should think in terms of presenting the overview in 3 minutes. Your total presenting time is 15-20 minutes. Since your goal is to field as many questions as possible. In addition, you may want to consider the Area presentation as a dry run before the Doctoral Council where you will be given about 2 minutes to present an overview.

c. Remember: the questions you get are not intended to be adversarial. Instead, you should by this time be confident of your command of your topic and use this time to display your command of your proposal. The Area Meeting is a safe environment compared to the academic universe. Use it to practice being in command of your topic even if you don't really feel like you're in command of it at all. But recognize constructive criticism from your peers and the professors.

8. After the Meeting:

Prearrange a meeting place and time with your adviser away from the faculty meeting venue. Your adviser will discuss the outcome of the meeting.