2020 PRISM Application: Research Proposal Guidelines and Template

Format: maximum of 1000 words, single spaced, 12-point font, and standard margins

Header:
- Line 1: Title of your project
- Line 2: Your full name, year of study and major
- Line 3: Your faculty mentor’s name and title

Please use the following section headings and prompts to craft an effective, well-articulated research proposal. You may remove the section headings, if you wish, or include them. Regardless, please preserve the order of information as suggested below and respond fully to the prompts. Please limit your use of footnotes, endnotes, or illustrations; they will not be included in your final word count.

Section 1: Research Project Overview: introduction and aims/objectives
- Please provide a cohesive, descriptive paragraph (or two) that outlines the “what, where, and with whom” information relevant to your research proposal. This section should lay the groundwork for your research topic, explicitly introduce your research topic and/or question(s), and explain the salience or relevance of the research. You should also specify the goal of your proposed research project. If you are continuing work with a faculty on a larger project, you should use this section to introduce the broader goals of the research and what portion of the work you will support/advance.

Tip: use clear, jargon-free language in this section and throughout your proposal. Abstract, overly theoretical language will not serve you well. Your reader will not re-read your proposal in an effort to understand what you are trying to say.

Section 2: Research Context: background and significance
- In this section, please address the following: what do we already know about this research topic? Your response to this question is often referred to as a “literature review” and affirms that you are aware of previous scholarship on the topic. You should also address what we don’t know, why knowing the answers would be important, and how your research project will contribute to our broader understanding of the subject or topic of the project. Answers to these questions help to establish the significance of your research topic or questions.

Tip: academic research is not about your own edification. Advanced undergraduate research should aim to contribute to the body of knowledge, even if this is a new way of understanding existing scholarship. Try to avoid over-use of the first person in research proposals, except where merited.

Section 3: The “HOW”: research plan, methodology, and potential outcomes
- This section may be the longest portion of your proposal. It must detail “how” you will undertake your research, including a detailed explanation of the work and justification for why this timeline/location/activity/research mentor is...
appropriate. Please include a timeline, major phases, and the location(s) of your research. This will alert the reader to the feasibility of your work. Lay out in clear, lucid text the tasks you propose to undertake and justify those activities. Explain how you will analyze/interpret your data and/or sources. Clearly indicate the anticipated end results or hoped for outcomes of your project (e.g., publication, thesis chapter, presentation or poster, etc.). Close this section with an indication of the significance of your findings, including the broader impacts.

*Tip: Do not be overly ambitious; students who don’t understand the very real limitations of time do not impress us. A lack of awareness about feasibility indicates naiveté about the research process and suggests that you are not advanced enough to be successful. We are impressed with students who identify the limitations and indicate what will actually get done over the summer. You only have a set number of weeks; focus your efforts and write in such a way as to convince the reader that you will actually complete the project. Readers will not award grants to students who submit applications for research that is not feasible and, therefore, not achievable.*

[Section 4]: Preparation for research

- Use this section to explain in detail how you are prepared to undertake this research. Explain how your academic background, research training and/or experience, language skills, and any other relevant experiences have prepared you to carry out your proposed project successfully. You should also use this section to confirm that you have secured the requisite approvals through IRB, if you propose to undertake research involving human-subjects reviews. If you are conducting interviews or ethnographies, please explain your training and expertise in performing interviews, interview/survey design, etc.

*Tip: Your reader will quickly lose confidence in your ability to successfully pursue a research experience if you don’t have the requisite skills to do so. Explain clearly and with specific detail how you are well suited to carry out your research. PRISM does not fund you to “prepare” for research; it funds you to successfully carry it out.*

[Section 5]: Motivation for research experience and benefit of the grant

- Use this concluding section to underscore your personal motivations for pursuing a scholarly undergraduate research experience and how participating in the PRISM Research Scholars program will advance your academic and post-graduate goals.

*Tip: This is a reflective statement that indicates to the reader that you understand not only the broader impacts of the research itself, but can articulate the value to you as a developing scholar. However, do not default to generalities and non-specific statements. This should be detailed and specific to you and what you hope to gain from the experience in light of your future ambitions.*

Final note: as a visual reference, the above text totals 899 words.
2020 PRISM Application: Research Budget

Format: maximum 1-page

Header:
  - Line 1: Title of your project
  - Line 2: Your full name, year of study and major
  - Line 3: PRISM Research Project Budget

Please use an additional page to provide a detailed research budget for any/all costs not associated with your personal living expenses while undertaking your research. This might include travel (if allowed in SU20), costs for making copies, accessing online materials, photography or duplication costs, and so forth. Ideally, you should include a table copied from an Excel spreadsheet that itemizes and totals your costs.