

Guidelines For Student Research Proposals

Miami University, the College of Arts and Science, and the Department of Anthropology strongly support undergraduate research. Research can be pursued through many venues, including Undergraduate Summer Scholars and Dean's Scholars. Many Miami anthropology majors have successfully completed research with support from one or more of these sources.

Most of the proposals for undergraduate research opportunities at Miami do not require detailed descriptions of how to organize your research proposal, just a short description of a page or less. This is not because the university does not demand rigor but because different disciplines have different requirements. The university asks the respective departments and programs to review and prioritize the proposals.

What do anthropologists look for in a good proposal? The most basic rule is that the reviewers should not only have a clear understanding of the topic but what you want to learn about that topic and how you will learn it.

Four basic elements **all** proposal descriptions should contain are:

1. **Problem:** What question does this project address?
2. **Method:** How will you try to answer this question? (Your method should be appropriate to your problem)
3. **Data:** What kind of information will you need to answer the question? Where will you get it? How will you get it? (Your data should be appropriate for your methodology)
4. **Outcomes:** There are two key questions here. First, what do you think you will have learned by conducting this research? Second, what will you do with what you have learned?

Some other things your proposal might include are:

1. **Institutional Review:** Students who are going to engage in original research with human subjects should address when and how they will do the required IRB training. Students conducting research with animal subjects should address when and how they will do the required IACUC review.
2. **Literature Review:** A brief account of some of the things social scientists have already written about this problem and where your project fits into the conversation.
3. **Schedule or Timeline:** When will the first step be completed? When can subsequent steps be started? What must be done before what else, and what can be done at the same time?
4. **Resources:** If you have access to a particular community, data set, mentor or other resource that would show that you are particularly well positioned to do the research, you should specify this.

The Anthropology faculty wishes you the best of luck in your research proposal process.