

SURF Application Research Proposal - Guidance For Prompt (updated 11/21/17)

This document helps you understand in detail what the "research proposal" section of your SURF application requires. Sections A-D together should be no longer than five pages (doublespaced, 12-point font, 1" margins). It should include:

A. Research Statement/Statement of Purpose (175-200 words)

- what specific topic will you be working on and why is it important? Why are you interested in this topic?
- Include context and problem, research question or statement, supporting points, how your project will contribute to the field, methodology, and rationale.

B. Background and Justification (1.5-2 pages)

- what is already known about the field of research you will be working on (be sure to cite references from the literature when applicable)?
- How does your research project fit in with what is being done currently in the field and how does it extend or fill in gaps in the field?
- Relate your background review to the supporting points of your statement of purpose.

C. Project Plan (1.5-2 pages)

- how you will address your research question?
- What are the main subpoints of the project and what methods will you use to address them?
- Include a brief timeline of when each phase of the work will be done. Most of your airtime will address the summer, but your timeline should take your project through all its phases: preparation, data collection, analysis, and write-up.
- For hard sciences proposals, the project plan should include your Aims (2-3 usually) which describe the main action items of your project and the methods you will use for each. A timeline can be tied in directly to each of the aims, or separately at the end of the project plan section.

- For social sciences/humanities, your project plan should be broken up into Phases with specific threshold goals and correlated to a timeline of 8 weeks.
- Be practical about what is feasible in 8 weeks.
- Your proposal should be understandable by a lay academic audience. Include as much detail as necessary; imagine you are explaining your project to a student assistant. Explain how your method(s) is(are) used to produce/collect data in each of your Aims/Phases.
- If you will use monetary resources beyond your SURF stipend, include a description of this funding in this section.

D. Qualifications (max. 1/2 page)

- what background do you have in the field (coursework, previous lab experience/field work/language, other relevant skills)?
- Have you done similar research previously?
- Who will be guiding you?
- What do you hope to gain out of the experience, and why is it interesting to you?
- For projects involving access to people or institutions, describe the access/permissions you have already obtained.

More information

E. Bibliography

This section should contain proper citations for background and related work.

F. Appendix (optional).

You may upload or link a photograph or other file --maximum 2 pages in length -- if it is essential to your proposal.

G. Additional support (optional).

Describing additional support is recommended for social science projects or humanities projects involving field work or archival access. Many projects require you to enlist the facilities, services or personnel of other institutions. (A study of kindergarten teachers, for example, could require prior approval of the principal.) To show your preparation, you may include a (maximum one page) document

including the names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of key people you have contacted whose cooperation will be critical to your. Also attach letters of agreement from these people if you have them. The letters should be very specific about what resources are being offered (e.g. use of facilities, introductions to specific groups of people, etc.), and ideally on letterhead. See [this link](#) for hints on letters of support.

Be sure to get help on your proposal from faculty members, post-docs, and/or the graduate students that you will be working with. They should be able to answer many of the questions above and assist you in proof-reading and editing your proposal.

For more hints on how to approach your proposal, see the "Resources" menu of the SURF web site (<http://surf.berkeley.edu>), especially the "advisors", "other resources", and (if applicable to your project) the "human subjects" tabs.