

## **English 388: Proposal Assignment**

In this assignment, you will produce a compliant research proposal that outlines a research project. With your group, you will:

- Practice proposal management, including developing a compliant outline, reading and responding to requirements as written, and following proper formatting guidelines.
- Work collaboratively to conduct background research, writing, and proofing/production activities, all an explicit part of the proposal process.
- Develop the art of proposal writing, particularly by persuading your readers—which include your professor as well as your classmates—that your proposed project is viable and useful to its intended audience. This includes writing an interesting, well-researched, persuasive proposal that is also properly edited and proofread to add to your “ethos” as a speaker (Beason).

Ideally, you should begin with the book project that your group has outlined and work backwards. Use the proposal assignment to investigate an element of the book, how communication factors into an argument the book makes, the usefulness of the principles you plan to emphasize in your presentation, or examine how the book’s lessons have been studied or used by a particular discipline or audience. This gives you the background information necessary to validate the usefulness of your presentation or the deliverable that you have proposed.

Due dates, narrative requirements, and formatting requirements are provided on the following pages.

## **George Mason University Student Research Program**

### **Contemporary Issues in Workplace Communication**

#### **Request for Proposals**

##### *Statement of Work*

George Mason University, in conjunction with the Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activity, and Research (OSCAR) and the English Department calls for proposals to research issues related to communication in contemporary workplaces.

##### Background

Today's workplace is a complex environment. Workers are constantly being asked to take on new roles and tasks in response to emerging technologies, rapidly changing industries, and diverse global demands, all requiring communication, technological, and interpersonal dexterity in unprecedented ways. Employers—large and small—must evolve within this environment while still accommodating worker needs, facilitating and supporting training and growth opportunities, and staying responsive to customer and client demands.

To research, analyze, and facilitate discussion about these evolving trends in the workplace specifically related to communication, George Mason University is funding research projects into debates on communication in today's workplace. George Mason University, through the OSCAR's Students as Scholars program, invites young scholars and researchers in interdisciplinary fields and teams to apply for funding and support to research this pressing issue.

Broadly, these research proposals should answer the question: What does it mean to have "good" communications skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace?

##### Research Proposals

For this funding, OSCAR will select presentations that examine current, relevant issues, controversies, discoveries, and debates in issues related to communication in the workplace. Students may choose projects that examine issues such as:

- How new technologies—such as mobile devices, social media, and informal means of communication—have shaped workplace communication
- The impact of communication skills on gaining, maintaining, and advancing within current employment
- The role of interpersonal communications skills on changing work environments, such as in telework or outsourced work spaces
- How specific industries—such as government contracting, banking/finance, or teaching—have been shaped by changing communication trends
- The health consequences of communications changes as they affect psychological, physiological, or medical conditions of workers

In so doing, OSCAR and GMU will act as catalysts for an on-going conversations among its students, who are the future workers, leaders, and policy makers whose day-to-day work will respond to these changes.

### *Requirements:*

Teams of researchers will **propose a research project**. This project will examine a debate, controversy, or other point of contest broadly related to communication. The research project should propose both secondary and primary research—in other words, it should suggest that the group conduct research using book, article, and online research **as well as** some kind of primary research gathering activity, such as conducting an interview, survey, or observation.

The proposal, therefore, must report on scholarly and popular secondary research (found in scholarly journals, popular books, the news, and internet publications) to provide sufficient background for the study. Proposers are also invited to supplement this literature with at least one source of primary research, such as an interview, a brief observational study, or survey results. The primary research could serve as a pilot example of for the full research study proposed.

Although you are proposing a project to conduct research after the proposal is approved, the preliminary research you provide in this proposal will ground your investigation to establish the viability of the inevitable study you propose to conduct.

### **Application and Review Processes and Deadlines:**

1. **Draft proposals due:** Monday, November 4, by end of class. Project teams will submit one electronic copy of their proposal drafts for interim review.
2. **Proposal conferences:** Tuesday, November 5 and Wednesday, November 6.
3. **Final proposals due:** Monday, November 11, 12:00 noon. One electronic copy, one hard copy.

**See attached Proposal Instructions for proposal guidelines.**

## **Proposal Instructions: NARRATIVE GUIDELINES**

*The Undergraduate Research Scholars Program (URSP) is a flexible opportunity providing funding for a student-mentor team to address a scholarly question during a semester.*

### **General Guidelines**

This application is for a competitive grant. Always use complete sentences and a professional tone. Your audience is the Student Scholarly Activities subcommittee, an interdisciplinary group with faculty and student representatives from across campus. Be sure to explain concepts and define acronyms clearly that will not be familiar to a general collegiate audience. The process of completing this application increases your written communication skills and general understanding of the research process.

### **Executive Summary (250 words)**

The proposal must contain a summary of the proposed activity suitable for publication, not more than 250 words in length. It should not be an abstract of the proposal, but rather a self-contained description of the research activity, study proposed, and benefits of the research that would result if the proposal were chosen.

It must clearly address in separate statements the value of the proposed activity. Proposals that do not separately address this merit review criterion within the Executive Summary will be returned without review.

### **Table of Contents**

A table of contents that outlines all major and minor sections of the proposal is required.

### **Project Description and Outcomes (2 pages)**

The Project Description section should clearly define: the scholarly question addressed, provide a discipline-specific context and rationale for the project, and the specific research project proposed (including primary and secondary research to be collected). The applicant should identify how this work will add to the “big picture” by contributing to the knowledge of the discipline. How will this original project address a knowledge-gap in a field? The applicant should cite appropriate research and/or creative literature using in-text citations.

Answer the questions: *What is your project and why is it significant?*

The Outcomes should outline the anticipated outcomes, products and/or results of the project. It should be clear to the review committee how these results will contribute to the scholarly and/or creative community. Identify where the project outcomes may be shared, e.g. a Mason undergraduate research symposium, a professional conference, a submitted publication, juried show, a workplace workshop for a particular company, etc.

Answer the questions: *What will you produce? How would those results contribute to a field?*

### **Process (1/2 page)**

In this section, you should describe the research design and/or methods you will employ to

complete the project. A description of materials and equipment necessary to complete the project should be included.

Answer the question: *What will you do to answer your question or complete your creative activity?*

### **Timeline (1/2 page)**

Please provide in this section a description of how you will invest the semester to complete the project. Consult with your faculty member regarding the different sections of the project and provide the review committee with a plan of work including detailed timetables for the semester. You may extend the timeline beyond the semester as needed, however be clear what work you will perform during the semester you receive funding.

Answer the question: *How will you schedule your time?*

### **Personnel (1 page)**

This section asks proposers to outline how each team member will contribute to the symposium by describing his/her background, roles, responsibilities, and deliverables.

In this section, you will provide a narrative description that explains the contribution of each team member to the project and presentation. This narrative should summarize individual's strengths, argue for how those skills will be leveraged to contribute to the project team, and outline individual responsibilities.

### **Budget (1 page)**

In this section, you should indicate how the award will be used to support your project. The total award for the traditional URSP is \$1500 that can pay for materials, supplies, research-related travel, and/or student stipend. For stipends, you may indicate that these funds will be compensation for your time and/or travel related to the project. For materials and supplies, preliminary prices and sources should be included in the justification. You may also include travel funds conduct project research, such as to travel to a company to conduct interviews.

### **Works Cited (unlimited)**

Include a list of every reference cited in the application narrative. You should include at least 8 resources, with at least 3 citations from scholarly articles or books published by a scholarly (University) press. You may also include a selection of works consulted as space allows.

## **Proposal Instructions: FORMATTING GUIDELINES**

Proposal Pagination Instructions. Each section of the proposal must be paginated.

Proposal Margin and Spacing Requirements. The proposal must be clear, readily legible, and conform to the following requirements.

- Use one of the following typefaces identified below:
  - Arial, Courier New, or Palatino Linotype at a font size of 10 points or larger
  - Times New Roman at a font size of 11 points or larger
  - A font size of less than 10 points may be used for mathematical formulas or equations, figure, table or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters. Proposers are cautioned, however, that the text must still be readable.
- Margins, in all directions, must be at least an inch
- Line spacing: single-spaced
- 8 ½ x 11 paper

These requirements apply to all sections of a proposal, including supplementary documentation.

Page Formatting. Since many reviewers will be reviewing proposals electronically, proposers are strongly encouraged to use only a standard, single-column format for the text. Avoid using a two-column format since it can cause difficulties when reviewing the document electronically.