



Mountain State University™

## School of Graduate Studies

### GRADUATE INDEPENDENT STUDY:

### WRITING A PROPOSAL FOR METHODOLOGY

**This document will help you with the following questions:**

*What process leads to writing a proposal for Methodology?*

*Who will be reading the proposal?*

*How do I write a Methodology proposal?*

*What does the proposal look like?*

**What process leads to writing a proposal for Methodology?** The Graduate Independent Studies courses numbered 501 are called “Methodology.” They are independent study courses in which students research and plan graduate goals, degree pathways, and learning agreements. Methodology constitutes the first phase of a Graduate Independent Study degree program. The course follows this process:

- 1) When registering for Methodology with the Director of Graduate Independent Studies Academic Services, the student is placed into a course section of Methodology supervised by an advisor who is the faculty member for that course section.
- 2) In consultation with the advisor, the student researches degree needs and determines necessary courses, directed independent studies, field projects, and practica that will constitute the units of learning to be done in the second phase of degree work, Content. Certain concentrations will have suggested or required units in Content as depicted in the [Graduate Catalog](#).
- 3) The student determines the capstone project for the course numbered 680, Perspective, in consultation with the advisor.
- 4) The student writes a proposal to the program and submits it to the advisor for evaluation. A proposal approved by the advisor and then by the office of the

Dean of Graduate Independent Study lets the student go forth and execute the learning plan for the degree.

A strongly recommended text covering proposal writing and project planning is

Holloway, Brian R. Proposal Writing Across the Disciplines. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002. ISBN 0-13-022495-2.

All other readings are determined by the student's need for preliminary research while developing the proposal. A short bibliography of resources assisting planning is attached to this document.

### **Who will be reading the proposal?**

Write the proposal to the faculty advisor for your course section. The advisor may ask consultants in the field of your proposal to review the Methodology proposal. Such consultants may be members of the institution or may be external to it. These consultants may continue as your mentoring team or voluntary committee for this degree, if the proposal so indicates and the advisor and the dean approve.

### **How do I write a Methodology proposal?**

When creating the degree proposal, keep in mind the sequence and features of the program:

- **You Propose** your degree in phase one, Methodology (3 hours credit).
- **You Enact** it in phase two, Content (25 hours credit).
- **You Demonstrate** it in phase three, Perspective, through a capstone project (8 hours credit).

**Methodology.** In Methodology, you define your outcomes and construct a proposal that is your learning plan. You develop this plan detailing the content to be learned, the methods through which the knowledge will be validated, and the project that displays it. Graduate courses previously taken elsewhere and those that you wish to transfer into this program may be reviewed for potential inclusion in your degree plan by Mountain State University at a charge of one hundred dollars per credit hour. With the assistance of the advisor, you identify the voluntary committee or the paid mentoring team that will direct you as you design your degree. Once the plan is approved, you enroll in Content.

**Content.** Content is the section of the program in which you accomplish and implement your learning goals by following your plan--through readings, research, writing projects,

field experiences, practica and coursework. A voluntary committee or a mentoring team guides you.

**Perspective.** Fulfilling your degree plan, you now present the product of your study, evaluated by your graduate committee or mentoring team. You have five years to complete the program from the time of your initial enrollment in Methodology.

**Format and structure.** Every proposal should contain a covering page bearing the title of the proposal, the date of submission, the name and ID number of the student, and the student's address. Each proposal should also contain:

**A description of the degree's concentration:** This will be Master of Arts or Master of Sciences in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in \_\_\_\_\_, or Master of Criminal Justice Administration, with a concentration in \_\_\_\_\_, or Master of Health Science with a concentration in \_\_\_\_\_.

**A rationale for the degree** that explains the importance of credentialing in this field and the reason for designing this degree.

**The details of the learning in Content,** including

**“Who”:** With whom will you study? Supply the names and credentials of those proposed for your committee, if these advisors are voluntary, or mentoring team, if the work in Content and Perspective requires intensive teaching as a course. If the advisors are not faculty of Mountain State University, you should attach their resumes and contact information to the proposal. The composition of your mentoring team or committee may change over time, at the discretion of the office of the dean.

**“Where”:** Where will the components of the degree be carried out?

**“What” and “How”:** Explain the work in your content area and show how it teaches you the competencies and knowledge required in your degree plan. You do this by dividing your 25 hours of Content into discrete sections embracing the skills you have identified, and explaining how they will be learned. For example, your plan may include traditional graduate courses offered by Mountain State University or transferred into the program, graduate courses offered in distance format by the School of Graduate Studies at Mountain State University or transferred into the program from other institutions, independent readings, tutorials, projects, and field work under the direction of advisors who are members of your committee. (See the Graduate Catalog descriptions of the Graduate Independent Study programs and the worksheet enclosed with this document). If you are planning a Health Science degree, remember that six credit hours of Content must be assigned to a directed

field experience.

**A description of Perspective:** You must explain the capstone project that will fulfill the Perspective component of the curriculum. The project might be a conventional thesis, a group of article-length essays on aspects of your subject, a book, a multimedia presentation, a film, a grant-funded program, or a program developed in the workplace. Your graduate committee or mentoring team will assess this project and forward its evaluation to the program's Director of Academic Services.

**“When”:** Your proposal must include a time line specifying when you will complete each stage of the work.

When you have completed the proposal, submit your plan to your assigned Methodology advisor. The advisor, and then the program, in consultation with faculty as needed, will review it. The advisor may require that the proposal be rewritten or refocused before approving the document. It is strongly suggested that by week 8, you forward a draft of your Methodology proposal to the advisor for preliminary review. The draft must be labeled “Draft.” You receive three credit hours in Methodology for a successful proposal, and can then begin Content.

**The goal of the proposal process:** Upon the completion of this course the student will understand and demonstrate knowledge of the theory and practice of interdisciplinary studies by creating a detailed plan of study in the chosen concentration. This plan will use research and critical thinking skills as well as presentation and communication skills to:

- Reflect the competencies needed for the student's goals.
- Express those competencies in a designed sequence of independent and course-based work to be initiated and completed in Content.
- Propose a project involving synthesis and evaluation that demonstrates the competencies learned. This project will be executed in Perspective.

The completed proposal is the evaluation instrument for this course. It will be evaluated according to how it succeeds in fulfilling the outcomes above. Proposals will be awarded letter grades based on their specificity, coherence, and performability.

**Course completion and time planning:** A student must complete this phase of the program within 20 weeks. (The syllabus is constructed to allow completion from fifteen weeks from the day of enrollment in order to build in some extra time). Depending upon the complexity of what is proposed, it might take several weeks for the advisor and any consultants to review it. Extensions may be granted with the permission of the faculty advisor, who must contact the Director of Graduate Independent Studies Academic Services so that the new date can be posted. Please be advised that graduate work is

more demanding than undergraduate work. In general, you should expect to spend at least 135 clock hours to complete a three-credit-hour graduate course, and maintaining a sense of progress as you move through the independent work is crucial.

**What does the proposal look like?** We have included sample sections of a proposal for your review, and have provided a template below. The cover sheet has been omitted, and language and material have been edited or deleted. This document is courtesy of Elizabeth Murphy.

# Elizabeth Murphy

GIDS 501  
April 28, 2002

## Proposal for GIDS 501 Methodology

This proposal is being written to identify the components of a Master of Science degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Educational Management. The proposal provides a description of the degree, the rationale, the content, perspective, and the timeline.

### Degree Description

I will pursue a Master of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies degree with a concentration in Educational Management. The Educational Management concentration will emphasize the evolution of leadership in higher education specifically as it relates to the development of leaders within the organization. The study of leadership development within the educational industry and the analysis of the changes in leadership development and structure of the higher educational institutions will demonstrate the evolution that the higher education industry has experienced and continues to undergo. Completion of the degree program and its curriculum will identify the key influences that have brought about radical changes in educational models throughout the last century.

### Degree Rationale

Leaders within the educational industry are expected to be accountable for student performance outcomes through the hiring and development of qualified faculty and staff while simultaneously managing facilities, working within budgets, and ensuring compliance with State, Federal and accrediting body regulations. Improving training and selection practices will produce school leaders able to face these challenges. However,

trends in the general population will make tomorrow's challenges, and necessary training, quite different.

Since graduating from XXXXXXXX College with a Bachelor of Science in Business, I have held management positions in both the business and educational sectors. The Master's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Educational Management will allow me to further develop my management and leadership skills in the educational arena by increasing awareness of the trends in the industry and changes influencing the leadership in higher educational institutions.

## **Degree Content**

### **Guiding Committee**

The committee members I have selected for guidance in the pursuit of my degree are Dr. YYYYYY and Dr. XXXXXX.

Dr. YYYYYY holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership from the XXXXXX Institute. He has been with XXXXXX College, a for-profit two-year multi-unit career college, for nine years. He has held various positions within this 14-campus organization, including Business Director, Dean of Instruction, and Campus Director. Dr. YYYYYY is currently the Campus Director for the YYYYYY and ZZZZZZ Campuses.

Dr. YYYYYY developed and implemented an organizational structure at the XXXXXX campus of XXXXXX College that resulted in higher continuing student retention and increased new student enrollments. Within a year, the campus doubled its student body and increased its operating profit by \$500,000. Currently, Dr. YYYYYY is serving on a Human Resource development committee for XXXXXX College. He has been responsible for identifying key competencies for all of the college's functional manager positions. Additionally, Dr. YYYYYY is a member of XXXXXX College's Senior Management, the governing body of the system.

Dr. XXXXXX, Ph.D. currently holds the position of Operating Officer for Strategic Initiatives at XXXXXX University. Dr. XXXXXX has held several senior level administrator positions in both public and private higher education institutions as well as leadership positions in non-profit organizations and corporations . . . During the last 14 years, she has held four senior level management positions in the higher educational industry.

### **Phase One**

The first phase of the content encompasses background research in leadership and organizational structures of higher educational institutions. During this phase I will study the evolution of leadership and the traditional structures of higher educational institutions over the past 100 years. With the approval of the IRB, I will conduct surveys of current leaders within the educational industry, public and private, proprietary and not-for-profit

to ascertain perceptions about the changing needs of leadership in education. The surveys will identify the changes in both structure and personnel. Changing leadership competencies and leadership development plans will be addressed. Finally, the surveys will capture the current leaders' thoughts on why these changes are necessary and the development of mandates that will become directional analysis for future decision-making.

The surveys in phase one will capture both quantitative and qualitative data. Professionals on the IRB skilled in survey methodology will be consulted to ensure accuracy and validity throughout the discovery process. The data gathered in the surveys will represent not only the perceptions of current leaders, but also the professional background and credentials of those surveyed. Correlation between the leaders' professional experiences and their perceptions of where the higher educational industry is moving will be made.

Phase one will incorporate throughout an appreciation of the foundation of educational leadership and leadership development, the current trends in educational leadership and leadership development, and the rationale for the changes that are occurring. A paper reconstructing the evolutionary timeline of higher educational leadership and leadership development will present the results. The paper will include a copy of the surveys and a summary of the surveys' findings. The research and survey results will provide the foundation on which to base the final Perspective project.

## **Phase Two**

The second phase of content will be to complete BUS532, Business Policy and Strategic Planning, at XXXXX University. This course is designed to address business strategies in a changing environment. The course discusses the impact of technology, government policy, and world economics on executive decision-making.

Phase two will develop further appreciation for the changes occurring in the general population and how they affect and will continue to affect the educational industry. A better understanding of the direction in which leadership and leadership development in higher education needs to move will be obtained by understanding these changes and outside influencers.

## **Phase Three**

The third phase of Content will be to compare the organizational structures and mission statements of a for-profit two-year multi unit career college, XXXXX College, a traditional liberal arts four-year institution, YYYYY College, and a progressive four-year university, ZZZZZ University. The evolution of the structures and mission statements for each of these institutions as well as the reasons for these changes will be explored. The impacts, positive and negative, that the changes in structures and missions have had on the institutions will be compared and contrasted.

The third phase will compare and contrast how different higher educational institutions respond to the changes in the general population through their structure and their campus

leadership. The impact of the evolutions in structure and mission will be measured by the financial and enrollment trends of the institution. Additionally, the current structures will be examined to determine if they reflect, or fail to reflect, the direction that higher educational leadership is moving towards. A comprehensive report will discuss my findings.

#### **Phase Four**

The fourth phase of content will be to complete BU541, Management Theory, at XXXXX University. This course addresses the issue of coordinating an organization's resources in order to accomplish organizational goals. Management Theory examines management by functions performed, roles assigned, and skills required.

The fourth phase will explore how leaders transition from identifying and analyzing the changes in the general population to developing tactical and strategic plans that will enable them to thrive in changing times. The emphasis will be to explore the application of management principles in a dynamic academic environment. Resource allocation will be examined as it relates to the identification and accomplishment of goals through the management and leadership of a diverse employee population.

#### **Phase Five**

The fifth phase of content will be working with Dr. XXXXX and the XXXXX County Public Schools on their Leadership Academy program. The XXXXX County Public Schools' Leadership Academy was developed to train teachers to become school administrators. The participants of the academy are trained in leadership, the XXXXX School system, and the duties of a principal.

During the fifth phase, a report will explore the Leadership Academy's development and success rate. The discussion will assess the success rate, the teachers' credentialing and years in the school system. The teachers selected to participate in the Leadership Academy will be surveyed, and the means of selection analyzed. Their competencies will be compared to the competencies of future leaders identified in phase one. In this phase the report will determine if XXXXX County is training to the past, current, or future needs of the school system.

#### **Perspective**

The capstone project will consist of two parts. A thesis will be constructed based upon the survey results and research conducted during phase one of the degree content. The thesis will explore the evolution of leadership and the traditional structures of higher educational institutions over the past 100 years and forecast where the higher educational industry is headed in its leadership needs based on the changes occurring. Consideration will be given to the impact of policy and strategic planning on leadership styles and effectiveness. The thesis will explore the changes in the general population that are challenging higher education to reconsider the strategies in leadership and structure that

have been accepted and successful in the past. The thesis will constitute the first part of the perspective project.

The accompanying piece will be a development plan for the present and future leaders of a for-profit two-year multi unit career college. The developmental plan will address the competencies needed for the leaders of this institution. It will address the hiring and orientation process for external candidates along with the development of internal candidates. The development plan will not only consider the changes occurring in higher education but also why these changes have been mandated. The development plan will reflect the changes within the general population and reflect why proprietary schools now represent one of the fast growing segments in higher education. A comparative study conducted in phase three of the degree content coupled with the case study completed in phase five of the degree content will provide the basis for the development plan. The plan will incorporate principles of management theory.

The thesis and development plan will provide a practical application for institutions of higher education in the hiring, development and management of leaders. Their base in historical norms, current trends, analytical data and accepted principles will provide support for the assertions made. The methodology used will allow for measurement of the effectiveness of the development plan in future years.

## Timeline

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Credits</b>
Methodology	February 14--May 31 2002	3
Content		
◆ Research	June 7-September 30, 2002	8
◆ BUS532	October 1-December 31, 2002	4.5
◆ Organizational Structure Analysis	January 1-February 28, 2003	4
◆ BUS541	March 1-May 31, 2003	4.5
◆ Leadership Academy Analysis	June 1-July 31, 2003	4
Perspective	August 1-December 31, 2003	8

## Use Our Template to Help Write the Proposal

*Responding to the following prompts and questions will help you create a rough draft of your proposal.*

**Describe the degree's concentration:** Master of Arts or Master of Sciences in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in \_\_\_\_\_, or Master of Criminal Justice Administration, with a concentration in \_\_\_\_\_, or Master of Health Science with a concentration in \_\_\_\_\_.

**Explain the rationale for the degree:** What is the importance of credentialing in this field and the reason for designing this degree?

**What are the details of the learning in Content?**

**Divide your 25 hours of Content work into discrete sections and explain how they will be learned.** For example, your plan may include traditional graduate courses offered by Mountain State University or transferred into the program, graduate courses offered in distance format by the School of Graduate Studies at Mountain State University or transferred into the program from other institutions, independent readings, tutorials, projects, and field work under the direction of advisors.

**What competencies, skills, or types of knowledge are manifested in the content components?** Explain your content areas as manifesting different competencies or skills. (See the worksheet enclosed with this document).

**With whom will you study?** Supply the names and credentials of those proposed for your committee, if these advisors are voluntary, or mentoring team, if the work in Content and Perspective requires intensive teaching as a course. If the advisors are not faculty of Mountain State University, you should attach their resumes and contact information to the end of the proposal. The composition of your mentoring team or committee may change over time, at the discretion of the program dean.

**Where will the components of the degree be carried out?**

**Describe Perspective:** You must explain the capstone project that will fulfill the Perspective component of the curriculum. The project might be a conventional thesis, a group of article-length essays on aspects of your subject, a book, a multimedia presentation, a film, a grant-funded program, or a program developed in the workplace. Your graduate committee or mentoring team will assess this project and forward its evaluation to the program.

**Attach a time line.** Your proposal must include a time line specifying when you will complete each stage of the work.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Credits</b>
Methodology		3 hours
Content  Describe each part-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Courses from MSU?</li> <li>◆ Courses from elsewhere?</li> <li>◆ Independent research?</li> <li>◆ Field experience?</li> <li>◆ Practica?</li> </ul>		Content hours total 25
Perspective		8 hours

## References

The following books may serve as helpful references as you plan and write your proposal.

### Style: APA, MLA, or Chicago

American Psychological Association. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: APA, 2001. (A supplemental disk is available as well).

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 1999.

Turabian, Kate L., John Grossman, and Alice Bennett. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996.

### Planning Proposals and Other Documents

Holloway, Brian R. Proposal Writing Across the Disciplines. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003.

----. Technical Writing Basics: A Guide to Style and Form. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

Locke, Lawrence F., Waneen Wyrick Spirduso, Stephen J. Silverman. Proposals that Work: A Guide for Planning Dissertations and Grant Proposals. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1993.

### Overviews of Research Approaches

Creswell, John W. Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1994.

McMillan, James H. and Sally Schumacher. Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Longman, 2001.

Mason, Jennifer. Qualitative Researching. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2002.

Patton, Michael Quinn. Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2002.

## APPENDIX

*Try using this table to help you plan your degree path. You may wish to save it as a separate file and enlarge it. Use the blank spaces at the very top to denote key disciplines or fields of work, if needed.*

### METHODOLOGY WORKSHEET--GIS

Areas of focus								
1. List concentration(s) to be stated in Methodology proposal →								
2. Identify competencies needed in these areas that will be stated in your proposal →								
3. Describe units of Content teaching these competencies →								
4. Describe other courses. →								
5. How will your perspective project demonstrate these competencies?								