## Dissertation Proposal Outline

The proposal for the dissertation must contain a well-developed plan for the project and include each of the following components outlined:

**Title Page**

The Institute for Clinical Social Work

TITLE IN CAPS

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

Institute for Clinical Social Work in Partial Fulfillment

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

NAME IN CAPS

Chicago, Illinois

Date

**Chapter I. Introduction (no more than 20 pages)**

a.     General statement of purpose

* The purpose of this \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, case study) \_\_\_\_\_\_(was? will be?) to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (understand? Describe? Develop? Discover?) the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (central phenomenon of the study) for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (the participants) at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (the site). At this stage in the research, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (central phenomenon) will be generally defined as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (a general definition of the central concept).

b.     Significance of the study for clinical social work

c.     Statement of the problem and specific objectives to be achieved

* Begin with a paragraph that creates interest and that advances the topic or general subject matter. Stay away from using quotes for the first sentence.
* Discuss the research problem or issue that leads to a need for the study. The need for a study often comes from certain deficiencies or gaps in the existing literature.
* Briefly summarize the recent literature on your topic. Try to visually depict where your study can be positioned into the larger literature. This is a briefing about the state of the general literature on your topic or groups of literature. If no groups of literature have addressed the problem, then discuss extant literature that is closest to your topic.
* Indicate the ways the current literature or discussions are deficient in understanding the problem. Mention several reasons. It is here that you can make the argument for the implementation of one of the qualitative approaches.
* Discuss how audiences or stakeholders will profit from your study.

d.     Hypothesis or research questions to be explored

e.     Theoretical and operational definitions of major concepts

f.      Statement of assumptions

g.     Epistemological foundation of project:  locate the project within a paradigm of inquiry (e.g., empirical, hermeneutic, etc.), discussing the assumptions of and rationale for this location.

h.     Foregrounding:  discuss the background of your interest in this topic of inquiry, particularly in relation to the value system and assumptions that shape your understanding of the phenomena and your analysis of data.

i.      Outline of dissertation (\*included in dissertation only)

**Chapter 2. Literature Review (using funneling method – no more than 50 pages)**

a.     Introduction – discuss how you conducted your lit review (focus, goal, coverage, organization, audience)

b.     Category 1 – works that provide a theory base or orientation for your work

c.     Category 2 – works that are relevant but not specific to your work

d.     Category 3 – works closer to what you are doing but still do not match your work (perhaps only aspects of your work)

e.     Category 4 – works that match what you are doing, if available

f.      Conclusion/summary

·       Internal order of the categories – chronological, played off each other, or subdivided into groups

**Chapter 3. Methods (no more than 30 pages)**

a.     Introduction

1.     Reintroduction of major approach and research questions/chapter introduction

2.     Rationale for qualitative research design (supported by lit), including a restatement of epistemology (supported by lit)

3.     Rationale for specific methodology (supported by lit)

b.     Research sample (inclusion/exclusion criteria, sampling methods, etc.)

c.     Information needed

1.     Contextual

2.     Demographic

3.     Perceptual

4.     Theoretical

d.     Research design (the steps you will use to complete your study)

e.     Data collection (instruments and tools, interviews, participant observations, documents, etc.)

f.      Plan for data analysis (how you are going to code and categorize the data)

g.     Ethical considerations

h.     Issues of trustworthiness (for qualitative or mixed-methods studies)

1.     Credibility

2.     Dependability

3.     Transferability

i.      Limitations and delimitations

j.      The role and background of the researcher

**Bibliography**