Graduate Research - Project Charter Sample Template

S U M M A R Y

Project Name:	Project name should summarize the project and provide enough detail to differentiate it from other projects. For a graduate program, this could simply be the name of your research or "Completion of Graduate Studies Program for [Student Name]"
Charter Author:	Person responsible for completing this document, typically the Project Manager. The graduate student is usually also the Project Manager.

Estimated Cost:	**Total Monetary**		**Total Contributed Human Resources**	
	Travel, honorariums, work lunches, transcription fees, software purchases, etc.		Internal, not fee for service, contributed resources. Include any resource that will contribute more than 20% of their time through the segment of the project that they are involved. Calculate dollar cost by multiplying the time spent by the median salary range for each position. Alternatively, you could simply include the number of days each person involved in your project will be contributing.	
Submission Date:	Date of formal submission.	**Estimated Completion Date:**		
Linkages:	When present, list dependencies on other projects or out of scope factors. E.g., research/project start date is dependent on approval of participation in program or when a work leave is granted. This row might also not be necessary and could be deleted.			

E N D O R S E M E N T

	Name	**Employment Title**	**Signature**
Sponsor:	Individual(s) with the (research/project) need. **Your graduate supervisor would usually be the sponsor of the project**		
Project Manager:	Person accountable for the effective execution of the project, irrespective of formal employment title. **This would usually be the graduate student.**		
PMO: Project Management Office	Many departments have someone designated as graduate student support; however, they are generally not managing deadlines or deliverables.		Optional
Advisory Committee:			Optional

Project/Research Overview

High level summary.

Project/Research Need

Include why there is a need for this research and how this research and its outcomes meet the needs of clients and key stakeholders and can impact policy and/or practice.

C L I E N T (S) & K E Y S T A K E H O L D E R S

Client(s)

Clients are the people who will be using the product or outcome of the project.
A graduate student might not have any clients for their research. The graduate student's clients would be and organization or person(s) that contracted the student to create something or seconded the student to do this research for another organization.

Key Stakeholders
"Stakeholders are people or organisations who have an interest in your research project or affect or are affected by its outcomes. Stakeholders include those who are both supportive of your research, as well as those who may be less supportive or indeed critical of it." Vitae

Key Stakeholders are the people affected by the project scope of work who are also able to affect the project positively or negatively.
- Supervisor
- Advisory Committee
- Funding body
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Stakeholders are the people affected by the project scope of work. This could include people who will use your research to inform their policy and practice.
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S U C C E S S C R I T E R I A

This section provides the information necessary to complete the following statements:
1) **The project will be complete when…**
   The thesis has been defended including evidence of:
   - Being able to describe, explain and defend the research work, and how it contributes to and furthers the knowledge within the discipline.
   - Being able to describe why the research work was undertaken, justify the methods used, and provide an interpretation and analysis of the result.

- My ability to undertake further research in the field of study and to make significant contributions to the field of knowledge.

2) **The project will be considered successful when…**
   Include your additional goals for success as needed. For example,
   - The student has demonstrated flexibility to adapt to continuous change to generate new knowledge.

S C O P E   S T A T E M E N T

In Scope
See the following link for information on the Scope of Research.

Out of Scope/Delimitations
Set the boundaries for your study. What will be excluded to ensure your project is manageable? Consider the number of participants, the location(s), the variables, the techniques, etc.
- This study does not cover…
- This study is limited to…
- The following has been excluded from this study…

R E Q U I R E M E N T S

Project requirements are the specific conditions that must be met to ensure that the product (project output) meets the sponsor's (research/project) needs and the institution's needs. E.g. The final thesis needs to demonstrate that 1) you are capable of independent critical thinking and analysis 2. you can communicate your ideas clearly. The research needs to demonstrate original and significant contribution to the specific discipline.

PROJECT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

The project timeline and milestones could be created as a Gantt chart, a spreadsheet, a Word Document, etc.

Consider the following milestones from the Grad Hub

Understand that it is inevitable that the timelines will change and your project will shift. That is to be expected. This is a starting point, and you will learn to adapt to changing factors throughout your project.

	When	Who needs to be Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed	Notes
1. Coursework & Other Program Requirements			
• Appointment of an advisor			
• Selection of coursework			
• Selection & formation of advisory committee			
• Completion of course work, internships, and practicums (if applicable)			
• Candidacy/comprehensive exam(s) (PhD only) *			
2. Thesis Proposal, Defense, & Ethics			
• Preparation and development of thesis/project proposal*			
• Proposal presentation and defense, approval received			
• Research Ethics Board approval (if applicable)			
• Minimum annual committee meetings and more as required			
3. Data Collection & Thesis Writing			
• Begin data collection & analysis			

• Drafting and revising of thesis/project report			
• Completion of thesis/project report			
4. Submission, Defence, and Completion			
• Review by supervisor and then advisory committee for approval to defend.			
• Distribution of thesis/project report to external examiner			
• Thesis/project report defense			
• Further revisions (if applicable)			
• Final revisions reviewed and approved by advisor			
• Submission of the final thesis/project report			
Other…			

Human Resources

Position	Responsibilities/Accountability/Consultation	X Days per week/month/year for Y weeks/months/years	Effort (days)
Project Manager/ Researcher	Complete all stages of the research including but not limited to the research proposal, the REB application, recruitment of participants, data collection and analysis, thesis defence, etc.		
	Attend professional development programs, such as effective writing courses, teaching training, academic integrity, and workshops on research grants and career opportunities.		
	Engage in consultation on the composition of the advisory and examining committees. If appropriate, the student will distribute reports in advance of scheduled meetings with the advisory committee.		
	Other…		
Supervisor/ Principal Investigator	Guide the Student on degree requirements, appropriate elective course work, research, thesis proposal, thesis writing, suitable resources, and workspace.		
	Advising and assisting the candidate in preparation for the submission of the thesis.		
	Ensuring, within reasonable limits, that the thesis is of an acceptable standard and quality for the degree sought		
	Collaborate on patentability of any invention arising out of the research before any publication or presentation of the research to ensure that the patentability of the invention is not jeopardized.		
	Other…		
Shared responsibility of the student and supervisor	Organize and schedule an in-person meeting with the entire advisory committee at least once annually.		
	Evaluate the thesis to determine whether it is ready to proceed to defence.		
Advisory Committee	Advise the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in writing when a positive decision is reached, and the defence will be requested.		
Shared responsibility of the advisory committee and supervisor	Submit progress report forms at least once per 12-month period.		
Graduate department student support	The department is expected to ensure that all documentation in the student's file contains all necessary documentation, is up to date and in order, and that the academic requirements for the degree have been met.		
External Examiner			
Graduate Chair/Department Head	The Department Head or Graduate Chair shall advise the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in writing when a positive decision is reached, and the defence will be requested.		
Research Participants			
Transcription Services			
Other…			
		Total Effort (days)	

Costs

Monetary Costs			
Units	**Description**	**Cost**	**Total Cost**
20	Meetings: Working Lunches, Kick-Off Meeting, Etc.		
1	Honorarium(s)		
5	Travel		
1	Transcription Services		
		Total:	
Contributed Human Resource Costs			
Position			**Total Days**
Supervisor			
Advisory Committee			
Department Head/Graduate Chair			
Department Graduate Support			
Graduate student			
Other…			
Total:			

P R O J E C T   C O N S T R A I N T S

Cost, Schedule, and Scope

The project's constraints can be categorized into three main categories: **cost**, **schedule**, and **scope**. These constraints are bound by the quality requirements of the project and must be prioritized to ensure that good decisions are made during the project. Prioritization offers guidance to the project team when deciding how to adjust the project plan, when the options are to do more, do it sooner, or spend less (or conversely, to do less, take longer, or spend more).

Fixed, Fluid, and Flexible

Project constraints are ranked as fixed, flexible, or fluid to give guidance to the Project Manager and team members on whether scope, schedule or budget may be adjusted. An example of fixed, fluid, and flexible is included below. This will be unique to your project but **only one of the three constraints can be labeled as fixed**.

- **Budget (Fixed)**: Budget is a critical constraint on the project. The scope and schedule will be modified to fit within the allotted budget.
- **Scope (Fluid)**: The scope of the project will be fluid, as items will be added or removed as dictated by the available budget.
- **Schedule (Flexible)**: The schedule of the project is dependent on the scope and will be flexible in adaptation to it.

Assumptions Log (sample completed table included)

It is important to have this conversation with your supervisor. If there is a huge discrepancy about the amount of time each person is going to contribute to the project or the turnaround time for feedback, there will be increased frustration that can impact the outcomes.

#	Assumptions	Confidence (1-4)	Lead Time (1 or 2)	Impact (1-4)	Total Score (Sum)
1	Financial resources are available	3	1	4	8
2	Project timeline is feasible	3	2	2	7
3	Senior leadership support the project	2	2	4	8
	Human resources for the project are sufficient (people's time, including your time as a researcher, is a human resource)	3	2	4	9
5	Stakeholders support the project	2	2	1	5
6	Participants will participate for the project duration	3	2	4	9
2	The supervisor will strive to collaborate with the graduate student on at least one publication during their programming.	3	2	1	6
4	Project sponsor is engaged	3	2	3	8
	• Your supervisor will provide feedback to you within X days after submitting a draft for review.				
	• Your supervisor will meet with you X number of times per month.				
8	Other….				

Assumption Rating Parameters

Factor	Measure	Criteria
Confidence	• Measures how certain we are that the assumption is true • Rating Scale: 1 – 4	1 - **Almost Certain**; very little doubt 2 - **Highly Confident**; some doubt 3 - **Reasonably Confident**; best guess at the time, but not surprised if it changed 4 - **Low Confidence**; if we have to guess. Many factors could prove us incorrect
Lead Time	• When will the assumption be proven true or false? • Rated 1 or 2	1 – proven or disproven in the **first half** of the project 2 - proven or disproven in the **second half** of the project
Impact	• Amount of rework that will need to be undertaken • Could also be schedule impact • Rating Scale: 1 – 4	1 – Minimal Rework or schedule impact 2 – Some Rework or schedule impact 3 – Medium Rework or schedule impact 4 – Significant Rework or schedule impact
Total Score	• Sum of Confidence, Lead Time, and Impact scores	**9 – 10 Points – Critical Priority** **7 - 8 Points – High Priority** **5 – 6 Points – Medium Priority** **3 – 4 Points – Low Priority**

R I S K S

Risk Register

	Risk List factors that could negatively affect the project.	**Probability the Negative Factor Occurs** (Low, Medium, High)	**Impact/Consequences** Describe how this risk can negatively impact the project	**Mitigation Strategy** Describe your strategy for decreasing or eliminating the risk.	**Contingency Plan** Describe your plan to address the factor if mitigation fails.
1	Project too large for time constraints or funding.			Ensure that input has been gained from both the supervisor and advisory committee.	Detail the possible additions or deletions to scope and revisit with supervisor; submit a revised proposal with rational for the revisions; resubmit an REB application with amendments.
2	Project team turnover (supervisor or participant turnover)			Accept risk.	
3	Weather conditions		Zero data for one year	Ensure there is an indoor component	Apply for extension
4	Etc.…				

Risks of not proceeding

What will it mean if the project does not proceed? Examples: the student may potentially have to reimburse funding; the student will need to switch to a different graduate program strand; etc.…

Note: Students' mental health and well-being are the top priories. Although personal work/life balance is not usually considered in a project charter, there is no risk greater than the risk of not taking care of your mental health and wellbeing. Your worth as a person is not tied to the success of this project.