

IDEV6850: DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

University of Guelph, Winter 2026

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Please note the course assessments may change

The official syllabus will be available on Courselink on the first day of class

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Developing a research project is an exciting process – it's an opportunity to pursue your research interests and explore a body of literature. That said, it is also a challenging process. As such, this graduate seminar aims to provide students with the skills to develop a research proposal. The research proposal may be based on students' actual graduate project and used for their progress towards candidacy. Or the research proposal may be a hypothetical graduate project which students develop to better understand the process behind undertaking a research project. Regardless of whether this is a research proposal for an actual or hypothetical project, students will learn about conducting literature reviews, crafting research questions, and selecting appropriate methods. They will also reflect on ethical issues which may arise in development research and fieldwork, as well as the process of preparing for and carrying out fieldwork.

Students are expected to actively participate in each seminar discussion, reflect on the readings and apply what they have learned to writing a research proposal. Students will write a Letter of Intent and will receive extensive feedback on their submission. The Letter of Intent can be approached as a draft research proposal. The course concludes with the submission of the Research Proposal and a mock "defense" where students present their research proposals to an interdisciplinary group of faculty members and answer questions about their proposed project.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course supports students in achieving the following learning objectives:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the research process, including the development of a literature review and a "researchable" research question
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of different methods and justify the selection of a particular method for a research project
- Reflect on one's own social position and the relating implications for the research process
- Examine the ethical issues which may arise when carrying out research in the field of international development studies
- Become familiar with the Research Ethics Board (REB) application process at the University of Guelph and the protection of human participants
- Prepare a plan for carrying out fieldwork and anticipate challenges which may arise in the field
- Write and defend a detailed research proposal

ASSIGNMENTS	Weight	Submission	Due Date
Seminar Participation	15%	In seminar	Ongoing
Letter of Intent	20%	Dropbox + Courselink Discussion Board	Mid-Feb
Research Proposal and Oral Presentation	65%	Dropbox + Defense	Mid-late Mar