



**Doctoral Dissertation
Prospectus Paper
Template**

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**School of Business and Technology Management
(SBTM)**

Version: January 2017
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The SBTM Prospectus Template

The SBTM Prospectus is a stepping stone into the final process that students have been preparing for throughout their programs – the dissertation. Using this template, you will lay out the framework for the structure and content of your Dissertation Proposal, which, in turn, provides the framework for the Dissertation Manuscript. While the doctoral program of studies has been training you to be an independent researcher and expert in your field, you are not alone. If you have questions during this process please reach out to your professor. The Academic Success Center and your Advisor are also available to help you.

Your Prospectus will be presented as part of your portfolio in the Portfolio course. A grading rubric can be found within the [Portfolio Handbook](#).

How to Use this Template

Milestone document templates are pre-formatted to conform to Northcentral University dissertation requirements. Templates include the required section headings for each milestone document. Refer to the corresponding Degree Guidebook for supplemental information for each chapter and section.

Northcentral Milestone Document Templates represent the standards of the research and academic communities for research writing. Because this Prospectus Paper Template (PPT) provides the framework for the structure and content of the Dissertation Proposal, it is important for students' Prospectus Papers to adhere to the template in terms of content, organization, and format. In addition, the template serves as a valuable

guide to the logical flow of the document, ensuring alignment among the problem, purpose, and methodological design and analysis, allowing the reason for, and the nature of, the study to be fully clarified. Adherence to the milestone template in terms of content, organization, and format will greatly facilitate the development of acceptable milestone documents throughout the dissertation process.

Enter text directly into the template. Eliminate template instructions and example text. Do not change the format, section headings, margins, page numbering, or font. Exceptions to APA 6th edition (e.g., 1.5 inch margin on the left, single-spaced references) unique to dissertations are reflected in the templates and take precedence over APA format. Refer to the [Dissertation Center](#) for current resources. *Milestone documents submitted to the SBTM that are not formatted using the template will be returned without review.*

Submission of a milestone document for SBTM Review indicates that the dissertation chair, student, and committee have read the Dissertation requirements described in the Doctoral Candidacy Resource Guide, guidebooks, and templates. Additionally, submission for SBTM Review indicates that the dissertation chair and committee have carefully read the student's milestone document and attest that it meets all of the requirements set forth.

[Title]

Choose an item.

Submitted to Northcentral University

Graduate Faculty of the School of Business and Technology Management
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

CHOOSE AN ITEM.

by

[Author]

San Diego, CA

December 2016

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Delete this page if your document contains no tables. See Appendix B and Appendix C for information on working with tables, figures, and lists of tables/figures.

List of Figures

Figure 1. Northcentral University's Logo [18](#)

Delete this page if your document contains no figures. See Appendix B and Appendix C for information on working with tables, figures, and lists of tables/figures.

Introduction

[Text...Introduce the dissertation topic in one or more paragraphs (2 pages maximum). The study topic should be briefly described to establish the main ideas and context. Include recent, scholarly, peer-reviewed sources to support each assertion. The Introduction should orient the reader to all of the concepts presented in the sections that follow. Key words related to the research topic should be defined clearly and precisely upon first use and used consistently throughout the paper. This will help to establish and maintain the central focus of the paper. Review the Candidacy Resource Guide for your degree program for more information about degree expectations with regard to the study topic and design requirements.]

Note: Do not describe the study purpose or method in the introduction as these belong in later sections.

Statement of the Problem

(Approximately 250 to 300 words) Articulation of a concise problem statement is the *key* to a successful proposal/dissertation manuscript and typically requires many revisions before the proposal is approved; this prospectus is the first step in refining your problem. The problem statement is a brief discussion of a problem or observation succinctly identifying and *documenting* the need for and importance of the study. Throughout your coursework, your research has become increasingly focused and you have begun to identify gaps or holes in the research that you are interested in researching; this is the time to identify that gap or problem. Include appropriate published or relevant primary sources to document the existence of a problem worthy of doctoral level

research. A lack of research alone is not a compelling problem (many things are not studied but do not necessarily warrant research). Stay focused and do not include all of your research – you will expand on the literature that you reviewed in the following section titled “Brief Review of the Literature”.

The documented problem that is identified may be a gap in academic research or a practical problem or issue in the profession of study for which there is not already an acceptable solution. In defining the problem a clear discrepancy must be drawn between that which exists currently and that which is desired. To identify and articulate a problem, consider the potential negative consequences to the field or stakeholders if the proposed research is never conducted. What is not known that should be known and what are the potential negative consequences to the field of study if the proposed research is never conducted? These questions can help to identify the problem that needs to be addressed and the theories relevant to predict, explain and understand the problem.

Ph.D. dissertation-worthy problems must be relevant and documented beyond any particular study site and have clear theoretical implications in order to make a realistic, but substantive contribution to the field of study. Applied study problems must be relevant and documented beyond any particular study site and worthy of investigation, although your research design does not necessarily require generalizability beyond the study site.

[Text... Present a general issue/observation that is grounded in the research literature and leads to the need for the study (in most cases scholarly citations within the last 5 years are required to document the general and specific problem). Follow with a

focused, documented problem that directly reflects and leads to the need for a research response.]

Note: Ensure that the concepts presented in the problem statement *lead to and align directly with* the Purpose Statement. Use of a “logic” map is highly recommended in order to ensure direct alignment and avoid “surprises” among the key elements:
 problem → purpose → research questions → proposed method and design.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose statement should be one concise paragraph that describes the intent of the study and it should flow directly from the problem statement. Specifically address the reason for conducting the study and reflect the research questions. Begin the purpose statement with a succinct sentence that indicates the study method and overarching goal.

[Text...“The purpose of this [quantitative, qualitative, or constructive] study is to... (describe the study goal that *directly reflects and encompasses* the research questions).” Follow with a brief, but clear overview of how, with what instruments/data, with whom and where (as applicable).]

Within the Purpose Statement:

- The research method is identified as qualitative, quantitative, or constructive.
- The stated purpose reflects the research questions: variables/constructs and/or phenomenon/concept/idea are identified (See the Degree Guidebook for your degree for additional information).
- The research design is clearly stated and is aligned with the problem statement.

- The participants and/or data sources are identified (See the Applied Degree Guidebook for additional information).
- The geographic location of study is identified (as appropriate).

Before moving forward, ensure that the purpose is a logical, explicit research response to the stated problem. The study results should make a contribution to theory, or the field or practice and have implications that are relevant beyond your study.

Research Questions

Before listing the research questions, introductory information should be presented in a discussion context. The research questions are to be distinct and *answerable*, given the identified constructs/phenomenon and population.

Note: Do not include specific interview or survey question/items here.

Quantitative: Research questions are included and the question list is followed by corresponding list of proposed hypothesis(es). Ensure the research questions and hypothesis(es) are aligned with the purpose statement. The research questions and hypotheses must be directly answerable, specific and testable based on the data collected.

Qualitative: Proposed research questions that are related to the phenomenon are stated. The proposed research questions must be aligned with purpose statement. Qualitative research questions should be open-ended and reflect the nature of the qualitative design (*avoid* yes/no and closed ended questions).

Constructive: Proposed research questions should be related to designing, creating, extending, applying, etc. your proposed artifact; quality and success criteria related to your research or achieving your goal; and any questions the answers to which

would inform other practitioners or scholars and which your research will answer. After completing your study, your data or other evidence should support your research questions. Constructive research questions are also usually open-ended.

[Text...Brief introductory text. *Note:* Avoid redundant text]

Q1. [Research question 1]

Q2. [Research question 2]

[Additional questions as needed.]

Hypotheses

(Quantitative Only. Delete this section if the proposed study is qualitative or constructive.)

Both null hypotheses and alternative hypotheses must be stated. Each must directly correspond with a research question. Hypotheses must be stated in testable, potentially negatable, form with each variable operationalized. *Note:* Each hypothesis represents *one distinct* testable prediction. Upon testing, each hypothesis must be entirely supported or entirely negated.

H1₀. [Null Hypothesis Text...]

H1_a. [Alternative Hypothesis Text...]

Brief Review of the Literature

Note: This is not meant to be an exhaustive review of the literature. However, when the proposal is eventually developed, this section of the Prospectus Paper should be

incorporated into the more exhaustive Background section in Chapter 1 and/or the Literature Review of Chapter 2 as appropriate.

[Text... The discussion should have depth and present an integrated *critical analysis* and *synthesis* of the scholarly, peer-reviewed literature that provides a foundation and context for the dissertation study. The discussion should be comprehensive, organized, and flow logically. The brief review of literature should *not* be a list of one article summary after another or an annotated bibliography. Use themes and/or subtopics as headings. Identify the themes or sub-topics around which the literature review has been organized into a coherent narrative discussion. In the review, at least 7 to 10 of the most important works or studies that touch upon the dissertation topic or problem should be discussed. Be sure to include works that provide alternate or opposing perspectives on the proposed topic area to demonstrate unbiased research. Focus particularly on those works that address main ideas in the field, describe areas of controversy, and indicate areas of incomplete knowledge and relate them to the envisioned study problem, purpose, and research questions. Include historical and germinal works as well as current works (within the last 5 years). Note that you will continue to expand and update the literature review until the final dissertation is submitted.

Note: Emphasize key findings and interpretations to build a coherent narrative of the current state of the literature rather than focus on researchers/authors (other than seminal authors in the field) and specific study designs (i.e., unless the author, specific design, analytics, sample size or geographic location are directly relevant, it is usually not

necessary to describe them). Review the Background and Literature Review sections of published, peer-reviewed journal articles for examples of academic writing.

Please note the literature review will contain several headings specific to the topic. With the exception of key, seminal authors, the majority of references should be scholarly, peer-reviewed and published within the last 5 years.

Theme/Sub-Topic 1

[Text...]

Theme/Sub-Sub Topic 1. [Text...]

Theme/Sub-Sub Topic 2. [Text...]

Theme/Sub-Topic 2

[Text...Repeat as needed]

Summary

[Text...]

Research Method

Because the research plan is in the prospectus paper stage, a highly detailed research design is not expected – this is a preliminary work. The prospectus paper, however, does provide a foundation for the next step in the dissertation process, the development of the proposal. A well-conceived, well written and well researched prospectus paper serves as a foundation for the remainder of dissertation work.

Dissertation research is an iterative and often recursive process. Students should expect to

revise numerous times before each milestone document is finalized. Although not required at this stage, students and faculty may find it useful to review the dissertation proposal template to begin to consider what will be required at the proposal stage, for example, design details and ethical considerations.

Note: If students wish to provide additional subheadings to organize the content of the discussion in this section, the dissertation proposal template Ch. 3 subheading wording/organization/format should be followed rather than developing unique subheadings.

[Text... Discuss the proposed research method (quantitative, qualitative, or constructive). An Applied Research study (DBA) must reflect an applied study goal and demonstrate validity within the context of the chosen research design and overall scientific rigor. Case studies, action research, and program development/ evaluation are appropriate.

Academic research in a Ph.D. program using quantitative studies must demonstrate both internal and external validity (e.g., large, random samples, statistical power and representativeness). Statistical analysis of existing data resources or survey results are appropriate examples

Qualitative studies must demonstrate validity within the context of the specific qualitative design (e.g., credibility, dependability, transferability, trustworthiness). Replication studies are not permitted. Case studies, narrative analysis, and ethnographies are appropriate examples.

Constructive research should provide a measurable benefit to the academic community in the form of an artifact, extension of an artifact, or application of an artifact in a new way.

A clear rationale behind the chosen questions for study, the particular data gathering techniques and data analyses should be provided. Clear decision paths are provided based on the associated research method/design. Sample size and method must be appropriate and justified based on the nature of the study design. Quantitative analyses must include justified sample size determination. Given an appropriate rationale for replication, replication studies in an original context are permitted. Constructive research studies involve the creation, design, application, etc. of an artifact as well as measurement of success in meeting your stated goal. Your research design and success measurements should be justified with appropriate evidence from similar studies.

In this section, describe and substantiate the appropriateness of the method and design to respond to the stated problem, purpose and research questions. The discussion should not simply be a listing and description of research designs; rather, elaboration demonstrates how the proposed method and design accomplish the study goals, why the design is the optimum choice for the proposed research, and how the method aligns with the purpose and research questions. Provide appropriate foundational research method support for the proposed study design; for example, refer to Moustakas and other appropriate authors to describe a phenomenological design and Yin to describe the appropriate application of a case study design.

Note: Avoid introductory research design and analyses descriptions as well as excessive reference to textbook authors such as Creswell and Neuman. General research

methods textbooks are not intended to provide the detail needed to implement qualitative research designs. Do not provide detailed descriptions of particular methods or designs that were not chosen.]

Operational Definition of Variables

(Quantitative/Mixed Studies Only. Delete this section if the proposed study is qualitative or constructive.)

[Text (optional)... Identify each of the primary constructs associated with the research question(s), and hypotheses. Include a brief overview of how each will be operationally defined for the proposed study. Operational definitions should be based on published, validated, research and instruments (describe and document how previous authors and/or the proposed instrument operationally defined each variable construct.

Note: Operational Definitions are distinct from the Definition of Terms.]

Construct/Variable 1. Description/Operational Definition.

Describe each variable, the nature of the variable (e.g., nominal, ordinal, interval), how each variable will vary (e.g., the range 1 – 5, 0 – 100) or levels (low, medium, high; male, female) and the data sources (e.g., archival data, survey items, and if appropriate, how the specific scores (categories, etc.) used in the analysis will be derived from the raw data such as summing or averaging responses to survey items or assessments.). Review the previous, established use of proposed instrument, the nature of the variable data collected and analytics for examples.

Note: Dissertations are not typically appropriate sources for instruments and operational definitions. Consult the [Dissertation Center](#) for guidance on locating pre-existing instruments. Also, review peer-reviewed, published empirical research related to

the research topic for potential pre-existing study instruments that may be used as is or adapted with author(s) permission for the purpose of the study.

Consult research design sources (including [Dissertation Center](#) resources) and ensure that the measurement level of each variable and the expected distributional characteristics of the data are appropriate to, and meet the assumptions of, the proposed statistical analyses (for example, is it likely that the responses will be normally distributed?) Become familiar with non-parametric alternatives to parametric tests to account for the possibility that the data do not meet parametric assumptions. See the [Dissertation Center](#) for more information.

Measurement

[Text...Provide a brief description of how study data will be collected, measured and analyzed. Describe the proposed instrument. Please note that survey self-development should be considered only after an exhaustive search for an existing validated instrument (See the [Dissertation Center](#) (Survey and Interview Resources) for guidance on such a search). Also, survey self-development will require a multi-step development and validation process, including pilot testing. (See the [Dissertation Center](#) (Research Methods Help/Research Workshop) for a tutorial on the multi-step development and validation process for a survey instrument). Review the scholarly literature for examples of how relevant concepts have been measured in the past.

For a constructive study, provide justification for your proposed measurements and metrics such as examples from previous attempts to solve the same or similar problem.

Although a highly detailed description is not required at the Prospectus Paper stage, study variables must demonstrate appropriateness to the study purpose and meet the assumptions of the proposed statistical tests. For qualitative studies, describe the proposed instrument or collection (e.g., interviews, observations), and how concepts will be coded and analyzed as appropriate to the proposed design based on primary qualitative research methods and design authors. Include appropriate support for the application of the proposed design. Consult research design and analysis sources including those available in the [Dissertation Center](#) for guidance.]

Summary

[1 to 2 paragraphs - Text...Briefly restate the key points, study purpose and proposed research plan.]

References

Instructions: This section of the Prospectus Paper is a list of references cited in text. All resources cited in the prospectus paper must be included in the list of references.

Please refer to the APA Manual, 6th edition and the [Academic Success Center](#) for additional APA guidance.

Note: APA6 requires a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) be provided, if one has been assigned (see page 187-192).

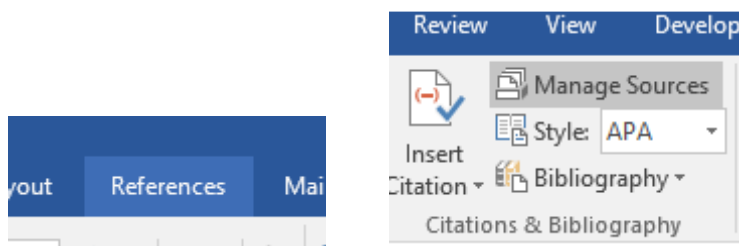
Refer to Appendix A for information on working with references in Microsoft Word and delete these instructions. Other software can be used as well; for example Endnote.

Appendix A Using the Microsoft Word References and Bibliography Tools

Microsoft Word makes it easy to manage your reference list and ensure everything is correctly formatted.

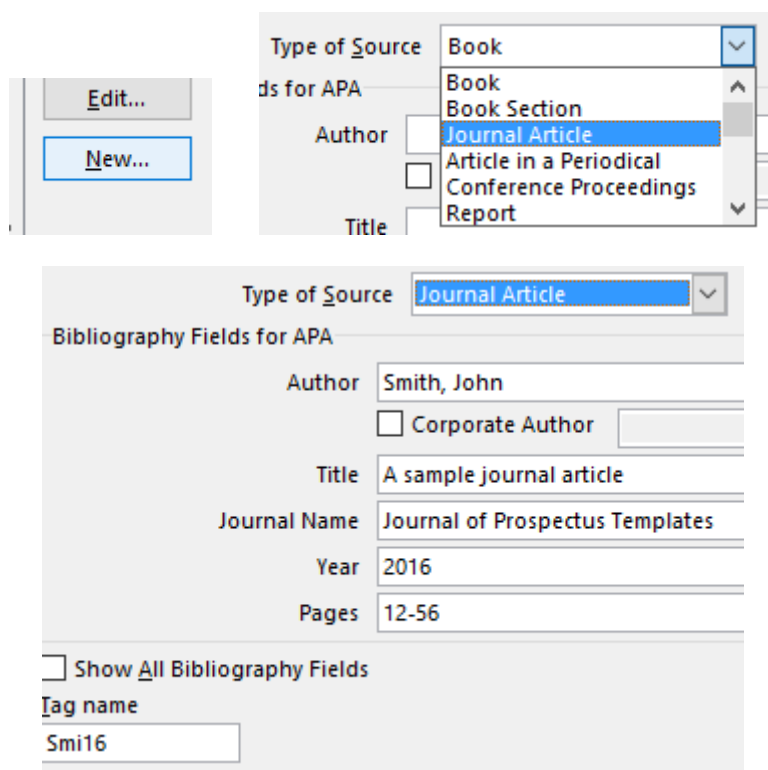
Managing References in Word

You can manage the references used in this document by selecting the “References” tab and clicking “Manage Sources” as shown:



Inserting a new Reference

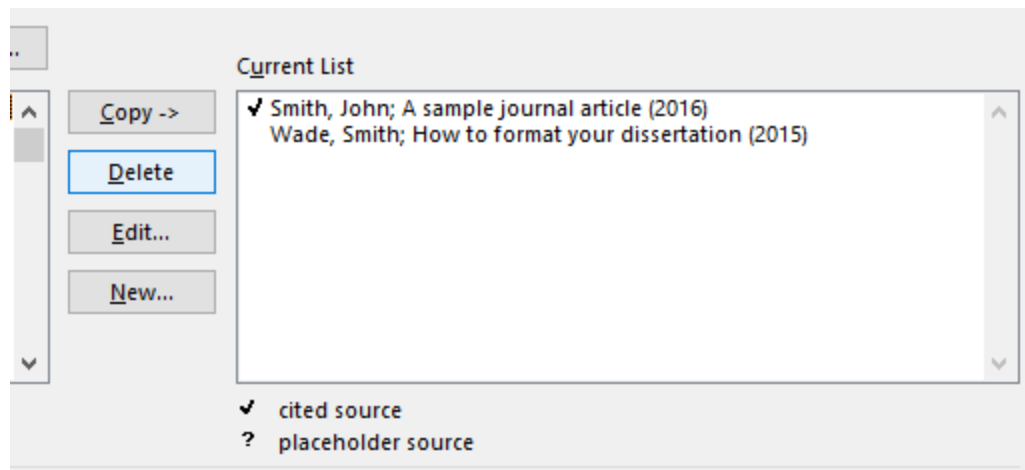
From the “Manage Sources” dialog, insert a new resource by clicking the “New...” button, selecting the appropriate type of resource from the drop-down box, and entering the resource’s information.



Deleting a Reference

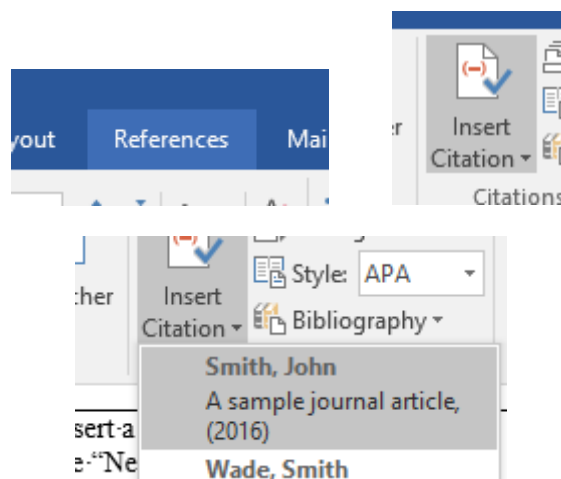
Your paper should only include references that are cited somewhere in your paper. To delete a reference, select it from the “Manage Sources” screen and click “Delete.”

You can easily see which reference are cited and which ones are not by looking for the check mark next to the reference (checked means it is cited somewhere in your paper).



Inserting an Inline Citation

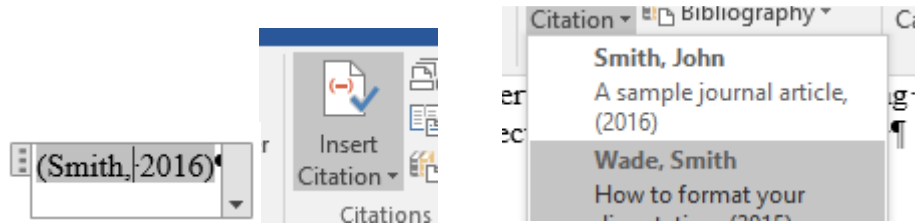
Insert an inline citation by clicking “Insert Citation” from the References tab and then selecting the appropriate source.



Sample output: (Smith, 2016)

Using Multiple Sources in the Same Inline Citation

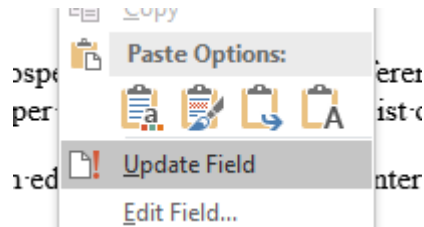
Start by inserting a citation for the first source as normal. For each remaining resource, click the citation with your mouse to highlight it and follow the same process as you would for adding any citation.



Sample output: (Smith, 2016; Wade, 2015)

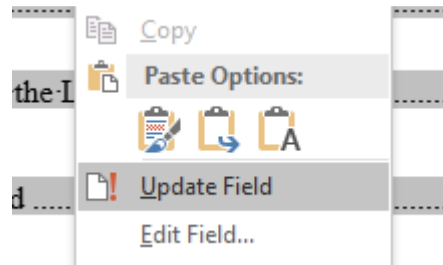
Updating Your Bibliography

Microsoft Word will not automatically update your bibliography when you add or remove references. To refresh the view of your bibliography, right-click anywhere on the bibliography and click “Update Field.”



Appendix B Working with Lists of Document Contents

Microsoft Word will not automatically update your table of contents (or figures or tables) when you add or remove headings. To refresh the view of your table of contents, right-click on the table of contents and click “Update Field.”



Appendix C Working with Figures and Tables

Captioning and Labeling Your Figures

To insert a label and caption for a figure, right-click on the figure and select “Insert Caption...” Type a period in the “Caption” box, followed by your caption. Then ensure the label “Figure” is selected and the position is “Below selected item” and click “OK.”

Finally, italicize the figure label and number but not the caption as shown in the example below.

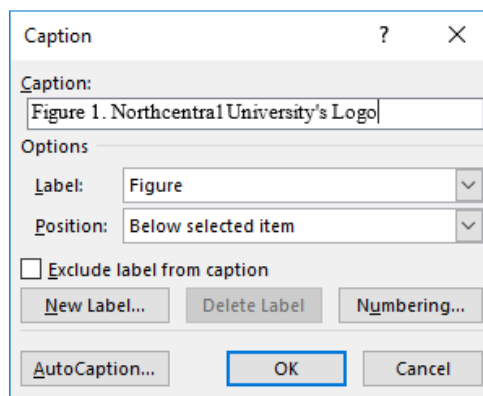
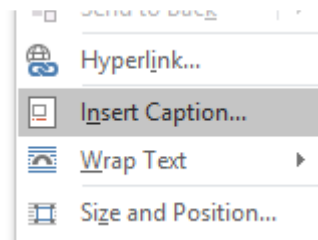


Figure 1. Northcentral University's Logo

Inserting a Caption for a Table

To insert a label and caption for a table, highlight the entire table, right-click on the table and select “Insert Caption...” Type a period in the “Caption” box, followed by your caption. Then ensure the label “Table” is selected and the position is “Above selected item” and click “OK.”

Finally, italicize the caption but not the label and number as shown in the example below.

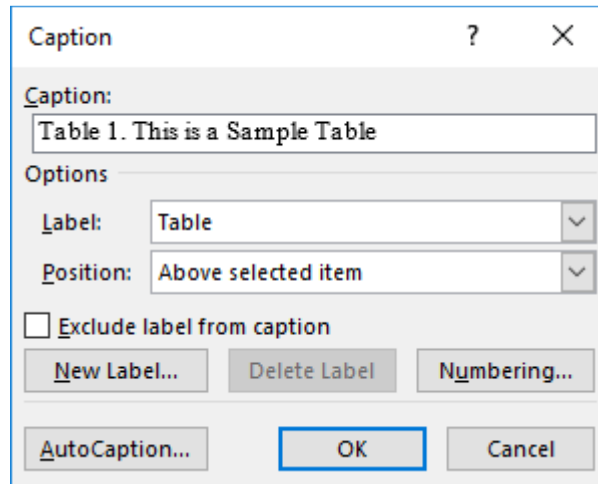
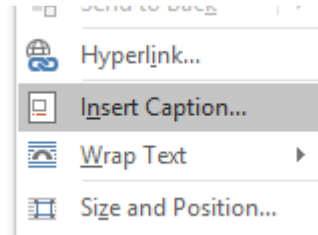


Table 1. This is a Sample Table

Foo	Bar	Baz	Quux
12	34	5	23
76	2	98	1996
98	45	67	97

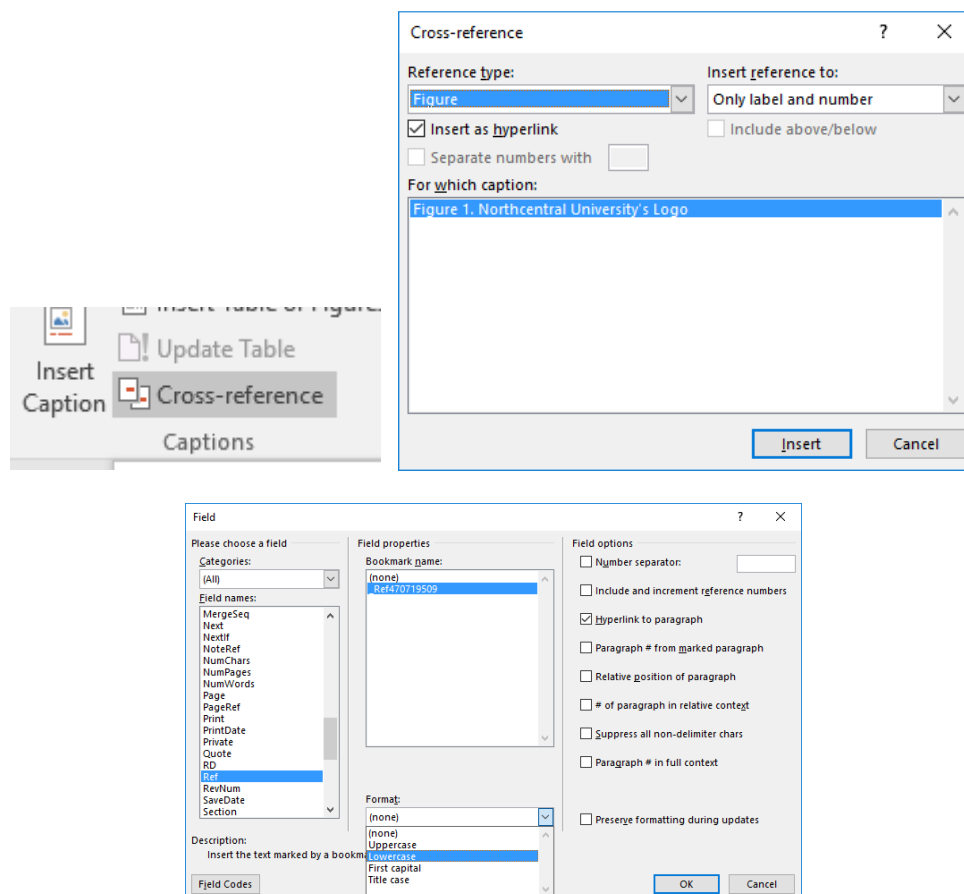
Inserting a Callout to a Figure or Table in Body Text

When referring to a figure or table in body text, click on the “References” tab and then “Cross-reference.” Select the “Reference type” (e.g., “Figure” or “Table”) and whether you wish to display the entire caption, just the label and number, the page number, or whether it appears “above” or “below” the current text. Then select the item you wish to reference in click “OK.”

You can also use this technique for referring to specific paragraphs, sections, or appendices within your document by using the “Heading” reference type and selecting the appropriate section or appendix heading.

If the inserted callout is inappropriately cased (e.g., it is capitalized when not at the beginning of a sentence or should be capitalized), right-click on the newly-inserted callout, click “Edit Field...,” and set the “Format” to “Lowercase,” “Uppercase,” etc. as needed.

An example is below.



The NCU logo is displayed above in *figure 1* on page 18.

Updating Figure and Table Callouts and the Table of Contents

If you rearrange, add, or delete figures and tables, Word won't automatically update all of the callouts for you. To update the callouts in the entire document, use the following key strokes:

1.  + 

2. 

This action will also update your tables of contents and bibliography. If prompted, select “Update entire table” and click OK.

