The Key Components of a Scholarly Book Proposal

Every press has their own requirements and format but most will ask for these items in one form or another. You might see different terms used, but they’re all looking for these basic elements.

# Working Title

Grabs an editor’s attention

Communicates what you think is most important in your book

Demonstrates that you have a handle on your book’s contribution and argument

# Project Description/Overview

Makes the main case for your book to all publishing staff and peer reviewers

Shows editors how you write and how you are approaching your book

# Intended Audiences

Particularly important for marketing and sales staff

Makes a case for fit between book and press

# Comparable Books

Also important for marketing and sales staff

Helps an editor get a handle on your vision through reference points

Your list makes a case for fit between book and press

# Table of Contents and Chapter Summaries

Particularly important for peer reviewers

Proves that the project needs to be a book and is well conceived

# Manuscript Specifications

Important for production planning

Editor will use your specs to make profit and loss calculations

May matter for marketing too

# Manuscript Status

Helps editor plan for peer review

Helps publisher plan for production and release date, alongside other projects

# Author Info

Relevant for peer reviewers who may be asked to comment on your qualifications

Gives publicity staff a sense of your platform

Some presses will ask for a CV too

# Writing Samples

Show editors and peer reviewers your writing style

Provide material from book for peer reviewers to evaluate

If you need more help decoding a press’s proposal submission guidelines or want tips on crafting any of these elements of your proposal, see *The Book Proposal Book: A Guide for Scholarly Authors.*