

Write a research proposal

A research proposal is a short document written to inform others about the proposed area of the research. Generally, you will be required to write a research proposal for acceptance into research degree candidature. In some departments this document is called a transfer report.

Before you start writing the proposal, ask yourself:

- What is the main research question?
- Is the research question worth answering?
- Will this make an interesting and worthwhile project?
- Will the findings be of interest to others?
- Can I justify undertaking this study?

The Purpose of a research proposal

- To propose a research project that is worthwhile and will result in a significant contribution to knowledge
- To formulate a detailed plan of the project including methodological approach and theoretical framework
- To ensure that the proposed research is achievable within the required time and with the available resources
- To demonstrate that you have adequate expertise and experience to undertake the project.

Key structure of research

1. Introduction

Present the context for the proposed research by outlining the background field and by reviewing some of the existing research. Establish the need for further research and in particular for the project that you are proposing.

2. Research Aims

Clearly state aims of the research project. What will you achieve in this research project? Identify the value, significance and contribution of the proposed work. The findings will need to extend knowledge in the field.

3. Literature Review

Review relevant previous studies. This will be a brief overview, not a comprehensive review of the literature like the one that you will present in your thesis. It will serve to provide a context within which your research will be situated, and whereby you can demonstrate the need for your particular research. Describe the theoretical framework you have chosen to use in your project.

4. General methodology

Outline and justify the proposed methodology. Discuss the rationale for your selection of research paradigm, research techniques, materials, equipment, testing procedures, data collection, proposed analyses, etc.

5. Research Questions

Present the research questions that the proposed study will investigate and answer.

6. References

Provide a list of all references that you have cited in the proposal.