

# **WRITING A RESEARCH** **PROPOSAL**

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## ***Outlines:***

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***A research proposal*** describes what you will investigate, why it's important, and how you will do the research.

The format of a research proposal varies between fields, but most proposals should contain at least these elements:

Cover page

Introduction

Literature review

Research design

Reference list

## ***Purpose of a research proposal***

Academics often have to write research proposals to get funding for their projects. As a student, you might have to write a research proposal to get your thesis or dissertation plan approved.

All research proposals are designed to persuade someone — such as a funding body, educational institution, or supervisor — that your project is worthwhile.

# ***Research proposal aims***

## **Relevance**

Convince the reader that your project is interesting, original and important

## **Context**

Show that you are familiar with the field, you understand the current state of research on the topic, and your ideas have a strong academic basis

## **Approach**

Make a case for your methodology, showing that you have carefully thought about the data, tools and procedures you will need to conduct the research

## **Feasibility**

Confirm that the project is possible within the practical constraints of the program, institution or funding

## ***How long is a research proposal?***

The length of a research proposal varies dramatically. A bachelor's or master's thesis proposal can be just a few pages, while proposals for PhD dissertations and research funding are often very long and detailed.

Although you write it before you begin the research, the proposal's structure usually looks like a shorter version of a thesis or dissertation (but without the results and discussion sections).

# ***Proposal contents***

## **1-Title page**

Like your dissertation or thesis, the proposal will usually have a title page that consist of:

The proposed title of your project

Your name

Your supervisor's name

The institution and department

**Title of Project** It should be concise and descriptive

## 2-Abstract and table of contents

If your proposal is very long, you might also have to include an abstract and a table of contents to help the reader navigate the document.

**Abstract** is a brief summary of approximately 300 words.

It should include the research question, the reason for the study, the method and the main findings.

# 3-Introduction

It should:

- Introduce the topic
- Give background and context
- Outline your problem statement and research question(s)

Some important questions to guide your introduction include:

Who has an interest in the topic?

How much is already known about the problem?

What is missing from current knowledge?

What new insights will your research contribute?

Why is this research worth doing?

## 4-Literature review

It's important to show that you're familiar with the most important research on your topic. A strong literature review convinces the reader that your project has a solid foundation in existing knowledge or theory.

It also shows that you're not simply repeating what other people have already done.

Compare and contrast: what are the main theories, methods, debates and controversies?

Be critical: what are the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches?

Show how your research fits in: how will you build on, challenge, or synthesize the work of others?

# 5-Research design and methods

The research design or methodology section should describe the overall approach and practical steps you will take to answer your research questions.

The Method section is very important because it tells your Research Committee how you plan to tackle your research problem.

For quantitative studies, the method section typically consists of the following sections:

1. **Design** -Is it a questionnaire study or a laboratory experiment? What kind of design do you choose?
2. **Subjects or participants** - Who will take part in your study ? What kind of sampling procedure do you use?
3. **Instruments** - What kind of measuring instruments or questionnaires do you use? Why did you choose them? Are they valid and reliable?
4. **Procedure** - How do you plan to carry out your study? What activities are involved? How long does it take?

# 6-Results

Obviously you do not have results at the proposal stage.

However, you need to have some idea about what kind of data you will be collecting, and what statistical procedures will be used in order to answer your research question or test your hypothesis.

## **7-Implications and contribution to knowledge**

To finish your proposal on a strong note, you can explore the potential implications of the research for theory or practice, and emphasize again what you aim to contribute to existing knowledge on the topic.

## **8- Reference list or bibliography**

Your research proposal must include proper citations for every source you have used, and full publication details should always be included in the reference list

# Common Mistakes in Proposal Writing

1. Failure to provide the proper context to frame the research question.
2. Failure to define the boundary conditions for your research.
3. Failure to cite landmark studies.
4. Failure to accurately present the theoretical and experiential contributions by other researchers.
5. Failure to stay focused on the research question.
6. Failure to develop a coherent and persuasive argument for the proposed research.
7. Too much detail on minor issues, but not enough detail on major issues.
8. Too much rambling -- going "all over the map" without a clear sense of direction.
9. Too many citation lapses and incorrect references.
10. Too long or too short.

***Thanks***