

Writing the Research Proposal¹

The following notes provide a guide to the structure and content of a research proposal.

Section	Indicative contents
Working title	Describe the breadth and depth of the topic and indicate the methodology to be used. If necessary use a title and subtitle.
Introduction (abstract)	Summary of the research topic, describing the major problem or issue and where the gap lies for your research together with an indication of what your research will achieve. Useful to express this as a research question.
Scope	State the limitations for the research, for example, time period, language, subject areas, regions and sample along with unit of analysis, for example, policy, programmes, behaviours – to emphasise that no claims for generalisability beyond these limits will be made.
Aims	General statements on the intent or direction of the research – where you intend to go; include reference to the methodological, practical and theoretical aims.
Objectives	Specific, clear and succinct statements of intended outcomes from your research, for example, search and review of the literature and assessment of a debate.
Justification	The rationale for doing the research on the topic; why the research needs to be done on this topic or problem. Make reference to the literature, gaps in knowledge, potential usefulness of a methodology and possible benefits of outcomes for understanding, practice and policy. Provide key references in support of your case.
Review of the literature (indicative)	Describe <u>briefly</u> the history of the topic identifying key landmark studies which indicate the methodologies used and arguments made; show the major issues or practical problems to identify the gap you intend to look at in your research and then indicate what will be some likely research questions (for qualitative research) or hypothesis (for quantitative research). If necessary,

¹ Adapted from: Hart, Chris (1998) *Doing a literature review* – London, Sage

show how key terms have been defined and used. Aim to show what contribution your research will make to the literature.

Methodology (indicative)	A concise justification for the methodological approach you intend to employ and what data-collection and analytical techniques you will use. No need to describe the methodology, but justify the following: use of qualitative or quantitative approaches; use of existing approach within an existing paradigm; explanation of why alternative methodologies were rejected or not; the use of techniques for data/evidence-collection techniques and anticipation of problems and issues, for example, ethics and access; indication of how the data will be analysed. Any variables to be operationalised should be defined. Provide references in support of your case.
Provisional work schedule	A general indication of the timetable for completing the research; usually broken down into manageable segments, indication the tasks necessary to complete each assuming that there are not problems. Often divided according the sections in the dissertation. Include slippage time.
Resource requirements	Identify any equipment that you will need for your research, for example, computing, access to special libraries or cost for field visits; if using postal questionnaires estimate printing and postage costs.
References cited and Indicative bibliography	This is the bibliography of all works cited in your proposal; often includes works not cited that will be followed up in the main research.
Related materials	Any materials that can support your justification or indicate your argument for collecting or using a particular kind of data, for example, computer game and video. Include in this section letters from corroborating institutions that give you access to necessary data or people.