

'Let's get on with it'



What is a **RESEARCH PROPOSAL**?

A Research Proposal is a written document that convinces others that you have a worthwhile research project, and that you have the competence and the workplan to complete it. It answers the questions: what you plan to accomplish, why you want to do it and how you are going to do it.
(Wong, PTP, Trinity Western University, Canada)

(Note: Most research proposals follow the same format; however, check with your lecturers if you are unsure)

What should a research proposal contain?

01 TITLE

Write a brief, precise phrase that captures the main emphasis of the research.

02 INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPHS

Here, you will try to 'sell' your topic to the reader in a few short paragraphs under the following subheadings:

→ Statement of the Problem

The 'problem' is what needs to be researched or studied. This is the **focal point** of your research. In one sentence state the problem of your research. Then write several paragraphs that say more about the problem.

An example is:

The frequency of job layoffs is creating fear, anxiety, and a loss of productivity in middle management workers.



Purpose

Briefly explain what your study hopes to accomplish.

For instance:

The goal of this study is to identify effective motivation strategies for enhancing employee confidence and performance.



Significance of the study

Clearly explain how your study relates to the larger issues. Use persuasive rationale to justify the reason for your study.

This section answers the questions:

- Why is this study important?
- To whom is it important?
- What benefits will occur if the study is done?

03 BACKGROUND (Literature Review)



For further information see the **Literature Reviews Study Guide**

Present your literature review—that is, a critical review of all the books, articles, etc., written on the topic that you will be researching. Show what other researchers have found out about the problem/topic you are trying to investigate and what 'gaps' in knowledge still remain. It is these 'gaps' that your proposed research aims to fill.

04 METHODOLOGY and DESIGN

Describe the actions you will carry out to answer your main research questions. This section consists of the following:



Methodology

Describe your chosen methodology or approach (e.g., positivist, interpretivist, critical theory, etc).

→ Research Design

Describe the research design you have chosen to frame your study (e.g., case study, experimental design, field research, etc.). Within the design, you can outline your plan for collecting data.

→ Sampling (participants/population)

Write a precise definition of the population in one sentence.

For example:

The participants for this study/research will be 55 year old corporate executives.

Describe in specific detail the procedures used for sample selection. This is extremely important as the reader of your proposal must decide if your sample will sufficiently represent the population.

For example:

Were they a random sample or were they selected using another criteria?

→ Procedures and Time Frame

State the time frame for the entire research. Explain/describe procedures to be followed.

For instance:

Instructions will be read out to the participants; OR Interviews will be conducted in participants' offices.

→ Budgeting

This budget should follow from your research plan. Make sure to itemize and account for the costs of your research (printing questionnaires, travel for you and participants, etc.). Justify budget items.

For example: *(Printing of questionnaires: \$150.00; Participants' refreshments: \$80.00; Transportation costs: \$100.00)*

Hint: Don't overestimate or underestimate resource needs.

→ Data Collection

This includes the field site description, a description of the instruments (questionnaires, interviews, phone calls, etc.) you will use, and particularly the data that you anticipate collecting. You may need to comment on site and resource accessibility in the time frame and budget that you have available, but the emphasis in this section should be to fully describe specifically what data you will be using in your study.

→ Data Analysis

Explain how you plan to analyze the data in order to generate answers to the research question. Include the statistical or other techniques and the tools that you will use in processing the data. Also indicate the range of outcomes that you could reasonably expect from your observations.

→ Interpretation

Explain how you will interpret the anticipated outcomes to answer the research question. It is extremely beneficial to anticipate the range of outcomes from your analysis, and for each, know what it will mean in terms of the answer to your question.

05 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Show what you expect to get out of the research. Link the data analysis and possible outcomes to the theory and questions that you have raised. Summarize the significance of the work. From the very beginning of formulating your work, write a page for this section to help you focus your reasoning as you build the rest of the proposal.

06 BIBLIOGRAPHY

This is a reference list of all the relevant sources that you have referred to or cited in the text of your research proposal.

Check with your lecturer about the referencing system you should use. Use a standard format. Arrange the references in an alphabetical order.



For further information see the **Using References Study Guide**

07 APPENDICES

These are any additional documents that support your research. These may include original questionnaires, interview protocols and questions, instructions to participants, a copy of the research instruments to be used, samples of informed consent forms for participants, cover letters sent to stakeholders, and official letters of permission to conduct research. Organise your Appendices according to the following order: Appendix 1, Appendix 2, Appendix 3, etc.