Planning and writing your research proposal

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Today we will look at:

• What a research proposal looks like.
• Why it is necessary to compile a research proposal.
• How a research proposal is usually evaluated.
• How you can write key sections of a proposal.
1. Name
2. Programme
3. A question I have about Research proposals is....
Purpose of a research proposal

- “Persuasive writing” for lecturers, you and readers
- Plan then do
- Provides a roadmap
- Opportunity for advice
- Quality/rigour/feasibility check
- Avoiding costly mistakes

Three key messages to convey:
What are you doing?  Why is it important?  I am competent to do this.

Image: purpose v process. cc licensed (BY NC) Flickr photo by David Horne: https://www.flickr.com/photos/davidhorne/4785770962/
Standard requirements

1. Title
2. Outline/summary/abstract
3. Research question/focus
4. Aim and objective (hypothesis)
5. Rationale and context
6. Literature review
7. Methodology
8. Methods of data collection & analysis - Ethics
9. Timeline/Plan of work
10. Resources/budget/support
11. Outcomes
12. Reference list

Image: structure. cc licensed (BY NC) Flickr photo by electricnude: https://www.flickr.com/photos/electricnude/117583141; Serenote1. cc licensed (BY NC) Flickr photo by Skye D.: https://www.flickr.com/photos/skyedonardson/2301683267

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Depending on your discipline, the requirements might not exactly match the standard cited on the previous slide (and on the left below). Please check with your department/ask your supervisor for a sample proposal.

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**Design**
1. Title
2. Rationale & Research Question
3. Theoretical framework
4. Design precedents
5. Design plan and site
6. Design Process
7. Timeline
8. Resources
9. Outcomes
10. Reference list
1. Title
Conveys what the research is about.
- clear
- concise
- understandable

2. Outline
[also summary, abstract...]
- what (topic and aims)
- who
- methods and timeframe
- why is this research needed?
This can be written last, if you prefer.
3. Research Question

What is the research question you are trying to find the answer to?

“The purpose of this research is...”

This needs to be focussed and answerable. It is better to err on the narrow side than to promise to answer the world.

Needs to be present for any kind of proposal (whether creative industries, business or social and health science).
4. Aims and objectives

The purpose of this research is to...

- clarity
- useful and achievable tasks
- scope and specificity
- sub-questions
- formulate hypothesis (if applicable)

Make sure these map onto
- the research question, and
- the methods.

Examples:
- Why do a number of major IT projects fail to produce the outcomes expected?
- What is the educational achievement of children of Korean immigrants who came to Auckland between 1990 and 2005?

**TIPS & TRICKS**

Write your aims on a slip of paper and keep in front of you as you write your sections.
5. Rationale

1) Answer:
Five Ws and H:
- **What?**
- **Why?**
- **Who?**
- **When?**
- **Where?**
- **How?**

2) Build:
On previous work or theory.
Make sure you map your statements back to your aims and objectives, your research question and methods.
Be consistent and precise in your use of terms. Reference your use of specific terms back to their source.
6. Literature review

Scene setting:
What is known about the topic?

• Show that you have read broadly on the topic and its wider context.
• Set up theoretical framework, methodology and research design. Summarise relevant theory and current issues and trends.
• Generate interest.
• Needs to be descriptive and critical.
• Remember you want to show that you are in the best position to run the proposed project.
6. Literature review cont’d

- Show what has been done and where this research was conducted.
- Identify gaps.
- Justify your study and note the original contribution your research will make.
- Don’t assume your reader knows your field.

**TIPS & TRICKS**

Write each main point from your literature review on a slip of paper and arrange the slips in a logical sequence.
7. **Methodology** - about the philosophy of being/existence (ontology) and the philosophy of where knowledge comes from (epistemology); positivism vs. constructivism (in the past associated with quantitative and qualitative paradigms respectively)

8. **Method** - means of data collection + analysis (appropriate to methodology):

**Important concepts:**
- Validity, reliability
- Trustworthiness
- Rigour, bias and sampling
- Reflexivity

Include detailed information:
- Who will be the participants? Why have you chosen this group? How does that relate to your aim? How does it relate to the problem or overall issue you are interested in?
- Be explicit about how you will analyse the data. What kind of tools will you use for analyses?
Methodology/Method

The “magpie” approach

Source: http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/choosing-which-method-to-use/SAGE.xml?rskey=v2Cdk&row=1

Magpie. CC (BY NC) licensed flickr image by NAPARAZZI: https://www.flickr.com/photos/naparazzi/5888586849

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8. Ethics

While you probably will need to gain approval for your research project from the Unitec Research Ethics Committee in a separate application, in your proposal explain briefly any ethical issues that you think are relevant.

- Confidentiality, anonymity
- Fairness
- Honesty
- Storage of data

It is also a good idea to look at the Unitec Research Ethics Committee moodle pages (password “Research01”) to determine which forms you will need and at which dates they can be submitted (→ timeline).
9. Timeline

When?

Indicate when you expected to have completed key stages. Usually completed as part of a table with key milestones (e.g., submit ethics application, commence data collection, complete data collection, commence data analysis etc.)

Sage Research Methods database: Project Planner

10. Resources

-salary -materials
-specific expertise -travel
11. Outcomes
This is a section relating to the significance of your project. You will need to show that you are closing the loop (stakeholder reports, hui, public meeting, presentations) and not doing the project for its own sake only.

Be careful not to overstate the outcomes (i.e., it is unlikely that with one project you can solve world hunger). Take note of your own biases and your limitations/ the limitations of the project.

12. References
• Academic integrity, referencing

Note: Overall presentation should be of high standard. Take note of consistent and professional formatting, good structure and uninterrupted flow.
Practicalities

- Draft, revise... (complete a final draft 3-6 weeks before the submission date to allow your supervisor to provide feedback)
- Gannt Charts to stay on track
- Listen to your supervisors
- Make use of opportunities to present your ideas/ a summary of your proposal at research fora.
- Use support available: experts in your field, other researchers, ethics committees, learning centre
- Expect and accept that a variety of feedback and rewrites are part of the process.

TIPS & TRICKS

Start putting your ideas and background reading into one document early on. This can act as a starting point for the proposal.
Sage Social Science Research Methods online tool:

Access via [Unitec library](#) to be able to see all resources (Unitec library search “Sage Research Methods Online” → Click View Online)

**Content**
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Methods lists
- Analysis and Write-up

[Image: Sage Research Database]

[Image: Sage Research Methods Online tool]

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Assume the perspective of a reader of a research proposal. What are your criteria for evaluating the proposal?
Resources


Sage Social Science Research Methods Database: http://methods.sagepub.com/ (Accessible via Unitec library)

Unitec library: Postgraduate Study Toolbox: http://libguides.unitec.ac.nz/postgraduatetestudy