



Library / LibGuides / How to write a Research Proposal / Components of a research proposal

How to write a Research Proposal: Components of a research proposal

[Home](#)

[Components of a research proposal](#)

[Books](#)

[Articles](#)

[Useful videos](#)

[Common mistakes to avoid](#)

[Sage Research Methods](#)

[Managing sources](#)

[Request a literature search](#)

[Research proposal - examples](#)

[Creating a Gantt chart](#)

[Free Apps for Research](#)

[Academic writing](#)

Components of a research proposal

Research proposals **differ** in terms of their presentation depending on what **each University department** requires. In other words, there is **no set template** for a research proposal. Please **contact your lecturer** regarding the **format** you are **expected to use** for your research proposal. Thus, the components of a research proposal include, **but are not limited to** those mentioned in this guide.

1. The title

Try to come up with a title that is **unique** and at the same time easy to remember. It should also make a **lasting impression** to the reader and make them want to come back and read your proposal. The title must also capture the **main concepts of the study**. As the research process is **lengthy**, it is important that you choose a topic that you are so **curious about** that you remain motivated for the duration of the research process. Select a topic that you will be able to complete **within the time frame** that you have for your research.

2. Introduction to the research

This section of the proposal must provide a **broad overview** of the topic. The **jargon and key terms** used in the particular topic must also be thoroughly explained in order to avoid confusion. The **interest of the researcher** in the particular topic must also be clearly outlined while at the same time mentioning, albeit briefly at this point, a **critical review of the main literature** that covers the topic. The researcher must also provide the **aim of the research** by clearly and concisely **stating the problem**, as well as the **research questions** to be dealt with. This section must also indicate what the research study **will not be covering**.

3. The background

The background to the topic of your intended research must be clear and precise. It must not only include an in-depth explanation of the key points of your subject but also all the **developments in the field** as well as their **timelines**. The researcher must also explain the **compelling interest** in the research issue as well as the **personal interest (if any)** in the topic. This section must also indicate the **specific area** within which the topic falls in your particular **field of study or subject**. Also, how will the proposed study contribute to a particular field? In other words, the impact and the significance in a subject area must be clearly outlined. The **target audience** must also be clearly described.

4. The research questions

The research questions must state **clearly** what your proposed study is meant to address or answer. Ensure that you use **simple language** that is easy to understand, while being cognisant of the **level of your intended audience**.

5. Objectives of the research

It is important that the objectives are in alignment with the research questions. The objectives must indicate what the aim of the research study is. In fact, objectives give you a clear indication of the steps that you will take to achieve the aim of the research. The objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

7. Literature review

Collect and present **relevant literature** on your topic of choice. It is important to include all the **main authors** or **experts** in a particular field. Depending on your field of study or topic, ensure that you include **recent literature** as well as literature that presents **counterarguments** to the topic. The justification for the study needs to be based on existing literature. Click **here** for more information on how to write a literature review.

8. Limitations and delimitations of the study

The researcher must indicate the **limitations** of the study which are what the **researcher cannot do** or factors that are beyond the researcher's control, as well as **delimitations** that the researcher **chooses not to address** for the purposes of the study. Delimitations are **boundaries** that the researcher has set for the study. The **reasons** both for limitations and delimitations must be discussed in this section.

10. Work plan

Your schedule for the research must be stated clearly including the projected timelines for the various stages of your study.

11. Bibliography

All the sources that you have used for your proposal must be listed in alphabetical order using a referencing style that your lecturer has prescribed for your subject field.

Click **here** for more information on the various reference styles.

6. Research methodology / research methods

This section outlines the approach which the researcher will follow in order to address the research problem and to answer all the research questions from the researcher. The research design must be clearly defined, e.g., is the research **Descriptive, Correlational, Causal-Comparative/Quasi-Experimental, Experimental, Diagnostic or Explanatory.**

State clearly

- how the research will be conducted in terms of the theoretical resources that will be used
- the theoretical framework for conducting the research, which is the theoretical approach drawn from your literature review to support your research study
- proposed research method(s)
- a comparison of the advantages, limitations and suitability of the available approaches and methods for conducting your research
- participants, instruments, procedure, analysis, etc.

Research design

Selecting the approach to use

Research approach

Research design and methodology

Importance of research

Attributes of a good research scholar

Summary of different research methodologies

9. Significance of the research

The researcher must provide **justification** for the need to conduct the study. What is the gap that the study will fill, and what is its contribution to the existing body of knowledge? The **originality and importance** of the research which will be **level appropriate**, must be clearly described, for instance, the required level of originality for a fourth year research project is different to that of a doctoral candidate.

The **impact** of the study for the **subject field** must be indicated. In other words, how will the research **improve** the field, who will it impact, how will it **make changes** in your industry or field etc.? Lastly, the proposed research must be **relatable, interesting** and **engaging**.

Last Updated: Dec 19, 2023 12:35 PM

URL: https://libguides.unisa.ac.za/research_proposal

 Print Page

[Login to LibApps](#)

Tags: [research](#), [research proposals](#)