

# Proposal

The dissertation proposal is a working document that helps you clarify your focus, objectives, academic literature, methods and timetable. It will help your supervisor engage with you and your research. Your supervisor will review your proposal and guide you so that your research has the potential to fulfil the academic requirements of the course.

For students on the following courses, the proposal will be assessed as 10% of their dissertation grade:

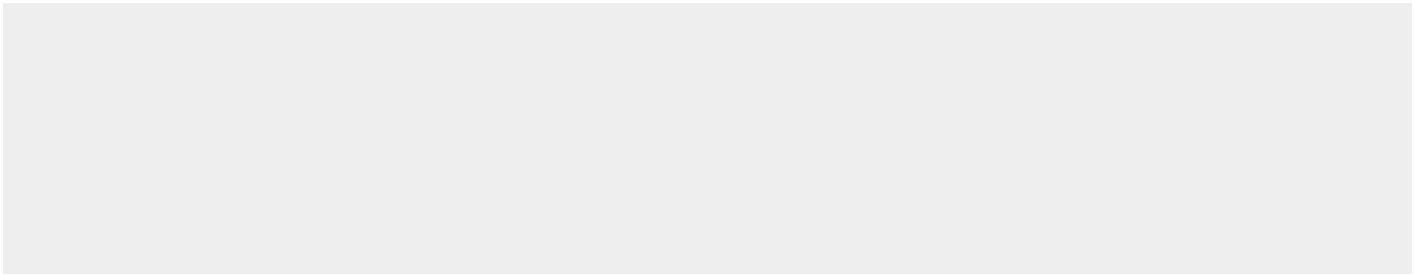
- MSc Finance
- MSc Finance & Economics
- MSc Accounting & Finance
- MSc Financial Mathematics (5%)

Watch these videos of WBS PhD students talking about their Masters dissertations.

- What advice can you get from each of their proposal creation experiences?

**Note:** *Audio and video is only available in the online version of this content.*

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## Ethics

When you are writing your proposal, it is very important to think about the ethics of what you are doing, especially during your research. For more information about research ethics please see your Student Handbook.

## Skills development

Scoping out proposals is a skill that is particularly useful if you have a project management job role, but the microskills of providing background and contextual details, assessing methodological possibilities and deciding on a timeline are useful for all jobs.

# Proposal structure

This proposal structure is suitable for most programmes whereas the structure shown in 'Proposal structure (2)' has been specifically designed for MSBA students.

Your project proposal should be no longer than three sides of A4 and you should structure it like this:

- Your name and contact details - telephone number and WBS email address
- A title which indicates the proposed area of study (this can be modified as your work progresses)
- A statement on the focus of the dissertation and why it is important (two paragraphs maximum)
  - Can you provide an example of the problem or issue that you want to investigate? What do you think you will find out and why is this interesting? What are the key theories and literature in this area?
- Research aims (i.e. what are the major specific objectives of your project?)
- Research design
  - How do you intend to carry out your research project? What frameworks, theories, methods and tools will be relevant to your research project? Which particular questions do you want to answer with this research project?
- Research methods
  - Will your approach involve generating new data or using existing data? How will you collect the data and who will you collect your data from (sampling and selection)? How will you analyse your data? Defend your choice in comparison to other forms of analysis. Are there any drawbacks of researching in this way? Discuss the strengths and weaknesses.
- Availability of research
  - Are library facilities adequate? Will the organisation(s) involved allow you access to the data you need? What are the 3-4 key references (e.g. texts/journal papers) for your research project idea?
- How does your research project relate to the course syllabus and modules (two paragraphs maximum)?
  - Which area(s) of the whole programme is/are most relevant and how? Are there any ethical or confidentiality issues in your project, including informed consent for respondents, and any potential conflicts of interest?
- Timetable

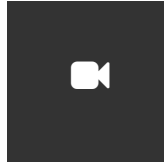
If you are not sure what the dissertation proposal for your degree programme should contain, please contact your Programme Team.

## Proposal structure (2)

The proposal structure shown on this page was specifically designed for MSc Business Analytics students, but the extra information given about key details may be useful to all WBS Masters students.

Watch this screencast of Dr Frances O'Brien (Associate Professor of Operational Research) giving advice about the dissertation proposal outline for MSc Business Analytics students.

- Make a note of which key words she highlights and what she says about them.



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## Group work task (3)

### Instructions

Materials: A2 sheet of paper, pencils, pens, ruler

Alternative materials: MS PowerPoint

Think about how to explain your proposal to another person. Look at the [research poster presentation training video \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMSaFUrK-FA\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMSaFUrK-FA). The student in the examples has completed his research project so his poster is very large and detailed. Your poster will be much smaller and less detailed, but you can learn a lot about poster presentation skills from what he says. To get an idea of what a real research presentation conference is like, look at [Academic Excellence Conference, Poster Presentations, 2008 Keene State College \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFiWW73Qu2Q&list=PLhMpsEfUNhOw\\_iWTobidt738jStj7iGOH\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFiWW73Qu2Q&list=PLhMpsEfUNhOw_iWTobidt738jStj7iGOH).

Next, create a research poster for your proposal. Meet with a group of fellow students from your subject area and give a 3-minute presentation about your proposal using your poster to help you. Answer your fellow students' questions. Now listen to their proposal presentations, take notes and ask questions.

### Skills development

Summarising your dissertation's argument, process and structure into a poster and 3-minute presentation is great practice for the future. It helps you practise the transferrable skills of prioritising information, summarising, explaining, creating and using visuals, and presenting to an audience. These skills will be useful for any career path.

