Research Proposal

Outline

1. Why writing this paper (status quo)

👇 therefore, it has become necessary to…

1. What did I do (this article reports the …)
2. How (we describe how …)
3. Results (xx demonstrated that…)
4. Implications of findings (we conclude with suggestions for /further research on and development of/…)

Follow closely the structure (all 7 sections) of the guide and write a research proposal of no less than 1000 words.

* Review at least two existing papers/tools/APPs/products most relevant to your Graduation Project
* Highlight your own contributions
* Most words in the proposal can go directly into your Graduation Technical Report
* What’s my methodology?
* 和product那个的撰写一起操作

## I.  Introduction

In the real world of higher education, a research proposal is most often written by scholars seeking grant funding for a research project or it's the first step in getting approval to write a doctoral dissertation. Even if this is just a course assignment, treat your introduction as the initial pitch of an idea or a thorough examination of the significance of a research problem. After reading the introduction, your readers should not only have an understanding of what you want to do, but they should also be able to gain a sense of your passion for the topic and to be excited about the study's possible outcomes. Note that most proposals do not include an abstract [summary] before the introduction.

**Think about your introduction as a narrative written in two to four paragraphs that succinctly answers the following four questions**:

1. What is the central research problem?
2. What is the topic of study related to that research problem?
3. What methods should be used to analyze the research problem?
4. Why is this important research, what is its significance, and why should someone reading the proposal care about the outcomes of the proposed study?

## II.  Background and Significance

This is where you explain the context of your proposal and describe in detail why it's important. It can be melded into your introduction or you can create a separate section to help with the organization and narrative flow of your proposal. Approach writing this section with the thought that you can’t assume your readers will know as much about the research problem as you do. Note that this section is not an essay going over everything you have learned about the topic; instead, you must choose what is most relevant in explaining the aims of your research.

**To that end, while there are no prescribed rules for establishing the significance of your proposed study, you should attempt to address some or all of the following:**

* State the research problem and give a more detailed explanation about the purpose of the study than what you stated in the introduction. This is particularly important if the problem is complex or multifaceted.
* Present the rationale of your proposed study and clearly indicate why it is worth doing; be sure to answer the "So What? question [i.e., why should anyone care].
* Describe the major issues or problems to be addressed by your research. This can be in the form of questions to be addressed. Be sure to note how your proposed study builds on previous assumptions about the research problem.
* Explain the methods you plan to use for conducting your research. Clearly identify the key sources you intend to use and explain how they will contribute to your analysis of the topic.
* Describe the boundaries of your proposed research in order to provide a clear focus. Where appropriate, state not only what you plan to study, but what aspects of the research problem will be excluded from the study.
* If necessary, provide definitions of key concepts or terms.

## III.  Literature Review

**Connected to the background and significance of your study is a section of your proposal devoted to a more deliberate review and synthesis of prior studies related to the research problem under investigation**. The purpose here is to place your project within the larger whole of what is currently being explored, while demonstrating to your readers that your work is original and innovative. Think about what questions other researchers have asked, what methods they have used, and what is your understanding of their findings and, when stated, their recommendations.

Since a literature review is information dense, it is crucial that this section is intelligently structured to enable a reader to grasp the key arguments underpinning your proposed study in relation to that of other researchers. A good strategy is to break the literature into "conceptual categories" [themes] rather than systematically or chronologically describing groups of materials one at a time. Note that conceptual categories generally reveal themselves after you have read most of the pertinent literature on your topic so adding new categories is an on-going process of discovery as you review more studies. How do you know you've covered the key conceptual categories underlying the research literature? Generally, you can have confidence that all of the significant conceptual categories have been identified if you start to see repetition in the conclusions or recommendations that are being made.

**NOTE**: Do not shy away from challenging the conclusions made in prior research as a basis for supporting the need for your proposal. Assess what you believe is missing and state how previous research has failed to adequately examine the issue that your study addresses. For more information on writing literature reviews, [**GO HERE**](http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/literaturereview).

**To help frame your proposal's review of prior research, consider the "five C’s" of writing a literature review:**

1. **Cite**, so as to keep the primary focus on the literature pertinent to your research problem.
2. **Compare** the various arguments, theories, methodologies, and findings expressed in the literature: what do the authors agree on? Who applies similar approaches to analyzing the research problem?
3. **Contrast** the various arguments, themes, methodologies, approaches, and controversies expressed in the literature: describe what are the major areas of disagreement, controversy, or debate among scholars?
4. **Critique** the literature: Which arguments are more persuasive, and why? Which approaches, findings, and methodologies seem most reliable, valid, or appropriate, and why? Pay attention to the verbs you use to describe what an author says/does [e.g., asserts, demonstrates, argues, etc.].
5. **Connect** the literature to your own area of research and investigation: how does your own work draw upon, depart from, synthesize, or add a new perspective to what has been said in the literature?

## IV.  Research Design and Methods

**This section must be well-written and logically organized because you are not actually doing the research, yet, your reader must have confidence that it is worth pursuing**. The reader will never have a study outcome from which to evaluate whether your methodological choices were the correct ones. Thus, the objective here is to convince the reader that **your overall research design and proposed methods of analysis will correctly address the problem and that the methods will provide the means to effectively interpret the potential results.** Your design and methods should be unmistakably tied to the specific aims of your study.

Describe the overall research design by building upon and drawing examples from your review of the literature. Consider not only methods that other researchers have used but methods of data gathering that have not been used but perhaps could be. Be specific about the methodological approaches you plan to undertake to obtain information, the techniques you would use to analyze the data, and the tests of external validity to which you commit yourself [i.e., the trustworthiness by which you can generalize from your study to other people, places, events, and/or periods of time].

**When describing the methods you will use, be sure to cover the following:**

* Specify the research process you will undertake and the way you will interpret the results obtained in relation to the research problem. Don't just describe what you intend to achieve from applying the methods you choose, but state how you will spend your time while applying these methods [e.g., coding text from interviews to find statements about the need to change school curriculum; running a regression to determine if there is a relationship between campaign advertising on social media sites and election outcomes in Europe].
* Keep in mind that the methodology is not just a list of tasks; it is an argument as to why these tasks add up to the best way to investigate the research problem. This is an important point because the mere listing of tasks to be performed does not demonstrate that, collectively, they effectively address the research problem. Be sure you clearly explain this.
* Anticipate and acknowledge any potential barriers and pitfalls in carrying out your research design and explain how you plan to address them. No method is perfect so you need to describe where you believe challenges may exist in obtaining data or accessing information. It's always better to acknowledge this than to have it brought up by your professor.

## V.  Preliminary Suppositions and Implications

**Just because you don't have to actually conduct the study and analyze the results, doesn't mean you can skip talking about the analytical process and potential implications**. The purpose of this section is to argue how and in what ways you believe your research will refine, revise, or extend existing knowledge in the subject area under investigation. Depending on the aims and objectives of your study, describe how the anticipated results will impact future scholarly research, theory, practice, forms of interventions, or policymaking. Note that such discussions may have either substantive [a potential new policy], theoretical [a potential new understanding], or methodological [a potential new way of analyzing] significance.  
   
**When thinking about the potential implications of your study, ask the following questions:**

* What might the results mean in regards to challenging the theoretical framework and underlying assumptions that support the study?
* What suggestions for subsequent research could arise from the potential outcomes of the study?
* What will the results mean to practitioners in the natural settings of their workplace?
* Will the results influence programs, methods, and/or forms of intervention?
* How might the results contribute to the solution of social, economic, or other types of problems?
* Will the results influence policy decisions?
* In what way do individuals or groups benefit should your study be pursued?
* What will be improved or changed as a result of the proposed research?
* How will the results of the study be implemented and what innovations or transformative insights could emerge from the process of implementation?

**NOTE**:  This section should not delve into idle speculation, opinion, or be formulated on the basis of unclear evidence. The purpose is to reflect upon gaps or understudied areas of the current literature and describe how your proposed research contributes to a new understanding of the research problem should the study be implemented as designed.

**VI.  Conclusion**

**The conclusion reiterates the importance or significance of your proposal and provides a brief summary of the entire study**. This section should be only one or two paragraphs long, emphasizing why the research problem is worth investigating, why your research study is unique, and how it should advance existing knowledge.

**Someone reading this section should come away with an understanding of:**

* Why the study should be done,
* The specific purpose of the study and the research questions it attempts to answer,
* The decision to why the research design and methods used where chosen over other options,
* The potential implications emerging from your proposed study of the research problem, and
* A sense of how your study fits within the broader scholarship about the research problem.

## VII.  Citations

As with any scholarly research paper, you must cite the sources you used. In a standard research proposal, this section can take two forms, so consult with your professor about which one is preferred.

1. **References --**lists only the literature that you actually used or cited in your proposal.
2. **Bibliography --**lists everything you used or cited in your proposal, with additional citations to any key sources relevant to understanding the research problem.

In either case, this section should testify to the fact that you did enough preparatory work to ensure the project will complement and not just duplicate the efforts of other researchers. Start a new page and use the heading "References" or "Bibliography" centered at the top of the page. Cited works should always use a standard format that follows the writing style advised by the discipline of your course e.g., education=APA; history=Chicago] or that is preferred by your professor. This section normally does not count towards the total page length of your research proposal.