

Proposal Assignment

Digital Finance Technology

June - July 2025
PhD Subject Matter Masterclass Outline
Digital Finance CRC

The research proposal is part of the learning process. You can consider and incorporate the material to be covered across the three masterclasses (finance, technology, and law) into your research, irrespective of which discipline you are based in. DFCRC students are expected to develop and present a research proposal in Digital Finance as part of the masterclasses.

The proposal is also an opportunity for you to obtain feedback about your research idea(s) from discipline area leads, peers, and others at the DFCRC. Finally, it is an opportunity for you to see what your fellow PhD students will be working on, and in turn, let them know about your research.

Objectives:

- Provide experience in identifying and formulating research questions and developing approaches to answer them.
- Encourage thinking critically about issues in Digital Finance.
- Apply the content covered in the masterclasses.
- Develop a research proposal that can be used for your PhD and potentially lead to a published paper.

Task:

- Identify a substantial and important problem or question in the domain of Digital Finance that can be addressed with research. If you already have a working research problem, see how you can extend it.
- Review what is known about the issue in academic literature, regulatory/industry reports, and grey literature, identifying the relevant background information and pinpointing the knowledge gap.
- Analyse the suitability of using blockchain technology to address the identified problem/question. You may consider questions such as:
 - Is there a need for multi-party interactions?
 - Are operations centralised?
 - Is data immutability required?
 - Is data transparency required for effective/fair market operations? Are there any private data, Personally Identifiable Information (PII), or is confidentiality required commercially?
 - Is high performance and scalability required?
- Describe a feasible approach to answering the research question.

Deliverables:

- Students will present their research proposal in two formats: (i) an oral presentation in class and (ii) a written document.
- Students will have 10 minutes to deliver their presentation and 10 minutes of Q&A. While one student presents, another will be chosen to lead the feedback discussion. The schedule will be notified before the presentation day.
- The written research proposals will be up to 3 A4 pages (1.5 spacing, font size 11) excluding references. The page limit can be relaxed with permission if there is a good reason. However, the relatively small page allowance is to force students to get into the good practice of distilling their ideas into concise and to-the-point statements.
- The presentation and report should address the following points in a suitable order:
 - Question – What is the research question that you seek to resolve?

- Motivation – Why is it important? Why is it interesting? Who cares? What are the implications or benefits of knowing the answer?
- Approach – How will you answer the question? What data, methods, models, and testing will give you a credible answer?
- “What, Why, and How” by Simon Sinek provides a fitting framework to address the above points. See <https://dilum.bandara.lk/resources/starting-your-research/> for details

Due dates and submission requirements:

- The proposals will be presented at the DFCRC on Thursday, 31/07/2025. Students are expected to submit their written research proposals 24 hours in advance, allowing the student leading the discussion time to review the proposal.
- Both the presentation slides and the written proposal are to be uploaded to the “Proposals” folder in the “Technology” channel of “PhD Students” Teams space. Name the two files with your name as the prefix. If you have any issues in upload, please email them to the instructor.

Assessment criteria:

- Novelty and originality of the research topic.
- Significance of the issue and its relevance to all three disciplines, i.e., finance, technology, and law. In this assessment, 50% of the weight will be given to technology aspects and the rest to finance and law aspects.
- Feasibility and approach to addressing the research question.
- Clarity of presentation (oral and written).

Rubric

Working towards proficiency (Areas to grow)	Proficient	Beyond Expectation (Areas that Glow)	Marks
	Novelty and originality of the research topic: An original and clear research topic that presents a novel approach or perspective that could significantly advance the field. Research questions or hypothesis related to digital finance.		/4
	Significance of the issue and its relevance to 3 disciplines: The research gap is backed with literature. Significance of the issue is highlighted while effectively integrating 50% technology aspects and balances the remaining 50% between finance and law.		/8
	Feasibility and approach to addressing the research question: The proposed approach is well-structured, realistic, and clearly outlined; methodologically sound; and the scope is manageable within a 3-year PhD.		/4
	Clarity of presentation – Oral: Clear and simple slides, clear flow of ideas, effective use of body language, and timely.		/2
	Clarity of presentation – Written: Follow academic writing style, clear flow of ideas, supported by references, and consistent use of language.		/2
Total			/20