

YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL

A complete guide to all stages of a successful research proposal

PREVIEW

n this course you will learn how to get through the proposal stage of your research. If you are starting a postgraduate qualification with research then you will need to put a proposal together which clearly sets out everything about your study. I'll teach you everything you need in this course, PLUS the activities and assignments will mean you also make progress on your own proposal.

My name is Peter Alkema and I coach, teach and support students in many stages of their academic studies. I have a PhD so I have been through everything I teach and I know what you are going through and I know exactly what support and teaching you need.

A research proposal is also an important document for the rest of your degree and the more effort you put into it, the more successful you will be.

Check out some of the preview lessons below to help you make a decision about enrolling. You can always get a refund if you aren't satisfied, but I personally guarantee that if you apply everything I teach you then you will successfully complete and defend your research proposal



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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THIS COURSE

In the lessons i teach you how to approach and complete all the different aspects of your research proposal. No matter what stage you are at, you will benefit from doing this course and I would advise going through all the lessons so that you get a complete picture of everything, especially because a lot of what you learn now will also be applicable in the rest of your degree.

There's also a whiteboard lesson which gives you an overall approach to your proposal and in another whiteboard lesson I'll teach you about how to write really good thesis statements. A thesis statement is like a North Star for your study and the better your's is, the more successful you will be.



In the course we will cover

- O The importance of lots of background reading and how that helps you become a better researcher and confirms what you want to investigate
- What actually goes into a proposal as well as a checklist that you can use to tick off and confirm that you have covered everything
- O My own proposal: I'll walk you through my entire document and point out all the key components so you can see the application of the lessons with a real example
- A proposal requires you to answer 3 questions: what are you going to study, why you are doing this research and how you are going to perform the study. there are individual lessons for each of these 3 topics and you will get assignments to practice what you have learned and i'll give you feedback on those assignments so that you take action and make progress on your own proposal

In other lessons i'll teach you how to present your proposal and how to create effective PowerPoint slides to support your presentation. I'll also walk you through my own proposal presentation slides so you can see exactly what I presented to achieve a successful PhD proposal.

In addition to all these amazing lessons, there are loads of downloadable resources and I provide my own PhD proposal document and presentation slides. There are also quizzes, activities and assignments to help you achieve your goal of successfully completing your research proposal. If you complete all the assignments and activities as you go through the lessons then I guarantee that by the time you finish this course you will actually make substantial progress on completing your own proposal

Please also introduce yourself to the rest of your class mates, tell us where you are from and why you took this course

So let's get into the first lesson



BACKGROUND READING

I was interviewing a student for my podcast recently. She had just achieved a distinction and I asked her what was the secret of her success in the early stage of her study. She very clearly answered that she read as much as she could get her hands on about her topic. She knew roughly what she wanted to research but it was only as she read widely that she got a sense of all the different views and issues in that particular field.

And this is exactly what you need to do, especially if you have sufficient time and not under pressure to hand something in or do a presentation. You probably have some idea of where to start and you should pick a few specific questions to start with and see what you can find. Look for previous research, other studies, even blog articles, news articles and contemporary sources.

Try to stay focused on your key questions but also allow yourself to follow some new lines of inquiry. The more you read, the more you will find out about related topics that you can go deeper into which will unlock new ideas and issues that you might want to study. The successful student i

mentioned earlier also had one important tip that she shared with me. As she read widely, she also made notes about what she was reading and what issues she uncovered that she found interesting.

So now, get yourself a notebook, it can be physical or digital. I write in a lined journal or you can use something like one note, Evernote, Trello etc. After completing this lesson, write down three questions that will help you start reading and investigating in your are of interest. In the next lesson we will pick up from this point and get more focused on the next stage. So get reading and remember to take notes!



WHAT GOES IN A PROPOSAL

Your proposal really sets you up for the rest of your study so its worth doing it as well as possible. your proposal needs to answer 3 main questions:

- **1** WHAT are you going to do in your study?
- **2** WHY should you be doing this study
- **3** HOW are you going to do it.

If you think about your final objective, its to complete and pass a thesis or dissertation. These three aspects of your proposal actually link directly with some key sections of your final document at the end of your degree, so its worth doing them well now, and then you will be in a better position later on.

In addition to the 3 main questions of "what", "why" and "how" you may also need to include a timeline for your study as well as funding information and ethics clearance if required. Its also good practice to even include an outline of your final thesis, and this





The "what" corresponds to the introduction section of your thesis, the "why" corresponds with the literature review and the "how" will be mostly in your literature review. There are some more detailed elements of your final thesis that you can't include in your proposal but at this stage its about getting the concepts right and setting up your study as effectively as possible.

will really prove to your supervisors that you are well focused on your end goal and know exactly what you need to do to get there successfully.

In another lesson I walk you through my own proposal document and point out all these aspects. You will see exactly what went into my own, successful proposal and you can use what you've learned to make sure yours contains everything you need as well. So your assignment after this lesson is to write a brief answer to each of the three questions mentioned at the beginning of this lesson. This will get your thinking go-

ing towards expanding on it in much more detail for your full proposal.

So find a blank page in your note book and answer each of these 3 questions with a couple of sentences: what are you going to do in your study, why are you going to do it and how are you going to do it. There's also a dedicated lesson for each of these 3 aspects so make sure you write up your brief answers for each one and then go and do each lesson with me.



WALK THROUGH MY OWN PROPOSAL

n your proposal its critical to explain to your readers exactly what you are going to do in your study. This links your study with the world of the reader. What's the background to your study? what problem will it solve? and what contribution will a successful study make to the world? This is where all the background reading will come in useful. you learned about this in another lesson and i gave you some homework to write up a few questions of your own interest and get reading in the relevant literature.

Now this reading becomes more structured as you identify a problem statement and some research questions which will guide the data gathering in your research and ensure that you successfully link your results back to your proposal. In the conclusion section of your final report, you will need to answer these research questions, so although you can make chang-

es, you must think about research questions very carefully as they will become important during data gathering and at the end of your study.

You should also define some key concepts and definitions, especially terms that come up frequently in the area of your research. Try

and avoid jargon or abbreviations but



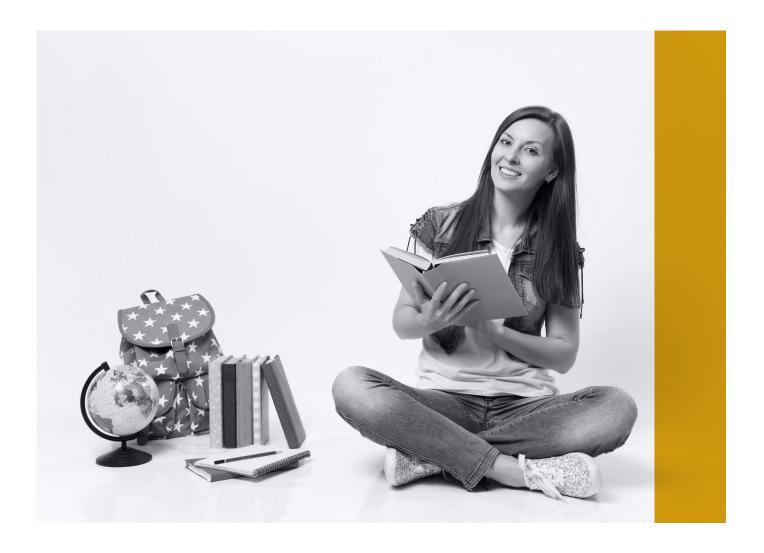
think about concepts that you can define in clear English which will help your reader get a better understanding of what you are trying to achieve in your study.

You will also need A thesis statement which clearly identifies what you are going to study and how that research will address the problem that you have identified. Your thesis statement also sets out the criteria by which your work will be judged. Your thesis statement is your argument, its how your work will lead to new knowledge, which is the most important thing for any research to achieve. Defining a good thesis statement is like establishing a North Star, it will guide you throughout your whole study and keep you on track

Now I want you to write down some bullet points about this aspect of your proposal, the what; some background, the problem statement, some key concepts and definitions, even try a thesis statement

Your activity from this lesson is to write a thesis statement for your proposal. This will be the anchor for your work so its a good idea to do this as best as possible ... i'll give you feedback on your thesis statement so you can improve it for inclusion in your proposal. I look forward to seeing you in another lesson.





DEFINING WHY YOU ARE DOING YOUR STUDY

You clearly need to define the motivation for your study. This links to the problem statement ... you may have identified a valid problem to solve, but is it an important problem to solve? What's the significance of your research? If you need to apply for funding then this will be critical.how will the world benefit if your study successfully answers your research questions and follows the path you described in your thesis statement?

This is the difference between significance and contribution. If you achieve what you are going to do, then you make a contribution, but you must also define the significance of this contribution. This answers "why" you are doing the study.

Another aspect of answering this question is the landscape of relevant literature, much of which you will have been aware of through your background reading. As an academic study, you must orientate your research in academic work. You must specifically show that there is a gap in the literature which you will address and that this is not only important to the world in general but also important to the world of rigorous academic research.

So, your study must have some significance, but you must define what this significance actually is. In your proposal you will have a section for your literature review and this is where you show that you understand the relevant literature but that you also orientate your work within it and why it matters.

Now I want you to write a few bullet points on this aspect of your study; the why. What's the significance of your study? Why will it be important to solve the problem statement? For the world? For academic research?



HOW YOU ARE GOING TO DO YOUR STUDY



In academic research, you define how you are going to do a study in your methodology. Your results will only make sense in the context of how you produced them. Someone must be able to reproduce your method so that your results can have wider application. Your method describes the route you will take through your study to get it done you will need to describe the techniques you will use. are you doing interviews, surveys, laboratory work, experiments etc.

You've probably got an idea of the academic method you want to use. for example i used grounded theory and there is a lot of reference material that helps researchers apply grounded theory in their research. whatever established method you are using, you ar still free to change it or combine it with other methods, but just remember that the harder it is for someone to reproduce your method, the less credibility your results will have

At the proposal stage you must describe as best as possible how you plan to complete your study, using whatever academic method you have chosen. You will also describe what instruments you will use as well as any ethical considerations that need to be incorporated in your study.

Now you must list a few bullet points that describe your method. focus your bullet points on answering the question of how you will complete your study. What academic method will you use? What instruments, are there any ethical considerations?

DEFENDING YOUR PROPOSAL

You might not be required to present your proposal for approval. But even so, its a very good practice to arrange a presentation with your supervisors and possibly some other experts in your field. Your proposal is a bit like a contract between you and your institution. You have written down what you are going to do, why its important and how you are going to do it. In return, your institution commits to supporting your study and giving you the credibility you will need to actually get it done.

As such its good to verbalize the essence of this contract in a meeting, just to make sure that everyone agrees with what's in it. And you should be proactive in arranging it. Once you've got an advanced version of your proposal, then chat with your supervisors and request that you can go ahead and set up your presentation. Think about people in your field that would be interested in your results, reach out to them and invite them. Your supervisors will also have experts in mind that they suggest you should include.

Now I want you to set out a plan for your proposal presentation. list some bullet

points that cover the logistics of this meeting. who should you invite?, when will you have it? Will you have it in a physical room or in an online meeting? If its an entirely online meeting it will be easier to invite experts from around the world. Also in your bullet points mention if you Have discussed it with your supervisors? What are some key aspects you should include in your presentation?

Use this list to help you plan your proposal presentation, and then go do it and good

