

Lecture 01 : Developing a Research Proposal

1. What is a Research Proposal?

A research proposal is a formal report that describes your proposed research, its objectives, methodology, implications, and other important details. A research proposal is the first step of the research process that presents the outline for a research project (Sidek et al., 2019). Research proposals are the framework of your research and are used to obtain approvals or grants to conduct the study from various committees or organizations. It entails the following steps:

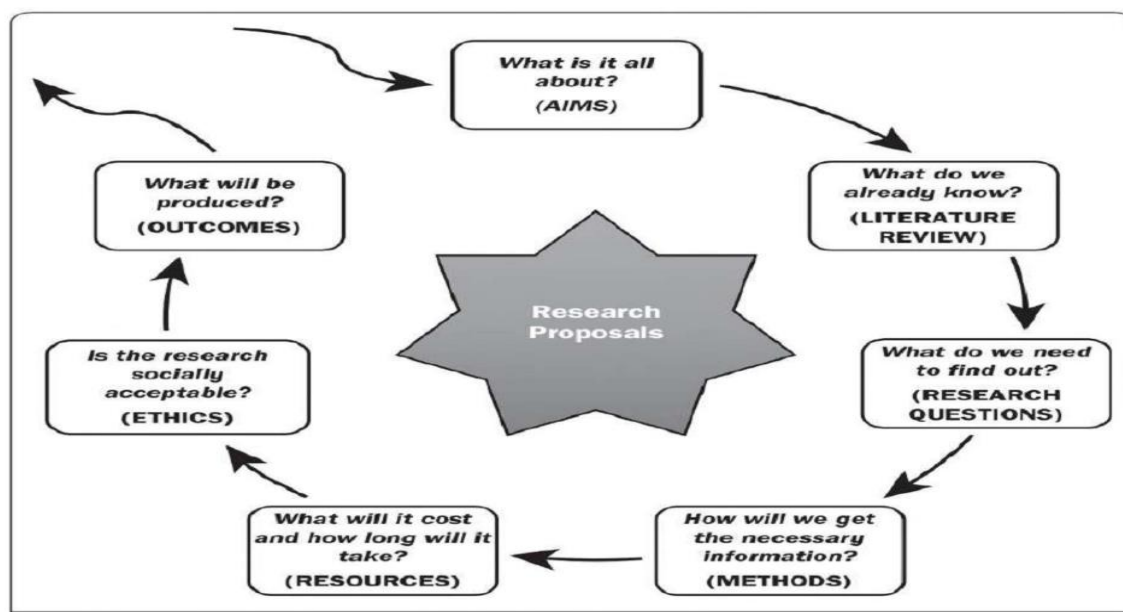


Figure 1 : The Circle of the Research Proposal Denscombe (2019,p 05)

Before embarking on the process of proposal writing, it is advised to consider the following questions

- (a) What is this research trying to find out; what questions is it trying to answer?
- (b) How will the proposed research answer these questions?
- (c) Why is this research worth doing?

Nunan (1992) provided a set of questions to follow during the process of proposal development illustrated in the table below

Questions to Guide the Design of a Research Proposal (Nunan, 1992, p. 227)

Area	Questions
Question	Is the question worth investigating?
	Is the question feasible?
	What are the constructs underlying my question?
	How will these be operationalised?
Design	Does the question suggest an experimental or a non-experimental design?
Method	What methods are available for investigating the question?
	Which of these are feasible, given available resources and expertise?
	Is it possible to use more than one data collection method?
Analysis	Does my research involve statistical or interpretive analysis, or both?
	Do I have the skills to carry out the kind of analysis I propose?

3. What is a research proposal used for and why is it important?

It is used to establish whether there is expertise to support the proposed area of research. It forms part of the assessment of the students' application. The research proposal you submit as part of your application is just the starting point, as your ideas evolve your proposed research is likely to change. A research proposal is meant to:

- (a) Defines a clear question and the approach to answering it;
- (b) Highlights its originality and/or significance;
- (c) Explains how it adds to, develop or challenge existing literature in the field; and
- (d) Persuades potential supervisors/funders of the importance of the work, and why you are the right person to undertake it

How long should your research proposal be?

It should be 2,000–3,500 words (4-7 pages) long.

4. What should be included in my research proposal?

Your proposal should include the following:

1. TITLE

Your title should give a clear indication of your proposed research approach or key question

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

You should include:

- The background and issues of your proposed research
- Your discipline
- A short literature review
- A summary of key debates and developments in the field

3. RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

You should formulate these clearly, giving an explanation as to what problems and issues are to be explored and why they are worth exploring

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

You should provide an outline of:

- The theoretical resources to be drawn on
- The research approach (theoretical framework)
- The research methods appropriate for the proposed research
- A discussion of advantages as well as limits of particular approaches and methods

5. PLAN OF WORK & TIME SCHEDULE

You should include an outline of the various stages and corresponding time lines for developing and implementing the research, including writing up your thesis.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

You should include:

- a list of references to key articles and texts discussed within your research proposal
- a selection of sources appropriate to the proposed research

