

# How to Write a Research Proposal

“One of the most challenging aspects of scientific research is synthesizing past work, current findings, and new hypotheses into research proposals for future investigations” (Friedland and Folt, 2000: pg. vii). Developing a research proposal starts with you identifying a general area of interest, then developing a focused research question. When drafting the proposal, bear in mind that individuals reviewing your application will often have to read a large number of proposals. Therefore, it is imperative **to structure your proposal such that it’s a well-presented and clearly written**, which will make a positive impact on the reviewers.

Here are some of the “**Golden Rules**” for Postgraduate Research Proposals

## Contents:

- Be clear, objective, succinct and realistic in your research question, aims and objectives.
- Convince the reviewer/funder that the research is worth being undertaken or funded (rationale)
- Allude to how this research will benefit the wider society or contribute to the research community

## Style:

- Use a short but descriptive title
- Provide a solid structure of your text (use section headings)
- Proper paragraphing is essential
- Appropriate tables and figures can enhance both the clarity and aesthetics of your work

## The Process:

- Identify prospective supervisors and discuss your idea with them (in most cases supervisors will have topics already)
- Allow plenty of time – a rushed proposal will show
- Get feedback from your prospective supervisor, while being prepared to take into consideration any form of feedback or comments.
- Remember that the reviewer may not be an expert in your field of research, therefore define or explain scientific jargon.
- Follow any guidelines you receive and meet all deadlines

## Example of structure for a research proposal:

Title

Background information/brief summary of existing literature

The rationale/motivation, aims and objectives

Methodology/description of techniques/experiments

Ethical considerations (contact the Research Ethics Committee for more details)

Timelines (work plan)

Budget

Anticipated research output (conferences, seminars and publications)

Appendix (consent and assent forms)

## Adapted from:

[http://www.ed.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.582051/fileManager/HowToWriteProposal.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.582051/fileManager/HowToWriteProposal.pdf)

<http://www.ais.up.ac.za/health/blocks/block2/researchproposal.pdf>

<http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/pdf/0300081405.pdf>