

Writing a Research Proposal

What is a research proposal?

“A plan that details reasoned, rigorous and systematic inquiry into a topic to justify the need for study and to gain a clearer understanding of the area” (Schneider et al., 2007, p. 340).

The proposal gives an indication of your intention for the research, justifying why you are proposing the research, and aims to persuade the reader of the value, feasibility and validity of your research.

You are persuading the reader that the research

- is important to your area of practice
- has been informed by previous research
- has clear aims and objectives
- is scientifically reliable and valid, i.e., rigorous
- is possible and that you can do it!

Before you start your proposal

Think about your thesis:

- What is your research question/problem/hypothesis?
- What is your thesis (argument)?
- What are the ethical issues to be considered?
- What is the framework for your thesis (quantitative/qualitative/indigenous)?
- What types/kind of data will be collected?
- How will the data be collected?
- How will the data be analysed?

Research proposal format

It is suggested that you follow this format in developing your research proposal.

Introduction

The introduction outlines the topic, problem area or issue and provides background and contextual information.

It includes the research topic (problem/question/aim) and the significance of the proposed study to the area of research.

Literature Review

A literature review is vital in establishing what is already known about the topic and therefore what the gaps are in current knowledge. Literature needs to be summarised and critiqued. Your proposed study needs to be established in the context of other studies that have explored the question from a different perspective or used a different design.

Design of the study

This is the plan for undertaking the research, informed by a philosophical position. Outline the features of the design, state how it is appropriate to your research, and justify your choice of design. Discuss advantages and disadvantages of the design you have chosen.

Methods

Include who the participants will be, what you will collect the data with, and how you will do this. Also state where you will collect the data and when this will be.

Address issues of rigour/truth and value. For example, validity and reliability for a quantitative study, or credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability for a qualitative or indigenous study.

Ethics

Reflect on any ethical issues that may arise from the proposed research. Discuss who will approve the research. Focus on potential benefits, risks/harm, storage of data, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, right to withdraw from the study, and communication of research findings.

Data analysis

Describe how you will analyse the data to make meaning of it, and outline advantages and disadvantages of your particular approach to analysis.

Timeline

A timeline helps you plan the study. It can be attached in table form.

Budget

Include an outline of all proposed expenses associated with undertaking the study in terms of resources and materials.

References

Borbasis, S., & Jackson, D. (2008). *Navigating the maze of research: Enhancing nursing and midwifery practice* (3rd ed.). Chatswood, Australia: Elsevier.

Schneider, Z., Whitehead, D., Elliot, D., LoBiondo-Wood, G., & Haber, J. (2007). *Nursing and midwifery research: Methods and appraisal for evidence-based practice* (3rd ed.). Chatswood, Australia: Elsevier.

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