

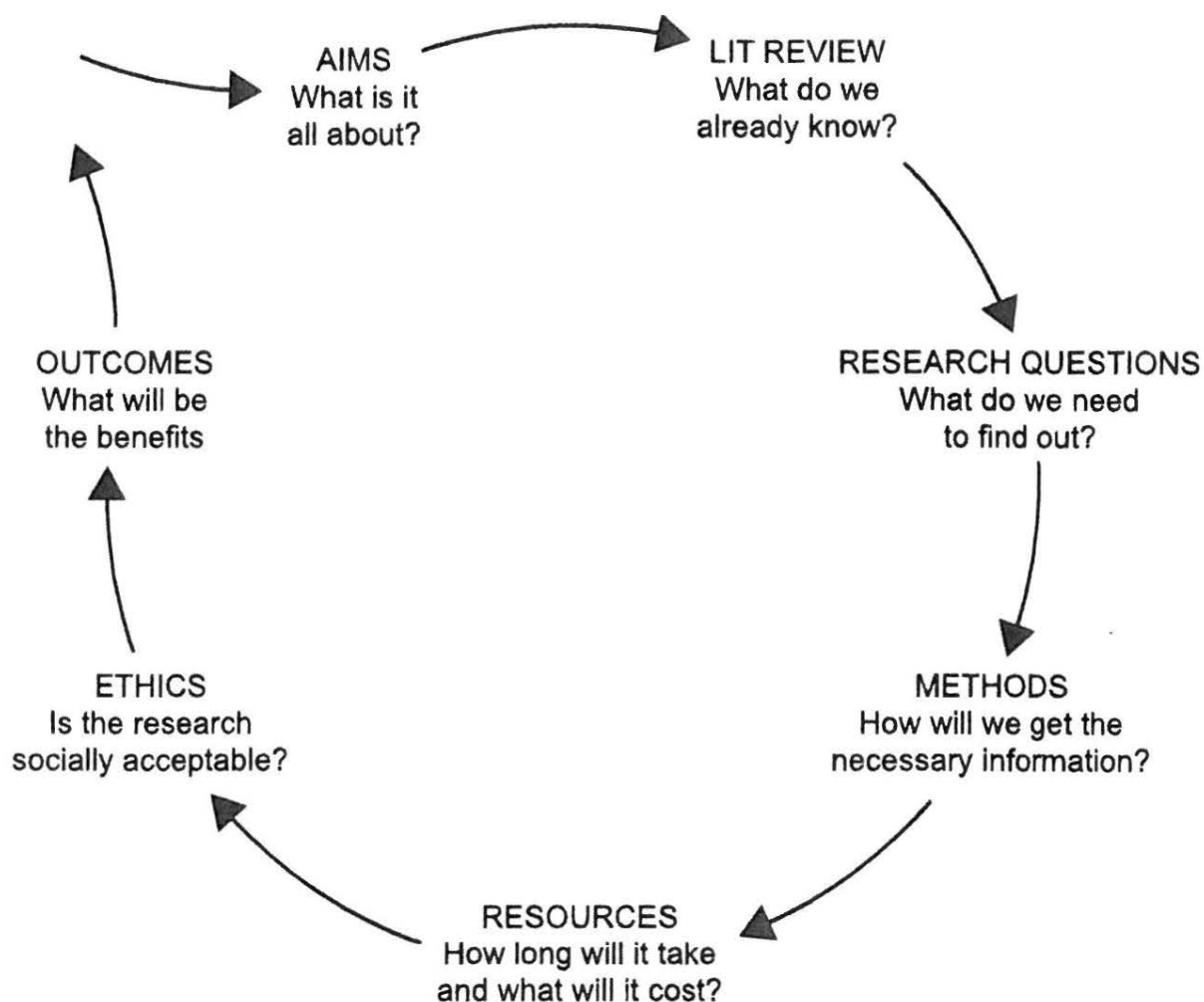
Writing the Research Proposal (for Confirmation)

Purpose of the research proposal

A research proposal (the confirmation document) is a formal written document to convince the University that your research will contribute value to your field of study and that you and your project are worth supporting (e.g. time, resources, and energy).

Features of the research proposal

A research proposal provides the following information.



Structure of the research proposal

Section	Purpose
Title	Summarize, in a few words, the research topic
Summary/Abstract	Provide an overview of the study which you will expand in the text that follows.
Introduction	Present a clear and concise statement of the overall purpose of the research AND/OR Provide a context for the research, e.g. a problem that needs solving This might include background literature
Literature Review	Demonstrate the relationship between the proposed study and what has already been done in the particular area; that is, to indicate the 'gap' that the study will fill.
Research question/s	Provide a logical 'conclusion' to the lit review in that they are explicit statements of what the study will investigate.
Methodology	Describe the appropriate design for how the questions will be investigated. This may include an awareness of possible problems, and how they will be dealt with.
Significance	Say why the study is worth carrying out.
Resources	Outline any resources and costs (with a budget if necessary) the research will require.
Ethics	Provide a statement as to how participants will be advised of the overall nature of the study, and how informed consent will be obtained from them.
Timetable	Give a working plan for carrying out, and completing, the study.
References	Provide detailed references and bibliographic support for the proposal.
Appendix (if necessary)	Provide examples of materials that might be used, or adapted, in the study.

Source: Adapted from Paltridge & Starfield (2007), Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language, p. 61.

Questions to help develop the research proposal

Area, topic, purpose

- 1 What is my research area? Have I clearly identified it?
- 2 What is my topic? Have I clearly identified it, and shown how it fits within the research area?
- 3 What is the overall purpose of my research?

Background and context

- 4 Into what background and context does my research fit?

Research questions

- 5 What are my general research questions?
- 6 What are my specific research questions?
- 7 Does each specific research question meet the empirical criterion? That is, is it clear what data are required to answer each question?

Relevant literature

- 8 What literature is relevant to my study?
- 9 What is the relationship of my study to this literature?
- 10 How will my study deal with the literature?
- 11 How does my proposal use the literature?

Perspectives

- 12 Is there a particular perspective behind my research?

Substantive theory

- 13 What is the role of theory in my study?
 - (a) Does the description-explanation distinction apply? If my purpose is explanatory, is the focus on theory verification or theory generation? What is the logic behind my position?
 - (b) Does the distinction between theory verification and theory generation apply? What is the logic behind my position?
 - (c) If my focus is theory verification, what are the hypotheses and what is the theory behind them?

Pre-structured versus unfolding

- 14 To what extent is my study pre-structured or unfolding? Does this apply differentially to different parts of my study?

Methods and data

- 15 Will my study use quantitative methods and data, qualitative methods and data, or both?
- 16 What strategy(ies) will my study use?
- 17 Does my study have a conceptual framework?
- 18 Who or what will be studied?
- 19 From whom will data be collected? Specifically, what is the sampling plan, the sample size and the basis for sample selection?
- 20 How will I collect the data?
- 21 What instruments (if any) will be used? Will I use already existing instruments? If so, what is known about them? Will I develop instruments for this study? If so, using what steps?
- 22 What data collection procedures will be used?
- 23 How will these procedures maximize the quality of my data?
- 24 How will I analyse my data?

25 What computer packages will be involved?

Consent, access, ethics

26 What issues of consent are involved in carrying out my study, and how will they be dealt with?

27 What issues of access are involved in carrying out my study, and how will they be dealt with?

28 What other ethical issues are involved in carrying out my study, and how will they be dealt with?

Presentation

29 Does my proposal constitute a logical and coherent argument, with interconnected sections? Do its parts fit together?

30 Have I given enough information for readers to understand value of the study?

31 Have I been clear? Is the proposal well organized, easy to follow and clearly written?

32 Is my proposal presented in an appropriate scholarly form?

Source: Punch (2007), Developing Effective Research Proposals (2nd ed.)

For more information or support

Book in for a workshop and/or individual consultation:

- <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-students/support/academic/workshops-consultations-advisors>
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