

Contents of a Good Research Proposal

1. A *title* that is appealing and meaningful, reflecting the contents of the research proposal.
2. An *abstract* that should be motivating to the reader. It should present the managerial/societal problem the dissertation aims to address, the problem statement (i.e. research objectives and research questions) and the research approach proposed. The abstract should end with about five key words that can guide the reader towards the main contents of the research proposal.
3. It should contain at most three chapters. Every chapter of the research proposal should begin with a brief introduction to guide the reader into the main contents of that chapter. Similarly, every chapter should end with a brief summary capturing the main points that have been discussed in that chapter.
4. In the first chapter (*Introduction*), the managerial/societal problem should be convincingly described, the problem statement should be clearly defined, the research purpose well formulated and the research questions clearly articulated. The significance of your research should be sound and with a strong motivation (i.e., the relevance to practice and preferably also to theory). A brief description of the research approach should be included in this chapter. The chapter should end with a clear outline of the structure of the document.
5. The second chapter (*Literature review*) should show mastery of the literature on the topic of interest in this research proposal. Literature used should be relevant to the problem statement and research questions. It be up-to-date (preferably not older than 5 years from the date they are cited) and from credited sources (e.g., ISI-ranked journals, reputable publishers like SAGE, Blackwell, Oxford University Press and authoritative institutes like World Bank, UNCTAD, Transparency International). Literature should be well reviewed (e.g., discussion of core concepts, their dimensions and relationships between concepts). Your arguments should flow logically (evident in meaningful headings and subheadings) and should express your “own voice”. That is, the review should not merely summarize the literature reviewed, but should contrast, compare and combine the literature to make one’s argument. The chapter should end with a summary of the main points from the literature reviewed and a conceptual model that visualizes the proposed relationships between the variables of interest. This model guides the formulation of the hypotheses in case of explanatory (often quantitative) research/initial propositions in case of explorative (often qualitative) research and thus helps to guide your empirical work.
6. The *Methodology* chapter is the third chapter and should consist of the research strategy, research setting* and where applicable, the study population, sampling method, operationalization and measurement of key variables, data collection methods (including draft research instruments like interview protocols and surveys), data processing and data analysis and the techniques that will be used to ensure validity and reliability of the results. This chapter should end with anticipated limitations during the empirical phase and how these can be overcome. *In case the research setting text is quite elaborate (e.g., description of company or industry under study), this setting could also be presented in a separate chapter after the methods chapter. This should be discussed with your Supervisor.
7. The cited references should appear at the end of the document under the heading *References*. All cited sources throughout the research proposal should appear in this section. References should follow the

latest version of APA (American Psychological Association) format style. This is the most commonly used method to cite sources within the social sciences field. The Candidate should use information ethically, i.e., there should be no evidence of plagiarism. All ideas, text, graphics, tables and media should be credited to the source. Useful sources explaining APA include:

- <http://www.apastyle.org/>
 - <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
 - <http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/>
 - <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/referencing/apa-style.php>
8. The research proposal should include three Appendices: (a) draft research instruments; (b) detailed work plan for the research project; and (c) budget (if relevant).
 9. The research proposal should have a sound structure and a clear writing style. All expressions and grammar should be used in the correct way.