

School of Population Health – Applicant Guidelines for Research Proposal

Suggested Headings for Research Proposal - PhD & Masters by Research

1. Abstract (max: 250 words)

2. Project title

3. Background / rationale

This section should address the following points:

- Establish what the problem is drawing on evidence from peer reviewed references. A comprehensive literature review is not required. But must draw on a few key references to clearly explain and justify the problem that the research will address.
- Identify clearly the gap in the literature that the proposed research will address providing a clear rationale for your proposed research.
- Should include research purpose/aim, and research question(s) and/or hypotheses all of which are well aligned. These should also align well with the proposed research design.

4. Sub-questions / objectives (if relevant)

These should align well with the main research questions.

5. Research design

- Brief description of the broad research approach (qualitative or quantitative, mixed method) drawing on some evidence to justify the appropriateness of the proposed research approach.
- Brief outline of the research setting, methods of data collection (example survey, qualitative interviews etc.), who the participants would be and a brief explanation of how participants will be accessed.
- In this section you are not required to provide details of sample size calculation. But you will need to provide a rough idea of what the minimum sample size will be.
- Not required to include details of how data will be analysed.
- Most important aspect for this section is the alignment and appropriateness of the research approach. Research approach and data collection methods must align well with the problem, the research aim and research hypothesis/question. Proposed research approach and methods of data collection must be appropriate to the research aim.
- If this research is a part of a bigger research project, provide a brief description of the

overall research project and a brief explanation of how this proposed research fits into the bigger research project.

6. Anticipated outcomes / significance (provide as dot points)

Indicate the novelty of the proposed research in terms of contribution to either the global body of knowledge, or existing theory, and practice.

7. Timeframe

You must provide the broad research activities for each year of the proposed research. Provide a Gantt chart showing the research activities as well as when writing of thesis will be completed. Include key activities such as candidature confirmation, ethics approval, data collection, data analysis etc.

8. Anticipated budget

You must include a detailed breakdown of the budget for the research activities including the funding source for each item. Include details where relevant for items such as printing of survey forms, development of online survey instruments, costs for conducting interviews, costs of transcribing, statistical analysis, accessing data, publications etc. Provide the budget details in a table including a column that shows the source of funding and whether the funding is available.

Insert your Research Proposal using these guidelines into the [Research Plan Form](#) under the 'Research Project Description' section. Please refer to the [UNSW Application Process](#) and [Document Submission Guidelines](#) for more detailed information.

Criteria for Research Proposal reviews

Your research proposal will be reviewed by an appropriate academic within your research area to determine if it has a testable hypothesis and if the project is adequate in scope and feasible for a PhD or Masters by Research. The peer reviewers will use the criteria below to assess your proposal.

Broad Criteria	Specific Criteria
1) Does the proposal convincingly articulate the research problem as important to public health and provide a well justified rationale for the research?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses evidence from peer reviewed literature or theory and provides an adequate overview of the research problem and rationale for the proposed research. May draw on key pieces of work, seminal articles or key work in the area but is not expected to provide a comprehensive literature review. Rather just a few key references) • The research aim is clearly articulated and aligns with the identified research gap • Proposal is appropriate in scope for the HDR degree indicated at the top of the page
2. Is the overall research approach relevant to the research problem/phenomenon to be studied and the research design feasible to be implemented during the candidature period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question/hypothesis is clearly articulated and aligns well with the research aim • Overall research approach and design is appropriate to the research problem, aim, and question(s)/hypothesis. • Proposed methods of data collection aligns well with the proposed research approach/methodology and is feasible • Proposed strategies for accessing participants is feasible for the research setting.
3. Will the research make a significant contribution to discipline and practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed research makes a significant and novel contribution to the discipline of public health/medical education practice/global body of knowledge/existing theory
4. Is the proposed timeline feasible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of qualitative research design, proposed time frame feasible for establishing rapport with participants, data collection within the particular research setting, data analysis, and writing up and allows for needed flexibility • In the case of quantitative research design, proposed time feasible for accessing the required sample size, data collection, data analysis and interpretation and writing up
5. Is the proposed budget adequate and is there evidence of funding available for the research activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed budget is adequate for implementing the research. • Funding sources indicated and funding is available for implementing the research activities.

Reference: Morse, J.M. (2003) A review Committee's Guide for Evaluating Qualitative Proposals, *Qualitative Health Research*, 13 (6), 833-851