

University Research Proposal Template

Abstract

Guidance

The abstract provides a concise overview of the entire research proposal. It should briefly describe the research problem, objectives, methodology, expected outcomes, and significance of the study in 150–250 words. Although it appears first, it is usually written after completing the proposal.

Introduction

Guidance

The introduction establishes the context of the study by presenting the topic, explaining its importance, and introducing the broad area of investigation. It should capture the reader's interest while demonstrating why the research is timely and relevant.

Background of the Study

Guidance

This section explains the historical, theoretical, and practical context of the research problem. It should include recent trends, industry or societal issues, and previous developments that justify undertaking the proposed study.

Problem Statement

Guidance

The problem statement clearly identifies the specific issue, gap, or challenge the research intends to address. It should explain why the problem exists, who is affected, and why solving it is academically or practically important.

Research Gap

Guidance

The research gap highlights limitations, inconsistencies, or unanswered questions identified in previous studies. This section demonstrates the originality of the proposed research and explains how it will contribute to existing knowledge.

Research Objectives

Guidance

Research objectives describe the specific outcomes the study intends to achieve. Objectives should be clear, measurable, realistic, and aligned with the identified research problem and proposed methodology.

Research Questions/Hypotheses

Guidance

This section converts the objectives into research questions or testable hypotheses. Quantitative studies generally formulate hypotheses, whereas qualitative studies focus on research questions that guide data collection and analysis.

Literature Review

Guidance

The literature review critically evaluates previous studies, theories, and empirical evidence related to the research topic. Rather than merely summarising sources, it should compare findings, identify trends, highlight disagreements, and justify the need for the present study.

Conceptual Framework

Guidance

The conceptual framework presents the relationships among variables or constructs investigated in the study. A diagram should be accompanied by an explanation of how independent, dependent, mediating, or moderating variables are expected to interact based on theory and prior research.

Research Methodology

Guidance

This section explains how the research will be conducted. It should describe the research philosophy, design, target population, sampling technique, sample size, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and overall research procedures to ensure transparency and replicability.

Sampling Plan

Guidance

The sampling plan explains who will participate in the study and how they will be selected. It should justify the sampling technique, sample size, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and provide a table summarising the sampling strategy.

Instrument Development

Guidance

Describe the development or adoption of questionnaires, interview schedules, observation protocols, or other instruments. Explain measurement scales, pilot testing, and modifications made to improve clarity and reliability.

Reliability and Validity

Guidance

This section explains how the quality of the measurement instrument will be assessed. It should discuss reliability measures such as Cronbach's Alpha and validity measures such as content, convergent, discriminant validity, Composite Reliability, AVE, and HTMT where appropriate.

Data Analysis Plan

Guidance

Describe the statistical or qualitative techniques that will be used to answer the research questions. Mention the software (e.g., SPSS, AMOS, SmartPLS, R, Python, NVivo), assumptions, and methods for interpreting results.

Expected Outcomes

Guidance

Explain the anticipated academic, managerial, policy, or societal contributions of the research. The expected outcomes should align with the objectives and demonstrate the potential value of the study.

Limitations and Scope

Guidance

Clearly define the boundaries of the study by explaining what is included and excluded. Discuss anticipated limitations that may influence the interpretation or generalisability of the findings.

Timeline (Gantt Chart)

Guidance

Provide a realistic schedule showing the major research activities from proposal preparation to final submission. The Gantt chart should illustrate milestones such as literature review, data collection, analysis, report writing, and revision.

Budget

Guidance

Present an itemised estimate of expected research expenses such as travel, software, data collection, printing, and miscellaneous costs. Include brief justifications where appropriate.

References (APA 7th Edition)

Guidance

List all sources cited in the proposal using APA 7th edition formatting. Ensure every in-text citation appears in the reference list and vice versa, maintaining consistency and accuracy. Only include the references referred in content.

Appendices

Guidance

Include supporting material that strengthens the proposal but would interrupt the main flow if placed in the body. Typical appendices include questionnaires, consent forms, ethics approvals, detailed tables, interview guides, and supplementary documents.