

## The Outline Research Proposal

As part of the application process, you will need to submit a short outline research proposal which enables us to assess your suitability for higher degree work, including:

- viability of your topic as a research study at Doctoral Level
- clarity of your topic
- methodology and the practicalities required for a research degree
- appropriate supervisor(s) to be appointed to support your research.

The proposal should be approximately 1,500 to 2,000 words, excluding references. Although it can seem very challenging to produce a research proposal, even in outline, before you have formally ‘begun your studies’, it can be a valuable way of working through your own ideas and interests, and assessing whether they are likely to develop into a feasible project, to form the basis of your doctorate. It will also form the foundation for your more detailed and formal proposal which will be presented to the School Doctoral Supervisors Panel after you completed all taught modules in the DBA course.

The initial proposal should not be treated as a rigid commitment, and some students do change their plans as their work develops, but research students are expected to have viable and sufficiently coherent projects and the requirement that a proposal should be written is *the first demonstration of this capability*.

The guidelines set out below are intended to help you to identify and address the important areas you will need to cover in your proposal.

### Outline Research Proposal – Guidelines

#### 1. Introduction

This should identify your proposed research topic and contextualise it within a particular discipline or area of interest. It should contain some reference to the relevant literature and practice issues, and your introduction should build on the knowledge and issues raised. You should also make clear why the research topic is worth investigation, for example, in terms of the need to extend knowledge or to address gaps in existing knowledge, and also of the importance of the topic and its potential contribution to the professional discipline.

## **2. Statement of Research Focus, Problems or Questions**

You should describe your proposed research focus within the topic you are interested in, and, if appropriate, the problems or research question(s) it is likely to address. This should give an idea of what questions, issues, or hypotheses will be investigated. This section may not be expressed very precisely at this early stage, particularly for types of research where the questions will unfold as the work progresses, however, some degree of focus is important to help you to plan the work and to help us to identify what kinds of support you will need. This will then continue once you are enrolled and working on your more detailed formal proposal.

## **3. Research Design, Data and Methodology**

This section should indicate your initial ideas about how to address the research problem. Its form will depend upon your chosen discipline and the research topic, as well as on your interests and the kind of approach that you anticipate taking. This may change as you develop your work further, but it is valuable at this stage to consider the most likely approach as this will help you to clarify your ideas and help us to consider the most appropriate supervision for you.

## **4. Data Analytic Procedures**

Although it may seem a long way ahead, it is very useful to think about data analysis right from the outset since it will have implications for the planning of your work. The data analysis approach will need to relate to your anticipated research focus or problem, design and methods and this will vary according to your discipline and subject area. Whatever the nature of the data, you should provide some indication as to how the data will be handled as part of the research, any problems anticipated (and the outline of solutions to these) and any support you will need.

## **5. Practical issues**

It will be useful at this stage to outline practical considerations for your research, including the resources you will need, any access, permissions from your employer or ethical issues that are likely to arise, any anticipated difficulties and how these might be overcome. You may find it useful to consult the University's Research Governance Policy, which can be read by visiting the UWL website and clicking on the research banner.

## **6. Timescale**

We recommend you give careful consideration to your own time management. For DBA, we expect you to complete the DBA Thesis stage in 2 to 3 years. Time management can be a major challenge for research students, since this form of work is both demanding and less structured than ‘taught’ modes of study. It is important to consider the needs of the research project but also your personal and work circumstances and availability of resources that will impact on the timescale of the work. It is useful to have a Gantt Chart to illustrate each stage of your research process.

## **Bibliography**

Please include a full list of references and sources you have used. You may also wish to provide a wider bibliography to indicate the range of sources you are likely to draw on and to indicate the preparatory work you have undertaken. UWL uses the Harvard reference style as a standard style. You can obtain details on this style by visiting <http://www.uwl.ac.uk/lrs/guides/harvard.html>.