

Title:

Student Name:

Contact Details:

Supervisor Name (if known):

School (if known):

- 1. Introduction/Literature Review**
- 2. Objectives (research question, hypotheses)**
- 3. Method and materials**
- 4. Significance/Original Contribution of the Research**
- 5. References**
- 6. Appendices/attachments (if any)**

A short research proposal (2-3 pages) is required when applying for admission into an ECU PhD program, and when approaching prospective PhD supervisors to accept you as a student.

Your research proposal is a blue-print of the research that you plan to undertake. A well-prepared proposal clearly outlines why the research is important, what the research questions are, and how these will be addressed through the research. A research proposal also enables you to identify key requirements (including research expertise) and resources needed to achieve your research objectives. It is therefore important to spend time investigating your potential research area and thinking about your research.

Notwithstanding, your research proposal is not set in stone. It is an outline of your initial ideas/thoughts and may vary or be revised in consultation with your prospective PhD supervisor before you are accepted into the PhD program.

Your Research Proposal

What do I need to do for my proposal?

- Identify and define the research problem
- Contextualise the research problem using relevant literature
- Define the research questions or hypotheses, and outline how they will be answered through the research
- Justify the significance of the research and state the original contribution that is expected to be made
- Briefly outline the appropriate methodologies that will be used to answer the research questions
- Explain the approach/es that will be used to analyse data

Proposal format

ECU has no specific requirements – the actual format, detail and scope of your research proposal will vary depending on your discipline. It should be written concisely to ensure that others can fully understand the research you wish to undertake. Recommended length of your research proposal should be 2-3 pages (excluding references, appendices/attachments).

Proposal elements

To write your proposal, use the following as suggested headings. Not all may be necessary for your research, and some sections may be combined or appear in a different order.

1. Cover page (your name, contact details, title of your PhD project, name of your prospective supervisor (if known))
2. Introduction/Literature Review
 - Every PhD aims to solve a problem. The introduction should provide a clear rationale for your research and describe the background to the research based on existing theoretical literature, conceptual frameworks, current practice, etc.
 - Demonstrate your understanding of the literature (research area) and make clear the specific issues or practical/theoretical gaps that need to be addressed (which will lead to a concise statement of the questions that your research will answer or the hypotheses that will be tested (#3 below).
3. Objectives (research question, hypotheses)
 - Provide a clear and simple statement of your research aim/objectives. This can take any form – it can be written as testable hypotheses, an over-arching question (with sub-questions), etc. In simple terms: what are you doing?
4. Method and materials
 - Briefly explain/describe the methods you are proposing to use to answer the research questions you have put forward. Provide a clear outline of (e.g.) intended participants, design and method to be employed, research procedure and data analysis. Pay attention to the size and complexity of your research as your PhD must be completed within 3-4 years.
 - Include any special resources (equipment, labs, facilities, etc.) that you will need.
5. Significance/Original Contribution of the Research
 - Every PhD must make a substantial and original contribution to practice, scholarship and knowledge. Your research proposal should demonstrate the significance and importance of your research to the discipline, to people, to the planet, etc.
6. References
7. Appendices/attachments (if any)