

Qualitative Research Proposal

In a research proposal, you summarize the components of your research and tell your audience concisely about the study you are planning: what you are going to do, how you are going to do it, and why it matters. A research proposal should contain the following sections and subsections:

- Abstract
- Description of the Research
 - Summary of Key Literature
 - Conceptual Framework
 - Research Question
- Design and Methodology
 - Description of Research Participants
 - Capturing Constructs
 - Trustworthiness, Rigor, and Accuracy
 - Facilities and Equipment
 - Data Collection Plan and Procedures
 - Data Analysis Procedures
- Time Frame
- Intellectual Merit
- Broader Impacts
- References Cited

Your research proposal should be formatted in APA style, including the APA recommended format for headings and subheadings.

Abstract

An abstract follows a clear structure that reflects the key elements of your study. These elements include a brief description of the scholarly context of your project; the objective or goal(s) of your research; the methodology you will employ; the findings you might expect; and the overall research contributions you hope to make. An abstract is typically one to two paragraphs in length (approximately 250 words). Researchers often write their abstract *after* other components of the proposal are finalized.

Description of the Research

A description of the research is where you position your study in the field and explain where and how you developed the components of your project question(s). Think of it as sharing the evolution of your thought process in designing your study, i.e., where ideas came from, how you envision the study unfolding, and what you think you know and want to confirm or find out.

Summary of Key Literature

These are the most important academic publications that inform your study. Key literature is the core of work published on your topic, or those pieces that shaped the focus and design of your research. The literature covered in this section should be sufficient in detail to describe the existing knowledge on your topic and to position where and how your work will fit within the field.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is an outline of your research plan for conducting the study. This is where you discuss how your study fits within the broader field and its theoretical concepts;

where your work might build upon or support a theoretical model; what the objectives of your study are; how you explain the phenomenon that is the focus of your research; and so on.

Research Question

One study has one main research question. One dissertation has one research question. There are often sub-questions to the main question, but there is only one main question that drives the study.

Design and Methodology

This section focuses on the type of research design you will use in your study. What type of design are you planning? For example, is it going to be a grounded theory, or a narrative, a descriptive study, case study, a qualitative study. Explain why the design is suitable for your study and the potential limitations of the design.

Consider the following questions when writing this section, and keep in mind that not all questions will be applicable to your specific study:

- What type of design will you employ (i.e., qualitative, mixed-methods)
- What type of data are you using (i.e., primary, secondary)?
- How are you going to collect data, if it comes from a primary data source?
- What are the characteristics of participants you need for the study? If you are comparing two or more groups, what are the different characteristics you need?
- What sampling method will you use?
- What is your sample size (approximate)? How did you determine the number?

Description of Research Participants

In this sub-section, describe the number of research participants required for the study and the characteristics of those individuals. If recruiting multiple groups of individuals, be sure to mention the characteristics of each group. You should discuss the sampling plan and sampling method you intend to use for selecting your participants. Include how you will determine the optimum number of participants (sample size) needed for your study.

Capturing Constructs

Qualitative data is collected in the form of text, audio, and observation, but these forms of data collection should also focus on capturing constructs. In writing this section, be sure to address these questions as a guideline:

- What are the main constructs of the study?
- How do you plan to capture these main constructs?

Trustworthiness, Rigor, Accuracy and Researcher's Bias

A number of issues with trustworthiness, rigor, and accuracy in qualitative studies come during data analysis (rather than during design). This is because, trustworthiness, rigor, accuracy, and researcher's biases are concerned with how findings are interpreted.

- Address trustworthiness, rigor, and accuracy in your study.
- Address **researcher's bias** in your study.
- How are you planning to ensure meticulous data collection?
- Are you engaging other researchers in the data analysis process (triangulation), or are you having participants express their views (participants check-in)?

- How are you going to address **generalizability**? Will your data be able to draw conclusions to a larger population?

Facilities and Equipment

In this sub-section, address the types of instruments to be used, equipment needed, and/or space required, as necessary.

Data Collection Plan and Procedures

Here you will discuss and/or describe your planned approach to collecting data. Include any approaches and/or activities you will use to minimize biases and enhance the trustworthiness of your study.

Every detail about data collection is included here. If the data comes from a secondary source, include details from the original study.

For example, in case of conducting interviews, be sure to address the following:

- How long will interviews last?
- Where will interviews take place?
- Provide the interview protocol and interview questions (include these as an attachment).
- Include necessary permissions from businesses, organizations, universities, and so on and what they have agreed to provide for you.

In case of conducting focus group, be sure to address the following:

- How many focus group sessions?
- How long are these focus group anticipated to be?
- How many participants in each one and whether there will be anyone to help and who will be helping with the process?

- How will the focus group recorded?
- Include necessary permissions from businesses, organizations, universities, and so on and what they have agreed to provide for you.

Data Analysis Procedures

In this sub-section, discuss your data analysis plan, including the steps you will take to ensure accuracy and/or trustworthiness of the findings and their interpretation. Be sure to address the following questions and topics:

- How will you manage the data?
- You may consider how transcription will take place; how you will ensure anonymity and confidentiality; how you are going to code your data; and how many patterns you expect to find.

Time Frame

Provide an approximate time frame for your study. Consider all aspects of research preparation, data collection, data analysis, and dissertation writing, keeping in mind that most stages of dissertation take longer than initially planned. For example, and as applicable, you will need to allocate time for IRB review and approval; human subject recruitment and scheduling; document and data access; equipment purchases; and drafting, writing, revising, reviewing, and re-writing processes.

ACTIVITY	PROPOSED TIME FRAME
Research Preparation	
Data Collection	

Data Analysis	
Dissertation Writing	

Intellectual Merit

This is the academic or scientific contribution that the findings from your research will provide.

Intellectual merit is how your work advances knowledge of a topic or in your field.

Broader Impacts

This is the non-academic contribution your research has the potential to make to broader society.

Broader impacts, or significance of the study, cover the possible benefit of your research to the general public.

References Cited

Include only the references you have cited in your Research Proposal. Your references must be complete and in APA format.