The research proposal is the base upon which the potential merit of your proposed research will be judged. It is a foundation from which to develop your ideas and methodological approaches, and plan your work and study program.

Proposal characteristics

Your task in presenting your research proposal is to convince your research degree committee that your proposed research:

- Has merit
- Is significant
- Is ethical
- Can be done by you.

Your proposal should be:

- Clear (no confusion or ambiguities)
- Comprehensive (you haven’t omitted any necessary information)
- Concise
- Well organised.

Preparing to write a research proposal

When preparing, ask yourself:

- What am I looking for?
- What do I seek to prove/investigate?
- What will I contribute to?
- What relationships between elements will I consider?
- What difference will my work make?
- Why does it matter
- How will I do it?

Draft proposal components

Indicative title

What will you call the thesis? It’s better to pose questions or make a suggestion about links rather than a single word or area of study. It should be clearly, concisely and unambiguously expressed.

Research question/hypothesis

The research question or hypothesis should define your research, set parameters, and act as a frame of reference for assessing your work.

Research objectives

This section should suggest the underlying research area and your main question and sub-questions. Eventually it will form the abstract for your thesis. Be as precise as possible and avoid a vague statement of objectives.
Background

What issues, problems, history, background provide a context for your own work? How is it contributing to academic work and the body of research and knowledge in this area? Why is it essential that your research be done?

What has been written about your topic? What theories, methods, and sources have been used? Where is the gap that your research will fill?

Where have you taken your theories from? What are the underpinning theoretical perspectives informing your ideas? How are these perspectives combined and how do they relate to and direct your unique piece of research?

Research methodology

What are the research methodologies underpinning your research? What methods or strategies will you be using and why? How do they link with and inform each other? There should be clear links with your objectives

Ethical considerations

Refer to the Research at Curtin.

Timeline

Indicate an anticipated deadline for each phase of your research and main features of each of your chapters. It needs to be realistic.