

Let's get your research career started!

Research Proposal Handout

Formal requirements:

8 – 10 standard pages = 3600 – 4500 words

(font size 12, 1,5 spaced, block alignment, ASA style referencing – see

http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/quick_tips_for_asa_style.pdf)

1. Title

- Condenses the paper's content in a few words
- It is the first think that captures the readers' attention
- Differentiates the paper from other papers -> it should be original

Tips:

- o craft a hook and be creative
- o keep it attractive
- o choose 2-3 key words (don't be too general)
- o keep it simple, brief but clear
- o avoid abbreviations and jargon

2. Abstract (approx. 150 words)

- It is an important strategic element → it's usually what everyone reads first
- It is a summary of:
 - o general idea/ research problem
 - o existing and current debates
 - o main objectives of the study
 - o research strategy
- An abstract is usually written as the last part of the proposal, when the proposal is already clear. It needs to be clear, brief, and convincing.

3. Research problem (800-1000 words)

- following issues must be addressed in this part:
 - o purpose of the study
 - o justification of the project – why do we need to know this?
 - o hypothesis (only in quantitative design) or a detailed description of the case (qualitative research)
 - o **main research question**
 - o definition of key terms, concepts you're going to rely on
 - conceptualisation → What do you mean by “status” / “class” / “power” / etc.?
 - definitions = way of clarifying terms and phrases

- operationalisation → How do you measure “power” / “status” / etc.?

4. Literature review (1750-2000 words)

- Provides an overview and discussion on the existing literature relevant to your research problem
- It is NOT only a summary of authors and their claims/theories/approaches, it should engage them critically (What are the strong and weak sides of the texts? What is missing? Do the findings from several studies match each other, or are they different?)
- A good literature review should capture the debate on the topic → it should provide a discussion of different concepts/theories/approaches to study the selected phenomenon
- The literature review should posit your research – you should show why your research contribution is necessary (a lack of literature on the topic, a lack of relevant research approaches, contradictory findings, a lack of studies in the national/transnational context, etc.)

5. Methodology (500-800 words)

- Determines if you are going to work qualitatively, quantitatively, or with mixed methods
- It serves as an overview of research methods (survey/interview/ethnography/content analysis/discursive analysis/etc.)
- it shows HOW you’re going to answer your research questions
- it includes:
 - Detailed description of a research sample (Whom are you going to study? How big will the sample be? How many interviews, texts, observations, etc.? How are you going to get access to the field?)
 - Description of research methods you are going to use to collect data (Are you going to interview the people? Do policy analysis? Do a survey? Factor analysis? Focus groups? Do participatory observation? Do a media discourse analysis? Other?)
 - Explanation and justification of the methods' choice (Why do you plan to use these methods and not the others? What are their advantages?)
- It is important that the methods are consistent with the nature of the research question – if you want to study sensitive topics don’t opt for questionnaires, if you want to generalize for the whole population don’t opt for ethnography)

6. Ethical considerations (300-500 words)

- think about potential ethical risks of your research (rapport with interview partners, sensitivity of topics, consequences of your research findings, etc.)
- what can you do to minimize ethical risks of your research?

7. Bibliography

The following three topics are not going to be a part of your assessment and do not count in the 8-10 pages' proposal requirement. Nevertheless, we would like to invite you to choose at least one of the topics and incorporate it to your research proposal. Be creative and think about how would you go about budgeting, sustainability, and dissemination if you were conducting this research in a real life?

- **Budget**

- Based on your methodology, research problem and questions, try to formulate a budget for your project. Consider your time, travel costs, transcription of interviews, money for respondents, etc.
- Be as detailed as possible.

- **Time-frame**

- Think about the time-frame of your research. How much time will you need for respective steps of your research?
- Be as detailed as possible.

- **Dissemination**

- What kind of audiences might be your research interesting for?
- How are you going to ensure that your research findings reach these audiences and what form of dissemination will be the most proper? (think about articles, public campaigns, social media, workshops, etc.)
- Be as detailed as possible.

The deadline for the first draft of a research proposal (at least 80% of the text in all research proposal sections) is 3rd December 23:59.

For tips and tricks about writing better research proposals and their respective parts (e.g. literature review or abstract), please see the Manual of academic writing available in IS (https://is.muni.cz/auth/do/fss/SOCIOLOGIE/el/typy_a_trikey/index.html). This manual is unfortunately for Czech speakers only. For English guidelines please visit the webpage of the Writing Centre at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/>) or Center for Academic Writing at the Central European University (<https://caw.ceu.edu/online-writing-resources>).