**Research Proposal – Guiding Questions**

This document outlines the general structure of a research proposal. For more detailed information, visit the [Academic Skills webpage about research proposals](https://www.trentu.ca/academicskills/how-guides/how-write-university/how-approach-any-assignment/how-write-research-proposal).

Please note that the length and complexity of a research proposal may depend on your year of study, and you may not need to answer all the guiding questions in this document as some are only relevant to specific disciplines.

**Introduction**

This section provides an overview of what you will be researching and why this is a valuable topic to study.

Summarize the broad topic.

* What is your topic?

Provide relevant background and contextual information.

* What do we already know about this topic in general?
* What is unknown or understudied about this topic?
* How will your research address this knowledge gap? How will your research specifically build on what we already know about this topic?

Describe the specific objectives of your study and research question(s). Note that some social science and science disciplines will also expect you to mention [hypotheses and predications](https://www.trentu.ca/academicskills/how-guides/how-succeed-math-and-science/writing-lab-reports/understanding-hypotheses-and-predictions).

Broadly suggest the rationale and/or importance of your research.

**Literature review**

This section organizes, evaluates, and synthesizes the existing literature about your topic and links your proposed research to this body of knowledge. For more information, visit the Academic Skills webpage about [literature reviews](https://www.trentu.ca/academicskills/how-guides/how-write-university/how-approach-any-assignment/writing-literature-reviews).

* How are relevant sources connected with each other?
* Are there areas of agreement or debate in the literature? Why is this important?
* What is unknown about this topic? Why should we explore this further?
* Humanities and social sciences: How does your theoretical framework guide your research? Why is this framework appropriate?

**Methodology**

This section describes the main strategy and specific methods you will use to answer your research question.

Describe the type of data you are collecting (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, etc.).

Explain the sampling strategy and data collection methods you are going to use.

* Humanities: What theoretical framework and argumentative structure will you use? Why is this appropriate for your study?
* Social Sciences: What qualitative methods will you use? Why are these the most appropriate methods to answer your research question(s)? What strategies will you use to maintain data quality and reliability?
* Sciences: What quantitative methods will you use? Why are these the most appropriate methods to answer your research question(s)? What strategies will you use to maintain data quality and reliability?

Describe how you will analyze the data.

* What tools will you use to analyze the data (e.g., statistical analyses, thematic analysis, etc.)?

**Outcomes and anticipated significance**

This section describes the outcomes you expect and how your findings will be useful to your topic or field of study.

* How will your research findings contribute to your topic? Discipline?
* What are the theoretical and/or practical applications of your work?
* Who would benefit from your findings?

**References**

Use a [documentation style](https://www.trentu.ca/academicskills/documentation) consistently and the style you use may [depend on your discipline](https://www.trentu.ca/academicskills/documentation-guide/documentation-style-discipline).

**Revision and proofreading**

Our [revision and proofreading](https://www.trentu.ca/academicskills/how-guides/how-edit-your-writing/strategies-revision-and-proofreading) checklist can help you to edit, revise, and proofread your research proposal.