Writing a Research Proposal: Some Thoughts to Consider

- What is your research question?
- Why does it matter?
- How will you address this question? (i.e. what will be your methodology?)
- Is your research question clear?
- Are your research methods appropriate?
- How many subjects do you need? How will you choose them?
- What statistic will you use?
Writing Your Research Proposal

Typically a document of no more that 2,000 words is sufficient to outline the proposed research topic and programme of research. Quality rather than quantity is the key to a good proposal. The proposal might typically comprise:

- **Title**

  This needs to be a clear and succinct description of your research.

- **Introduction**

  This should briefly explain what you propose to research, why the research is of value and how you propose to go about it.

- **Literature Review**

  This should justify why research is necessary in the area that you propose by a thorough examination of key, recent contributions in research periodicals. Problems or gaps in the literature should be identified to lead on to the selected research question.

- **Research Question**

  This should be a precise specification of the problem or the gap in existing knowledge that your research seeks to answer.

- **Research Method**

  This should cover high-level decisions on choice of methodology including details of methods of data collection and analysis. A time schedule showing key activities is useful.

- **References**

  The literature cited in the proposal should be listed at the end of the document. Use of the Harvard style of referencing is preferred.

For further information on writing your research proposal please see:
Harvard style bibliographies and references:

**Book**
Take the information from the title page and the reverse of the title page:
Family name, initial(s). Year. *Title*. City of publication: Publisher

**Book (electronic)**
Family name, initial(s). Year. *Title*. City: Publisher. [Date accessed]. Available from World Wide Web:
<URL>

**Chapter in an edited book**
Use the title page and reverse title page of the book and the chapter heading itself:
Family name, initial(s). Year. Chapter title. In: Initial(s) Family name of editor(s), (eds). *Title of book*. City of publication: Publisher. Page number of your quotation

**CD-ROM**
Use the accompanying material:
*Title*. Year. [CD-ROM]. City of publication: Publisher.

**Command paper**
GREAT BRITAIN. Department/Committee. Year. *Title*. (Command no). HMSO: London
N.B. Check what abbreviation is required for Command, as this is different for different historical periods.

**Conference paper**
Use the title page and reverse title page of the full proceedings and the headings for the paper:
Family name, initial(s). Year. Title of paper. In: Editor(s) of conference proceedings if known. *Title of conference*, date of conference, location of conference. Place of publication: publisher. Page number(s)

**Electronic discussion list**
Family name, initial(s). Year. *Title*. Date added. Available from: *Discussion group title* [Date accessed]

**Email**
Family name, initial(s). *Title*. [online]. Message to: Recipient. Date sent. [Date accessed]. Personal communication

**Interview (taped)**
Family name, initial(s). Year. Interview with the author on Date. City. [Cassette recording in possession of author]

**Journal article**
Use the title page of the journal volume or issue and the article:
Family name, initial(s). Year. Title of article. *Journal title*. Volume (issue number), page number of your quotation
Journal article (electronic)
Use information from the web site and the article:
Family name, initial(s). Year. Title of article. Journal title [online]. Volume (issue number) [Date accessed], page number of your quotation. Available from World Wide Web: <url of site>

Lecture notes
Family name, initial(s). Year of presentation. Lecture title, lecture notes distributed in the topic module code (capitalised) title of module. Teaching organisation, the location on date. Do not use italics.

Newspaper article
Family name, initial(s). Title of article. Year. Newspaper title, date, page number of your quotation
WEBSTER, B. New speed camera puts more drivers in the frame. 2006. Times, 24 May, p.1

Organisation report
Organisation. (Unpublished, year). Title. Report dated date

Press release
Organisation. Year. Title. Press release, issued date

Television broadcast
Series title and number and title of episode. Transmitting organisation and channel, full date and time of transmission.
Yes, Prime Minister: Episode 1, The Ministerial Broadcast. TV, BBC2, 1986 January 27. 20.30 hrs.

Thesis
Use the title page of the thesis:
Family name, initial(s). Year. Title. Type of qualification, academic institution

Unpublished documents
Family name, initial(s). Year. Title. Unpublished.

Website with author
Take the information from the webpage itself or the associated homepage - use the title bar and the credits at the bottom of the page, your own date of viewing the page and insert the words [online] and Available from World Wide Web:
Family name, initial(s) Year. Title [online]. [Date accessed]. Available from World Wide Web: <url of site>

Website with no author
Take the information from the webpage itself or the associated homepage - use the title bar and the credits at the bottom of the page, your own date of viewing the page and insert the words [online] and Available from World Wide Web:
Title of website. Year as appearing on site [online]. [Date accessed]. Available from World Wide Web: <url of site>