

# Ph.D. Research Proposal

Doctoral Program in \_\_\_\_\_  
<Area of Ph.D. Research Proposal>

<Title of your Ph.D. Research Proposal>



**THE OPEN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
FOR  
COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINES**  
Affiliated to **MEDICINA ALTERNATIVA** Alma-Ata 1962



<Complete Name of candidate>

<email address of candidate>

Advisor(s):

<name of advisor>

- 1. Abstract**
- 2. Keywords**
- 3. Table of Contents**
- 4. Problem Statement**
- 5. Literature Review**
- 6. Research Objectives and Approach**
- 7. Usefulness of Research**
- 8. Work Plan**
- 9. Conclusions**
- 10. References**

# GUIDELINES FOR WRITING PhD RESEARCH PROPOSAL

## INTRODUCTION

This short guide is aimed at helping you to write a good research proposal. It is intended to help you to think about your proposed PhD research in a clear, structured and meaningful way.

It should be stressed that the following is only a general guide and it ***does not*** guarantee acceptance into a PhD program. Accepting PhD students onto a research program depends on many factors including:

- the nature of your proposed research
- the quality of your ideas
- ability to commit to an intensive period of research study
- effectiveness of your research proposal in communicating your ideas
- the “match” between the proposed research and the potential supervisor

In short, the better your proposal, the better your chances of being accepted.

## **WHY A GOOD RESEARCH PROPOSAL IS ESSENTIAL TO THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

Remember that a research proposal is about what ***you*** want to study; it immediately reflects your initial understanding of, and commitment to, PhD study. A research proposal can and should make a positive and powerful first impression about your potential to become a good researcher. Importantly, the main purpose is to enable the university to assess whether you are a good ‘match’ for our supervisors and our areas of research expertise.

Therefore, in a good research proposal you will need to demonstrate two main things:

- that you are capable of **independent critical thinking and analysis**
- that you are capable of **communicating your ideas clearly**

Applying for a PhD is like applying for a job, you are not applying for a taught program. When you start a PhD you will become a valued researcher in an academic department.

A research proposal is an essential first step in your PhD journey. Make sure you give it your fullest consideration and effort.

## **YOU ARE NOT EXPECTED TO BE THE EXPERT**

Remember, you do not need to have a PhD to write a research proposal! Your proposal should be indicative and it should **outline** your areas of interest and your general insight into the research topic. You are **not** expected to be an expert and to be familiar with all the specific details of your subject. **However, you are expected to have a good level of knowledge about the subject and where you might make a valuable contribution to research.**

Some people seem to think a research proposal is too complicated and an inconvenient part of the application process. A good research proposal should not be complicated. However, it can be challenging to write and it is important to get right. A PhD is challenging, so it is good training working on your research proposal.

The following are deemed important to consider. You need to check your own subject's particular conventions and expectations. In summary though, a research proposal should generally include **six** main sections, as detailed below:

- 1) a clear working **title** for your research project
  - what will you call your project?
  - what key words would describe your proposal?
  
- 2) a clear **statement** about what you want to work on and why it is important, interesting, relevant and realistic
  - what are your main research objectives? – these could be articulated as hypotheses, propositions, research questions, or problems to solve
  - what difference do you think your research will make?
  - why does this research excite you?

- what research 'gaps' will you be filling by undertaking your project?
  - how might your research 'add value' to the subject?
  - is your research achievable in the time allocated? (e.g. 3 years full-time)
- 3) some background knowledge and context of the area in which you wish to work, including key literature, key people, key research findings**
- how does your work link to the work of others in the same or related fields?
  - would your work support or contest the work of others?
  - how does your work relate to the expertise within the department you are applying to?
- 4) some consideration of the methods/approach you might use**
- how will you conduct your research?
  - will you use existing theories, new methods/approaches or develop new methods/ approaches?
  - how might you design your project to get the best results/findings?
- 5) some indication of the strategy and timetable for your research project and any research challenges you may face**
- what would be the main stages of your project?
  - what would you be expecting to do in each year of your PhD?
  - what challenges might you encounter and how might you overcome these?
- 6) a list of the key references which support your research proposal**
- references should be listed in the appropriate convention for your subject area. Such references should be used throughout your research proposal to demonstrate that you have read and understood the work of others.
  - other relevant material that you are aware of, but not actually used in writing your proposal, can also be added as a bibliography

All of the above six sections are important, but section 2 is particularly important because in any research project, establishing your main purpose represents the whole basis for completing the research program. Therefore, the value of your proposed research is assessed in relation to your research aims and objectives.

### **THE APPROPRIATE LENGTH OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

A good research proposal is as long as it takes, but a guide would be **1500-2000** words. Remember that it is meant to be an accurate overview, not a thesis, so you need to provide enough detail for the reader to understand it. **Follow 3C's rule (i.e. Clear, Concise and Coherent)**

Finally, remember that a research proposal instantly reflects your potential competence to undertake a PhD effectively. A proposal is ultimately about **your** ability to demonstrate that you are capable of PhD study, so you should put time and effort into it.