Designing a good research proposal (SEDarc)

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Today’s session: how?

To determine the general principles of designing a good research proposal.

To establish some SEDarc specific advice as Kent’s SEDarc DTP lead.
Housekeeping

Please keep **your microphones on mute** during the main sessions.

Please **unmute yourselves during the breakout room/group activities**.

If you feel comfortable to, please do **switch on your cameras** during the group activities.

We will be **monitoring chat**, please do make comments.
Today’s session: what?

1. Establish what to consider before starting the proposal.

2. Determine and discuss how to write the proposal itself.

3. Consider what a review panel is looking for.
Getting started
Identify who to speak to

Who might be your **potential supervisor**?

Who can help you **finesse your ideas**?

Are you going to ask a **friend** to review and critically reflect on your proposal?

Who will be your **referees**? Do they need to be informed ahead of time?
Two key criteria of a PhD are for the thesis to demonstrate:

- The creation and interpretation of new knowledge

- Understanding of a substantial body of knowledge at forefront of the field
Criteria for originality

1. Building new knowledge
2. Original processes or approaches
3. New syntheses
4. New charting or mapping of territory
5. New implications
6. Revisiting a recurrent issue or debate

(Guccione, p.137).

Example:
What kinds of analytical methods from other fields might provide a new way of thinking about your research topic?

If that institution place emphasis on interdisciplinarity, this offers a route into ‘originality’.
Read the instructions

What do the instructions say?

Get to know your researcher funder:

• What is the organisation’s mission?
• What are their main interests and activities?
• What research topics have they funded recently?
• What do they say in their latest annual report on research?
• What rules do they have for submission?
What makes a good research proposal?
Research proposal sections

Title
Abstract
Introduction (Statement of aims)
Research background and questions
Research methods: how will you collect your data? How will you analyse your data? What challenges will you face?
Proposed research outcomes (and any limitations?)
Schedule of work (demonstrate planning, and capacity for project management, consideration of resources)
Bibliography
Ethics
Research Environment
Aims

What are the aims of my work?

• Do I want to explain the causes of something, criticise a theory or belief, describe something?

• Am I looking to develop good practice, or, empower a group?

What language is applicable to my proposal?
Abstract

*Shop window* of the research proposal

*Succinct rationale* about why the work is crucial

Distillation of the proposal; *an overview* of the project in its entirety.
The introduction should identify:

• Research aims
• Research background
• Specific literature/field/debates we will be looking at
• Questions/hypothesis to be considered
Writing an introduction: a funnel structure

- General statement about research field
- Aspects of problem already studied/themes emerging
- Identification of gap
- Purpose of study
- Contribution

Saunders and Lewis (2011)
Literature Review

Multidimensional purpose:

Identifying what work your research intersects and engages in.

Enabling you allows you to fine-tune what gaps in knowledge or skills you intend to respond to and fill.

Doctoral Training Partnerships
Check word count rules (references included?)
Research questions

Indicate what the researcher need to find out to add something valuable to the field.

Should be precise and specific.

The bridge between what we already know and what we are going to look at.
Getting to your research questions

What are the broad aims of your project? What are the benefits of your research?

How will you investigate these aims?

The specifics: what relationships/factors will you look at?
Methods and methodology

1. Explain the **methodological approach**

2. Describe the method for **collecting data**

3. Describe the methods for **data analysis**
Methods and methodology

• What are you going to do? Why?

• Why is this method/approach the best one for the project?

• How are you going to do it?

• Is there consistency between your purpose and your procedure?

• Do you have the skills? What training might you need?
The objective of your schedule of work is:

1. To demonstrate you are able to plan a project
2. To highlight you understand the different steps you’ll need to undertake.
Writing

• You don’t have to be encyclopaedic: construct your argument with choice references

• Showcase your knowledge and understanding

• You need to be clear: you want people to argue for your proposal!

• Use affirmative language (I WILL establish, this project WILL determine)
Thank you.