

Guidelines to Write Your MPhil/PhD Research Proposal

A research proposal is a clear road map of your research that demonstrates your ability/skill to conduct the research. Therefore, it must be systematic and scientific with required all formal steps as given below:

1. Topic
2. Problem
3. Context and background
4. Relevance & Significance
5. Research objectives
6. Literature review
7. Hypotheses
8. Research questions
9. Theoretical approach
10. Methods/methodology to be employed
11. Research design

Including all components, it consists of eleven parts, but you may leave them out alternatively as it does not fit with your work.

Topic

The topic must be creative and interesting.

It must create curiosity in readers' minds.

Examples:

- “Practical Buddhism in post-conflict Sri Lanka”
- “Conflict resolution and Theravada Buddhism”
- “Ways and means for the secular/lay life in Buddhism”

- “Buddhism and modern economic challenges”
- “Reflection of the ethnic struggle in post-conflict Sri Lankan literature”

Research Problem

- This is the key component of your work.
- The problem can be presented in a maximum of two paragraphs.
- But, it depends on the way that you present your research problem.
- Whatever the way you apply, presenting a problem statement is good.

Context and Background

In this section, you can show the context and background that your research problem emerged.

This can be done by using 2 to 3 pages.

Relevance and Significance

There are different kinds of relevancies in research works such as:

- 1) disciplinary relevance
- 2) policy relevance
- 3) social relevance

Significance can also be three ways,

- 1) theoretical
- 2) interpretative
- 3) empirical

This section also can have 3 to 5 pages.

Research Objectives

- These objectives must be aligned with your research questions.

- You may utilize a maximum of up to one page for this purpose.

Literature Review

Five different categories of literature can be reviewed:

01. global or comparative literature
02. local literature
03. theoretical and conceptual literature
04. empirical literature
05. published as well as unpublished literature

The literature review can be done in three steps:

Summarizing the key arguments and analysis in the work under review.

Showing the strengths, weaknesses and shortcomings in the analysis and presenting arguments and conclusions of the work.

Highlights the insights relevant to your work.

The literature review can be done thematically or chronologically, at least up to 8 pages.

Hypotheses (This is not mandatory)

This is an intellectual guess.

This can directly be derived from the existing literature.

Hypotheses testing is linked to positivists' research tradition. Non-positivists avoid this component. Also, those who use the grounded theory for the analyses may not use hypotheses. This is not mandatory in humanities and social science research works.

Research Questions

- Research questions help to break/unpack the research problem.
- The answer to a research question can be a chapter in the thesis. This helps to structure your thesis.

- Three to five research questions can be derived.
- Even, if you need sub-questions are also important to derive.
- It will subsequently help you to structure the sub-topics of your thesis.

Theoretical Approach (This is not mandatory but important)

You may use a possible theoretical approach without forcibly integrating it into your work.

Example: Marxism, structuralism, modernism, post-modernism, feminism or post-colonialism, etc.

This helps you to find an intellectual language and overall guide for the work. Again if you use grounded theory, this may not be that much helpful in your work.

Methods and Methodology

Here you should discuss clearly the ways and means of data collection, how to justify those methods, analytical techniques and tools.

The methodology is the philosophical stance of your work.

Research Design

This is the action plan for every part of the research with time allocations.