

# Writing a Research Proposal



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## Overview

- What is a research proposal
- Organising a research proposal
- Writing the research proposal



# What is a research proposal?

- Written for thesis & dissertation
- A statement of intent: outlines what you *propose* to do, and
- Why your research should take place



## Why a proposal?

- You need to convince your readers that:
  - Your research topic/issue warrants further investigation
  - That it is a significant issue and that further research
    - will uncover more information on the topic/issue
- You have chosen appropriate methods for studying the
  - problem (methodology and design)
- You are the right person to do it (knowledgeable and confident)



# Length

- Will vary depending on:
  - The purpose of your research and details provided
  - University requirements, discipline and topic
- The total page count can vary significantly. For example, it could be 10-15 pages, or 75 pages. We highly recommend:
  - Reading your department guide, and
  - Discussing it with your lecturer/supervisor



# Defining your research topic

*Find your passion and topic of interest*

- What are you interested in?
- What question/s do you want to answer?
- What contribution will it make? (this can include how your research will challenge or change existing knowledge on the topic)
- Are you willing to study this for several years?



# Organising a Research Proposal

- Title of Study
- Introduction
  - The Problem
  - Research objectives
- Literature Review
- Methodology
  - Research design
  - Data analysis
- Ethical statements
- Timeframe/Plan
- Budget
- Primary references

What sections are included  
in a research proposal?



# Title of Study

- Not too general – should reflect what your study is about
- Clearly indicates your topic and the key issues/concepts that you want to explore
- Should encapsulate what you intend to do
- No more than 15 words
- Catchy and attention grabbing (if possible)
- May change as you progress





# Introduction

- Acquaints reader with the topic
- May begin with a brief historical overview
  - How your topic fits within the larger context (e.g. outlines the general field of interest)
- Why you are interested in the study → statement of the problem



# The Problem

1. Statement of the problem
2. Rationale (what will happen if no one looks at this?)
3. Hypothesis/Thesis
4. Delimitations (i.e. the choices made by the researcher that should be mentioned, which describe the boundaries that have been set for the study)



# Statement of the Problem

- State clearly and briefly
- May be a question or a statement
- Do not promise more than is necessary



# Significance of the study

Purpose:

- What is the purpose/overall aim of your research?
- What objectives do you expect to achieve?
- What specific research question/s will be addressed?



# Significance of the study (continued)

- Significance:
  - Why is the research important?
  - What is your study's contribution to the field of knowledge?
  - What are its wider implications or uses?



## Example: Filipino Women Writers in Spanish: A Literary History and Anthology (1900-1969)

The evolution of feminist criticism in literature has contributed much to the study of women's writings and the experiences they depict....Certainly, except perhaps for the last decade, women's literature in the Philippines was not conscious of the feminist agenda. Albuero (1994) claims that early works [by women] were written from the margins. But the feminist perspective has enabled readers to become aware of this inequality and, consequently, generated much scholarly interest in women's studies. In the last ten years alone...

However, surprisingly, previous to known Filipina writers in English, Filipino, or the various vernacular languages, no research is found on the Filipina writers of Spanish. Although the society was decidedly more patriarchal then, it seems impossible that no works were written by our "foremothers."

It is, thus, the intention of this study to make known the foremost Filipina writers of Spanish. For instance, not many are familiar with the names Evangelina Guerrero-Zacarias, Nilda Guerrero- Barranco, and Adelina Monasterio Gurrea. They were considered important and major writers of their time yet in the study of the country's literary history, they remain silent and unrecognised. They wrote in Spanish, with significant literary contributions, but they are not even included in the roster of women writers in Philippine literature classes. Who were they? What did they write? Did their writing reflect the social, political, and moral issues and concerns of their time? Did their literature develop with the times and with their male counterparts?



## Example: The impact of endometriosis on female athletes' lives and wellbeing: A qualitative study (abridged)

Endometriosis is a debilitating condition that affects one in nine people with uteruses of reproductive age and about 8% of New Zealand's professional athletes (Heather et al., 2020)...it is under-reported, under-researched and under-diagnosed (Gao et al., 2006). Although benign, this estrogen-dependent inflammatory disease can cause chronic pelvic pain (CPP), multiple surgeries and infertility (Giudice & Kao, 2004; Sourial et al., 2014). These physical symptoms additionally have a negative psychosocial impact on sufferers. Women with endometriosis have expressed feelings of shame, fear, depression and an overall burden (Young et al., 2019). Unfortunately, due to social stigma, women often stay silent on these issues, and many believe that this kind of suffering is an expected norm or just part of being a woman (Matías-González et al., 2021)

...Many researchers recognise how endometriosis impacts jobs, relationships, well-being, and quality of life (Gao et al., 2006; Moradi et al., 2014). However, research on athletes with this condition is rare. Currently only one case study specifically about an athlete with endometriosis exists from 2007 and no studies have contributed to this field since (Jones et al., 2007). As endometriosis affects 8% or possibly more athletes (Heather et al., 2020), research is warranted on how this impacts their lives and sport. It is hoped that this project will identify how athletes are affected, identify areas for further research, and highlight implications for elite sporting bodies. Accordingly, this research aims to explore female athletes' experiences of living with endometriosis, focusing on the effects of endometriosis on their lives, wellbeing, and the impacts on their sport...Endometriosis may affect critical parts of sport like relationships with staff and coaches, mental health, peak performance, training and even identity and self-worth.

The overarching research question is: how does endometriosis impact the lives and wellbeing of female athletes? The research aims and objectives of this project are: 1. To understand the symptoms, journey to diagnosis, and treatment experiences of female athletes with endometriosis. 2. To understand the impact of endometriosis on sporting lives, including selection and relationships. 3. To evaluate the effects of endometriosis on female athletes' wellbeing, mental health, and future aspirations.



# Hypothesis

- Prediction
- Assumption
- One or more may be generated through analysis of background of the research problem
- Shrewd guess, assumption, informed judgment or inference → to explain observed facts or conditions





# Delimitations of the study

- Your choices
- Boundaries of the study that are imposed by the nature of the problem being studied
- Integral to the research design: sets the parameters and tells reader what will and will not be included, and why



# Literature Review

- Reviews the written work on and around your topic
- Identifies your study's contribution to the field of knowledge
- Shows the relationship of your research to other local and international research in the field
- Discusses improvements in the field and what is already known (and consensus/divergence in the field)
- Points out gaps and weaknesses in previous studies

For more information: <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/assignment-types/literaturereview.php>



## Indicating gaps

- Using negative openings
- Using contrastive statements
- Raising a question, a hypothesis or a need



# Negative openings

## *Feminist critique of the medical model of childbirth*

It is interesting to note that many of the feminist critiques of childbirth have been written in the early to mid 1980s. There can be no doubt that these publications have influenced women and midwives throughout the world to take political action but there has been very little literature which links feminism with midwifery and none which specifically addresses the issues of partnership within the midwife/client relationship...



# Raising hypotheses, questions or needs

Bushnell and Choy (2001) conducted an analysis of permanent long-term arrivals and departures for the period 1992-2000 in various skill categories – low skilled, semi-skilled and high skilled occupations. They found that, during the 1990s, there was a net in-flow of people in high-skill occupations, and net out-flows of people in semi- and low-skilled occupations. Their conclusions was... rather than a 'brain drain,' ...New Zealand is experiencing a 'brain exchange' with the rest of the world. This of course raises a critical question, whether employers are accessing all the skills that new immigrants are bringing to New Zealand.



# Methodology

- **Describes** not only the way in which data is collected (practical), but may include the **discussion** of theoretical issues (research methods)



# Methodology and research design

- Tells the reader 'how' you will be doing your study
- Tells the reader 'why' you are doing it that way (e.g. justifying your choices regarding methodology and design)
- Demonstrates the reasons behind your choice of:
  - Methodological standpoints
  - Methodological approaches
  - Techniques for data collection and analysis
- Justify your choice of one approach over another and its consequences for the research



# Methodology and research design

- Your research questions guide the inquiry process:
  - Instruments or tools to gather data?
  - Show link between your research question/s and the tools you will use
- Include practical/theoretical/conceptual framework you will employ





## Data analysis

- Break down of data for understanding
- Indicates how you will present results
- Statistical tests you will use
- Methods used to prove your hypotheses



## Ethics section

- Covers specific ethical issues of your research and how you intend to conform to the relevant ethical codes
- “Code of Ethical Conduct for Research and Teaching Involving Human Subjects”
- Protect confidentiality, anonymity, and the physical and mental well-being of participants
- Other codes of conduct (e.g., relevant governmental/committee codes) also need to be mentioned

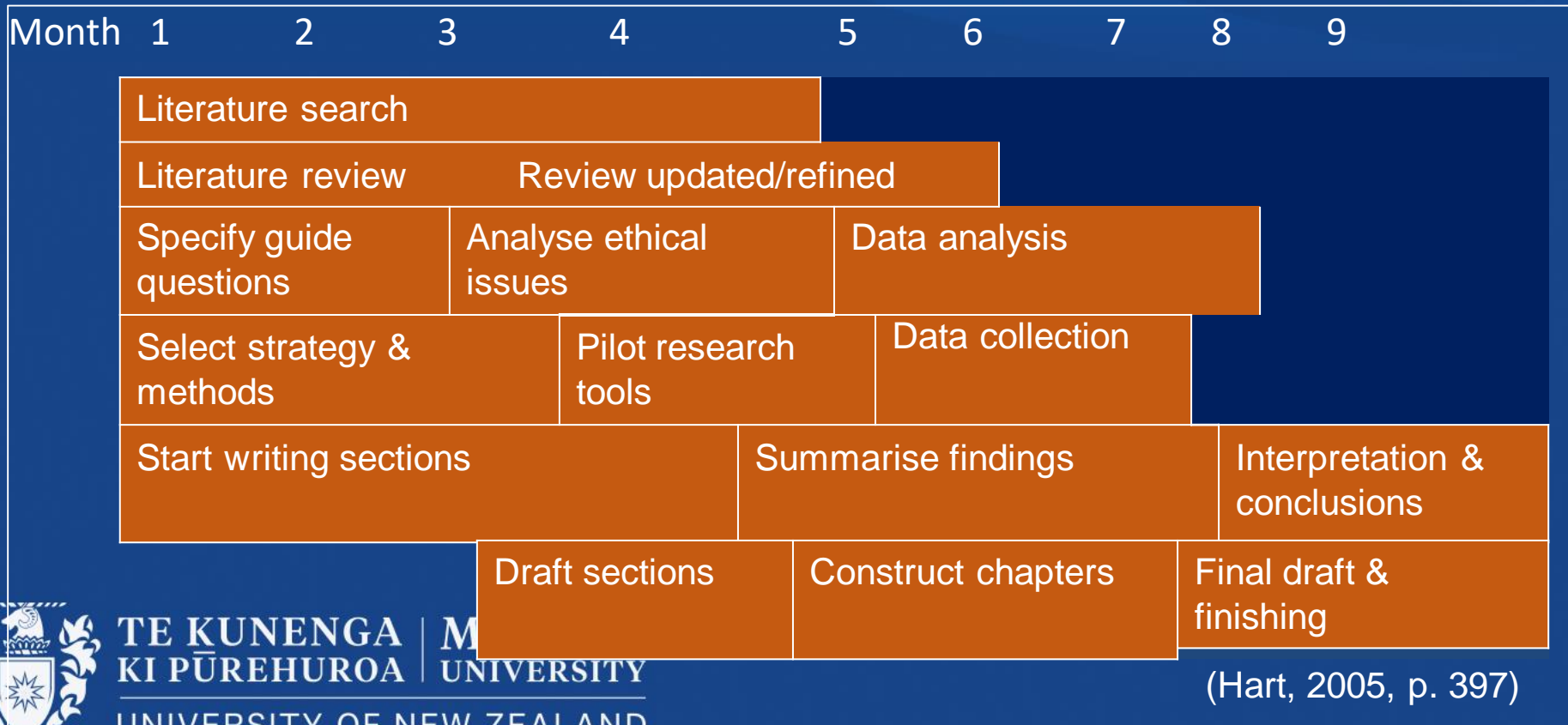


# Timeframe of study and budget

- Timeline for the study
  - Times and dates of each step of your research process
  - Be as specific as possible
- Budget estimate of costs involved in your study
  - (need not be too detailed)
    - Costs that will be incurred
    - Indicate source of funds



## Research Proposal Sample Timeline



(Hart, 2005, p. 397)



## Primary references

- Highlight appropriate texts cited in your proposal
- Supervisor guidance for other essential texts
- *Never* underestimate the value of a good reference list



# Writing the research proposal

- Well-structured → well written
- Clear, concise, and to the point
- Consider:
  - Paragraph organization
    - ✓ Follow P–Topic sentence/controlling idea
      - I – Illustration, Evidence,
      - E – Explanation, Elaboration
    - ✓ Avoid long paragraphs of 250+ words
    - ✓ One main idea = one paragraph



# Writing checklist

- Sentences
  - Have you conducted a grammar and spell check?
  - Have you defined words correctly?
  - Is there one idea per sentence?
  - Have you avoided overly long sentences?
  - Have you read it out loud to pick up errors?
  - Have you written a complete sentence?



# Writing checklist

## • *Paragraphs*

- Is there one main idea per paragraph?
- Is your paragraph relevant to the topic?
- Have you used topic sentences?
- Have you avoided short or overly long paragraphs?
- Is there a progression of ideas from one paragraph to another?
- Have you linked paragraphs together?





# Writing checklist

- *Sections*

- Is there a logical progression of ideas?
- Are sub-sections clearly labelled or sign-posted?
- Does it relate to an understanding of the thesis topic?



# Writing checklist

- *Style*

- Is correct referencing style used?
- Is there appropriate use of evidence?
- Have you avoided clichés?
- Have you excluded emotive language?
- Is it the appropriate tone and level?
- Have you avoided slang or jargon?



## Remember that...

- A good proposal reassures the university that you are capable of bringing the thesis to fruition
- A good proposal finetunes and directs the project so that there is a higher chance of the final thesis being accepted



## What we covered

- What is a research proposal?
- Organising a research proposal
- Writing a research proposal



# References

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