

Developing a Good (Better) Proposal

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MSEP

Module: S3

Class 2

5/3/2023

S3 Requirements

- Pass – No Pass Module
- Submit preliminary draft proposal
 - 26/2/2023
- Present preliminary draft proposal
 - 5/3/2023
- Submit revised draft proposal
 - **26/3/2023**
- Present revised draft proposal
 - 2/4/2023

Fact no 1

- There are two types of theses
 - The very good ones
 - The completed ones

What is a dissertation?

Doing a dissertation is demanding

- Doing a dissertation is demanding because it involves a ***process*** and a ***product*** and both of these require a number of intellectual and practical skills:
 - critical reading of empirical research to identify a gap in what is known about a subject or issue;
 - formulating a research question that can contribute in some (small) way to the knowledge base about a topic or issue;
 - informed decision-making about the research process, which includes the ability to identify, appreciate and discuss limitations of previous works and theoretical arguments;
 - **effective time management in relation to the planning of the project and its completion to a deadline;**
 - clarity and conciseness in the communication of one's own research, both in the written dissertation and during the oral examination;
 - sensitivity to ethical issues at all stages of the research process;

Rate Yourself

Search, spot and retrieve relevant studies	
Critically read empirical research to identify a gap in what is known about a subject or issue;	
Formulate a RQ that can contribute in some (small) way to the knowledge base about a topic or issue;	
Effective time management in relation to the planning of the project and its completion to a deadline;	
Writing Skills Presentation Skills;	
Knowledge of Ethical Issues	

Fact no 2

- It will take longer than you expect

4 reasons for doing a good draft proposal

- Think through
- A basis to discuss with your supervisor
- A basis for application to the Ethics Committee
- Part of the Thesis

About your topic

- There are a number of factors that you will need to take into account but remember that research questions can come from a variety of sources: personal and professional experience, the literature, including the popular press, and theory, for example. Generally however, start thinking in broad terms and then begin to focus. Ask yourself the following:
- **Is it a significant ‘problem’ or issue’?**
- **Is it a researchable ‘problem’ or ‘issue’?**
- **How feasible is it?** (Too big? Too small? Too complex? Unethical? No access? Too expensive?)
- Am I sufficiently interested in it?
- Am I too involved? If the answer is ‘yes’, then think again! Strong emotions can make it difficult to develop the necessary detachment from the topic under investigation.
- **What are the risks involved?**

Researchable Topic

- it should be possible to identify that **there is a need for the issue/problem to be studied;**
- the resources needed are commensurate with those available in terms of time and finance (travel/ postage/equipment);
- **the problem should be researchable** using a study design and method that you understand and carry out.

About your draft assignment

I have spotted the “closest” studies on the topic, read them and tried to spot a gap/new element needed	
I have tried to justify the need for the study and to develop a research question	
I have contemplated resources needed	
I have outlined the methods needed to examine the RQ	

Preliminary thoughts on methodology

You need to demonstrate that you can formulate a research question and design a way of exploring it in relation to three levels:

- research strategy – the overall paradigm for the research, typically expressed in terms of distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative approaches and in which you explore epistemological and ontological matters;
- study design – the particular way in which the research will be constructed, for example, experimental, survey design, case study, case-control study, longitudinal study;
- data collection methods – for example, the specific ways to be used to collect or generate the data, for example, use of a questionnaire or interviews, or use of specific equipment to measure certain variables of interest.
- It is important that there is coherence between these different levels.

Develop (as much as possible)

- Working title – Topic of the study
- Rationale and background of the study
 - Concise review of literature
 - **Need for the study based on the literature review and in particular on the “closest” studies.**
- Methodology
 - Design of the study
 - Participants
 - Analyses

Fact no 4

- The earlier the better

3 attributes of the IS (Ideal Supervisor) (In search of the Phantom Expert)

- **Knows**
 - Topic
 - Sub-Topic
 - Research Methods
 - Interests
- **Has and devotes time to supervision**
 - Regular Office Hours
 - Not 36 students to supervise
 - Not involved in reformulating the educational system of Papua New Guinea
- **Has an appropriate style of supervision**
 - Controlling
 - Non-controlling

Tie all these to your interests

5 + 1 Attributes of the ISS (Ideal Student to Supervise) (In Search of the Phantom Perfect)

- S/he has a “draft” research proposal
 - This is based on searching, retrieving, critically reading, synthesizing literature and identifying a need for a study.
- S/he can handle basic stats (or qualitative methods)
- S/HE CAN WRITE
- Does not depart for safari/north pole exploration before finishing his/her duties/obligations
- KNOWS HIS/HER TOPIC
- **SMILES A LOT**

My SR Strategy

(Relative to the Topics Presentation)

- **Forethought**
 - Browse CVs and papers of potential supervisors
 - Ask other students
 - Contemplate possible topics
- **Performance**
 - Be prepared for specific questions
 - Notes
- **Reflection**
 - Consider alternatives
 - Meet with staff