



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**NOTRE DAME**  
A U S T R A L I A

# Guideline:

Format and Presentation of a  
Research Proposal for a  
Higher Degree by Research

Effective: 28 March 2019

Audience: Higher Degree by Research  
Students

Policy Category: Academic  
Policy Sub-category: Research

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
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## 1 PURPOSE

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- 1.1 The *Guideline: Format and Presentation of a Research Proposal for a Higher Degree by Research* ('**Guideline**') outlines the format and procedures associated with the development and presentation of a Research Proposal at the University of Notre Dame Australia ('**University**').
- 1.2 The Research Proposal is an important document. A Research Proposal explains the why and how of the proposed research. The Research Proposal provides a means of answering several questions before the student's research candidacy is confirmed.

## 2 RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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This Guideline should be read in conjunction with the following Policies and Procedures:

- 2.1 *Policy: Code of Conduct: Research*
- 2.2 *Policy: Research Integrity*

## 3 FORMAT

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- 3.1 The Research Proposal is a two-part process. The first part is the preparation of a substantial and assessed written document. The second component is an oral presentation at a public forum organised by the School and Research Office.
- 3.2 Proposals vary in structure according to discipline. As such, supervisors are best placed to guide students regarding an appropriate presentation framework. Typically, a Proposal includes the following components:
  - (a) Title
  - (b) Summary/Abstract
  - (c) Introduction
    - i. Overview
    - ii. Topic and purpose
    - iii. Potential significance
    - iv. Research questions
    - v. Limitation
  - (d) Review of the significant literature
    - i. Theoretical perspectives (conceptual or theoretical framework)
    - ii. Related research
  - (e) Methodology
    - i. Methodology
    - ii. Research design
    - iii. Site and sample/population selection
    - iv. Data collection methods
    - v. Methods of data analysis
    - vi. Ethical considerations
  - (f) Appendices

- i. Timeline
- ii. Budget/funding
- iii. References
- iv. Research instruments (if applicable)

- 3.3** Each Higher Degree by Research ('HDR') student presents both a substantial (as defined by the supervisor) written Research Proposal and a verbal presentation.
- 3.4** At least two readers (one of whom is normally external to the University) are appointed to provide feedback on the Proposal.

## 4 PROCESS

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### 4.1 Presentation

- 4.1.1 The Research Proposal should ideally be presented before the end of the first semester of fulltime equivalent study, but this may vary from School-to-School.
- 4.1.2 In some circumstances, and only with the permission of the relevant Dean, data collection may commence before the Research Proposal has been approved. However, it is recommended that the research proposal be approved before primary data are collected. Please note that ethics approval (where relevant) is required before any data can be collected.

### 4.2 Length

- 4.2.1 The length of the Research Proposal should not normally exceed 6,000 words, but specific requirements are set by the School in which the student is enrolled.

### 4.3 Submission of draft

- 4.3.1 The draft Research Proposal must be submitted to the School Research Committee. The draft Research Proposal should be accompanied by a letter or email from the principal supervisor stating that the supervisor:
- (a) agrees that the Research Proposal is of the required standard; and
  - (b) accepts that the student can achieve the work outlined.
- 4.3.2 The School Research Committee reviews the draft Research Proposal and makes recommendations to the HDR student and supervisor concerning its readiness to be submitted to readers for comment. Where modifications are suggested, these will be discussed with the student and supervisor.
- 4.3.3 If the School Research Committee is of the view that the Research Proposal is of an appropriate standard, the School will appoint two readers for the Proposal and send it to them. In due course, their feedback will be provided to the supervisor and student, who may wish to revise their proposal accordingly.
- 4.3.4 In addition, the School in conjunction with the Research Office will organise the oral presentation, advertise the presentation time and place to the academic staff and HDR students of the University.

#### 4.4 Submission of final copy

- 4.4.1 The revised Research Proposal should be submitted by the student to the supervisor. In turn, the supervisor, once satisfied with the version, will submit it to the School Research Committee. The School Research Committee shall provide a copy of the Research Proposal to the Dean of the School and the Research Office.
- 4.4.2 The document should include:
- (g) an approved method of citation and referencing, which must be consistently employed in accordance with discipline requirements;
  - (h) a declaration of the extent of external assistance, conditions and limits of data ownership, and any obligations that require reporting or limit reporting of data and findings; and
  - (i) a title page that contains the student's number, the names of supervisors and positions, as well as university email addresses.

#### 4.5 Oral Presentation

- 4.5.1 The oral presentation is a public seminar attended by fellow students, academic staff, supervisors and reviewers (readers) where possible. The oral presentation will be followed by questions and discussion. Students may use visual aids such as PowerPoint and a summary hand-out.
- 4.5.2 After an introduction by the chairperson (normally the Dean, Chair of the School Research Committee or Director of Research) the student presents the Research Proposal for approximately 20 minutes.
- 4.5.3 The attending audience provides comments and discussion (10 mins).
- 4.5.4 Suggested Outline of the Research Proposal Presentation:

| Component                             | Duration | Comments   |
|---------------------------------------|----------|--|
| Introduction                          | 5 mins   | Chairperson welcomes participants and briefly explains the process.  |
| Research Student Presentation         | 20 mins  | The Proposal is presented in a way that reflects the written Proposal and addresses any reviewer (reader) comments received. |
| Questions from the attending audience | 10 mins  | The Chairperson invites questions and comments from the floor.   |

#### 4.6 Reader's Reports

- 4.6.1 Readers submit a written report in the form of the approved rubric to the Dean of the School, who presents them to the School Research Committee for review. The rubric will include marks where a grade is required to satisfy course requirements in

the case of a Professional Doctorate or a Master of Philosophy. Where no grade is required (Masters by Research and PhD) no marks are required.

- 4.6.2 The School Research Committee will recommend to the Pro Vice Chancellor, Research either:
- (a) Confirmation of candidacy; or
  - (b) Provisional enrolment be maintained pending further development of the Research Proposal to satisfy particular points and concerns; or
  - (c) Termination of the enrolment of the student due to:
    - i. the unsatisfactory nature and/or standard of the Research Proposal in circumstances where the Dean believes that there is no reasonable likelihood that the student will meet the required standard at a second attempt; or
    - ii. the Dean believes that the status of the Research Proposal indicates that the student is unable to meet requirements without compromise to the student or the University.
- 4.6.3 The final decision with respect to the status of the student resides with the Pro Vice Chancellor, Research. The student will be advised in writing of the outcome by the Research Office.
- 4.6.4 The student and/or the supervisor may request from the Pro Vice Chancellor, Research further explanation of the decision.

#### 4.7 Changes to Planned Research

- 4.7.1 Minor changes are to be expected in the life of a developing research project and it is the supervisors' professional responsibility to oversee these.
- 4.7.2 If there are significant changes in direction or by force of circumstance, a change of research questions and/or topic, the principal supervisor should:
- (a) notify the School Research Committee and the Research Office in writing; and
  - (b) recommend whether there is the need to present a modified Research Proposal and/or seek new ethics clearance.

| Version | Date of approval | Approved by     | Amendment   |
|---------|------------------|-----------------|---|
| 1       | June 2006        | Vice Chancellor | Effective date – new Guideline.   |
| 2       | October 2006     |                 | Updated   |
| 3       | September 2012   |                 | Updated   |
| 4       | March 2016       |                 | Updated   |
| 5       | 12 July 2018     | PVC, Research   | Minor editorial amendments - updated guideline format and nomenclature. |
| 6       | 28 March 2019    |                 | Updated guideline template and nomenclature.                            |