

Doctor of Business Administration Programme

Guidelines for Research Proposal

Your application should be supported by a 3,000 / 3,500 word (approx) research proposal which will be discussed at your selection interview. Typically, the proposal will include the following:

1. Your research area

You need to begin by providing the aims of your research project (or the question you are looking to answer) and a brief outline of the background context. The aims may cover both practical and theoretical outcomes, for example, your aim might be to suggest modifications to a theory to enhance its value or validity in a particular context. You should seek to be as clear and specific as possible.

You should also mention the scope of your aims, for example do they refer to one organisation or to more than one? Are you seeking to undertake a comparative study and if so which organisations would you be considering and why?

2. Significant prior research

This section should be a brief overview of previous research in the area. This will not be a full review of the literature, however, you should identify major research and key themes or issues in your chosen area. You should consider: whether there are any distinctive gaps that you are aiming to fill; the literature / theoretical framework(s) your research will draw upon. This is an important part of your research outline as it helps you to contextualise your own research within current business and management literature.

3. Possible research method(s)

You need to provide a plan of how you propose to carry out your research. At this stage, you do not need to explore the methodology literature, however, you do need to indicate which research method(s) you intend to employ. This section will therefore include:

- an outline discussion of the overall strategy for the research;
- what data collection method(s) you intend to use (quantitative or qualitative);
- why you have chosen this method(s);
- how you would analyse the data.

Remember to ensure that your method of data collection fits with the aims of the research project.

4. Why a DBA and why this topic?

You will be investing a lot of time and energy into your studies so it is important for you to reflect upon why you have chosen to do a DBA and why this particular topic. Remember, in order for you to maintain your enthusiasm and motivation, your research topic needs to be of a deep and lasting interest to you and therefore this section is an important part of the application process. You should consider any difficulties you foresee in undertaking a DBA and in your proposed data collection and how you may overcome these.

5. What is the contribution to professional knowledge that you hope to make?

Why is your research worth doing? In this section you should provide a realistic evaluation of the potential value of your research to management practitioners. It may be that you are looking to develop an existing theoretical model in order to apply this in practice, or you may be looking to explore ways in which to improve management practices and techniques.

6. Other relevant information

In this section you should provide any further information that you consider relevant in supporting your research application.

Useful reading:

Bryman, A., and Bell, E. (2007) *Business Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods*. 5th edn. Oxford University Press.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Low, A. (2008) *Management Research*. 3rd edn. London: Sage.

Easterby-Smith, M. (2015) *Management Business Research* Sage Publications.

Hammersley, M (1993) (Ed) *Social Research: Philosophy, Politics and Practice*. London: Sage.

Johnson, P. and Duberley, J. (2000) *Understanding management research: An introduction to epistemology*. Sage.

Ravitch, S.M. and Riggan, M. (2016) *Reason & rigor: How conceptual frameworks guide research*. Sage Publications.

Robson, C. (2011) *Real world research: a resource for users of social research methods in applied settings*, 3rd edn, Wiley, Chichester.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A (2012) *Research Methods for Business Students*. FT Prentice Hall

Yin, R, K (2014) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. London: Sage Publications