

# Designing a Research Proposal

Written by E-International Relations

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## Designing a Research Proposal

<https://www.e-ir.info/2021/09/25/designing-a-research-proposal/>

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Before conducting research, whether this is for an undergraduate project/essay, or a dissertation or thesis, it is important that you design a research proposal first. This will serve as a plan to orient you as you conduct your research and seek to answer the question(s) you have set. Every university (and programme within) will have its own guidelines for this, but the resources below give some accessible overviews on how a research proposal works in general, and then lists some examples the E-International Relations team has found useful from universities around the world.

The resources below have been curated by the E-International Relations team. You can find more resources on our methods homepage.

### Overviews

How to Develop a Good Research Topic by KStateLibraries (YouTube)

How To Write A Strong Research Proposal by Dr Amina Yonis (Youtube)

'The Perfect Proposal' by Dr. Hastings of the Texas A&M University Writing Center (YouTube)

Developing Research Questions by Monash University (website).

### Doing a Literature Review

An essential part of any proposal is a review of the relevant literature already published on the topic you are researching. This shows that you understand where the existing debates are focused and (for more advanced works) can identify any gaps in the extant research that your work may address. Generally, literature falls into two broad categories: (1) Academic literature – this is books, journal articles and academic PhD theses... anything peer reviewed. (2) 'Grey' Literature – essentially anything *not peer reviewed* but useful to your research. This is a broad category that incorporates Newspaper/Magazine articles, policy or technical reports, government publications/archives, multimedia content (Podcasts, videos etc.) etc. Both academic and grey literature can be online or physical/in print and the distinction is less important than the nature and use of the materials in your literature review.

Get Lit: The Literature Review by Dr. Candace Hastings (YouTube)

Literature Review by University of Waterloo (website).

Andrew Booth, Diana Papaioannou, and Anthea Sutton, *Systematic Approaches to Successful Literature Review* (SAGE, 2012), pp.1–16. [https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43465\\_Booth\\_et\\_al.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43465_Booth_et_al.pdf)

Chris Hart, *Doing a Literature Review* (SAGE, 1998), pp.1–25. [https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/28728\\_LitReview\\_\\_\\_hart\\_chapter\\_1.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/28728_LitReview___hart_chapter_1.pdf)

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Robin Kiteley and Chris Stogdon, *Literature Reviews in Social Work* (SAGE, 2014), pp.5–22. The Selection of a Research Approach. [https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/58106\\_Kiteley\\_&\\_Stogdon.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/58106_Kiteley_&_Stogdon.pdf)

John W. Creswell, *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* Fourth Edition (Sage, 2014). [https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/55588\\_Chapter\\_1\\_Sample\\_Creswell\\_Research\\_Design\\_4e.pdf](https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/55588_Chapter_1_Sample_Creswell_Research_Design_4e.pdf)

## Examples of different university guides for research proposals

University of Nottingham <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/pgstudy/how-to-apply/research-proposal.aspx>

Oxford University <https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/about/writing-your-research-proposal>

King's College London, Department of European and International Studies <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/eis/postgraduate/eis-phd-research-proposal-guidelines>

Guidelines for elaborating a master's thesis or project. ISCTE Business School (Lisbon, Portugal). [https://www.iscte-iul.pt/assets/files/2020/11/02/1604315461085\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_elaborating\\_a\\_Master\\_s\\_dissertation\\_or\\_project.pdf](https://www.iscte-iul.pt/assets/files/2020/11/02/1604315461085_Guidelines_for_elaborating_a_Master_s_dissertation_or_project.pdf)

Dissertation Proposal Template. Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics. <https://www.clsbe.lisboa.ucp.pt/system/files/assets/files/dissertation-proposal-template.pdf>

Writing a research proposal. University of Melbourne <https://students.unimelb.edu.au/academic-skills/explore-our-resources/graduate-research/writing-a-research-proposal>

Types of Research Design. – University of Southern California. <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchdesigns>

Guidelines for the Preparation of Research Project, Dissertation and Thesis – University of Malaya. [https://inpuma.um.edu.my/Guidelines\\_for\\_Preparation\\_of\\_Research\\_Project\\_Dissertation\\_and\\_Thesis.pdf](https://inpuma.um.edu.my/Guidelines_for_Preparation_of_Research_Project_Dissertation_and_Thesis.pdf)

Research Proposal Guidelines. – University of Pretoria. <https://www.up.ac.za/communication-management-division/article/2417100/research-proposal-guidelines>

Writing a Research Proposal. – Victoria University of Wellington. [https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1341273/Writing-a-Research-Proposal.pdf](https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1341273/Writing-a-Research-Proposal.pdf)

How to Prepare: Thesis Proposal. – University of Hong Kong. <https://gradsch.hku.hk/f/page/476/1666/thesis-proposal.pdf>

George Washington University, Dissertation Content and Style Guide. [https://gsehd.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/gsehd\\_dissertation\\_content\\_and\\_style\\_guide.pdf](https://gsehd.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/gsehd_dissertation_content_and_style_guide.pdf)

Organizing your Social Sciences Research Paper. <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide>

Tips for Writing a Good Quality Social Science Research Paper. <https://globaljournals.org/journals/human-social-science/tips-for-writing-a-good-quality-social-science-research-paper>

Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper. <https://libguides.pointloma.edu/c.php?g=944338&p=6806892>

The Open University. (2021). “Postgraduate Study Skills”. *The Open University*. <https://help.open.ac.uk/conducting-an-interview>.

## **Designing a Research Proposal**

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Types of Research Designs. University of Southern California Libraries.  
<https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchdesigns>

Writing your research proposal (York St. John University). <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/study/research/apply/examples-of-research-proposals/>