



# Thesis Proposal Template

This is to be a word document that will be evaluated by the research committee of the Faculty of Business and Enterprise. It is recognised that under supervision, the candidate, within university policy guidelines, may change the scope and content of their research project.

The proposal should cover/include the following components.

## 1) Title (up to 25 words)

The title can be a working title in that it can be changed at a later date. It should convey the essence of the proposed work

## 2) Background (up to 4 pages)

The background section should be a brief review of the extant research leading to the research question. It will contain the most recent leading peer-reviewed research in the discipline/topic being proposed. A student without current access to a library may not have access to recent journals; however, a scholarly resource such as [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com) might be sufficient for a draft proposal.

The background will identify a specific purpose for the conduct of the research. Research conducted at Swinburne University is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge. This means that candidates must demonstrate an understanding of the existing body of knowledge that will be contributed to by this research. The background will clearly identify gaps in existing knowledge as well as outline why the research is important and should be conducted.

## 3) Research Question(s) or objectives (½ page)

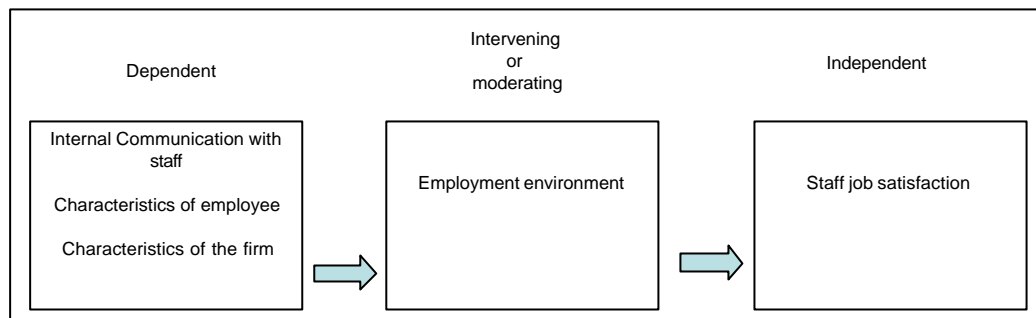
The research questions or research objectives are broad statements of the goals of the research. They are directly related to the gaps in existing knowledge identified in the previous section. The objectives would cover what the research is attempting to find out (in broad terms). For example:

- This research aims to
  - Identify the entrepreneurial behaviours of small business owners in Australia
  - Understand the impact of such behaviours on business performance
  - Propose a model of entrepreneurial behaviours that lead to small business success

In qualitative research proposals, the research objectives might be sufficient to provide a conceptual framework for the study. However, in studies which are quantitative in nature, the candidate might be expected to develop hypotheses to be examined in the study.

## 4) Theoretical framework (1 page)

The theoretical framework is sometimes called the conceptual framework and describes the theories or concepts to be covered or addressed in the research. The framework is often presented as a diagram and includes a depiction of the variables to be examined and their hypothesised relationships to each other. The framework will include a consideration of the dependent and independent variables and any moderating or intervening variables that may be considered. The following is a very simplistic example:



The variables identified in the theoretical framework will be directly related to the research questions proposed in the preceding section.

### 5) Research Methodology (2 pages)

The section on research methodology will include a brief consideration of some of the following questions:

1. What level of research is this (eg theory building, confirmatory, exploratory etc, etc)
2. What type of research is it (eg qualitative, quantitative, combination, experiment)
3. What exactly are your research questions (if qualitative)
4. What exactly are you measuring (if quantitative )
5. What measures will you use and why
6. How will you establish validity and reliability
7. Who/what is your sample frame (why them and not someone else)
  - Sample size (why this many people )
  - Sampling technique (justification usually links back to 1 and 2)
  - Method of execution (if necessary) where will you get hold of these people / when / how/ why
  - What are the implications of this sampling methodology on validity and reliability of the answers
  - What will you do to limit bias, and improve response rates.
8. What instruments will you use (eg discussion guidelines, questionnaires, coding frames)
9. What type of data will you collect (and why) (eg ratio, ordinal, categorical, interval if quantitative) (e.g., text, semiotics, paralanguage, interpretations, proxemics, kinesics, if qualitative)
10. What you need to do to collect this data (think this through before producing the instrument)
11. What method of data analysis will you use and why will you use that one
12. Ethical constraints and issues

**6) Significance of the research (up to 1 page)**

This should be a statement (not more than one page) of why it is important to undertake this research, in terms of the field of study involved and anticipated benefits to the wider community. What is the potential of the research to produce knowledge for some useful application? This section is linked to the background.

**7) Reference list and/or bibliography**

A list of references should be provided in an appropriate academic format such as Harvard or Author-Date.

**8) Timetable (1 page)**

This section should include a consideration of the time frame required to conduct research (including formalising the proposed research with an academic supervisor), collect data, analyse the data and write up a thesis based on the outcomes of the research. Candidates should recognise that the expected duration of PhD study is 3.5 years for full-time or 6 years for part-time and 2 years full-time or 4 years part-time for Masters of Research. The timetable submitted must adhere to these timeframes to be acceptable.

**9) Budget (1 page)**

The budget must contain details of costs that the candidate expects to incur in the conduct of the research project. For example, costs associated with fieldwork, travel, mailing surveys, internet survey hosting, etc. Swinburne University is not automatically responsible for all costs involved with conducting research.

**10) Academic recommendation(s)**

Where possible attach a letter of recommendation from an academic about the candidate's ability to conduct research at the higher degree level.