

Writing an effective research proposal

Berkeley

Office of Undergraduate Research

An effective research proposal has a standard framework

- Statement of Purpose
- Background
- Project Plan
- Qualifications

The Statement of Purpose clearly and succinctly defines the scope of the project in 200-250 words.

- Context for research question
- Main problem or issue
- **Your Research Question and support points.**
- **Methods**
- **Significance or rationale**

The **Background** builds the base on which your **Research Question** stands in 1.5 to 2 pages

- What is already known in the field you propose to study?
- What are the limits of what is known?
- How does this logically lead to your **Research Question**?
- -you justify the points of your question with literature review and an expansion of context to empirical frame.

The **Project Plan** outlines the main Aims or Phases of your research project in 1.5 to 2 pages.

- Aims/Phases of your Project: action items
 - Aim 1: I will investigate/collect/measure
 - Aim 2: I will determine/calculate
 - Aim 3:
- Methods: describe how you will accomplish each of your Aims/ phases threshold
- Timeline: how long will each Aim take?
- Alternatives/Issues: address possible issues that may arise and alternatives

Your **Qualifications** describe how you are capable and able to do everything you describe in your Project Plan

- What coursework/labwork/languages/preliminary or previous research experience/ travel or life experiences qualify you to complete the work you have suggested?
- If you are not qualified, where will you gain the skills necessary or who will you work with that has the necessary skills

OUTLINE

Statement of Purpose

- **I. S of P. 200-250 words**
- A-context/hook (1-2 sentences)
- B-Research Question "my research question ask..."
- Specifically, I will support this or I focus on three points
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
-
- C-Method: "My methodological approach is..."
- 1
- 2
- 3
- D-Rationale

Outline

- II. Background of research question 1.5-2 pages
- A.1.
- a)
- b)
- c)
-
- B.2.
- a)
- b)
- c)
-
- C.3.
- a)
- b)
- c)
-
- D4. Rationale

Outline

- **III. Plan**
- Aim/Phase 1. Dates and thresholds
-
- Aim/Phase 2
-
- Aim/Phase 3