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

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