



Proposal Approval of Student Research

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OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL PROCESS

1.1. Overview of Research Proposal Approval Process

Research proposals are considered by a committee with the delegated authority of the Postgraduate Research and Scholarships Committee.

The following is an overview of the approval process:

	Process
<i>Step 1.</i>	Research proposal received with all required signatures and distributed to committee members.
<i>Step 2.</i>	<p>Decision made at committee meeting. Decision may be one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approved (at first submission); 2. Approved with suggestions; 3. Amendments required to satisfaction of Programme Leader; 4. Unable to approve / requirement to resubmit; 5. Final approval (when conditions met or satisfactory resubmission made). <p>Decisions recorded in committee minutes. Minutes and proposal report sent to Postgraduate Academic Administrator.</p> <p>Student notified of decision and copy of letter sent to Postgraduate Academic Administrator, supervisors, head of department, and programme directors.</p>
<i>Step 2a.</i>	<p>For decision categories 3 and 4 the student modifies the proposal in line with stated requirements and submits a revised proposal and research proposal submission form for approval.</p> <p>For decision category 3 the committee must give final approval if the programme leader or discipline leader certifies the requirements have been met.</p> <p>For decision category 4 the committee retains discretion to approve or decline the resubmitted research proposal for research proposals resubmitted after an initial decision.</p>
<i>Step 3.</i>	<p>The student may seek research ethics approval once his or her research proposal has been approved (decision categories 1, 2 or 5).</p> <p>The committee secretary sends a copy of the letter notifying the student of approval to the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) Secretary.</p>
<i>Step 4.</i>	Approved (decision categories 1, 2, or 5) proposals are filed with the Postgraduate Academic Administrator.

2. GUIDELINES FOR LEVEL 9 RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Before embarking on your research project it is necessary to complete and submit a Research Proposal to the appropriate Proposal Committee. This is Stage One. Once this has been approved you can then submit (if needed) your proposal for Ethics Approval by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (Stage Two). Appropriate forms for Ethics Approval can be accessed from the Postgraduate Centre, the H: Drive, J: (Student) Drive and Moodle.

2.1. Stage One: The Proposal

Your research proposal provides an initial statement of your intended topic and your research methods. It provides your supervisors, programme leader, and the Proposals Committee with evidence that you have thought enough about your proposed research to be able to embark effectively on a systematic plan of study. It serves to:

- Explain your research intentions. The more clearly and thoroughly you do this, the better able we will be to provide you with useful advice and assistance.
- Outline the ways in which you intend to carry out your research action, and explain why these are appropriate to your topic.
- Ensure that you, your supervisors, your programme leader and the Proposal Committee have a common understanding of what you intend to do.

The research proposal is developed with your anticipated supervisors as your first task after enrolling for the research component in your degree.

Your proposal should be no more than 5000 words, and should include all of the following 10 sections. Please check with your Programme Leader for any requirements specific to your programme. Please submit the electronic copy of the proposal in a Word format and provide a word count for the document.

2.1.1. Working Title

This is an early indication of the focus for your project and may be changed at a later date.

2.1.2. Outline of the project

Description of what you intend to do, and why—that is, what significance or importance does it have, and why it is worth doing.

Aims/Objectives of the Project. This should include

- The purpose of the project;
- The research question(s);
- The hypothesis to be tested (if appropriate); and
- The nature of the information sought.

2.1.3. Literature Background

Give a concise summary (but not an annotated bibliography) of a cross-section of significant relevant literature, regarding the state of knowledge or opinion about the proposed research topic. Ensure that the literature supports and contextualizes your topic and indicates your awareness of relevant issues and disagreements within previous research. Identify any possible gaps in the knowledge as indicated by your key sources, and indicate what addition to existing literature your completed study will make.

2.1.4. Methodology/Research Method

Explain why your selected research approach is appropriate to your topic and your stated objectives.

The discipline in which you work may require you to develop your research plan as your research unfolds. If you intend to use such an “emerging plan” for your project you still need to explain the following:

- why this approach is appropriate for your area/topic/approach;
- how research questions will be identified, and how they will be answered;
- how the project design will be developed.

2.1.5. Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

Detail the proposed methods and techniques to be used for data collection, with specific details of sample size and criteria for selection of participants, where appropriate. Indicate how you expect to analyse your data. You are not required to attach questionnaires or questions for focus groups unless they serve to amplify or clarify elements of your research design.

2.1.6. Ethics Issues

While you probably will need to gain approval for your research project from the Unitec Research Ethics Committee, it is useful to explain in your proposal any ethical issues that you identify as pertinent. Your supervisors will advise if ethical approval can be obtained from within the Department.

2.1.7. A Time Line or Gantt Chart

Outline the scheduling of activities for the period of your research.

2.1.8. Resource Issues

Outline any resourcing issues that are relevant to the project, such as equipment, software or laboratory costs. Also include possible conference attendance and any anticipated support.

2.1.9. Outcomes/Outputs

Indicate uses to which your research may be put. Suggest any likely outputs (papers and conference presentations) and outcomes (the possible difference that the research will make to society, professionals or the community).

2.1.10. Reference List

Provide references for all sources mentioned in the proposal. Use a style appropriate to the discipline.

2.1.11. What to avoid in your proposal

The following are some of the common weaknesses in submitted proposals:

- Lack of concise statement for purpose of project or objective of project not clearly defined.
- Unclear or insufficient research questions articulated.
- Inadequate literature or literature not linked adequately to the topic/research question.
- Rationale for data collection methods not given.
- Sample size not specified or rationale given for selection of participants.
- Possible outcomes are not described.

2.1.12. How to submit the proposal

When your intended supervisors and Programme Leader agree that your proposal is ready to submit, please send it electronically (in a WORD format) to the relevant Proposal Committee secretary. In addition, you must provide hard copy of the two following items:

- The completed Proposal.
- The Submission Form signed by your intended supervisors, your programme director, and yourself. Your proposal will not be considered unless these signatures are included.

2.1.13. Approval Process

Proposals are considered by the relevant Proposal Committee. Meeting dates are available from your Programme Leader. You will receive written notification from the Chair of the Proposal Committee regarding the outcome of the Committee's consideration of your proposal. You may be asked to make revisions, or to re-submit your proposal.

3. GUIDELINES FOR LEVEL 10 RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Before embarking on your research project it is necessary to complete and submit a Research Proposal to the appropriate Proposal Committee. This is Stage One. Once this has been approved you can then submit (if needed) your proposal for Ethics Approval by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (Stage Two). Appropriate forms for Ethics Approval can be accessed from the Postgraduate Centre, the H: Drive, J: (Student) Drive and Moodle.

3.1. Stage One: The Proposal

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- Explain your research intentions. The more clearly and thoroughly you do this, the better able we will be to provide you with useful advice and assistance.
- Outline the ways in which you intend to carry out your research action, and explain why these are appropriate to your topic.
- Ensure that you, your supervisors, your programme leader and the Proposal Committee have a common understanding of what you intend to do.
- Demonstrate a contribution to knowledge at doctoral level.

The research proposal is developed with your anticipated supervisors as your first task after enrolling for the research component in your degree.

Your proposal should be no more than 7500 words, and should include all of the following 10 sections. Please check with your Programme Leader for any requirements specific to your programme. Please submit the electronic copy of the proposal in a Word format and provide a word count for the document.

3.1.1. Working Title

This is an early indication of the focus for your project and may be changed at a later date.

3.1.2. Outline of the project:

Description of what you intend to do, and why—that is, what significance or importance does it have, and why it is worth doing.

3.1.3. Aims/Objectives of the Project.

This should include

- The purpose of the project;
- The research question(s);
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3.1.14. Approval Process

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