

**Methodological Course  
for UMS Postgraduates  
Semester 1, 2014/2015**



# **WRITING & PRESENTATION OF ACADEMIC PROPOSAL (MA & PhD)**

**by:**

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# A. Introduction

## Why Writing Research proposal?



Writings research proposal has relationship with research design concept.

*Any student certainly requires him/her proposal to be formally approved. Those seeking funding require the approval of the funding agency to which they apply, or they will not receive support. In this cases, the will almost always some required format to the good proposal (Robson, 1993: 464).*

Therefore each of the postgraduate students and researchers should writes a good and systematically research proposal.

# **Types of Research Design**

## **i. Experimental Design**

- Laboratory**
- Outside the Laboratory, e.g. in the classroom.**

## **ii. Formal Designs for Survey**

## **iii. Designing Case Studies**

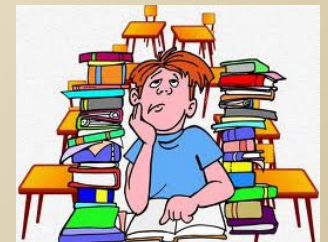
## **iv. Designing Evaluations Research**

## **v. Designing Ethnography Research**

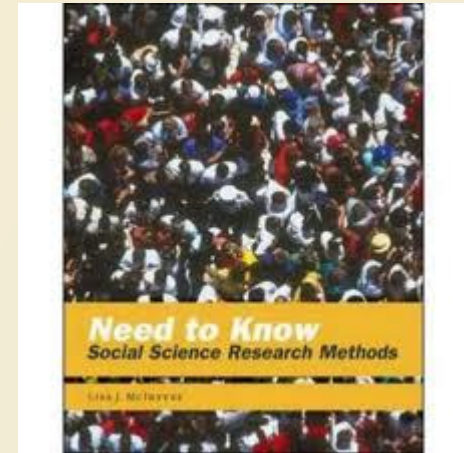
This lectures will discuss about how to writes a small-scale research proposal for MA/PhD level.

Accordingly, a student should prepared and plan their research proposal before they started writings which is similar to popular analogy between a researcher and an architects (Hakim, 1987; Leedy, 1989).

The architect plans building while the researcher plans to examine social issues or problems and attempt to put forward the solutions in order to overcome the risen issues.



Robson (1993) argued:



*“the research proposal is your opportunity to persuade the ‘client’ that you knows what you are talking about. That you have though through the issues involved and are going to deliver. That is worthwhile to take the risk and give you licence to get on with it”*

(Robson, 1993: 465)

For this reason, each research proposal should look interesting and significant to the assessor.

Obviously, it is an exhausted and disappointed if our research proposal been rejected after we spent time and energy developed unvalued proposal.



## B. How to identify a good quality research proposal?

Silverman (2000) suggested these questions should take to considerations critically to develop and writes a high-quality proposal:

- \* Why should someone interested or give attentions to my research? Does my research topic or subject matter seem to be **attractive or researchable**?
- \* Does my research design **realistic, achievable and *carefully explained***?
- \* Does the researcher **capable or competent** to conduct or to completed these research?

Silverman (2000) recommended, these elements are in turn to developed a good quality research proposal:

- **have to be practical** (e.g. referring to explain social problems or aim to solve organisational trouble such as high turn over in a workplace, prevent environmental degradation or pollution, the improvement standard of living among the urban poor etc).
- **capable to draw attention** from grant contributor/supervisor
- **proficient to make broader links** *(a wider context): the relationship between theoretical and empirical or the micro and macro correlations*
- **apply a clear language and terminology**; organised idea, etc.
- **plan your writings before you started to writes** (including managing your time and activities)



Meanwhile Robson (1993) mentions good quality research proposal can be recognised by these criteria:

**1. A good proposal usually understandable and straight forward**

- in general, this kind of proposal explain clearly about *why*, *how* and *what* is the research problem.
- research aim should clearly stated
- significance of study interestingly stated and current issues of the study is critically noticeable.
- capable to describe the comprehend of empirical and theoretical contextual.
- as a result, good quality proposal requires comprehensible thought/paradigm expression and should be put in writing clearly.

# A Comprehensive Guide To Writing A Research Proposal



ERMIT SINGH  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT  
HUSKARMA, SIKHIM

VENUS



## 2. A good quality proposal communicates easily

e.g. mega-sentences and complicated be required to avoid.  
We should aware of our audience that read the *proposal*.

## 3. Research proposal must be well **organised** and **systematic**

The structure of research proposal *simple* and *self-evident*.

- 'lettering and numbering',
- 'heading and sub-headings'.
- *standard paragraph* (not as a meeting minutes style!)

#### 4. Research proposal should be *researchable*

A good research proposal commonly considered practicality research works (Silverman, 2000).

e.g. Is your research statement *specific* and *researchable*?

Be ensure your research objective whether *pure academic (theory based research)* or *policy research*?

*Basic research* or *applied research*?

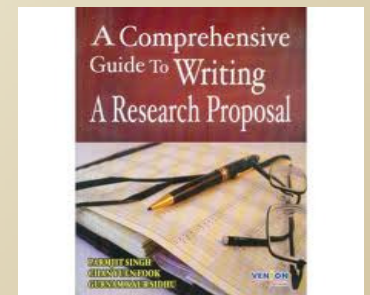
So, you must realistic and practical writing your research proposal and know well who is your audiences or sponsor.

#### 5. Proposal should be *persuasive*

Writing research proposal is similar to sale our “product”.

You should able persuade your sponsors or supervisors brilliantly.

However, as a good salesman, don't you ever ‘over stated’ regarding your product!



## 6. Plan and writing vigilantly your research proposal

*Research design* issue must be written clearly and carefully. You should able shows your in-depth understanding or level of intelligent regarding relationship of these issues:

- \* Literature Reviews (e.g. i. *Theoretical Perspectives Debates*, ii. *main concepts of your research*, iii. *reviews on previous research findings*)
- \* Show your research plan thoroughly via *Gantt Chart* and *Milestone* regarding your research works;
- \* Propose your data analysis methods simple and clear (whether Quantitative or Qualitative or the combination of both); and explain it interestingly.

Therefore, a good research proposal has a comprehensive research plan and easy to understand.

## **C. *Standard Format for Research Proposal* in Social Sciences.**

Robson (1993) and Silverman (2000) suggested as follow:

### **1. Title**

Research title would be specific, brief, clear and informative.  
This is the first part will read by your assessor or supervisor.



## 2. Problem Statement

For example you would highlight why certain issues regarding 'environment' or 'social problems' or 'socio- economic' phenomena become a main issues in the developing countries like Malaysia.

This part should include a brief, but concrete, literature review and previous research findings related your research

You must able show your academic evaluation capability on the chosen social phenomenon in your proposal or write your **research gap** specifically.

### **3. Significance of study**

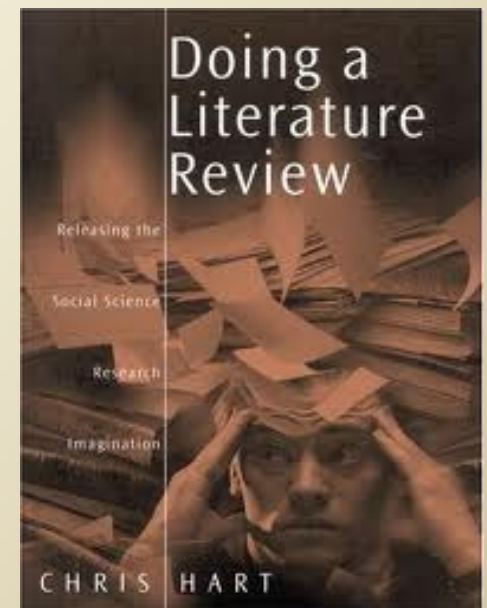
You should be able to *impress* evaluator/supervisor professionally and explain why the chosen topic is essential.

### **4. Research Questions**

Research questions ought to be parallel to your research problems.

### **5. Research Objectives**

Ensure your research objectives and research topic are match and relevant with your field of studies.



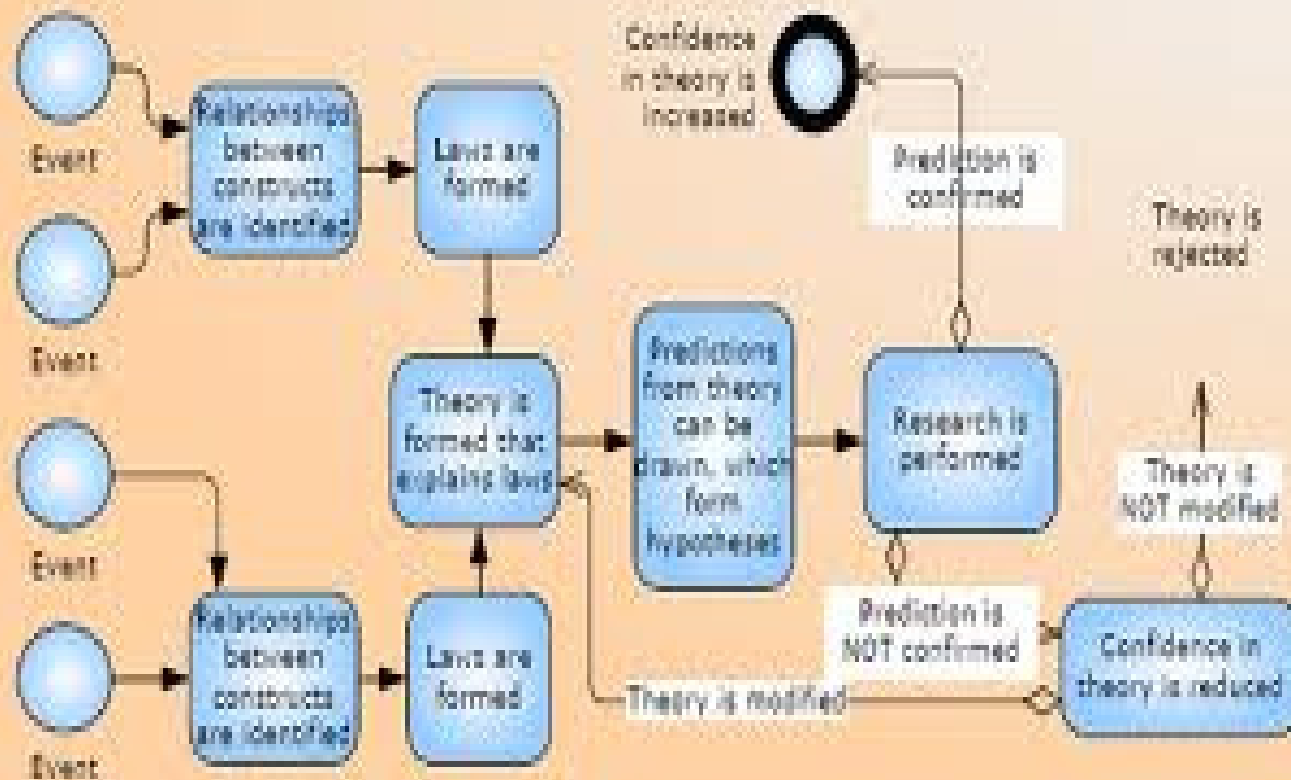


## 6. Literature Review

Exemplify to the evaluator your literature review in 4 element as follow:

- i. Review on **theoretical perspective debate/literature** (as a PhD/MA candidate you should able to identify and explain the strengthen and weakness/limitation of the theoretical perspective) and choose one **research paradigm** as your 'position' from this reviews.
- ii. Review on **main concepts definition** and explain how to operationalize/measure these concepts and its relationships with your conceptual framework
- iii. Review on previous research findings (especially journal articles) – explains and evaluates.

# How facts become theories



#### iv. Review on Research Methodology

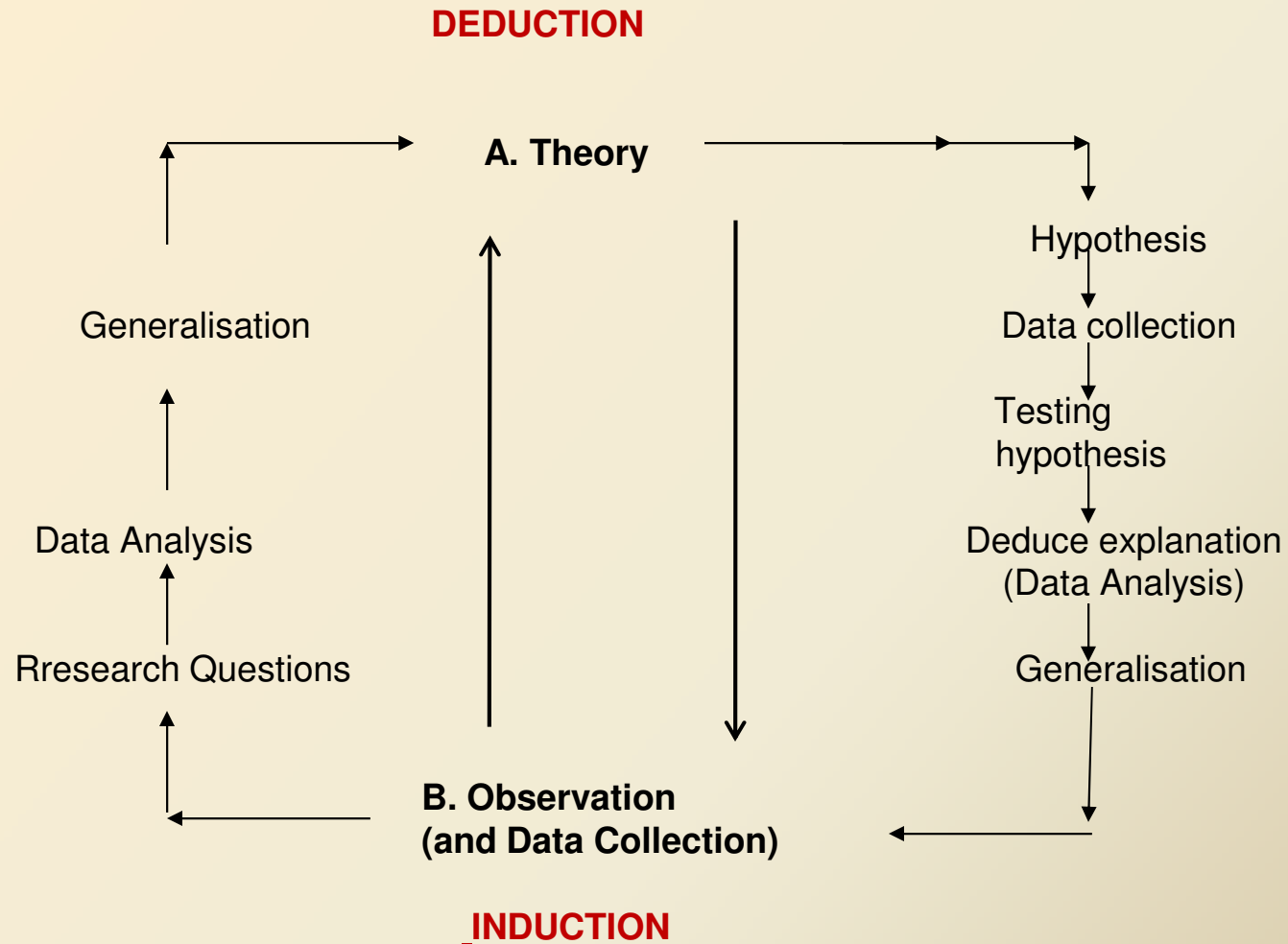


You are advised to write and review research methodological issues where it was written by previous researchers (particularly the advantages and disadvantages aspects of the findings), and justify why do you choose a certain research methodology (position) in your research proposal (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

A PhD candidate or MA candidate should be able to write and debate on research paradigm issues:

- e.g. *realism, materialism, idealism, phenomenology, structuralism, post modernism and etc.*
- *issues on ontology, epistemology and methodology;*
- *issues on interpretivism or positivism; and its relationship with deductive and inductive process.*

**Figure 1: *Induction and Deduction in Social Sciences Research Process***

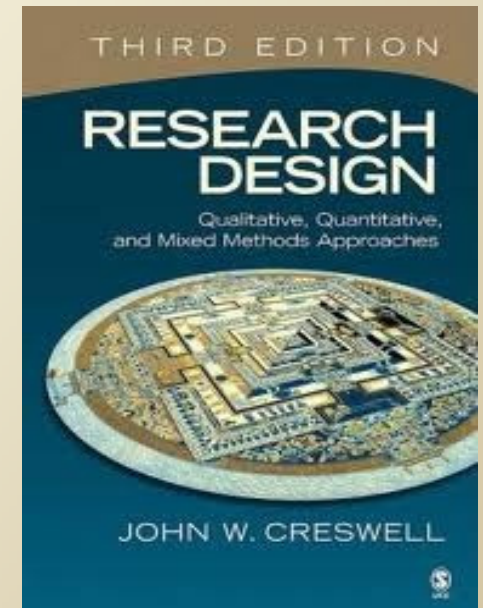


Source: Punch (2005:12)

\* *Justify why you choose **research design** (experimental? survey? or case study or ethnography)*

## **7. Data Collection Methods/Techniques**

e.g. *Experiment/laboratory  
Questionnaires survey;  
face to face survey interview with questionnaires;  
In-depth interview;  
Participant Observation  
Direct Observation  
Archive research  
Documentary data*



## 8. Data Analysis Methods

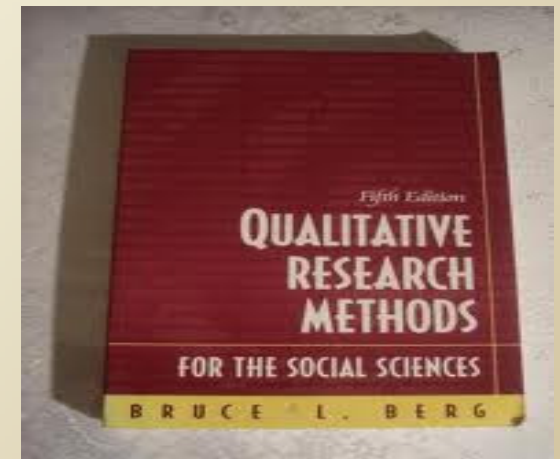
Please stated what kind of your data analysis methods and justify why do you choose this method?

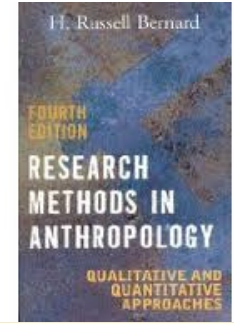
*Qualitative Data Analysis?*

*Quantitative/statistical Data Analysis?*

*Content Analysis, and etc*

*Validity and Reliability* issues should be given serious attention at this stage.





## 9. Ethical Issues in Social Sciences Research

In some circumstances, you are advised to fill up a special form for *The Ethical Research in Social Sciences*.

Commonly you will be involved with:

- \* Approval/agreement/Consent letter from your respondents
- \* Approval letter from the 'gate keepers'
- \* Consider seriously the sensitivity respondents (e.g. patients in hospital), religious, socio-cultural, socio-political sensitivity during writing up your research proposal or doing your research works.

## **10. Research Findings Dissemination**

- publish in high impact journals
- executive reports, posters
- present papers in (international/national conference and seminar)

## **11. *Timetable and Milestone***

- please indicates your specific deadline for every phases of your research works.





## 12. Research Budget

You are advised to apply for research grants for your MA or PhD research (e.g. from UK universities in Malaysia; Monash University, Oxford University, Harvard University).

## 13. References/Bibliography

A good research proposal does have comprehensive references or bibliography. It should be written in standard academic writing procedures.

(Gantt Chart) Table 1: Ecotourism Development and Community Participation in Kinabatangan Area, Sabah (January to December 2013)

Task/Month	January - February	Mac-April	Mei-Jun	July-August	September - November	December
Literature Review						
Prepare Questionnaire and interview questions guideline						
Fieldworks and Data Collections						
Data Analysis						
Research Report Writing						
Thesis Submitted						

## **D. Why did your research proposal was turned down?**

Robson (1993) indicated as follow:

1. Do not follow the directions or guidelines given for your kind of proposal. Omit information that is asked for. Ignore word limits.
2. The title has little relationship to the stated objectives; and that neither title or objectives link to the proposed methods or techniques.
3. Produce woolly, ill-defined objectives.



4. Problem statement does not clear stated.
5. Research design and research methodology unsuited to the stated research objective.
6. Conceptual definition lacking in clarity and confused.

7. Have the statement of the central problem or research focus vague, or obscure it by another discussion.

7. Leave the design and methodology implicit; let them guess.

8. Poorly conceptualised, or be either very brief, or, preferably, long winded and repetitive in your proposal. Rely on weight rather than quality.

9. Your research ideological stance is not clear enough;

10. Then, it make your research findings is also not clear as expected or inevitable.

## **5. Conclusion**

Writing a research proposal is an “art” or “a craftwork”. To gain the quality art work, it needs a carefully planned, focus and systematic. To achieve the viable outcome, the works must done in the ample time.

Your proposal draft should be edited few times before you submit it to your supervisor/sponsor.

A good research proposal should communicate well through simple, brief and straightforward language.

The proposal must justify why the research questions are best dealt with proposed research methods, systematic conceptualised and references etc.

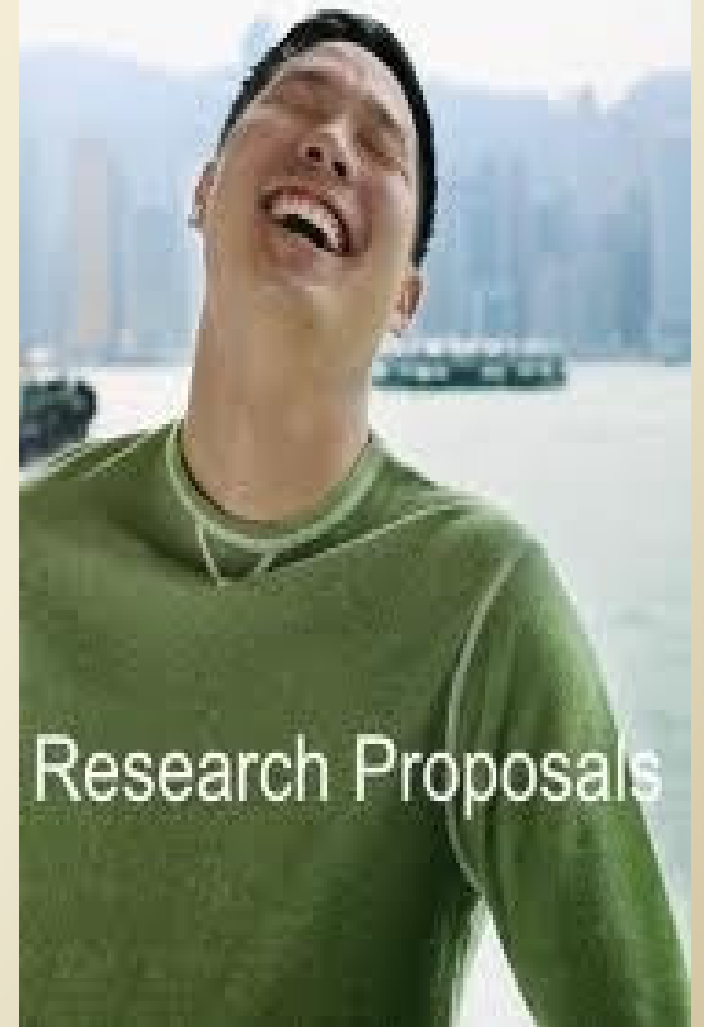
A good quality research proposal will gain research grant sponsorship, and the most important thing, for the MA and PhD candidate, they will gain approval to proceed their study without difficulty.



All the best!!

Thank you...

100% Approved



Research Proposals