



## Research Proposal, Thesis & Research Management

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## Research Proposal

- What is a Research Proposal
- Components of Research Proposal
- Assessment of Research Proposal
- How to defend Research Proposal

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## What is a Research Proposal?

- A research proposal is a written form of the detailed **research plan** before the study is actually carried out.
- Intended to convince others that you have a **worthwhile research project** and that you have the competence and the **work-plan** to complete it.

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- **Based on scientific facts** and on the art of **clear communication** .
- **Start writing by the time one has decided on the topic** for the study

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## Remember!

A good research project may run the risk of rejection simply because the proposal is poorly written...

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## Components of a PhD/MSc Research Proposal

- Title
- Abstract
- Chapter 1 (INTRODUCTION)
- Chapter 2 (LITERATURE REVIEW)
- Chapter 3 (METHODOLOGY)
- Chapter 4 (DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS)
- List of References

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 **Length of Proposal**

- About ½ of your thesis
- 100 – 150 pages

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 **Proposal/Dissertation/Thesis Structure**

**Structure A**

- Introduction (10%)
- Literature review (20%)
- Methodology (20%)
- Results (20%)
- Discussion (20%)
- Conclusions and Recommendations (10%)
- References
- Appendices

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 **Structure B**

- Introduction (10%)
- Review of background literature (20%)
- Design of the system and/or Methodology of the research (10%)
- Testing of the system or Implementation of the research (15%)
- Presentation and analysis of the data (15%)
- Evaluation or Comment and Critique of the outcomes/findings (20%)
- Summary and Conclusion and Recommendations (10%)
- References
- Appendices

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 **Conference/Journal Structure**

- Introduction and Literature Review
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion and Conclusion
- References

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 **Effective Thesis Title**

1. Reflects **key words** and/or ideas from the thesis.
  - Identify key variables, both dependent and independent
  - Suggest a relationship between variables which supports the major hypothesis
2. **Specific** and gives the reader a good idea of what the paper is about.

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 **Effective Thesis Title**

4. Captures the readers' attention. **Keep it simple, brief and attractive.** Use words that create a positive impression and stimulate reader interest
  - Not more than 15 words.**
5. Differentiates the paper from other papers of the same subject area.
6. **Avoid abbreviations and jargon.**

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ii. Redundant words such as “An investigation of ...”, “A preliminary study of ...”, “A study of ...”, “Analysis of ...”, “On the ...”, “Theory of ...”, “Some ...”, and “Toward a ...” must be avoided.

iii. Thesis title should not contain formulas, symbols or subscripts, Greek letters, or other non-alphabetical symbols. Word substitutes should be used instead.

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iv. Thesis title should not contain acronyms, eg. “GPS” or even acronyms in brackets. For example, “GPS” should be written as “Global positioning system” and should not be written as “Global positioning system (GPS)”

v. Thesis title should not contain punctuations such as colon “:”, semi-colon “;”, etc.

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**Examples of Thesis/Dissertation Titles**

- A framework for the integration of information security and assurance within information systems curricula
- Modeling and evaluating electronic health record systems in Malaysian healthcare industry

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**Abstract**

- It is a summary in **one** paragraph, approximately **300** words. Use future tense to describe activities.
- It should include the **problem statement**, the **rationale** for the study, the **hypothesis** (if any), the **methodology** and the **expected findings/outcomes**.
- May include the **design, procedures, the sample** and any **instruments** that will be used.

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**Chapter 1 Introduction**

- Background of the problem + Brief LR
- Statement of the problem
- Operational Definition
- Objectives of the study
- Research questions/hypotheses
- Theoretical/Conceptual Framework
- Scope of the study
- Significance of the study

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**Introduction**

- The introduction typically **begins with a general statement** of the problem area
- Then, focus on a specific research problem
- Followed by the rational or justification for the proposed study

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 **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

- Critical review of relevant research to provide rationale for your work
- Present the GAP - unanswered questions, untried method
- Findings of others you are challenging or extending

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 **Literature Review Problems**

- Lacking organization and structure
- Lacking focus, unity and coherence
- Being repetitive and verbose
- Failing to cite influential papers
- Failing to keep up with recent developments
- Failing to critically evaluate cited papers
- Citing irrelevant or trivial references
- Depending too much on secondary sources

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 **Some helpful guides**

- It is also helpful to keep in mind that you are telling a story to an audience.
- Try to tell it in a **stimulating and engaging** manner.
- Do not bore them, because it may lead to rejection of your worthy proposal.

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 **Chapter 3 Research Methodology**

- Research Design & Procedure
- Operational Framework
- Setting of study, Time-frame of the study
- Subjects or data sources
- Instrumentation, Sampling Design & Data Analysis
- Assumptions & Limitations
- Research Planning & Schedule

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 **Chapter 4 Discussion & Conclusions**

- convince your reader of the **potential impact of your proposed research**.
- **communicate a sense of enthusiasm and confidence** without exaggerating the merits of your proposal.
- **mention the limitations and weaknesses of the proposed research**, which may be justified by time and financial constraints as well as by the early developmental stage of your research area.

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 **References**

- Follow UTM Thesis Format.
  - The Harvard system
  - The American Psychological Association system;

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 **What to include in the Appendices?**

- A glossary of concepts, constructs, and definitions
- Samples of the measurement instrument
- Other materials that reinforce the body of the proposal

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 **Assessment of PhD/MSc Research Proposal**

- Normally in the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester (PhD – Fulltime) and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester (MSc – Fulltime)
- Two evaluators will be appointed
- Purpose – to officially endorse that the student can proceed with his intended study, and to provide suggestions for improvement.

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 **Assessment Criteria**

- Title
- Research Problem
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- A rubric is normally used

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 **Criteria for Title**

1. Does the topic resort in the domain of the relevant academic department?
2. Is the topic of the research project defined concisely?
3. Does the title adequately anticipate the contents of the research?
4. Does the title avoid repetitive and non-contributing words, such as “A study of ...”, or “An investigation of ...”, as well as any abbreviations?

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 **Criteria for the Research Problem**

1. Is the research problem clearly defined?
2. Does the research problem refer to secondary research (completed theses, scientific journals, textbooks, internet sources such as [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com))?
3. Is there a need for the research?
4. Is the research problem significant or important enough to warrant the research?

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 **Criteria for the Research Problem**

5. In the case of master’s students, will the researcher be able to prove that he/she can do research independently?

or

In the case of doctoral students, will the research contribute to the field of specialization?

6. Is the research achievable within the maximum period allowed to complete this qualification?

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7. Does the researcher have an adequate budget to achieve the goals of the research? (A budget should be attached to the research proposal as an annexure.)

8. Has the researcher demarcated and differentiated the research from other research on the topic?

9. Has the researcher explicitly stated the presuppositions, assumptions and objectives of the research?

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### Criteria for the Literature Review

1. Has the researcher provided a literature review, focused on the topic, as a basis for the research?
2. Based on the literature review, has the researcher exposed both corresponding and contradictory viewpoints on the topic?

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3. Based on the literature review, has the researcher justified the need for the research?
4. Based on the literature review, has the researcher demarcated and differentiated his/her research from other research on the topic?

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### Criteria for the Methodology

1. Is the research executable, ie are appropriate resources available and accessible?
2. Has the researcher stated his/her hypotheses either as research hypotheses or as statistical hypotheses?
3. From the hypotheses, are the variables and their relationship with one another clear?

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4. Has the researcher indicated measures to ensure scientific accountability, such as objectivity, validity and reliability?
5. Does the researcher remain objective and refrain from expressing his/her personal opinions and values in the proposal?
6. Has the researcher indicated the data required in order to undertake the research?

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7. Has the researcher indicated how a pilot study will be done?
8. Has the researcher indicated who his/her statistical consultant will be?
9. Has the researcher indicated which software package (MSEXcel, SAS or SPSS) will be used for the analysis of the data?

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10. Has the researcher indicated the target population and/or sample?

11. If the researcher is going to use sampling, has he/she indicated if random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling or cluster sampling will be used?

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12. Has the researcher indicated where the data are or may be located?

13. Has the researcher indicated how the data will be obtained from primary and secondary sources?

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14. Has the researcher indicated how the initial data exploration will be done?

15. Has the researcher indicated what statistical technique(s) will be used?

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16. Is the statistical technique appropriate in view of the hypotheses and the characteristics of the data?

17. Has the researcher provided a schedule indicating target dates for the completion of the various phases and submission of chapters?

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### UTM AIS Research Proposal Assessment Rubric

- [Assessment Rubric for UNP0010 Research Proposal.docx](#)

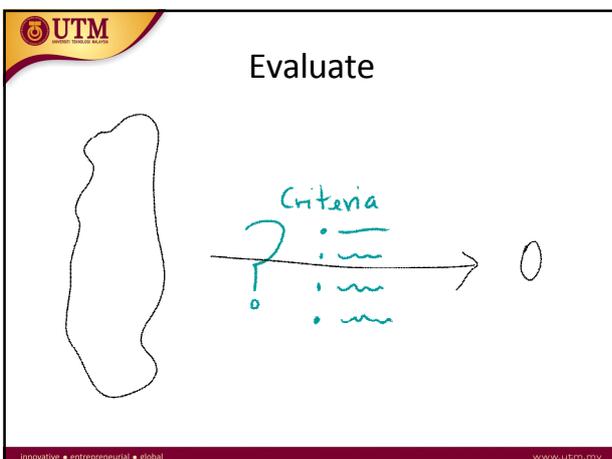
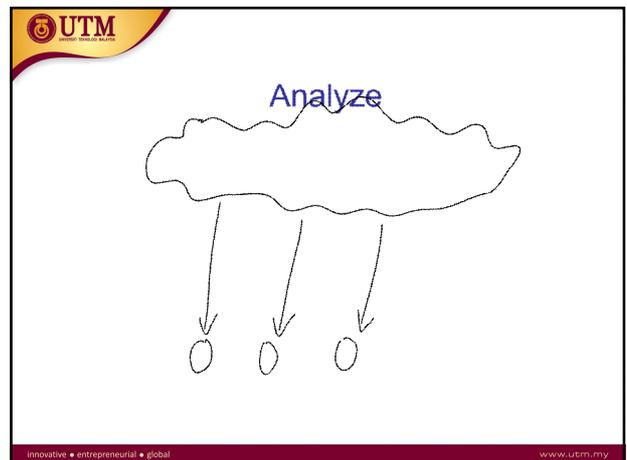
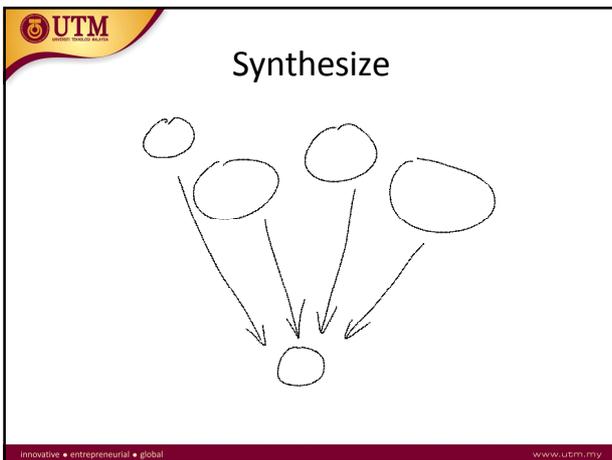
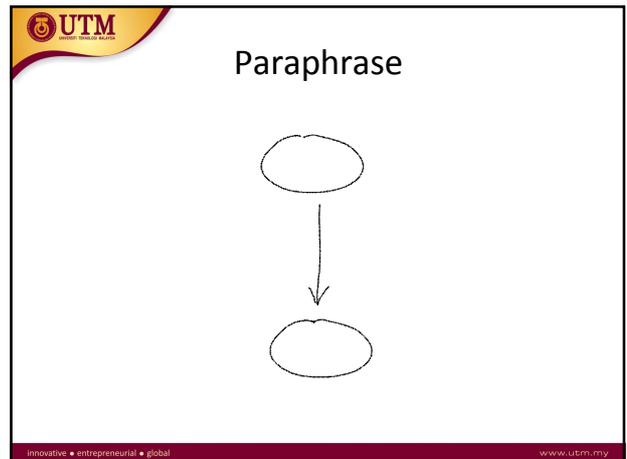
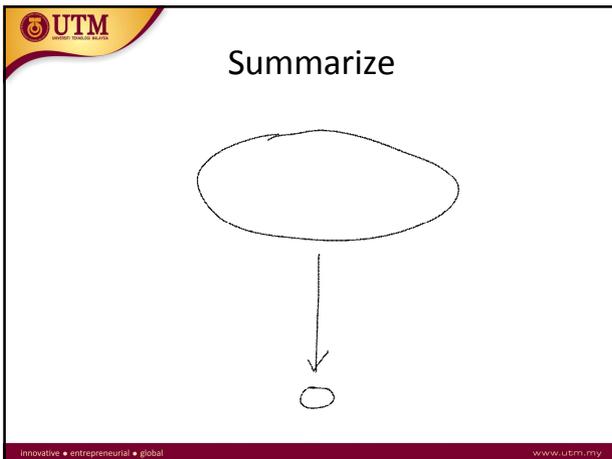
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### Elements of writing

- Summarize
- Paraphrase
- Synthesize
- Analyze
- Evaluate

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**Research Proposal Defense**




## How to Defend a Research Proposal?

- Attend some defenses before it's your turn. Discuss your research with others.
- The defense should be team effort - you and supervisor.
- Don't be defensive at your defense.
- Consider recording your defense to not miss valuable feedback.

<http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>

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## HOW LONG?

- Not longer than 30 minutes
- Try to limit the number of slides to about 20-30

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## FORMAT

- Conservative layout that appears professional
- No slide transitions, animation, or sounds that are distracting
- Easy to read font
- Do not crowd slides with excessive text
- Do use figures and tables

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## ORAL PRESENTATION

- Create notes in PowerPoint of the points you want to cover for each slide
- Except for things like research questions, do not just read the slides from the screen
- Explain or expand on what is on the slides

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## REHEARSALS

- Practice presenting the whole PowerPoint and oral comments before you submit it to your supervisor.
- Get feedback on the PowerPoint from your supervisor.
- Practice the presentation before your actual defense with your supervisor.
- **PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT !!!!**

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## TITLE PAGE

- Start with a title page that uses the title of the proposed thesis
- Titles should follow the stated guidelines
- Titles should give a clear idea of the major focus of the thesis

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 **TOPIC BACKGROUND**

- Why do you want to research this topic?
- What is the background or history of this topic?
- What scholarly sources document the need for the research you plan to conduct?
- Is there a gap in the scholarly literature that this research addresses?
- **Hint:** You can use more than one slide to address each of the categories

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 **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

- “The problem this study will address is .....
- Where and when is it a problem?
- Who are the stakeholders?

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 **PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

- The purpose of this study is to.....

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 **IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

- How could your study impact the field of research?
- How could your study impact the stakeholders?

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 **Theoretical Foundation**

- Refers to the philosophical stance taken by the researcher, for example
  - Constructivism
  - Critical Theory
  - Pragmatism
  - Postmodern, etc.
- Briefly describe the theory
- How does it relate to your research?

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 **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

- Start by introducing the conceptual framework of the literature review—how it is organized.
- Give enough information to make it clear that you have a deep understanding of the literature.
- This is only an overview.
- Do cite authors, their publications and publication dates.

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**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- First, state the primary focus of the questions (this could be in the form of a question)
- Number the research questions for easy reference during discussions with the evaluation panel

**METHODOLOGY**

- Define your proposed research methodology
- Why is it appropriate for answering your research question(s)?
- Cite methodology literature in support of your choice of methodology

**SPECIFICS ON METHODOLOGY**

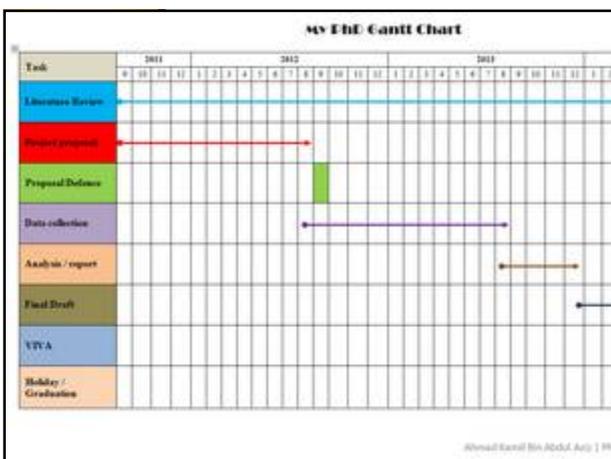
Depending on your choice of methodology you may need to outline specifics such as:

- Context of the planned research, demographic data
- Participants—number, how selected
- Methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation or analysis

Hint: you need multiple slides for these categories.

**TIMELINE**

- Outline the steps needed to complete the thesis and when you plan to complete them
- Be reasonable
- Take note the necessary progress in order to Graduate on Time (GOT)
  - usually will need to submit the notice to submit thesis by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> semester.



**REFERENCES**

- List only those cited in the PowerPoint
- One slide should be enough

**THANK YOU**

- Be sure to thank the members of your committee

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**SAVE YOUR WORK**

- You will be doing a PowerPoint at the defense of your full thesis.
- You can use some of these slides to build that presentation.

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**THESIS**

- Structure of thesis
- Thesis format and styles
- How to start writing a thesis
- Planning and timeline for writing a thesis
- Types of Thesis
  - Conventional
  - Compilation of paper

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**Thesis - Contd**

- Role of student and supervisor in thesis preparation
- Submission regulation
- Assessment of thesis
- Viva-voce Preparation of thesis
- Ethics and codes of Publication
- Plagiarism
- Referencing

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**Sequence of a structured thesis**

```

graph LR
    C1((Chapter 1  
Introduction)) --- C2((Chapter 2  
Literature  
Review))
    C2 --- C3((Chapter 3  
Methodology))
    C3 --- C4((Chapter 4  
Results/Findings))
    C4 --- C5((Chapter 5  
Discussions  
&  
Conclusions))
  
```

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**Chapter 1 Introduction**

- establish the overall field
- summarise previous research
- indicate the research gap
- state the purpose of the article and outline it.
- A thesis should be able to reference **at least four or five writers** in the first one or two paragraphs

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**Justification for the research**

Can be one or more of the following:

- Relative importance of the specific areas by previous researchers
- relative neglect of the specific research problem by previous researchers
- relative neglect of the research's methodologies by previous researchers
- usefulness of potential applications of the research's findings

**Chapter 2 Literature Review**

```

    graph TD
      RP[Research problem] --> PD1[Parent discipline 1]
      RP --> PD2[Parent discipline 2]
      PD1 --> ID[Immediate discipline with the theoretical framework]
      PD2 --> ID
      ID --> RQH[Research questions/hypotheses developed from the theoretical framework to focus data collection]
  
```

Credited to Chad Perry

**Research Problems**

- outlines **the core or one big idea of the research**, starting with the **research problem** printed in **bold** or *italics* on **page 1 or 2** of the thesis.
- The research problem is **one or two sentences that cannot be answered 'yes' or 'no'**;
  - *How effective for strategic marketing in the Australian finance industry are Porter's models of competition and European models of networks?*
- Note that the **constructs** referred to in the **research problem** are **high level ones** and are **not the more specific constructs developed for hypotheses** at the end of chapter 2 or their **operational definitions** developed in chapter 3.

**how the problem is solved in the thesis**

- *How can relationships involved in interorganisational governance in marketing channels be managed?*
  - Essentially I argue that interorganisational governance is a heterogeneous phenomenon and that different relationship management strategies are appropriate under different conditions.

**Theoretical Framework (Model)**

- Classification models of the literature review and analytical models of the theoretical framework.
- *The Academy of Management Review*
- This analytical model will usually explicitly consider **relationships** between concepts, and so there will be **arrows** between the groups of concepts

Figure 1. Integrated View of Signaling in the Consumer Market

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## Research Questions

- **hypotheses**
  - Does the number of successful telemarketing calls correlate with the level of specialisation of telemarketing representatives?
  - Each *construct* in the hypothesis (for example, 'specialisation of telemarketing representatives') *must be capable of being measured*;
  - Generally speaking, the total number of research questions and/or *hypotheses* should **not exceed about four or five**; if there are more, sufficient analysis may not be done on each within the space constraints of a PhD thesis.

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## Chapter 3 Methodology

<p><b>Qualitative research</b></p> <p><b>Research problem:</b> how? why?</p> <p><b>Literature review:</b> exploratory - what are the variables involved? constructs are messy research questions are developed</p> <p><b>Paradigm:</b> critical realism/interpretive</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> for example, case study research or action research</p>	<p><b>Quantitative research</b></p> <p><b>Research problem:</b> who (how many)? what (how much)?</p> <p><b>Literature review:</b> exploratory - what are the relationships between the variables which have been previously identified and measured? hypotheses are developed</p> <p><b>Paradigm:</b> positivist</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> for example, survey or experiment</p>
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## Methodology

- describes the major methodology used to **collect the data** which will be used to **answer the hypotheses**.
- PhD research normally requires at least *350 respondents in a quantitative survey* or at least *45 interviews in four to fifteen qualitative case studies*.
- **one or two paragraph description of major statistical processes**.
- Justify the chosen methodology based upon the purpose of the research, and **justify not** using other techniques.

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## Chapter 4: Results

- After the introduction, *descriptive data* about the subjects is usually provided.
- Then the *results for each research question or hypothesis* is usually presented
- It is traditional in science to *separate the results from the discussion of their significance (Chapter 5), to preserve objectivity*.
- **Findings**
  - **summary of answers to research questions or hypotheses**

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## Chapter 5 Discussions and Conclusions

- Chapter 5 is the **most important chapter** of the thesis
- **examiners will spend much time studying chapter 5**.
- **make his or her chapter 5 worthy of the rest of the thesis**
- **make a distinct contribution to the body of knowledge**

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## Conclusions about the research problem

- implications of the research for furthering understanding of the research problem are explored.
- including those insights discovered during interviews in qualitative research which had never even been considered in the literature reviewed in chapter 2.
- the complete answer to the research problem.

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 **Implications for theory**

- conclusions are based on *findings* alone
- *not only made a significant contribution to knowledge in its immediate discipline/field*
- *but also has implications for the parent disciplines/fields* and also among other related disciplines

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 **Implications for policy and practice**

- **Examiners may be impressed if this section develops a checklist of procedures for the stakeholders which incorporates the research findings**

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 **Limitations**

- limitations that became apparent during the progress of the research
  - questionnaire results may indicate that age of respondents is a limitation
- **do not make too much of any limitations**

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 **Implications for further research**

- help students and other researchers in selection and design of future research
- Further research could refer to both **topics** and to **methodologies** or to **both**.

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 **Thesis format and styles**

- Refer to UTM Thesis Manual, 2007  
<http://sps.utm.my/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/UTM-Thesis-Manual-2007.pdf>
- A doctoral thesis/thesis **should not exceed 300 pages** excluding appendices.
- Master thesis/thesis or the Master project report **should not exceed 200 pages** excluding appendices.

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 **Evaluation of Research Student**

Evaluation for a master and doctoral student by research shall include:

a) Evaluation of Research Proposal;

A student is required to present a research proposal for evaluation purposes within the duration specified by the University, failing which the student may be given TM status.

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b) Semesterly evaluation by the supervisor;

c) Thesis examination by the Internal and External Examiners;

d) Oral defense of thesis to a Panel for Oral Examiners.

Oral defense of thesis by a student cannot be held more than twice.

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 Examiners and member of the Panel for Oral Examination for doctoral thesis/thesis are appointed by the University.

Examiners and member of the oral examination panel for master thesis/thesis are appointed by the faculty.

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 **Master Program by Research**

The Thesis Examiner should consist of at least one Internal and one External Examiners.

**Doctor of Philosophy Program**

a) The Examiners for Ph.D. Thesis must be of at least one Internal and one External Examiner;

b) The Oral Examination Panel consists of a supervisor, Internal Examiner(s), and External Examiner(s).

The supervisor is required to attend the Oral Examination Session.

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 **Preparing a Presentation for Your Thesis Defense**

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 **Build the presentation**

- Use the presentation from your proposal defense as a start
- Edit down your proposal presentation
- Summarize Chapters 1-3
- Focus on Chapters 4-5

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- Timing: The presentation should be no longer than 30 minutes
- Be sure you have the approval of your supervisor for everything in the presentation
- Practice multiple times
- Practice with your supervisor prior to the defense

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## Format

- DO
  - Select a conservative slide layout that appears professional
  - Use an easy to read font
  - Use figures and tables
- DO NOT
  - Do not add slide transitions, animation or sounds that are distracting
  - Do not crowd slides with excessive text

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## Oral Presentation

- Create notes in your presentation of the points you want to cover in your oral presentation of each slide.
- Except for things like the research questions, **do not just read** the slides.
- Your oral presentation should explain or expand on what is on the slides.

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## Title Page

Start with a title page that uses the title of the thesis

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## Topic Background

- Why this topic?
- History
- Statistics of need
- Is there a gap in the research this research addresses?

**You can use more than one slide to address each of the**

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## Problem Statement

- Your problem statement should clearly and explicitly state the reasons you are doing your study.
  - The purpose of this study is to.....

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## Importance of the Research

- How might your research impact the field of study?
- How could it impact your work as a professional?
- What else is significant?

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## Theoretical Foundation

- If it is discussed in your thesis, include a slide on the philosophical orientation of your thesis
- For example: critical theory or social constructivism
- Briefly explain why the philosophy relates to your research.

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## Conceptual Framework

- Start by introducing the major categories of literature used in your proposal.
- Give enough information to make it clear that you have a deep understanding of the literature, but this is only an overview.
- Properly cite authors and years.

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## Research Questions

- Number questions for easy reference during discussions with the committee members.
- Include **HYPOTHESES** for studies that use inferential statistics.

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## Methodology

- Define which major category of research you used for your thesis.
- Why is that appropriate to your research questions?
- Cite methodology literature in support of your choice of methodology.

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## Specifics on Methodology

Depending on your choice of methods, you may need to outline specifics such as:

- Variables—*independent, dependent, intervening*
- Participants—*number, how selected, demographics*
- Reliability and validity
- Methods of data collection
- Data analysis
- Limitations

**You may need multiple slides for these categories.**

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## FINDINGS

- ▶ Present enough detail to be convincing, but not so much that you get "lost in the weeds!"
- ▶ Use tables and figures from your thesis.
- ▶ Call attention to significant findings.
- ▶ Address how the findings relate to the research questions and hypotheses (if you have them).

**You will need multiple slides for this section.**

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## Conclusions

- What did you learn?
- How are the findings related to the conceptual framework from the literature?
- Discuss strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of your work.

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## Implications

- For future scholarship/research
- For practitioners
- Other?

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## Recommendations

- For changes in theoretical constructs
- For public policy
- For changes in related practice

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## References

- List only those cited in the presentation.
- One slide should be enough
  - (everything else is included in your thesis!)

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## Thank You

- Thank the members of the committee.

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## Research Management

- At the start of the first semester, read the
  - Expectation of Supervision
    - [E:\UNP0010 Research Methodology Jan 2014\RESEARCH METHODOLOGY\SEM2\\_20132014\Managing Research\Supervision Expectation Form.pdf](E:\UNP0010 Research Methodology Jan 2014\RESEARCH METHODOLOGY\SEM2_20132014\Managing Research\Supervision Expectation Form.pdf)
    - Discuss respective expectations

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## ii. MOU of Supervision

- [E:\UNP0010 Research Methodology Jan 2014\RESEARCH METHODOLOGY\SEM2\\_20132014\Managing Research\MOU of Supervision.pdf](E:\UNP0010 Research Methodology Jan 2014\RESEARCH METHODOLOGY\SEM2_20132014\Managing Research\MOU of Supervision.pdf)
  - Roles of the student and supervisor
  - Frequency of meetings
  - Deliverables

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## Plagiarism Check

- Turnitin Report for each individual chapter
- Similarity index must be less than 20%

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## Maximizing your research output

- Intellectual Property
- Commercialization (Copyright, Patent)
- Publications
- Exhibition

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## Managing conflicts

- Try to discuss amicably (student – supervisor) and avoid involvement of faculty admin.
- But if conflict cannot be resolved, talk to the coordinator and/or Academic Manager.

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