

Research Proposal - Dissertation

CHECK-LIST

1. Formal Aspects

- Length:
 - Maximum of 5000 words (excluding Front cover, Index, and Bibliography).
 - The literature review should be between 2000 words (minimum) and 2500 words (maximum).
- Includes cover with identification of the author, title, name of the Course Unit and Word Limit;
- Includes Index (including Index of Figures or Index of Tables, if relevant);
- Pages are numbered;
- Table formatting (including caption) complies with formatting rules adopted by ISEG;
- Figure formatting (including caption) complies with formatting rules adopted at ISEG;
- ‘Bibliographic References’ section complies with Harvard Referencing system, adopted at ISEG;
- In-text Citations comply with Harvard Referencing system, adopted at ISEG;
- Avoid using indirect references (‘cit in’) in the text.

2. Outline

- **Introduction**
 - Provides a justification of the topic, supported by evidence in the literature.
 - Identifies the dissertation argument
 - Identifies (and defines, by reference to the literature) the key concepts in the topic;
 - Identifies the Research Question (and, if applicable) the Hypothesis;
 - Describes the structure of the Research Proposal.
- **Literature Review**
 - Per each key concept in your topic, there should be a section that:
 - Identifies and describes the different forms of conceptualising and operationalising the concept in question;
 - When applicable, describes how a given conceptualisation reflects an underlying theoretical standpoint;
 - Situates the dissertation’s contribution to the identified concepts and debates (What is new?);
 - In addition to this, there should be a section that explores the empirical evidence on your topic, namely:
 - Methodological approaches used in other studies, and a justification of your methodological approach against that background;

- Empirical evidence of previous research in your topic that guides the development of your data collection and analytical approach (a) what methods you choose, what is the reason for that, b) what analytical approach, to what ends;
- Empirical evidence on how similar studies brought theoretical insights when dealing with similar issues/topics elsewhere, and
- Explain why your dissertation will have an impact and add to that existing research and theoretical debates (frame your work critically within existing literature).
- Includes reflection on positionality of the researcher in similar studies and how it shaped data collection/interpretation (if relevant).
- **Research Question & Hypotheses**
 - Specifies the Research Question in a clear and understandable manner;
 - If applicable, it specifies the Hypotheses that will be subjected to empirical validation.
- **Methodology**
 - Identifies the Methodological Approach (Qualitative/Quantitative/Mixed);
 - Identifies the data collection method that will be applied;
 - Identifies the research context, sampling criteria and the data collection tools (e.g. interviews, participant observation, focus groups, participatory methods, etc.) and the ethical considerations will be addressed (e.g., informed consent, anonymity, data protection);
 - Provides a justification for the choice of methods and outlines the researcher's positionality and reflexivity strategies (especially if the research involves immersive, participatory, or ethnographic methods)
 - Identifies how the key concepts will be operationalized;
 - Identifies the data analysis strategy (content analysis, discourse analysis, etc.) explaining why and how it relates to the sampling procedures and data collection tools;
 - Explains how the validity and reliability of the data will be ensured (e.g., triangulation, member checking, thick description).
 - Describes limitations of the methodological approach and how these will be mitigated or acknowledged.
 - Provides a timeline for data collection and analysis phases.
- **Bibliography**
 - At least 20 references (effectively used in the body of the text).