



## Marketing Research: Project 3 (MRP302)

### Guidelines for the writing of a research proposal

The purpose of this access module is to prepare you for the research component found in the B Phil (Honours) in Marketing Management – a degree in which research is a major requirement.

Once you have worked through these comprehensive guidelines for the writing of a research proposal, you are required to submit a **proposal** for a marketing research topic of your choice by **14 May 2012** to by using the **upload button** on the IMM GSM web [www.immqsm.ac.za](http://www.immqsm.ac.za)

There are NO examinations for this module. The only assessment is the submission of a proposal.

#### 1. Introduction

A research proposal suggests how your dissertation/thesis will be conducted. It can be viewed as your '**plan of the research**'. This document outlines how you propose to undertake your research studies. The proposal has to be accepted before you can start with your research.

The research proposal can be viewed as a document that embodies the logic of your research and can be viewed as a tool to give you clarification of your thoughts.

## 2. What is the research proposal?

### A research proposal is

- a document to outline your thinking about the research problem.
- the questions you wish to study and how it should be done.
- the approach to the study and the resources you will select.
- used to clarify your thoughts on your research.
- a document that indicates whether you have done sufficient preparation for the study.
- used by the supervisor to judge how much thought has gone into your research and whether you have an idea of where you are heading in your research study (Mouton 2001:45).
- the basis of the working relationship between you and your supervisor (not unlike a contract or agreement).
- a document used to tell the supervisor what you wish to study and how you are planning to do it.
- a document, once accepted by the supervisor, that implies certain responsibilities and duties to both parties as the supervisor agrees to provide you with the necessary guidance and supervision to achieve the set objectives (not a legally bounded document).

## 3. The research proposal (design)

A good research proposal gives the reader a clear and consistent outline of what is to be studied, what are the objectives of the research, what type of study will be conducted (research design), how the research will be conducted (research methodology) as well as the envisaged time-frame and resources required.

The research proposal should express the research logic for your studies. This document embodies your thinking on the research topic and therefore follows the same

logic and principles of research – important therefore to initially take cognisance of basic principles of research.

The research proposal is a key document that is both a backward- and forward-looking document.

- It documents the researcher's thinking thus far (primarily about the formulation of the research problem and research design).
- It also outlines the anticipated events (research methodology; time-frame and thesis structure).

This dual nature of the proposal is concretely reflected in the use of past tense (sometimes the present tense) for the first two phases and the future tense when writing about the research process to follow.

In drafting your proposal, carefully consider the following points:

- Show evidence that you have a clear area of interest.
- Show evidence that you have a specific research issue or question within that area of interest.
- Show evidence that you have some interesting and original thinking around the research issue or question.
- Show evidence that you can explain your ideas and thought processes clearly and concisely.
- Show evidence that you already have some knowledge of the topic that you propose to research – for example, you need to show your awareness of particularly important works in the existing literature.
- Show evidence that your project is worth pursuing.

#### **4. Structure of the research proposal**

The guidelines below will assist you in producing your proposal and help you address some questions or concerns.

### **Proposal Presentation**

Proposals need to be presented in the form of short text (not exceeding 1500 words).

### **Content and Layout**

#### **Cover page**

Title, name of author and the date of the proposal

#### **Content pages**

##### **Background**

(One or two paragraphs)

The background contains a brief overview of the proposed research. It should describe the context of the proposed study and introduce the reader to the topic.

##### **Problem statement**

(Two or three paragraphs)

An indication of what is to be studied formulated as a research problem. The research problem may also be formulated as more than one specific research question. This problem statement should include an explanation why the specified problem or area of research is worth investigating.

Bear in mind that a research dissertation is not a book. A book usually addresses a series of loosely related topics, but a dissertation is more tightly focused, with a carefully detailed scope. Research proposals – including successful ones – often start off as

being overly ambitious, so it is important to remember that the more broad ranging a proposal is, the harder it is to see a coherent dissertation developing from it.

### **Research objectives**

(One paragraph)

The research objectives will flow logically from the research questions formulated as part of the 'problem statement'.

### **The research hypotheses (if applicable)**

(One paragraph)

While writing this, keep in mind that you should be guided by the requirement for this section to contain explicit indications of **what** you expect to find in your investigation and analysis of the chosen topic. In addition, the hypotheses should also imply **how** this will be achieved. The **how** is your research design and should be such that the hypotheses will be unequivocally supported or rejected by the results of your investigation.

A hypothesis is a statement of a predicted outcome, which will either be supported or disproved by the research. Two types of hypothesis are commonly used in experimental research:

- **The null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>)**, where the researcher usually takes as a point of departure the opinion that there will be no difference between the experimental group and the control group.
- **The alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>)**, which is set up against the null hypothesis and in which the researcher assumes that a difference does exist between the experimental group and the control group.

For example, a researcher wishes to determine the influence of group discussion classes on the throughput rate of first-year students.

**Null hypothesis:** There is no difference in the throughput of first year students who attend group discussions and those who do not.

**Alternative hypothesis:** There is a difference in the throughput rate of first year students who attend discussion classes and those who do not.

### **The scope and limitations of the proposed research**

(Two to three paragraphs)

Provide some indication of how extensive your research process will be and detail any potential hurdles that may crop up in the research process. Also provide detail on the limitations (if any) to the research study.

### **Literature review**

(Two pages)

This plays an important part in the inductive research process – you need to display that you understand the topic and the related theory. You must supply evidence of having covered some part of the extensive body of literature that is relevant to the research topic. In the absence of a literature review a research design document is inclined to be shallow without making any significant contribution.

Remember that your discussion of the existing literature must be correctly referenced using the IMM GSM guidelines attached to this document.

### **The research plan**

(One page)

This section details the proposed method of measurement (research methodology) and should include the following sub-headings:

- A description of the research subjects, a description of the research design, i.e. exploratory, descriptive, casual, predictive, etc.
- The sampling plan (if applicable).

- The instruments that will be used for data collection.
- A brief description of the research procedures that will be followed.

The hypotheses explicitly indicate what you expect to find as a result of your research but they also imply how the results will be achieved. The test for this section is that the research plan must be designed to produce outcomes or results which will either confirm or reject the hypotheses.

### **Proposed methods for processing, analysing and interpreting the data**

(One page)

A broad distinction is made in research between QUANTITATIVE (for example, statistical or experimental studies) and QUALITATIVE (for example, biographical narratives or case studies) research.

According to Creswell (1994) quantitative research may be summarised as follows:

- Data are in the form of numbers.
- The focus is concise and narrow.
- Data are collected by means of structured instruments such as questionnaires.
- Results supply less detail as far as behaviour, attitudes and motivation are concerned.
- Results are based on larger sample sizes representative of the population.
- Hypothesis may be tested.
- Knowledge is based on the relationship between cause and effect.
- The use of numbers allows greater precision in reporting results.

Many quantitative techniques may be used and the most widely used are:

- **Experimental method:** When researchers need to show that method A produces better results than method B.
- **Observation techniques:** When researchers wish to record occurrences or the patterns of behaviour of subjects, or to communicate with them in a particular way.
- **Survey research:** When researchers wish to conduct research on a large scale and where a sample of respondents is drawn from a given population. There are various survey techniques, such as questionnaires, telephone surveys, emails, and Internet surveys.

According to Schwandt (2001) the key aspects of qualitative research include the following:

- Relies on data in the form of words.
- Seeks meaning of human action.
- Depends on description to express their data.
- Various research methods are used in qualitative research but the most common is the interview.

### **Timeline and anticipated deadline dates of the critical milestones**

(Half page)

Your proposal must set out a timeline with critical points indicated in the process, such as the completion date expected for the literature review, the time allowed for the collection of data, the review and analysis of data, etc., as well as the proposed completion date.

## **Potential outcomes and conclusion**

(One page)

You need to indicate the following in this section:

- Possible findings
- Possible recommendations
- Possible implications.

## **Reference list**

A reference list of all cited literature should be attached to the research proposal and should be in the correct technical format as prescribed by the Harvard Referencing System. Please find the reference document attached.



## REFERENCING

### 1. Plagiarism and referencing

#### 1.1 What is plagiarism?

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offence:

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 'to plagiarise' means:

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

#### 1.2 What can be considered to be plagiarism?

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the greater part of your work, whether you give credit or not.

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing or referencing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism.

#### 1.3 Are IMM GSM students required to use a reference system?

All assignments and dissertations produced by IMM GSM students must include *in-text* citations. Each citation requires a **reference** at the end listing the sources of the citation. The two types of references always go hand in hand. This means that for each in-text reference a corresponding entry should be included in the list of references at the end of the document. The contrary is also true: for each entry in the list of references, an in-text reference should be included in the text. A Bibliography on the other hand is a list of items that have been used in preparation of the assignment or dissertation but that you have not necessarily cited in the text.

IMM GSM follows the **Harvard Referencing System** in the list of sources for such academic texts. As it is not possible to reproduce the total **Harvard Referencing System** in this document, only a couple of basic pointers are given.

#### **1.4 Why should sources be referenced?**

Giving credit to the original author by referencing sources is the only way to use other people's work without plagiarising. But there are a number of other reasons to reference sources:

- References are extremely helpful to anyone who wants to find out more about your ideas and where they came from.
- Not all sources are good or right – your own ideas may often be more accurate or interesting than those of your sources. Proper references will protect you from taking the blame for someone else's bad ideas.
- Referencing sources shows the amount of research you've done.
- Referencing sources strengthens your work by lending outside support to your ideas.

#### **1.5 When should sources be referenced?**

Whenever you borrow words or ideas, you need to acknowledge their source. The following situations almost always require referencing:

- Whenever you use quotes.
- Whenever you paraphrase.
- Whenever you use an idea that someone else has already expressed.
- Whenever you make specific reference to the work of another.
- Whenever someone else's work has been critical in developing your own ideas.

## 2. In-Text referencing

### 2.1 Aspects to remember when in-text referencing is used

- In the author-date style, in-text citations usually require the name of the author(s) and the year of publication
- A page number is included if you have a direct quote, paraphrase a passage or want to direct the reader to a specific page. Page numbers may also be included if you are referencing a long work – the page numbers might be useful to the reader
- Using the Harvard Referencing System, a brief citation to a source is given in parentheses within the text and the full source is given in alphabetical order under the “List of References”.

### 2.2 Examples of in-text referencing

When referring to an author’s work, the author’s surname and the year of publication are placed in the text in parentheses.	In competitive markets, a marketing approach is a means to an end (Kotler, 2004).
The alternative format to this is:	Kotler (2004) is convinced that in competitive markets...
To refer to a particular page of a work enter the reference as shown. This is usually done when a direct quote has been used:	“Private ownership allows wealth to be distributed unequally” (Kotler, 2004, p.253).
Citing a range of pages:	(Kotler, 2004, pp.253-264)
Citing a work that has two authors is written with an “and” in the text:	The work of Smith and Norris (2005) ...
However, citing two authors inside of brackets an ampersand (&) is used:	(Smith & Norris, 2005)
If there are three or more authors the first time you mention them in full:	(Smith, Norris & Van Wyk, 2005)
If there are three or more authors, the second or subsequent reference is as follows:	(Smith <i>et al.</i> , 2005)
If more than one work by an author, written in the same year, is to be cited, distinguish the works by placing “a”, “b” or “c” after the publication date:	Van Wyk, (2005a) or Van Wyk,(2005c) or (Van Wyk, 2005a)
If there is no specific author of a publication, but it has been written by an organisation, then the name of the organisation is used:	Initially IMM Graduate School of Marketing (2005) Thereafter IMM GSM (2005)
If there is no specific author of a publication, and it has not been written by an organisation, then you may use:	(Anon., 2006)

### 3. Reference List and Bibliography

- A reference list contains only the books, articles, and web pages, etc. that are referred to in the text of the document. A reference list will always be included at the end of an assignment, dissertation or article.
- A bibliography includes all sources consulted for background or further reading. This is also included at the end of the text.
- Both are arranged alphabetically by author. If an item has no author, it is cited by title, and included in the alphabetical list using the first significant word of the title.
- If you have more than one item by the same author, list the items chronologically, starting with the earliest publication.
- Each item appears on a new line.
- There is no indentation and no numbering of the items.

**Note: All IMM GSM assignments and dissertations require a reference list but not usually a bibliography.**

#### 3.1 Books

The particulars of every entry for a book in the reference list and bibliography must be stated in the following order:

**Author(s)** (surname with capital first letter followed by a comma)

**Initials** (in capital letters with a full stop after each and a comma following the last full stop)

**Year of publication** (followed by a full-stop)

**Title** (in italics, followed by a full-stop)

**Edition** (except the first, use the number followed by ed. And followed by a full stop)

**Place of publication** (town or city followed by a colon :)

**Publisher** (followed by a full-stop)

Description	In-text citation	Reference List
One author	Wegner (2007, p.3) would indicate...	Wegner, T., 2007. <i>Applied Business Statistics: methods and Excel-based applications</i> . 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. Cape Town: Juta.
Two authors	(Cateora & Graham 2007, p.149)	Cateora, P. & Graham, J., 2007. <i>International Marketing</i> . 13 <sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
Three or more authors	<b>Initially:</b> Perreault, W. D, Cannon, J.P. and McCarthy, E.J., (2009, p.51)  <b>Thereafter:</b> Perrault et al. (2009, p.51)	Perreault, W. D., Cannon, J.P. and McCarthy, E.J., 2009. <i>Basic Marketing: A marketing strategy planning approach</i> . 17 <sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
Editor	(ed. Jooste et al, 2009, p.201)	Jooste, C.J., Strydom, J.W., Berndt, A. & du Plessis, P. J. (eds.) 2009. Sandton: Heinemann.
Author and an editor	(Mazinter 2004, p.515)	Mazinter, L., 2004, 'New Media in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century', In Koekemoer, L ed. <i>Marketing Communication</i> , Lansdowne: Juta, p.515

Dictionaries	(Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 1989, p.104)	<i>Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary</i> . 1989. London: Oxford University Press.
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### 3.2 Journal articles

The particulars of an article from a journal must be laid out in the following order:

**Author (s)** (surname and initials, separated by a comma) Initials (in capital letters with a full stop after each and a comma following the last full stop)

**Year of publication** (followed by a full-stop)

**Title of the article** (followed by a full-stop.)

**The journal's name** (in italics followed by a comma)

**Month/season, date** (followed by a comma)

**Volume** (abbreviated to vol. followed by a full-stop)

**Number** (abbreviated to no. followed by a full-stop)

**Page(s)** p. or pp.

**Date article viewed if online** [in square brackets]

Surname of author, initials of author. Year of publication. Title of journal article. *Title of Journal*, volume (number): page number(s) of article.

Description	In-text citation	Reference List
Online	(Alexander, 2004, p.212)	Alexander, P.M., 2004. Diversity at a dual-medium university: factors affecting first year students' attitudes. [Online] <i>Journal name</i> , vol. 18, no. 1, pp.202-220 Available from: <a href="http://www.website.com">www.website.com</a> . [Accessed: 19 June 2005]
Paper copy	(Malesa, 2009, p.23)	Malesa, N., 2009. Science fiction shopping. <i>Strategic Marketing</i> , Vol. 5 pp. 22-24.

### 3.3 Newspaper articles

The particulars of a newspaper article must be stated in the following order:

**Author(s)** (followed by a full-stop)

**Year** (followed by a full-stop)

**Title of the article** (followed by a full-stop)

**Title of the newspaper** (in italics, followed by a comma)

**Edition date** (followed by a comma)

**Page(s)** (followed by a full-stop)

Description	In-text citation	Reference List
Paper copy	(Smillie & Flanagan, 2009, p.1)	Smillie, S. & Flanagan, L. 2009. Mom finds body in car boot. <i>The Star</i> , 2 October p.1.

### 3.4 World Wide Web Addresses

In-text citation	Reference List
(IMM GSM, 2009)	IMM GSM, 2009. <i>Prospectus and Yearbook</i> . [Online]. Available at: <a href="http://www.imm.co.za/registration/prospectus/">http://www.imm.co.za/registration/prospectus/</a> [Accessed: 3 October 2009]

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

For more information about referencing and drafting of a bibliography consult:

*Harvard referencing* 2009 [Online] Available from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvard\\_referencing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvard_referencing)  
[Accessed: 25 September 2009]

Nicholson, I. 2000. *Harvard referencing*. 2nd ed. Brisbane, Queensland: Moreton Institute of TAFE. [Online] Available from:  
[www.home.gil.com.au/~jandi/harvard/Harvard\\_v.2.02.pdf](http://www.home.gil.com.au/~jandi/harvard/Harvard_v.2.02.pdf)

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. 1989. London: Oxford University Press.

International Standards Organization. (2002), *Bibliographic references to electronic documents*. [Online], Available from: <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/iso/tc46sc9/standard/690-2e.htm> [Accessed: 21 May 2002].

Snooks & Co. 2002. *Style manual for authors, editors and printers*, 6th ed. John Wiley & Sons, Milton Qld.

*What is a citation?* 2009. [Online] Available from:  
[http://www.plagiarism.org/plag\\_article\\_what\\_is\\_citation.html](http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_article_what_is_citation.html) [Accessed: 03 October 2009]

*What is plagiarism?* 2009. [Online] Available from:  
[http://www.plagiarism.org/plag\\_article\\_what\\_is\\_plaigarism.html](http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_article_what_is_plaigarism.html) [Accessed: 03 October 2009]