



RESEARCH PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

The research proposal guidelines are prepared for applicants to the ISM Doctoral Programme in Management.

A research proposal is the preliminary plan of a doctoral dissertation. A research proposal should include the following parts:

- Introduction
- The analysis of the current state of research
- Research methodology
- Research limitations
- References

Title

The title shall be concise and define the essence and scope of the planned research. It should include the main keywords of research that may reflect dependent and independent variables and the relationship between them, researched process, and/or certain contextual factors, which are intended to be studied.

Introduction

The introduction should include the following elements: relevance of the study, research gaps and research problem (or research question), research aim, research objectives, research methodology, scientific contribution, and limitations of the intended doctoral research.

The relevance of the study demonstrates the importance and timeliness of the intended research in academic and practical contexts.

Research gaps identify deficiencies in previous studies, including unexplored areas, inconsistencies, and contradictory findings. Based on the identified gaps, the research problem or research question should be formulated.

The research aim states the essential aspiration and expected outcome of the doctoral research.

Research objectives specify the key stages of the research process leading to the achievement of the aim. Clearly formulated objectives help to structure both theoretical grounding and empirical examination.

The dissertation title, research problem, aim, and objectives must be closely interrelated.

The research methodology briefly describes the research methods applied.

Scientific contributions demonstrate how the intended research is expected to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the research field. The contributions should address the identified research gaps.

The limitations of the dissertation define the scope and boundaries of the intended research.

The analysis of the current state of research

The aim of this section is to disclose the existing level of knowledge in the research area. The literature analysis should demonstrate that the intended research is solidly grounded in previous studies and based on a critical analysis of scientific literature and existing empirical evidence.

The author is expected to review the main studies in the chosen research area and identify gaps, contradictions, inconsistencies, and unresolved theoretical and practical issues. This section should clearly justify the need for further research and explain how the proposed study intends to address the identified gaps. It should provide an overview of the key sources, major studies, schools of thought, theories,

concepts, and relevant debates related to the research topic. Where appropriate, the author should compare different theoretical perspectives and critically evaluate their strengths and limitations.

The development of the text should be coherent, critical, and logically structured, respecting the main principles of the literature review. The literature analysis should not be descriptive; it should demonstrate the author's ability to synthesize, compare, and critically evaluate existing knowledge.

The final part of this section shall summarize the literature review, highlight the identified research gaps, unresolved issues, contradictions, or limitations in previous studies, and logically demonstrate how the intended research will address these limitations and move research forward. It may introduce the conceptual framework, propose hypotheses, or provide directions for the empirical investigation.

The literature analysis shall be based on scientific literature, such as peer-reviewed scientific articles (from scientific databases), monographs, books, dissertations, and research reports. The use of textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and non-scientific periodicals should be avoided.

Research methodology

This section shall include a preliminary methodological approach, provisional data collection method (s), and data analysis techniques. The research methodology may contain the description of the level of analysis, unit of analysis, and unit of observation. The author is expected to demonstrate the appropriateness of methodological decisions to the aim of the research and the nature of the research problem.

Research limitations

Research limitations show the scope of research, the boundary conditions of conclusions, and research findings.

Referencing and formatting requirements

The research proposal shall be written in English. The recommended length of the proposal is up to 5,000 words. All in-text citations and references should follow the APA 7th edition citation and referencing guidelines.

Research ethics

The research proposal shall be prepared in accordance with research ethics requirements. Intellectual property must be protected, and plagiarism and self-plagiarism are not tolerated. All research proposals are checked for plagiarism. For more information, please visit the ISM Research Ethics webpage <https://www.ism.lt/en/about-ism/academic-ethics/>.