

Guidelines for Writing a Doctoral Research Proposal

Faculty of Medicine - **For Health Sciences**

Guidelines for Submitting a Research Proposal for the PhD Track

The research proposal may be written in Hebrew or English.

Linguistic clarity, conciseness, and precision will be taken into account.

The proposal must be typed as follows:

- **Hebrew:** Ariel font, size 11 (titles may be larger and bold).
- **English:** Times New Roman font, size 12 (titles may be larger and bold).

The proposal must be submitted as a **PDF file**, on **A4 paper format**, with **1.5 line spacing** and **2–3 cm margins** on all sides.

Bibliography, footnotes, and references must be printed with **single spacing**. Bibliography may be in font size 10. The bibliography must be generated using a citation management software (e.g., Mendeley).

The student must submit the proposal to the Graduate Studies Office by email as a PDF file: **med.tm@biu.ac.il**

Please note:

If the dissertation changes significantly from the approved research proposal, the differences must be stated, including a detailed explanation of the changes and the reasons for them.

This document outlines the central and general expectations from a PhD candidate on **the doctoral research proposal document**.

- Any fundamental change in the research process must only be made after receiving approval from the advisor.

1. The Research Proposal Must Include:

A. Title Page- With the proposal title in Hebrew and English.

B. Table of Contents

C. Abstract- In Hebrew or English — up to one page.

D. Theoretical Background (2–4 pages)

This section should include a review of the theoretical literature relevant to the study and the knowledge accumulated in the field.

Theoretical framework and literature review:

The guiding principle is moving from general to specific. Do not organize this chapter chronologically by the date of publication. The opening paragraph is the broadest; the subsequent

paragraphs develop the theoretical background using existing literature and your own arguments to lead toward the research questions and hypotheses. The literature supports the theoretical thinking.

The research hypothesis or question at the end of this section should clarify the specific problem presented earlier. The goal of the background is to lead logically to the hypothesis/question and to justify its importance.

You should identify gaps in the existing literature and explain what still needs to be studied. Show the logical continuity between previous research and your own study -how it extends or relates to them.

Reviewers will ask themselves: **“What will we know after this research that we did not know before?”** and **“Will we learn something important?”**

Make sure you can answer the inevitable question that will follow your work: SO WHAT?

You may conclude the chapter with a paragraph summarizing existing knowledge gaps.

E. Importance, Research Aims, and Hypotheses (1–2 pages)

At the end of the introduction, present:

- Importance of the research
- General goal
- Specific objectives
- Research hypotheses

The research problem may be presented as a hypothesis predicting relationships between variables, or a well-formulated research question, or a central working hypothesis.

The literature review must lead to this hypothesis or central question. There may be more than one central hypothesis or problem.

For qualitative research, a hypothesis may not exist -instead, formulate a research question or working hypothesis. Similarly, for exploratory data-driven research, state the research question.

From the literature review, formulate the study’s contribution and innovation:

- Why is the research important?
- What issues or questions have not yet been examined?
- How will the research contribute to the field?

Also specify:

- Originality and innovation
- Potential direct or indirect impact on human health

- Expected contribution to scientific knowledge

Innovation may also be presented at the end of the Methods chapter if it involves methodological or theoretical development.

F. Research Methods (2–4 pages)

If using new methods, detail the innovation. There must be a clear match between the methods and the research problem.

For Quantitative/Observational Research:

Study design:

The opening paragraph describes the overall study design.

The Methods chapter must include details on:

- **Population:**
Description of the sample or participants, study design type, target population, study population, sampling method, recruitment method, sample size and justification (e.g., power analysis, if relevant).
- **Instruments:**
Detailed description of all research instruments (for example, questionnaires) and how they were developed. If using tools/instruments developed by others, cite sources. Describe if and how you contribute in any way to the development of the instrument as part of the research. Include validity and reliability when relevant.
- **Procedure (data collection):**
Describe how the study was conducted, for example:
how participants were identified, contacted, consented, how long the meeting took, etc.
This section will also include the list of variables in your study (derived from the hypotheses presented in the previous chapters). For each variable, if possible at the proposal stage and when relevant, explain how it will be measured. Refer to:
 - Dependent variable(s)
 - Independent variable(s)
 - Other key variables (potential confounders, moderators, mediators)

Describe how you will minimize:

- Selection bias
- Information bias
- Approaches to handling confounders

Describe quality control and handling of missing data.

Statistical methods and approaches for data analysis: Specify which approach will be used according to the research objectives. Also include the software used for all calculations and analyses, along with the relevant references for these programs.

For Quantitative Interventional/Experimental Research:

Add:

- Description of the experimental procedure
- Study location
- Participant tasks
- Data collected before/after
- Tools used
- Any additional relevant information on how the experiment fits to the research question.

For Qualitative Research:

- Research approach: Which qualitative methodology fits the research question and why? (e.g., discourse analysis, interviews, ethnography, narrative research, phenomenology)
- Study population and justification
- Sampling method and data collection process, including challenges with sensitive populations
- Reflexivity (field notes, personal notes)
- Research tools (interviews, focus groups, ethnography, digital ethnography, etc.)
- Quality assurance and data validity (transparency, detailed description of data collection and analysis, saturation)
- Data analysis: thematic, comparative, narrative, discourse analysis, etc. Analysis should be conducted with advisor involvement at all stages.

Students are encouraged to transcribe interviews themselves,
as analysis begins during transcription.

- Anticipated limitations and challenges

Ethical considerations- For qualitative and quantitative studies- attach IRB/Helsinki approval where relevant, including approval number.

G. Preliminary Results and Discussion (1–2 pages)

If preliminary data exist, present and analyze them regarding the research question or hypothesis.
If multiple questions/hypotheses exist, divide into sub-sections.
Discuss whether results support the hypotheses.

The preliminary findings chapter will focus not only on reporting the results, but also on analyzing them. It should present arguments and reasoning that highlight the research problem and either support or don't support the hypothesis you proposed, or answer the research question you raised. You must explain whether the findings support the hypotheses or not.

In qualitative research, describe preparatory steps for fieldwork: What preparations did you make before entering the field? Contacts? Ethical approvals? Interview guide?

H. Future Research Plan (1–2 pages)

Include:

- Timeline
- Required resources, equipment, or facilities
- Expected challenges and how they will be addressed

I. Full Bibliography

Include only sources cited in the proposal.

J. Appendices

Examples: questionnaires, consent forms, systematic literature review summary, photos, maps, interview lists, etc.

Appendices must be listed in the table of contents.

Proposal Length

A strong PhD proposal may be up to **10 pages**.

If preliminary results exist: up to **15 pages** (excluding references).

With advisor approval, proposals may reach up to **20 pages** (excluding references).

The suggested page allocation described for each section does not necessarily fit every study and it is a general recommendation and common practice. If the proposal exceeds this limit, it may be returned for shortening, which may delay review and approval. A longer proposal is not necessarily a better one.

The student must submit the proposal to the Graduate Studies Office
by email as a PDF: **med.tm@biu.ac.il**