**DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY**

**INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION**

**Guide on Applying for Postgraduate Research Studies**

**Student Guide to Postgraduate Research Admissions Process**

**DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION**

**Writing a Research Proposal for Postgraduate Research Study**

As part of your application to any of the masters/ PhD by research programmes at DCU Institute of Education, you are required to complete a research proposal. In this proposal, you describe the research study you plan to undertake. As such, it is a vital part of your application process.

The research proposal involves a considerable amount of preparation. You will generally be expected to have refined your initial research ideas through critical analysis of some of the academic literature relevant to your topic. You will also be expected to have reflected on the nature of your proposed research and its potential impact/s. In this document, we present a set of guidelines to show you what is involved in the writing of a research proposal and to help you structure your research proposal effectively.

**What should the research proposal consist of?**

In essence, your research proposal should answer three questions:

* What do you want to investigate?
* Why do you want to investigate it?
* How are you going to investigate it?

Your aim is to demonstrate that you have begun the process of refining your ideas for a research topic and that you have the capability to research at the level of the programme. One of the ways to demonstrate this is to show how your research idea relates to published research. You need also to show that you have given some thought as to why your research ideas are worth researching.

**How should the research proposal be structured?**

Please see below the structure for the research proposal. There are five main sections, as outlined:

***Section One: Overview of Proposed Research Study*** (max. 300 words in length)

In this section, you should aim to give a clear, concise description of your research idea. You will need to articulate aims and objectives of your research study, and compose key research question/s that will be explored in your study. Think about and respond to the following:

* What is this a study of? What do you want to investigate?
* Why do you feel your research topic and proposed study is important?
* What are the aims and objectives of the research study?
* What are the research question/s?

This requires some skill in writing economically and you may find it easier to complete this section after you have written a draft of the full proposal.

***Section Two: Preliminary Literature Review*** (max. 600 words in length)

In this section you will describe the relationship between your research study and existing research. Try to respond to the following points/ questions. They are designed to make you think about the relationship between the existing academic literature (academic books, papers, etc.) and your own research idea.

* Are there research studies that have been undertaken in the target area/s of interest? What have been the main findings from these studies? Explain how these research studies/ findings have informed or may inform your proposed research study.
* Suggest how your research study/ project could make a new contribution to knowledge. Try to explain how your research study is expected to add to, develop, or, indeed, challenge, the state-of-the-art (literature/ research) in your area/s of interest for this study. For example: Outline expected contributions to existing academic knowledge, existing theories, methodology, practice and/ or policy.

**Section Three: Proposed Research Methodology** (max. 500 words in length)

In this section, you should provide a general overview of the proposed research methodology. Within this section, please respond to the following, as they should help clarify your proposed research approach:

* *What type of study do you intend? Quantitative study/ Qualitative study/ Both, etc.*
* *Who do you expect to gather data from in order to explore the research question/s? Think about* whose opinions, attitudes, dispositions, beliefs, practices, actions etc. need to be garnered (for example: *Teachers, Trainers, trainees, learners, policy-makers, etc.), and how many will be needed.*
* *How do you expect to collect the data (for example: Data can be collected using a diverse range of tools, such as Surveys, Interviews, Focus groups, Observations, Statistical information from web engines, etc.)? When might you collect this data? Will there be a number of phases of data collection and analysis?*
* *Are there Ethical, Political, Access or other considerations that you think you may need to address? Explain.*

**Section Four: Reason for choosing DCU Institute of Education** (max. 100 words in length)

In this section, you should explain why you want to engage in research within the DCU Institute of Education.

**Section Five: Preliminary Bibliography** (no word limit)

In this section, you should give an alphabetical list of all published material you have read on the issue you intend researching. For the most part, you should confine your reading to academic research published in academic books and journals. (This section is not included in the total word count for the research proposal).

It should be noted that this research proposal format may not be appropriate for articulating all types of research initiatives – for example, it may not be suitable (in its entirety) for articulating research of theoretical/ philosophical nature. The FRAP panel require any deviation from this guiding framework for research proposal to be accompanied by an explanation/ sound rationale as to why a different structure for the research proposal was required.

**Deadline for Submission:**

Please see [DCU Institute of Education website](http://www.dcu.ie/institute_of_education/Opportunities-for-Research.shtml) for up-to-date information on deadlines for submission to Faculty Research Admissions Panel for each academic year. There will be FRAP meetings to process PhD/ Masters by Research studies applications in February, March, April, May, June, September, October and November. [Please note applications are not processed by FRAP in the following months: December, January, July, or August.] The first in-take of PhD and/ or Masters by Research students for each academic year begins in March and ends in November**.**  If you have any queries about this process, please contact: **ioe-research-office@dcu.ie**