Research project: the research proposal

A research proposal is a plan or outline of your proposed research project. It is used to demonstrate that you have identified a suitable question/problem to investigate and an appropriate approach to investigate the question/problem. Below is an example of what a research proposal might generally include; however always check your project guidelines for any specific requirements or variations to this structure.

Structure of a research proposal

Title page This is a separate page with the title of the report, your name, student ID and other identifying details as requested.
Introduction This section provides contextual information to set the scene for your research project. You will also discuss why this research is needed and the broad aims and objectives.
Research questions Clearly and concisely state your research questions and what you are going to investigate. Express this as a question, hypothesis or proposition (depends on research project type).
Literature review This is a detailed presentation of information related to your proposed research. Draw on literature related to your topic including journal articles, reports and other scholarly sources and identify a gap in the literature which your project will attempt to fill.
Research design (methodology) This section details how you will you go about answering your research question/s. Includes what type of data will be collected and how, as well as how it will be analysed. States any limitations (e.g. size of project, time available, resourcing issues).
Research timeline (if required) This section details what activities or tasks will be undertaken in your research and when.
References This is a list of the references cited in the proposal. For further guidance about referencing and avoiding plagiarism, check the UniSA website on referencing.
Appendices (if required) This includes extra materials and is placed at the end of the research report as including them in the main section may distract from the flow of the discussion.

References

Monash University 2014, 'Writing a proposal in education', Monash University, viewed 15 December, 2012, < http://www.monash.edu.au/education/research/degrees/proposal-writing>.