

Masters Thesis Research Proposal Guidelines

PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSAL

The purpose of a Masters Thesis Research Proposal is twofold:

1. To ensure that you have carefully developed your initial research ideas (stated originally in your topic outline) in consultation with your supervisor(s) and have established a clear direction for your thesis.
2. To enable staff to evaluate the quality and suitability of the proposed research, in terms of academic merit and scope

Research proposals, and the accompanying approval form, should be submitted to the Waterways Centre as soon as possible after approval of your enrolment in the thesis, and definitely within two months.

THE WRITTEN RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Your thesis research proposal should be:

- clearly and concisely written (10-15 pages, single spaced, including diagrams, tables and references).
- intelligible to those without specialised knowledge of your particular sub-discipline.
- clearly demonstrating your knowledge of the field and how your study addresses a key issue.
- Checked by your supervisor prior to submission, and if necessary revised according to their advice.

Please see over for a recommended structure for your written proposal.

THE ACCOMPANYING UNIVERSITY APPROVAL FORMS

There is also an official research proposal approval form that will accompany your proposal document. This needs to be filled out and signed by you AND your supervisor before your proposal is submitted to the Waterways Centre. The forms are available on the Waterways website [here](#). There are different forms for Lincoln and Canterbury students ... make sure you get the correct ones for your university!

For Lincoln students, there is a **Research Proposal** form (which incorporates your written research proposal) and a **MEA** form (supervisor's agreement).

For Canterbury students, there is a **Master's Research Proposal Application** form and you attach your written proposal to this.

Once these have been approved by your supervisor(s), all documents should be submitted to the Waterways Centre (suellen.knopick@canterbury.ac.nz), where the proposal will either be approved and forwarded to university administration, or returned to you for revision.

WRITTEN RESEARCH PROPOSAL STRUCTURE

Your research proposal MUST include the components listed below. Break your proposal down into different headings to cover the following points. Note that one of the most important parts of the proposal is a clear statement of your research aim and objectives (in other words, addressing the issue of *what* you want to do).

The essential components of your thesis proposal are:

Title Should be concise and informative.

Introduction Providing the conceptual context of your proposed research, with references to earlier key works in the field (a literature review), and creating a “picture” of why your research is important. You may include a diagram, table or figure, if this helps illustrate a key point.

Research Aims & Objectives A clear statement of the research aim (what you plan to achieve) and 4-6 key objectives (the key steps you will take to achieve this).

Methods A discussion of the overall methodological approach, and particular methods and techniques you propose to employ to solve your research problem. Sources of data should be specified. Provide a map of the study area where this is appropriate. List the equipment you will need, and sites you will visit (if appropriate).

Timetable Show the 12 months of your thesis, and state which research activities (e.g. literature review, fieldwork, data analysis, write-up) will be conducted at different times of the year. If you need to submit **human or animal ethics applications**, you must include this in your timetable.

Budget What are the estimated costs of your proposed research? You may not be able to calculate these exactly, but you need to provide an itemised list of costs, as far as you are able to predict at this stage.

Health and Safety considerations As you figure out your methodology you will know what kind of training you might need to work in the lab, whether you need training for going out in the field, what kind of field work you will be doing etc. You should address how you will mitigate the risks included in your methodology.

Reference list A list of references that you have cited, in a correct format.

QUESTIONS OR QUERIES?

General enquiries about the proposal should be directed to your supervisor in the first instance, and then to the postgraduate coordinator if your supervisor is unable to help.