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Guidelines for Evaluating Research Proposals

This chapter is included in the text for two reasons. The first purpose is to give you **guidance as you write your own proposal**. If you merely mimic another research proposal, you will miss the most important learning goal of the thesis or dissertation process – the creation of a plan to solve a real problem through research and analysis. By choosing a subject of interest and systematically applying the guidelines given in this checklist, you will master – from the ground up -- skills that will help you in all your problem solving situations.

The second purpose is to provide you a **checklist to help you evaluate research proposals of other students**. Use this checklist along with the descriptions in Chapter 2 to master the essential elements of writing an effective research proposal.

Research Proposal Checklist

Front Matter

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------|-----|------------|--|
| Yes! | Yes? | No? | No! | Is the title page typed in proper format? |
| Yes! | Yes? | No? | No! | Is the Table of Contents properly organized? |

Introduction

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------|-----|------------|---|
| Yes! | Yes? | No? | No! | Does the introductory statement move you, like a “funnel,” from a general to a specific view of the problem of the study? |
| Yes! | Yes? | No? | No! | Does the introductory statement avoid personal pronouns, subjective language, and awkward grammar? |
| Yes! | Yes? | No? | No! | Is the Problem stated clearly, tersely, and objectively? |
| Yes! | Yes? | No? | No! | Is the Problem stated in the proper format (relationship between variables or difference between groups)? |
| Yes! | Yes? | No? | No! | Does the Purpose clearly state the intention of the study? |
| Yes! | Yes? | No? | No! | Does the Purpose break the Problem down into subsections for analysis? |

Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is the Related Literature a true “synthesis” of researched material, rather than a review, or summary, or report?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Are most of the materials footnoted in the Related Literature section drawn from primary, rather than secondary, sources?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is there an obvious organizational scheme to the Related Literature section: historical, topical, or related to the hypotheses?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Does the Related Literature section give you the impression that the writer is thoroughly familiar with what is known in the field?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Does the Significance of the Study section answer the question “So what?” (Does it explain why this particular study is important to the field? Does it include referenced support for the study?)
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Does the Hypothesis state an expected answer to the Problem which has been stated?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is the Hypothesis written in testable form?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is the Hypothesis stated appropriately? (usually this means as a research, rather than a null, hypothesis)

The Method

Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is the study’s population clearly defined?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is the procedure for sampling (if used) clearly explained?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is the size of the sample(s) stated?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is there a clear description of the instrument(s) that will be used to gather data?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Are the <u>stated</u> limitations <u>actual</u> limitations to the study or merely delimitations?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Are the stated assumptions legitimate in the context of the proposal, rather than “cop-outs” for shallow thinking?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Are the stated definitions legitimate in the context of the study (operational, unusual connotation, or restricted meaning) rather than being obvious or commonly used words?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is the research design (if needed) clearly explained?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Are the procedures for collecting data clearly stated step-by-step?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Do the procedures avoid fuzzy language and “word magic”?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is there evidence that the researcher has considered potential

problems and provided contingency plans?

The Analysis

Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Are the procedures for analyzing data clearly stated step-by-step?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Does the researcher give evidence of understanding the statistical procedures he/she has chosen?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Are the research hypotheses restated in a null form for testing?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Are each of the hypotheses tested with the appropriate statistic?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	<i>Is there agreement among the Problem, Hypothesis, and statistical procedures used (All deal with relationship, or difference, or congruence, etc.)?</i>
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Are there model charts, graphs, or tables which show how the data will be organized and reported in the final paper?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Are all references cited in the body of the paper (and only those cited) referenced in the bibliography?

General

Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Does the paper exhibit theological reflection and application to the Christian ministry context?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Is Southwestern style used correctly throughout the paper?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Does the paper generally exhibit good writing skills: spelling, grammar, syntax, clarity of thought?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Does the paper exhibit good organizational skills: flow of thought, effective transitions from section to section, the impression that the paper is "all of one piece"?
Yes!	Yes?	No?	No!	Does the paper present a "professional" appearance?
A	B	C	D	On the basis of what you've learned in class, what grade would you consider proper for this paper?

x 5 x 3 x 1 x 0

Count Number of Each Category (Should add to 40)
Multiply each count by appropriate factor

Evaluation Points in each category

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Add 4 subtotals together for total points (0-200)