

Outline of Proposed Research Template

Outline of Proposed Research

Your research outline should present a clear, preliminary summary of the doctoral research you intend to undertake. It helps the University assess the potential and scope of the proposed research, your readiness to undertake doctoral study, and whether suitable supervision and research support are available. It is not expected to be a fully developed research plan. You should discuss this research outline with your proposed supervisor before you apply. If your application is successful, you will refine the project further with your supervision panel during your conditional enrolment period (first six months of your study).

Using this template

The headings below indicate the main areas normally expected in a research outline, or short proposal. You do not have to use these headings or follow this order. Choose a structure and terminology that suit your discipline, methodology and proposed project. Some sections may overlap, and some suggestions may not be relevant. Give enough detail in each relevant area to show that the project is coherent, responds to important research needs or knowledge gaps, and is realistically scoped. The guidance notes and questions are prompts, not a checklist.

- Keep the proposal focused and concise. The complete research outline should normally be 3-5 pages, including figures and references (using 11-point standard font e.g., Aptos/Arial/Calibri).
- The proposal must be written as your own work, developed in consultation with your proposed supervisor.
- Indicative word counts are intended to help you balance the proposal and are not prescribed limits. You may allocate space differently to suit your discipline, research design and proposed project, or include additional sections, provided the complete outline does not exceed 5 pages.
- Write for an informed reader who may not be a specialist in your topic. Explain discipline-specific terms where needed.
- Your proposal should demonstrate your academic writing so avoid overusing bullet points.
- Figures may be included to illustrate key concepts or relevant data to help communicate the proposed research and should be accompanied by figure captions.
- Include citations to acknowledge the key literature or other information sources that contextualise the proposed research. Use a recognised referencing style appropriate to your discipline and include a reference list. You are not limited in the number of references you may cite, but 5-10 references might be an indicative range.
- Clearly acknowledge any ideas or content drawn from other sources, including if, how and why Generative AI has been used.
- The proposal may be submitted in English or te reo Māori.

Provisional title of research project

Provide a concise title that identifies the main topic, problem, practice or question you will focus on. This provisional title may change as the project is refined.

Project overview [100-150 words]

Provide a brief summary of your proposed research project. Describe what you intend to investigate, develop or create, the broad approach you propose to take, and the potential contribution of the research to knowledge or practice.

Context and rationale [300-500 words]

Situate the proposed project within the relevant scholarly, professional, creative, or cultural context. Identify the problem, gap, debate, question or opportunity to which the research responds, and explain why addressing this is important. Draw selectively on relevant literature or examples and include appropriate citations.

Research question or aim [50-100 words]

State the overarching research question, aim or hypothesis. You may add a small number of supporting objectives if these help you to clarify the direction and scope of the project. Consider the following:

- *Is the question or aim sufficiently focused and appropriately scoped for doctoral research?*
- *Does the research question respond clearly to the rationale outlined above?*

Approach and methodology [400-600 words]

Explain how you propose to address the research question or aim and why this approach is appropriate. The level of detail should be sufficient to demonstrate that you are aware of different methods, practices, or theoretical frameworks in your discipline and can justify your proposed approach, recognising that the research design may evolve as the project is refined. You may also wish to consider the following:

- *What data do you anticipate collecting and how will you analyse it?*
- *What do you anticipate to be the main phases, components, processes, or outputs of the project?*
- *Does the research depend on access to specialised facilities or equipment, data, archives, materials, creative spaces, field sites, or professional or community relationships?*
- *Are there any ethical, cultural, safety, data governance or intellectual property considerations that may shape the research design?*

Expected contribution and significance [100-200 words]

Describe how the research may contribute to advancing knowledge or practice in your field. Where relevant, identify any potential wider cultural, social, environmental, professional, policy, economic or community significance or benefits.

References

Provide full references for the sources cited in the proposal.