# Basic guidelines

Your research proposal should follow the guidelines below.

1. The word count for the document should not exceed 1500 (+/- 10%) words.
2. The document should include the following:
   1. Introduction (150 words)
   2. Lit Review (300 words)
   3. Lay Summary (150 words)
   4. Scientific Summary (150 words)
   5. Rationale (100 words)
   6. Research Question and Hypothesis
   7. Method
   8. Ethical Considerations
   9. Expected Outcomes

# Research Proposal

The purpose of the research proposal is to help you organise your ideas about your major research project, and to enable you to get feedback on what you are planning to do. It is worth taking the time and putting in careful thought at this stage: it will give you a head start in preparing your ethics and it will mean that the project is more likely to run smoothly in the long run. Much of what you develop here can eventually be recycled into the final dissertation write-up.

Once you meet with your supervisor and discuss your initial proposal, you can work on the proposal form and start your ethics application. There are additional materials and guides in the dissertation section of The MSc Psychological Studies Dissertation Moodle.

# Part 1. Developing your Project Proposal

This section will take you through the background of the proposed study, the rationale, the aim, etc. All of these come together to create the introduction of your dissertation. Summaries section will help with writing your abstract and the Plain Language Statement required for your ethics.

Project Title [Insert title here]

\*What is the title of your project? This will also be the title of your ethics application, so try to make sure it is informative and revise it until both you and your supervisor are happy. It is likely that your Dissertation title will differ from this proposed title.

## Approach

Is your project Quantitative, Qualitative, or Mixed Methods? Is it a Primary Research Project or a Secondary Data Analysis?

## Lay Summary\*

Approximately 150 words.

## Scientific Summary\*\*

Approximately 150 words.

\*A lay summary is a brief summary of a research proposal that has been written for members of the public or non-experts, rather than researchers or professionals. It should be written in plain English, avoid the use of jargon and explain any technical terms that have to be included.

\*\*In a scientific summary explain to a general reader (with an assumed graduate psychology background) why your proposed research is worth doing and why the results will be important.

## Rationale

\*In a couple of paragraphs briefly outline your topic, explain and provide justificationwhy you are doing this particular study.

* Start with 1-2 sentences describing the topic.
* Provide a brief theoretical background of the study. This is not intended to be a detailed literature review, one or two key articles and a brief account of their findings will be sufficient. Be sure to reference the articles in APA format (7th Ed.).
* Explain how your project is novel and addresses a particular “gap” in the literature.

## Research Question(s)

\*This should be a statement that provides the major objective, intent or roadmap to the study. Usually 1-2 sentences that are open-ended. By looking at your research question(s), you should be able to determine whether you are looking at causal relationships (quantitative study) or exploring a phenomenon (qualitative study).

### Quantitative Research Questions:

1. Usually start with ‘ how,’ ‘what’ or ‘why’.
2. Contain an *independent*and a *dependent* variable.
3. Look at connections, relations or comparisons between variables.

### Qualitative Research Questions:

1. Usually start with ‘what’ or ‘how’ (avoid beginning qualitative questions with ‘why’ as this implies cause and effect).
2. Identify the central phenomenon you plan to explore (tell in your question what you are going to describe, explore, generate, discover, understand).
3. Avoid the use of quantitative words such as relate, influence, effect, cause.