**Writing the Research Proposal:   
A Guide for Aboriginal Higher Degree by Research Students**

A research proposal is a concise document which outlines the purpose, nature, process and scope of your research project. It is used at the application stage and at the confirmation of candidature to assess the validity and feasibility of your proposed project and whether the research is suitable for the nominated level of study (viz. MRes or PhD). Practically it assists you to structure your thoughts around what you wish to research, how you will achieve it and, if successful to enter the HDR program, help keep you on track.

At the HDR application stage the proposal ought only be two pages long, and as such requires you to be concise. The reviewer will be interested in reading why the research needs to be undertaken, how it will contribute to the field and community, and how you intend to undertake the research. The research proposal is worked in in the first period of the HDR program prior to confirmation, and in having undertaken greater reading within that period, will be longer than this present proposal (up to ten pages). In other words, please keep in mind that this is a working document and your research plan will change. We suggest that you structure your research plan under the headings listed below.

For further informationplease contact Dr. Mike Guerzoni at the Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Aboriginal Leadership at [m.a.guerzoni@utas.edu.au](mailto:m.a.guerzoni@utas.edu.au) or 62265574.

**Title (working title)**

Indicates the subject and scope of the research. This title should be descriptive to indicate the subject of inquiry, although clearly and concisely written.

**Project Aim**

A statement of the aims of the project, what the project seeks to achieve, intends to examine (viz. the data), and seeks to produce. Please be realistic as to what you can accomplish in the maximum allowable time available to you. This should be brief, within 3-4 sentences.

**Research Questions**

List the questions which will be sought to be answered in order to meet the aims of the project. List each question in a dot point.

**Research Significance and Context**

This section should explain why your proposed research topic is important and needed, both in respect to the field (e.g. absence of knowledge) and society (e.g. community). For the purpose of this proposal, please include some discussion of the literature of the field to demonstrate this, as well as the context of the field in which you are going to contribute (viz. what is the ‘lay of the land’).

Google Scholar is a useful starting point when looking for literature, particularly if you do not have access to databases such as Scopus.

**Methodology and Method**

What methodology are you using and why (qualitative or quantitative). Identify, define and explain (briefly). If you are using a specific theoretical paradigm (e.g. critical race theory, feminist theory) please give a brief description of what it is and why you are using it.

What methods are you using (e.g. surveys, interviews, document analysis)? Identify the method, define and explain the method. Briefly state why you are using the method, and how you intend to use it (e.g. intended sample, size of sample, type of interviews etc).

Please note that methodology can be a difficult concept to grasp at first. There are workshops available once you have begun your HDR to assist you.

**Timeline**

Outline the major milestones you need to deliver in your research project and other candidature milestones. Outline the major tasks to be undertaken in each of those milestones. Major milestones may include (but not limited to) first and subsequent drafts of literature review; ethics application and approval, confirmation of candidature, annual reviews, commencement and completion of individual research experiments, submission of manuscripts for publication; thesis submission.

**Outputs and Outcomes**

What you expect the project to produce. For instance, contributions to knowledge, the foundation for the production of community resources, journal articles, a book, public lectures.

**References**

Provide a list of references you have cited in the research proposal.