

**International Pre-Master's: Advanced Diploma in Research Theory and Practice in English  
(Business Studies or Engineering)****Guidance on Writing a Research Proposal**

As part of your initial application for a place on the IPMs you must submit a research proposal along with your CV for consideration by the Course Director. The research proposal should be no longer than 2 side of A4 and you should outline the key concept, research topic or problem you wish to study in either Business Studies or Engineering.

For further information about writing a research proposal please download and review the document 'Writing a Research Proposal for the IPMs: Business Studies or Engineering' (below).

For more detailed guidance on how to design your research in either Business Studies or Engineering we recommend you consult, as appropriate, these highly accessible books:

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2015) *Business Research Methods*. Fourth Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leong, E. C., Heah, C. L-H. and Ong, K. K. W. (2016) *Guide to Research Projects for Engineering Students: Planning, Writing and Presenting*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

McMillan, K. and Weyers, J. (2011) *How to Write Dissertations and Project Reports*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016) *Research Methods for Business Students*. Seventh Edition. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

To discuss your research topic with the Academic Director, Dr Nigel Kettley, before application, please email [nck20@cam.ac.uk](mailto:nck20@cam.ac.uk). Please note that applications close to the deadline without prior discussion of the research proposal might lead to you being asked to apply for the following intake of the IPMs course instead. The research proposal assists the Institute of Continuing Education identify an appropriate supervisor for your research project. Once accepted on to the IPMs course, you may further refine and develop your research proposal, but any substantive change of topic must be approved in advance by the Course Director.

## **Writing a Research Proposal for the IPMs: Business Studies or Engineering**

### **Key questions before writing your proposal**

What concept, topic or problem am I going to investigate in my research project?

Who else has done research on this concept, topic or problem, and what did they do?

How am I going to do my research?

Why will my research be important to the academic community and various stakeholders?

### **A working title for the research project**

This should do more than convey the key words associated with the proposed research.

### **Research motivation and background**

You should provide a brief overview of your motivation for studying a specific concept, topic or problem in either Business Studies or Engineering. You are expected to provide a justification of your topic choice drawing on academic and, if appropriate, professional literature. You might also refer to the way in which your own background gives you competences in your chosen area.

### **Identification of the relevant literature**

In this section, you should develop your proposal to demonstrate that you are aware of the debates and issues raised in relevant bodies of literature in either Business Studies or Engineering. References to key articles and texts should be made to show that you appreciate their relevance to your research concept, topic or problem.

### **Derived research question(s)**

You may wish to identify a research question or questions which will guide your project. However, you should acknowledge that your research topic and question(s) are likely to develop over the duration of your study. In proposing a question (or questions), you need to consider what is feasible for you to achieve in the time available on the course.

### **Methodology**

You need to specify the research method you feel will be most appropriate to the concept, topic or problem you intend to investigate. You should also, briefly, consider alternative research methods that might be adopted to study the topic and explain why your method is preferable. Additionally, you need to consider how your research method will address your research question(s) and reflect on any ethical issues raised by the research strategy.

### **Potential contribution of research**

You should highlight the potential benefits of your research, whether practical, theoretical or both, for the academic community and potential stakeholders in the field under investigation. Your thoughts on the potential contribution of your research should, usually, relate back to your initial motivation for studying the topic and to the background literature.

### **Reference list**

You should include a short list of references you have cited in the research proposal.

### **Timescale and research planning**

A preliminary outline of the way in which you think you might progress with your research.

Please note that none of the elements of the research proposal are fixed. This means that once the course commences it is possible, to some degree, to change the direction, question(s) or methodology of the research project with the prior approval of the Course Director.