Choosing a Research Topic

When choosing your topic, you should identify the broad area of study and make a list of all possible topics. You may also have an idea of what you want to do, but investigate all possibilities before your decide. You should give yourself plenty of options and then select the one that works best for you. Your research topic should be something that you are particularly interested in. If you pursue a topic that you know well, you have already completed half of your research. Take time to read over some of the tips outlined below and you will be on the fast track to having your proposal approved.

- Do some brainstorming as a method of getting a large number of ideas relating to a specific area of interest, keeping in mind the requirements for both your dissertation or thesis proposal and the rest of the chapters.

- A strong research topic is a focussed topic. You should have a clear focussed and a worthwhile problem and determine if the scope of the research is appropriate to the degree and does the topic have the potential to make an original contribution. You should start off with an idea of a clear question or problem that can be explored and make a significant impact on the knowledge in your particular discipline. Ask yourself why do I want to study this topic?

- Ask yourself if your topic is manageable? You should ensure that your topic is not too large, nor too small.

- The next question is: Am I qualified to research this topic and does the University have the necessary facilities? There are several aspects to this question. First, is there anyone in the School/Department with sufficient expertise to supervise your project and does the library have sufficient resources?

- Ask yourself if this topic is feasible? You will have to determine whether or not the topic you are proposing is manageable within the time-frame. Your supervisor or promoter will be able to advise you on this.

- Listen to ideas – it is your choice if you use them or not. It is quite likely that the title of the research will change over the time, particularly in the final stages before submission of the thesis/dissertation.

- It is always a good idea to generate several possible research questions and then choose the best one as every research question has strengths and weaknesses.

- Ensure that you have access to the information needed to answer the question or test the hypothesis. Determine the availability of and access to literature and information, time needed to complete research, technical and computing skills, etc. required.

- Ensure that you have the necessary financial support and equipment to do the research.
Ensure that you can make a good thesis/dissertation statement/question/a research hypothesis about the problem as you need to be able to convince others of the novelty of the topic.

Once you and your supervisor or promoter has agreed on the research area, research topic and research question or problem as well as the most appropriate research design to complete the research project you can Finalise your research proposal.

**Choosing the Title**

There is no real formula for identifying a meaningful title. The title describes the scope of the research. Choose a title that captures the essence of your proposed project.

- The title should accurately describe the exact nature of the main element of the study.
- The title must be informative and relevant and should capture the attention of the reader.
- The title should not be too long (normally not more than 10 words) but should provide as much information about the study as possible.
- The title should preferably not be in a question form; it must define the research clearly, and must be clear and precise.
- The title should not contain technical terms, or jargon. The use of acronyms should be limited.