

SEARCH Award Research Proposal Guide

Use this guide to prepare your SEARCH research proposal.

Background

What is a Research Proposal? A research proposal is a specific genre of persuasive academic writing, and typically answers the “So What” questions...

WHY is the research being conducted?

HOW will the research be conducted (design and methods), and how will the researcher comply with appropriate research protocol?

WHAT will the research contribute to the discipline/current discourse?

Note: While the contents of a research proposal are discipline and context specific, certain elements are common to all proposals.

Why Compose a Research Proposal?

*The proposal serves as a guide or roadmap for an intensive research project such as an undergraduate research experience, thesis, or dissertation.

*Proposals are required for most grant applications. Thus, writing a research proposal is great practice for grant writing, and a key skill for the world of work.

The SEARCH Research Proposal (100 points total)

Proposal Formatting Instructions: Setting Up the Document

Download and use the SEARCH Proposal Template to ensure your document meets the formatting and content criteria.

- Set all margins to 1 inch.
- Include a page number on each page of the proposal narrative (except cover page).
- Organize the document by section (Project Description, Research Methods and Design, etc.)
- Proposals must be double-spaced using a 12- point font.
- Proposal narrative must not exceed 5 double-spaced pages. The cover page, references, budget table, timeline table are NOT included in the page limit.

Proposals must include ALL five sections/criteria outlined below.

1. The WHY: Project Description/ Research Objectives (30 points)

- *Clearly identify the research topic/problem/issue to be addressed through this project.*
- *Identify the proposed research question(s), thesis statement, or hypothesis.*
- *Provide an overview of your approach to the research topic. This section typically frames or positions the research within the discipline, problem area, or discourse with reference to relevant literature.*
- *Identify the research objectives that you plan to achieve. For example, what is the gap in the literature that your research aims to fill.*

2. The HOW: Research Design and Methods and Research Timeline (30 points)

- *Provide an overview of the proposed design, methods, and conceptual framework (i.e., specify how the research will be conducted. Example: This narrative inquiry will involve two in-depth interviews with ten participants.... I will develop interview guides from the literature...)*
- *Explain why the proposed methods are the most appropriate to accomplish the study goals.*
- *Include the research timeline in this section. See page 4 for the timeline template.*
- *If this is a team project, please detail each team members' contribution to the research (who will do what and when).*

3. The WHAT: Project Significance (20 points)

- *Explain the "So What" of the research project.*
- *What is the significance of the research, and what do you hope to discover by conducting this research?*
- *What will the research contribute to the discipline/ current discourse? (Example: We expect that study findings will show...OR... Data may reveal two related points... OR... By inhabiting the role of researcher and artist I hope to discover...).*

4. Budget Justification (15 points)

- *In this section, please Itemize and include a detailed justification for each projected expense. You should consult with your faculty advisor/mentor before you prepare the project budget. You may include charts, tables, and other graphics to detail the budget items in this section.*

NOTE: In addition to including the budget narrative in the budget justification section of the proposal, you also will submit the budget items with the online application form. See the cost projections information below for additional guidance.

SEARCH Research Project Cost Projections

You should consult with your faculty advisor/mentor before you prepare the project budget. You may or may not be using funds for each item listed below. In the e-application, insert 0 dollars in the fields that are not relevant to the budget.

<input type="checkbox"/> Project Costs	* ...
Total Project Costs Requested	
Personnel	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Fringe Benefits	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Travel	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Minor Equipment	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Operating Expenses	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Total	<input type="text" value="0"/>

The following UT System Policies may apply. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but the following policies may be relevant to your research. Please review them carefully,

- [FI0705 – Travel](#)
- [SA0575 – Programs for Minors](#)
- [FI0313 – Gift Cards and Gift Certificates](#)
- [RE0001 – The University of Tennessee Policy and Procedures on Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarly Activities](#)
- [FI0900 – Fringe Benefits Provided to Employees](#)

5. Student Merit & Need (5 points)

Address each of the following points in this section

- Provide a brief overview of your background including your major, skills and expertise relevant to this research project, academic interests, and future professional goals.
- Why did you decide to apply for this award?
- How do you see the opportunity to conduct research “fitting in” with your academics, and future professional career?
- What do you think you will learn about yourself through this experience?

**Use a color block to mark the months that correspond to each timeline item. We have already filled in some items since these have fixed dates. The Final Report due date is dependent on your graduation date.*

SEARCH Award Timeline	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June
Apply for/Obtain IRB/IACUC Approvals / Complete Biosafety Committee Registration (if applicable)												
Funds Can Start to Be Expended (if approvals have been obtained - if applicable)												
Projected SEARCH Project start date												
Data collection begins (Mark N/A if not applicable)												
Mid-Assessment Due												
Data collection ends (Mark N/A if not applicable)												
Projected SEARCH Project end date												
Presentations / Conferences SEARCH Awardee will attend (as outlined in budget section of the proposal)												
Publication deadlines associated with the project (Mark N/A if not applicable)												
UTC Spring Research and Arts Conference Presentation												
Final Report Due												