

## SEARCH Award Research Proposal Guide

*Follow this guide closely when preparing your SEARCH Research/Creative Project Proposal.*

*Questions? Send a message to [Office for URaCE staff](#).*

### Background

#### What is a Research Proposal?

A research proposal is a specific genre of persuasive academic writing. The proposal addresses the following 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 protocols?

**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.

#### Proposal Formatting Instructions: Setting Up the Document

*Download and use the **SEARCH Award Research Proposal Template** (download from the SEARCH Award website) to ensure your document meets the formatting and content proposal requirements.*

- Proposal must be double-spaced using a 12-point font with margins set to 1 inch.
- Proposal narrative must not exceed 5 double-spaced pages. *The cover page, title page, and references are NOT included in the page limit.*
- Include a page number on each page of the proposal narrative except for the first two pages of the proposal.

**Page 1 – Cover Page:** This page should include the names of the primary applicant, group members (if applicable), and mentor/advisor.

**Page 2 – Title Page:** Include ONLY the project title on this page.

**Include the following 5 sections in the proposal:**

1. Project Description/Research Objectives
2. Research Design, Methods, and Data Management
3. Project Significance
4. Budget Justification
5. Student Merit and Need

**Proposal Section Descriptions and Content**

**Section One – Project Description/Research Objectives (35 points)**

- Clearly identify the research topic/problem/issue to be addressed through this research 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?

**Section Two – Research Design, Methods, and Data Management (35 points)**

- Include 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.
- If this is a team project, please detail each team members' contribution to the research (who will do what and when).
- Provide a detailed description of the research project data management plan. See additional information below.
  - o Clearly describe the common data standards that will be applied to the data and associated metadata to enable interoperability of datasets and resources. Include a discussion of specialized tools, software, and/or code needed to access or manipulate shared scientific data (including name(s) of the needed tool(s) and software and specify how they can be accessed).
  - o Describe any applicable factors or data use limitations affecting subsequent access, distribution, or reuse of scientific data related to informed consent, privacy and confidentiality protections, and any other considerations that may limit the extent of data sharing.
  - o Describe how data, samples, and other research products will be archived, and how you (the applicant/researcher) will preserve access to them, including policies and provisions for re-use, re-distribution, and the production of derivatives.

**Section Three – Project Significance (15 points)**

- 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...)
- Include a description of creative or innovative approaches, tools, or techniques to support the significance of the work.

**Section Four – Budget Justification (10 points)**

In this section, 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.

- See the cost projections information below for additional guidance.
- The award maximum is \$1,000. If your projected expenses are over \$1,000, please list your other sources of funding (ex. Your department, an external grant, etc.).

***SEARCH Award funding may be used for the following research expenses:***

- ✓ Supplies, which will be used to support the SEARCH Award project.
- ✓ Minor equipment, which will be used to support the SEARCH Award project.
- ✓ Conference registration Fees for SEARCH awardee presentation at in-person conferences. The conference presentation must be directly related to the SEARCH project.
- ✓ Conference travel for SEARCH awardee presentation at in-person conferences. The conference presentation must be directly related to the SEARCH project.
- ✓ Other operating expenses.
- ✓ Other research-related expenses.

***SEARCH Award funding may NOT be used for the following:***

- Student wages and fringe benefits

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](#)

**Section Five – Student Merit and Need (5 points)**

- 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?