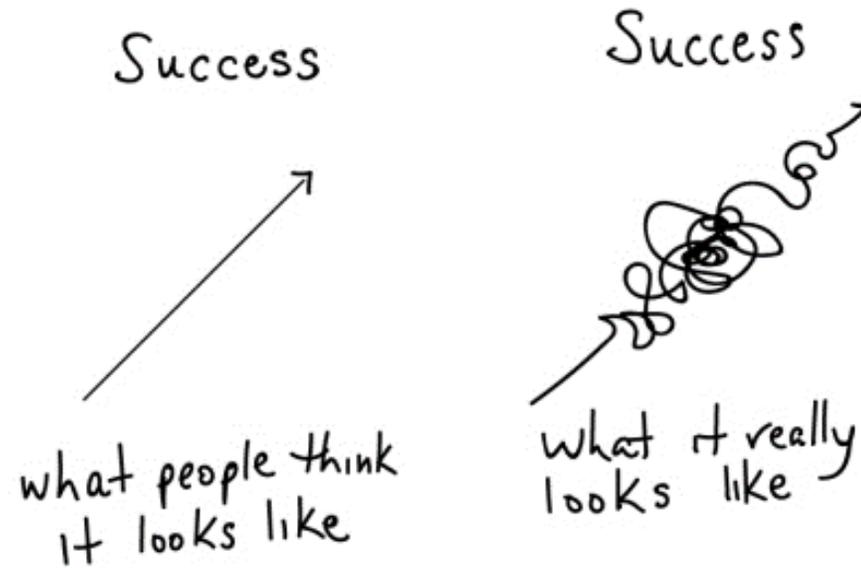
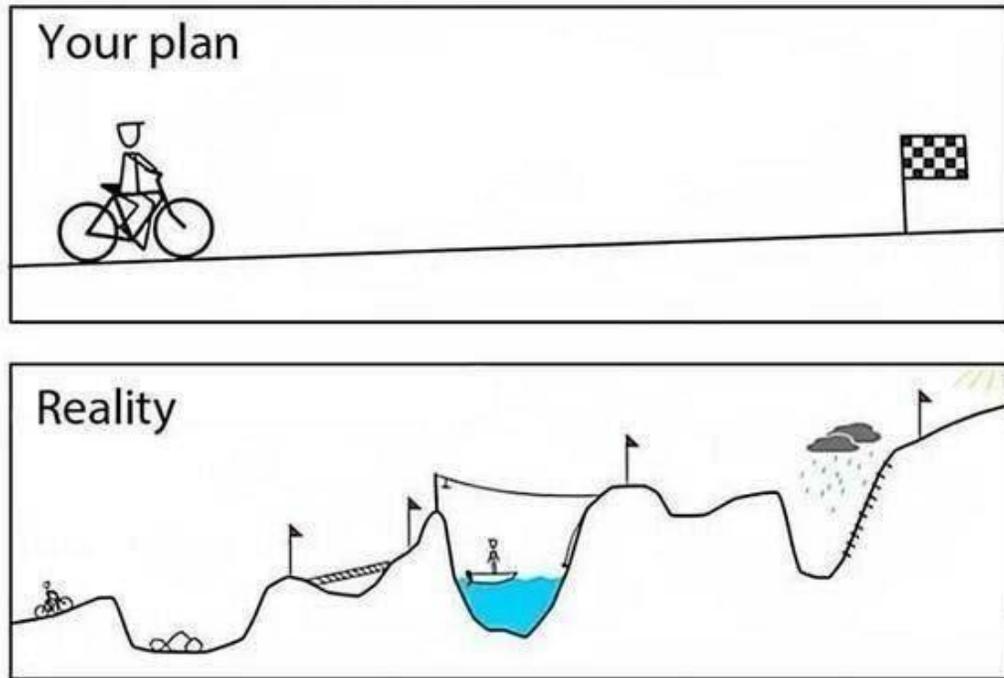


CCT dissertation writing workshop 2018

A look at the research journey and developing
a good research proposal

Overview of the research journey

What we think it's like vs what it's like



Always put enough time aside to make progress on your research work

- ▶ Academic work requires sustained thinking, so put aside adequate time to think (15 minute intervals are not enough)
- ▶ You need enough time to 'get in the zone' - and then keep going (how long does it take you to 'get into the zone'?)
- ▶ Life will always intervene, you decide on how much
- ▶ The length of time it will take to finish is proportional to how much you prioritise your thesis along with the extent of the challenges you will face.

What is research?

- ▶ A way in which to uncover knowledge
- ▶ It can be an analysis and presentation of what is already known
- ▶ It can be the establishment or demonstration of something new
- ▶ Two main types: desk research and field/laboratory work
- ▶ Methods and approaches used in research depend on the type undertaken

What is your research thesis or dissertation for?

- ▶ A document made to demonstrate your knowledge of the literature
- ▶ A document showing your understanding of the literature
- ▶ A document showing evaluation of all relevant positions
- ▶ Ability to justify the position chosen and argued for
- ▶ It should answer an important or interesting question in the field
- ▶ Giving new ideas, analysis, conclusions, and insights
- ▶ (You can see this is the structure of proposals and theses/dissertations, which we will come to later)

Theses or dissertations are conventionalised research outputs

- ▶ There is a standard way in which you are expected to present your research
- ▶ One expectation is to learn the conventions of your field (semantics of research area, methods of data collection and preservation, conventions of presentation, types of appropriate argument, what counts as a valid reason in field, etc. - e.g., explaining behaviours in clinical settings versus economic settings from the perspective of a clinical or economic theory respectively)

Three basics of undertaking research

- ▶ Planning, research, and writing
- ▶ By far, the longest and most important parts of the production of the thesis - each stage is critical
- ▶ Getting going with these basics of research takes for granted that you have a question in mind (looking at formulating such a question will be covered by Justice)
- ▶ Not getting anyone of these right makes for a tougher journey with additional challenges to completing the project

Three basics of undertaking research

continued

- ▶ Planning: what do I focus on reading, how do I allocate time to all my responsibilities, what do I write first, what is the scope of my research project, how long will or should each step in my research take, what steps are there in my research anyway?
- ▶ Research: following the literature within the scope of your investigation (for desk research), identifying the key resources to which to anchor your analyses, selecting the relevant bits of information throughout the literature, getting an overview of the entirety of the relevant literature to your question
- ▶ Writing: writing (and rewriting) we will cover in more detail later, but this is basically the culmination of your research in its presentation of the data, the marshalling of arguments, the formulation of a discussion in terms of analysis or description, and a presentation of findings

An overview of the parts of the research document you will produce: abstract

- ▶ You will probably write and rewrite this many times over throughout your dissertation writing
- ▶ Sometimes, you will have to write it last - you almost always can't write it first
- ▶ An abstract summarizes the case you have made, that's why it is hard to start with
- ▶ It can help to approach the abstract as an explanation of your research question and (short) explication of your thesis statement (we will go into that in the course of this workshop)
- ▶ Shortly describe your exposition/argument: abstract states what the case you are making is

An overview of the parts of the research document you will produce: introduction

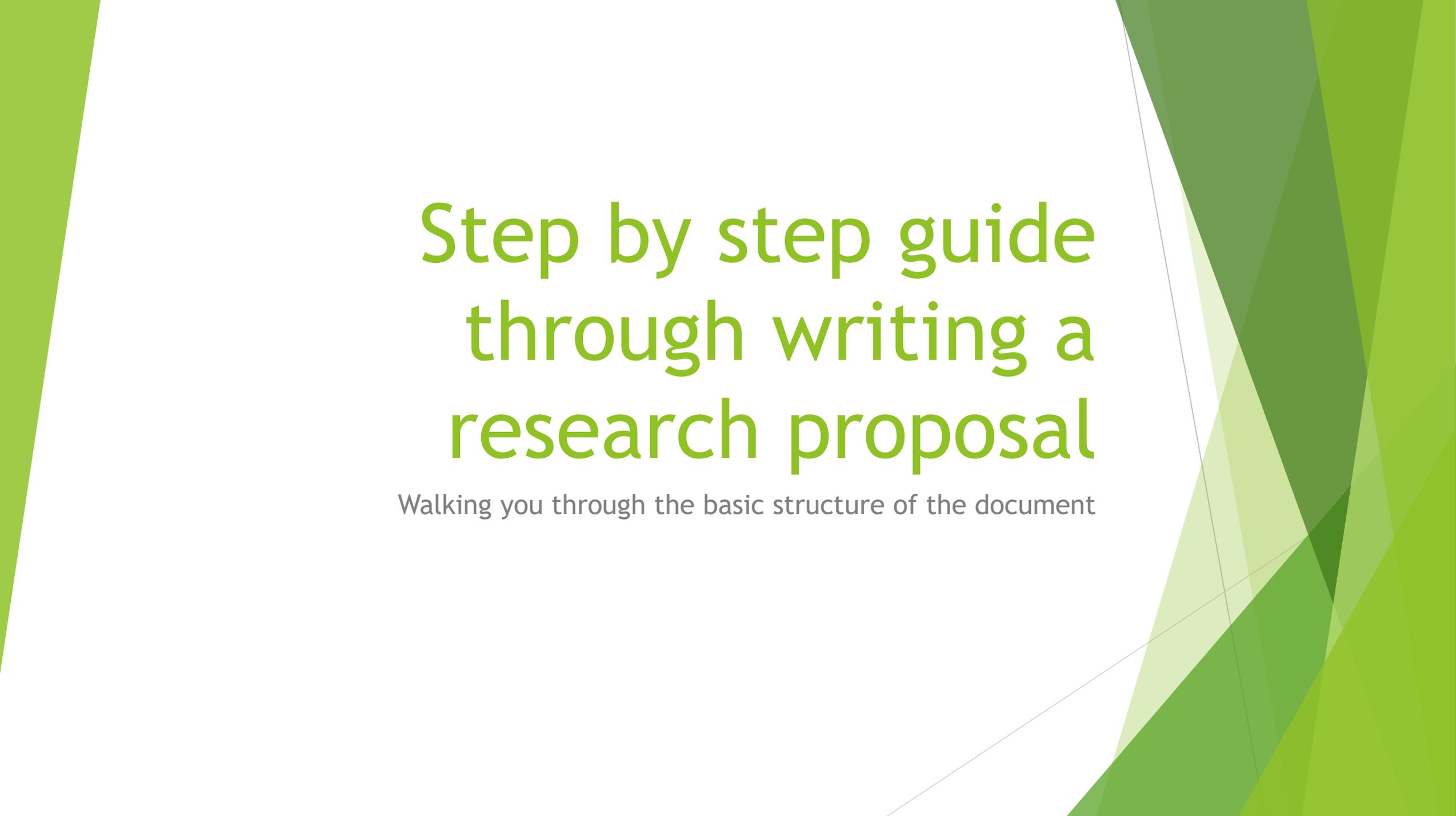
- ▶ What is the significance of the question you are answering in your field?
- ▶ Describe your question in detail and give relevant context for it (also historical if relevant)
- ▶ What do you plan on doing about this question?
- ▶ Give a full explication of your thesis statement - detail how the question is answered
- ▶ Give the steps of your argument or exposition with reference to the chapters in which you make the arguments or give the exposition

An overview of the parts of the research document you will produce: chapters

- ▶ Each of the chapters are like an essay dealing with one major idea
- ▶ Like an essay, the chapter will have an introductory part, a body, and a conclusion
- ▶ These parts are not marked with headings in the chapter, but are inherent in the structure
- ▶ Each chapter must build on or directly relate to its previous chapters (no filler chapters)
- ▶ Introduction: what you will be covering in that chapter (and how it relates to the previous one)
- ▶ Body: the case you make in that chapter (a leg in the advancement of your case)
- ▶ Conclusion: what you have achieved and where you are going (recapitulate the points/argument and how it leads to the next step in the case you are building)

An overview of the parts of the research document you will produce: conclusion

- ▶ The conclusion and the abstract are the only parts of your work many people will read to see if looking into the document is worth it
- ▶ Conclusion should summarise all the major arguments in your case
- ▶ It should recapitulate findings, problems, solutions, and any recommendations made
- ▶ If someone asks “What’s the point of your research?” and “What do you achieve in your thesis?”, the conclusion should be able to answer these questions

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The overall composition is clean and modern, with the text centered in a white space.

Step by step guide through writing a research proposal

Walking you through the basic structure of the document

What is a research proposal

- ▶ Planning document: shows whether study has been well thought out
- ▶ It is a document used to assess the feasibility of the project
- ▶ It ensures that proper care will be taken to manage data, deal with human or animal research subjects ethically, that there are the requisite resources to undertake such a study, that you have the intellectual resources to do so, to ensure your supervisor is capable and willing to supervise such a project, etc.
- ▶ It's not a contract you are bound to! You are allowed to change your mind about the details along the way (within reason, otherwise you must write a new proposal).

The parts that tend to make up a humanities/social sciences proposal

- ▶ **Project title**
- ▶ **Background to the Research Problem**
- ▶ **Review of Literature**
- ▶ **Location of the Study (For Empirical Studies Only)**
- ▶ **Key Research Question and Research Sub-Questions**
- ▶ **Objectives**
- ▶ **Theoretical frameworks upon which the research project will be constructed**
- ▶ **Research Methodology**
- ▶ **Validity, Reliability and Rigour**
- ▶ **Anticipated Problems/Limitations/Scope of Study**
- ▶ **Proposed work plan/Time Frame**
- ▶ **Cost Estimate (in the case of empirical research)**
- ▶ **References**

Writing the proposal:

Project title

- ▶ It must be informative and descriptive (at minimum)
- ▶ It should contain key words of the discipline (this has search advantages)
- ▶ It can be catchy or easy to remember

Background to research problem

- ▶ Provide a genealogy of the problem in general and where it fits in the field
- ▶ How does this problem arise? - locate the issue in the literature
- ▶ Have people grappled with this problem before? How?
- ▶ What aspects of this problem have been resolved? How were they resolved?
- ▶ What aspects of the problem are still outstanding (that you are working on in the thesis)?

Literature review

- ▶ Who are the people who have done significant work in the area?
- ▶ Discuss the significant contributions to the topic already in existence
- ▶ Identify the gaps in the aforementioned and discussed literature
- ▶ Be specific about which gaps you will be addressing

Location of study (for doing empirical work)

- ▶ Where will your study be happening?
- ▶ You can include why this location was selected (a justification and description of advantage)

Key research question

- ▶ This is your primary research question: in a sentence, what are you asking (then answering)?
- ▶ This is the overarching question your research aims to answer

Secondary research questions

- ▶ Divide your main question into its constitutive parts and enumerate them
- ▶ What other questions will you have to answer to answer your key research question?

Objectives

- ▶ Enumerate the things you want to have achieved

Methodology

- ▶ The dissertation project can be non-empirical (if the resources come from previously published projects) or empirical (if you collect data through questionnaires or other methods). In this
- ▶ section, you need to explain the methods of collecting data.

FOCUS ON



PROGRESS



PERFECTION