

Appendix 2

Questions to Guide Proposal Development

This appendix brings together the questions raised in earlier chapters. Together, they constitute a comprehensive checklist of questions to help students in proposal development. They are of three types.

First, there are the questions about the context for the proposal noted in Chapter 2:

- Who will read my proposal?
- What will their expectations be?
- What is the process for approval of my proposal?
- What departmental and/or university guidelines are there for my proposal and its presentation?

Second, there are the three general and overarching questions highlighted in Chapter 3:

What

- What is my research about?
- What is its purpose?
- What is it trying to find out or achieve?
- *Especially*: what questions is it trying to answer?

How

- How will my research answer its questions?

Why

- Why is this research worth doing?

Third, there is a set of middle range questions to help in proposal development. I call them 'middle range questions' because they sit between the general overarching questions above, and the many, much more specific and technical questions which can be asked of research. These specific and detailed questions were presented in Chapter 12 of *Introduction to Social Research* (Punch, 2005), and concern such technical details as the internal validity of the research design, or the reliability and validity of the data, or aspects of data collection or analysis methods. While they are sometimes appropriate questions to ask of proposals, these detailed questions are generally more applicable to completed projects and reports.

The following list brings together the questions from Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Naturally, there is some overlap between them, and this list consolidates and summarizes them. The more detailed versions of some of the questions can be consulted in the review sections at the end of Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Questions to help in proposal development

Area, topic, purpose

- 1 What is my research area? Have I clearly identified it?
- 2 What is my topic? Have I clearly identified it, and shown how it fits within the research area?
- 3 What is the overall purpose of my research?

Background and context

- 4 Into what background and context does my research fit?

Research questions

- 5 What are my general research questions?
- 6 What are my specific research questions?
- 7 Does each specific research question meet the empirical criterion? That is, is it clear what data are required to answer each question?

Relevant literature

- 8 What literature is relevant to my study?
- 9 What is the relationship of my study to this literature?
- 10 How will my study deal with the literature?
- 11 How does my proposal use the literature?

Perspectives

- 12 Is there a particular perspective behind my research?

Substantive theory

- 13 What is the role of theory in my study?
 - (a) Does the description–explanation distinction apply? If my purpose is explanatory, is the focus on theory verification or theory generation? What is the logic behind my position?
 - (b) Does the distinction between theory verification and theory generation apply? What is the logic behind my position?

- (c) If my focus is theory verification, what are the hypotheses and what is the theory behind them?

Prestructured versus unfolding

- 14 To what extent is my study prestructured or unfolding? Does this apply differentially to different parts of my study?

Methods and data

- 15 Will my study use quantitative methods and data, qualitative methods and data, or both?
- 16 What strategy(ies) will my study use?
- 17 Does my study have a conceptual framework?
- 18 Who or what will be studied?
- 19 From whom will data be collected? Specifically, what is the sampling plan, the sample size and the basis for sample selection?
- 20 How will I collect the data?
- 21 What instruments (if any) will be used? Will I use already existing instruments? If so, what is known about them? Will I develop instruments for this study? If so, using what steps?
- 22 What data collection procedures will be used?
- 23 How will these procedures maximize the quality of my data?
- 24 How will I analyse my data?
- 25 What computer packages will be involved?

Consent, access, ethics

- 26 What issues of consent are involved in carrying out my study, and how will they be dealt with?
- 27 What issues of access are involved in carrying out my study, and how will they be dealt with?
- 28 What other ethical issues are involved in carrying out my study, and how will they be dealt with?

Presentation

- 29 Does my proposal constitute a logical and coherent argument, with interconnected sections? Do its parts fit together?
- 30 Have I given enough information for readers to make the judgements shown in Chapter 2?
- 31 Have I been clear? Is the proposal well organized, easy to follow and clearly written?
- 32 Is my proposal presented in an appropriate scholarly form?