RESEARCH PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

This template is offered to facilitate the writing of a full research proposal. This template follows the "Guideline for developing your research proposal" from the RESPACC group.

The sections of the proposal are presented in boxes with their different sections. Under each heading, there is guidance on how to write the contents of that section. There is also a recommendation on the length or format of the text to be written.

Under each section there is a blank space that can be expanded to accommodate the corresponding text. Of course, when you have finished writing the proposal, you can delete the text in the suggestions and boxes if you wish, so that the text is unified and presentable.

RESEARCH TOPIC/TITLE

An initial working title should be provided and should describe the content and aims of your proposal For example: Healthcare use and healthcare costs for patients with advanced cancer; the international ACTION cluster-randomised trial on advance care planning.

BACKGROUND

Problem Statement
You should start by outlining the problem to be addressed in the study. It is a statement about an area of concern, a clinical difficulty, or a way to improve practice that points to the need for meaningful understanding and deliberate investigation. It offers the foundation for the formulation of a research question. To formulate a problem statement, it is important to answer the following questions: ***What is the problem? Why is it important?*** *and* ***how will the problem be addressed?*** *(Length: 1 paragraph)* The problem statement can be concluded by summarising it in a **research question.** If the proposed research uses quantitative methods consider formulating the question using the "PICO" rule which recommends stating all the components of the problem within the same question (P: patient or population to be intervened, I: intervention or event to be studied; C: comparison with other interventions or with the usual situation or practice and O: expected results; T: the time period to be considered or the type of study can also be added. Once the question has been formulated, the researcher should ask whether it is Feasible, Interesting, Novel, Ethical, and Relevant ("FINER" framework). *(Length: 1 sentence with few lines)*

Previous research findings
This section will demonstrate your knowledge of the research problem and your understanding of the theoretical and research issues that are relevant to the research question. This means that you must read both the literature on the topic and on the research method you plan to apply. Following this, you may identify new theoretical insights or a new conceptual framework for your research. A way to perform this work would be a) Start exploring the state of the art by searching the internet b) Considers the sources of scientific evidence in an orderly way c) Update your findings conducting a short rapid systematic search and d) Synthesize the previous findings in a few paragraphs. *(Length: 1-3 paragraph with references)*
The research capacity of your team
This section may describe: a) Individuals or teams that will participate in the research, including a brief summary of their research experience, b) Previous research by the team in relation to the proposal and results, c) Relevance of the research opportunity for that group on the proposed topic *(Length: 1-2 paragraphs)*
Justification of research
In this section, you need to justify the importance of the research to be conducted in the proposal. The section covers the following issues: a) Relevance and importance of the study: *Why do this research? Why now? b)* Practical application of the study output: *What gaps in knowledge will be addressed? c)* How the new knowledge gained through the study will contribute to the solution of practical problems: *Who will benefit from the research?* d) How the study findings will be useful and to whom? *(Length: 1-2 paragraphs)*

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim
…WHAT you want to know…" The research proposal's 'aim' is to describes the main goal or the overarching purpose of your research project. It is a statement that broadly points out what are your aspirations in reference to the research, and what you hope to accomplish through your research. An aim is therefore generally broad, ambitious, but achievable. In practice, the aim/aims should briefly describe why your research is needed (i.e., the context), what it sets out to accomplish (the actual aim) and, briefly, how it intends to accomplish it (overview of your objectives). *(Length: It can range in length from a single sentence to a short paragraph)*
Objectives
"…HOW…the specific steps you will take to achieve your aim…" Objectives are a specific set of research actions that you plan to carry out in your research project. They can be seen as steps that address HOW your research aim will be achieved. They are focused, practical, timebound, linked with a concrete research method. Research objectives divide research into several parts and address each part separately. When you write your research objectives use the SMART format: **S= Specific:** Write them clearly and keep them narrow and focused. **M= Measurable:** You must be able to measure them to know how you progress towards achieving them. **A= Achievable**: You must create objectives that you can realistically achieve with the financial and human resources that you have available. **R= Relevant:** The objectives must be relevant to achieving your overall research aim. **T= Time-bound:** Build milestones/timelines for each objective. *(Usually, they are presented as a numbered list)*
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METHODS

Research design
Refers to the type of study according to the plan of data collection, measurement, and analysis. *(Length: 1-2 sentences)*
Population, recruitment & sampling
• **Population** refers to the entire group that you want to 'draw conclusions or represent'. It does not always refer to people. It could be institutions or palliative care services… • **Sampling** is the process of selecting the group from the total population that will take part in the study. It can be a random selection (everybody could potentially participate) or not random where participants are selected because of specific characteristics, or a purposive, or convenience sample. A sample is the specific group that you will collect data from. • **Recruitment** refers to how you are going to inform and actively seek out potential participants. *(Length: 2-3 paragraphs)*
Types of data, collection procedures
Data collection includes how you are going to collect the data. You need to be specific about what data are collected, what exactly are you recording, how and when. If you are planning to use measurement scales, you need to specify them or if you are doing interviews you need to describe the general areas that you expect to cover during them. *(Length: 1-2 paragraphs)*
Process of data handling and data analysis
Data handling involves how you are going to deal with the data, who is going to have access to data, where data are going to be stored, and how data are protected (i.e., passcode protection), processed to anonymize it or keep it confidential. If it's a qualitative study the analysis usually entails a prior transcription of the audio recording of interview or focus group data before analysis of the text. If the study uses quantitative methods where data are transformed into numbers, you may need to save the data on a data handling platform and to check that is adequately recorded to avoid errors. **Data analysis** refers to making sense of the data. In quantitative studies, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses of numerical data are used to explore

relationships among variables (specific aspects are measured). In qualitative studies, analysis uses textual data to infer meanings. It may involve creating codes and themes that provide labels about the meaning of the data.

In any type of research, the complexity and depth of the data analysis must be coherent with the study aims and objectives. You need to report what type of analysis you are conducting.

(Length: 2-3 paragraphs)

ETHICS STATEMENTS

Ethical implications

When writing the ethics statement, it is good to write sentences that will attempt to answer each of the questions below: **Why** your research is necessary and ethical (i.e., social, and clinical value)? **What** it sets out to accomplish and how the ethical aspects are ensured (i.e., scientific integrity)? **How** are ethical principles on recruitment and enrolment of participants safeguarded (i.e., participants' welfare, eligibility criteria, informed consent) **How** are privacy and private information respected (i.e., protection and data safety) **How and by Whom** is ethical approval provided (i.e., Ethical Committee review)

(Usually, multiple sentences with clear statements, written using an infinitive verb "to + action": to consent, to protect).

Information and consent

Proposals to be submitted to the ethical board are required to present the informed consent document that will be used: That document should include the following aspects: 1. Voluntary participation 2. Purpose and background of the study 3. Procedures (what will happen to the participant) 4. Risks, harms, or burden involved 5. Benefits of participation 6. Confidentiality issues (data protection, codes, authorized access to data etc.) 7. Respect issues 8. Investigator's name as well as name and contact information of the person receiving complaints

(Length: 1 sheet of simple, easily readable information, usually in an annex)

Ethical Board review requirements
Depending on which country or institution you plan to do your research (single country, multinational etc), the funding body and on the type of research (investigational drugs, patients, potentially vulnerable participants, caregivers, administrative issues etc.) the process of seeking approval vary significantly. In the research proposal the relevant Ethics Board and the requirements for application and approval must be clearly identified. (Length: 2-3 paragraphs)

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Timeline
The project scheduling plan requires a breakdown of the work structure with details about all the tasks, the person(s) allocated to the tasks and the start and end date of the task. *(A Gantt chart, is one of the most popular and useful ways of showing activities of a project displayed against time)*.
Details of cost
Indicate here are the main categories of costs: 1. **Staff costs**: directly incurred costs of people who work on the project; 2. **non-staff costs**: equipment, travel, office costs, etc; 3. **Overheads**: costs incurred by the institution hosting the project e.g., lighting, heating, etc. This is normally calculated as a percentage of the overall project direct costs, but funders have different rates. *(A table is good way to present the project budget)*

Financing plan
You must indicate the sources of funding you have available to cover the budget you have presented above. If you are submitting this proposal in response to a call for proposals for grants, you must indicate the amount you are applying for and any other type of support or funding from public or private sources available to you. (Length: 1 paragraphs)

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Impact
The **social impact** section of a research proposal should detail the potential impacts of the proposed research on the social and economic wellbeing of the target population. It should articulate the direct and indirect effects the research is expected to have on the community, and how the research may influence the lives of individuals. In this section you must give details about the Patient and Public Involvement in your proposal The section should also explain how the research findings will be used to inform public policy and decision-making, and how the research results can be used to bring about positive social change. Additionally, this section should discuss how the research findings can be used to inform, educate, and empower the target population. The **scientific impact** section of a research proposal should detail the potential impacts the proposed research has on the scientific community. It should articulate the expected contribution the research will make to the field of inquiry, and how the research results may be used to advance scientific understanding. The section should also explain how the research findings can be used to inform and support future research projects, and how the research results can be applied to other related contexts. *(Length: 1-3 paragraphs)*
Dissemination

The section should also describe **plans for disseminating** the research results, such as publishing in scholarly journals, presenting at conferences, how the research can be used to inform scientific practice, and producing educational materials for the public. *(Length: 1-2 paragraphs)*
Acknowledgment of contributions received for the proposal
The section should detail the contributions made by other individuals and organizations that aided in the creation of the research proposal. This section should identify any collaborators or consultants that provided support or expertise or other forms of assistance in the preparation of the proposal. Finally, this section should thank all those who provided feedback or advice that contributed to the development of the proposal. (Length: 1 paragraph)
References cited to support proposal
The References Cited to Support Proposal section should include a bibliography of all sources used to inform the research proposal, including any books, journal articles, websites, and other materials consulted during the preparation of the proposal. *(Present a list of references with a given format: use the typical style for your field)*

http://www.studiipaliative.ro/proiecte/cercetare-respacc/

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