*From The Good Supervisor* Gina Wisker (2n edn 2012) London Palgrave Macmillan

Format for a research proposal **Shape of proposal Prompt questions Indicative title** (should be a statement rather than a question)

**Aim and focus**

• Research question or • What is your research hypothesis – problematising question?

the statement, identifying • Are there any sub-questions?

underlying concepts so that • What is your hypothesis?

the area under study can be interrogated, not just described. There can be sub-questions in

a hierarchy helping ask the question. Science research usually has a hypothesis, basically an assumption to be challenged and explored.

**Context**

• Establishes students’ own • What is *your* context in context, that of the research, relation to your research? topicality, timing, key issues, • What is the brief history of the gap in knowledge this the field?

work will fit. • Why undertake this study

• What are the concepts (ideas) now?

that the research will deal • What is *unusual* about it? Now?

with? What concepts or ideas underlie it?

**Theoretical perspectives**

• Theories and interpretations, • Which theoretical areas, arguments in the field into theories underpin your

and theorists which the work research; help you ask your fits. Includes the key theories question?

and theorists in a dialogue • Who are the key figures and

with the student’s theorists? What are the debates?

own ideas and plans. How does *your* work engage with the debates?

Defining titles, research questions, conceptual frameworks 123

**Shape of proposal Prompt questions**

**Methodology and methods**

• Choices of research approach • Is your work inductive or based on beliefs about how deductive/theory-building or the question can be asked – theory-testing or both, and, if theory-building (inductive) or so, *why*?, Where? Does it theory-testing (deductive). make an intervention or not?

• Interventionist (causing ) • Which methods could you change or non-interventionist. use to ask your question/

• The active vehicle or vehicles vehicle your enquiry? Why?

that enable the student to Why not others?

question the area or field to • What are the limits of each ask, observe, explore, and method?

experiment and take part using interviews, focus groups, experiments, tracked processes, observation schedules and questionnaires, etc.

**Design of the study**

• How you are going to • What will you do and in what undertake the research? order?

• Why, in what roles, using • What’s your field, sample, which sample or experiment? population and why? Do you

• Where, when, how many and have access to them? How? why? Boundaries – what’s • What will you *not* be looking at *not* studied and why. This in your work, and why?

helps plan ahead.

**Ethics**

• Considerations about risk, • How will you gain informed harm, confidentiality, consent from human invasiveness, participant participants?

consent, full information, • Can you ensure they will come withdrawal and the use to to no harm?

which research is put. • Can you ensure there’s no risk to you? Or your participants? Or from your research?

• Can you ensure the information will be kept confidential and not used for other means?

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**Shape of proposal Prompt questions**

**Outline plan**

• Essentially, a plan of what • What do you think the shape of each chapter could focus on your dissertation or thesis will

– suggests themes, look like? Which chapters and developments and why?

differentiation. • Do you intend to separate results from discussion (scientific) or have several chapters which interweave the data and the discussion i.e. move between extracts of results and discussion along the links of themes and developing argument?

• How will this dissertation/

thesis shape help you to develop an *argument*?

**Justification for the level of the award**

• Some of this will have • How and why is this making a appeared in the aim and focus, contribution to knowledge? but here students make • Why is it important? statements about • Why bother doing it? contribution to knowledge • Who could use it or do further and understanding, why it is work with it?

important and meaningful and how it could lead to further work and insights.

For your own planning you might well also include

**Draft abstract**

Indicating

**What** the work is about

**Why** undertaken

**Why** undertaken this way

**What** has been found or developed?

**What** is its significance?(so what?)

**Time plan** – and critical path analysis

Draft plan of what will go in each chapter :

* Typical content
* Title
* Abstract
* Introduction
* Theoretical perspectives/ literature review(in arts and humanities the intro and litreview are often one piece)
* Methodology and methods (not present usually in arts and humanities although the theories underpinning the work might drive the way you conduct it- and in eg performance there are methodologies and methods…)
* Data ,and discussion - and your findings/drawn together in themes ,developing an argument (Results/data)
* Conclusions/summary/(sometimes recommendations)
* Appendices/statistics/illustrations
* References and bibliography