**Letter of intent**

**MINI-PROPOSAL**

**WHAT? WHY? HOW?**

**The letter of intent in essence a mini research proposal.**

The aim of the letter of intent is give you an opportunity to formulate your research topic/ideas in a structured manner, and to provide the departmental research committee with an indication of your intended study. The format of the document of intent is similar to a research proposal, which is the tangible outcome of a planning process during which you will have to contemplate and eventually convincingly answer three crucial questions:

* What exactly will I be investigating in my study?
* Why should anyone care about or get excited about the issues that I will be investigating? In other words, why is my study valuable to an academic audience?
* How exactly will I go about to investigate the issues that I chose to focus on? What evidence will I present to show that the research approaches, methods and techniques that I have selected are appropriate and that they have been applied appropriately?

**As a suggested guideline, your letter of intent/mini-proposal could include the following:**

**Cover letter including contact details, address, previous qualifications**

**1. Title**

**2. Introduction**

2.1 Background and preliminary literature overview

* An introduction of the core theme/topic to be investigated in the proposed study
* An explanation of the conceptual and/or practical importance of the broad theme/topic
* A brief overview/summary of existing academic literature on the topic
* An indication of the ‘gaps’, inconsistencies and/or controversies in the literature that the current study will address.

2.2 Problem statement

* A formulation of the problem that will guide the study (based on the ‘gap’)

2.3 Aim of the study

2.4 Research questions

* A main research question and approximately 3 sub questions

**3. Methodology (or Methods)**

Research approach

Description of research design and methods

**5. List of references**

**An overview of the process involved in preparing a Research Proposal**

A research proposal is constructed incrementally and is the tangible outcome of a planning process (Hart, 2005:368). The typical process involved in compiling a research proposal is outlined in Figure 1 below.

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| 1. Preliminary literature review |

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| 2. Identify a possible research topic |

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| 3. Refine research topic |

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| 4. Formulate tentative problem statement & research objectives | 5. Formulate tentative title | 6. Create framework for  literature review (themes) |

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| 7. Get supervisor’s approval for tentative title, problem statement and objectives |

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| 8. Collect appropriate literature for review |

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| 9. Write a concise literature review |

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| 10. Finalise title, problem statement, aims, write introduction |

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| 11. Write the research methodology section |

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| 12. Compile chapter plan |

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| 13. Finalise and proofread proposal document |

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| 14. Check referencing and list of sources |

Figure 1: The typical process involved in compiling a research proposal