

School of Arts and Social Sciences

Preparing a research proposal for SASS Honours applications

Length and purpose of the proposal

Research proposals for Honours applications should be one or two pages. You could use the same proposal for your Honours application and a scholarship application.

The proposal is a preliminary outline of what you intend to do for your Honours project. It is used to communicate your project idea with your potential supervisor(s) and Honours Coordinator, and to demonstrate you are well organised with your ideas. Potential supervisors like to be approached with a draft proposal. Typically, after consulting with a potential supervisor you will redraft the proposal.

Your Honours application proposal is provisional so we expect it will change as time goes on.

The things that should be in your proposal

- Your name
- Title: Give your project a title.
- Proposed supervisor: This is the person who has agreed to be your supervisor and will complete a “Supervisor – Student Agreement” form with you to be used in your application. Some students may have a principal supervisor and a co-supervisor.
- Background: Honours is a research training degree, so your project needs to be framed in terms of an enquiry into something. Briefly describe the context for your project and then outline the specific problem, issue or area of practice you will investigate. State why you think the project matters. Creative researchers may refer to previous creative works that can be more fully described or represented in an Appendix, but an appendix is optional.
- Objectives: What, specifically, are you planning to investigate? This can be written as a statement or a question, followed by additional details. A typical opening sentence in this section starts: “The purpose of this research project is to (investigate/answer the question)...” This could be followed with smaller, more specific objectives, including the project outputs. Outputs might include a thesis or creative work(s) and an exegesis. If you are proposing a component of your output that is other than text, such as visual art, media, or a sound-work, outline the scope of this output. Be as clear as you can in this section, as it is the key to others understanding your project. This may require you being clearer than might be comfortable at this stage: remember that the research can and will change.
- Method: State what you will do in your project, or how you will conduct your research. You might, for example, conduct a survey; engage in a specific creative practice and connect it with a theory; or conduct a critical, theoretical analysis from a particular disciplinary perspective. The possibilities are limitless. This section can include the theoretical stance you will take. In this section you might also include the resources you need in order to undertake your research, for example, a music studio, a kiln or an mp3 recorder for interviews. Issues regarding such resources should be raised in discussions with your potential supervisor(s).
- References: All literature cited in the proposal must be properly referenced.
- Appendices: Use an appendix to provide additional details. For example, creative researchers who have not studied at SCU may be required to append a piece of writing, images of work, or a CD or DVD of a film or performance. SCU students may also do this. This previous creative work should be mentioned in “Background”. The Appendix will extend your proposal beyond one or two pages.

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