

# Exercise 3. Elements of the Research Prospectus



Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A research prospectus is a preliminary proposal, that is, typically a preliminary plan for conducting a study. A research prospectus is not a detailed technical research proposal, but it is a thoughtful analysis of the issues you probably will face as you proceed (or proceeded) through writing the research proposal. The most common purpose of the research prospectus is to present a balanced overview of the study, including its problems and its opportunities, as a preliminary communication to your mentor (or advisor) and team members (or committee). The prospectus can be written before the research proposal to guide its development *or, if not drafted before, then after the research is completed the prospectus serves as a tool to focus what was done and discovered before writing the journal article.*

The informal writing you have completed in Exercise 1 on the background to your research project and on your disciplinary community helped you to focus your message and attention on your readers of the prospectus.

The form of the research prospectus may be a sentence outline or a detailed, structured report with subject headings, much like the IMRAD form used for a journal article. The aim is to produce a tool for capturing ideas and thoughts from which you can work to write the research proposal or the journal article. In any case, be sure to consider at least these sections and **write at least one topic sentence** that addresses each:

## I. Research problem

A “research problem” is a situation that, if left unsolved, produces a negative consequence for some group, institution, or individual. Solving the research problem is what answers the ultimate question “So what?” for the reader. What is the research problem you are trying to solve? Do different readers have related but different problems your research will address?

**Your response:**

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## II. Assumptions

What are the assumptions on which you will base (or based) your study? Are the assumptions presented and verified in the literature (disciplinary problems) or are they speculative (something you noticed in your work and can verify through the research you will do or have done)? If speculative, how did you notice these assumptions?

**Your response:**

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## III. Theoretical Issues

What theory(ies) informs your study? Who proposed the theories? For example, how will you explain the theory behind the research you will do (or did) to another scholar in your discipline? How does this theoretical base affect the study design?

**Your response:**

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## V. Research Questions

Based on your research problem, what are the research questions you are trying to answer? *Remember that a research question can only be answered with data and the information derived from that data.* Why and how will (or does) this data and information help solve the research problem?

**Your response:**

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## VI. General Research Plan

In general, how do you propose to conduct this research so that it answers your research question? What data-gathering methods will (or did) you use and what kind of data will (or did) it produce? What will (or did) you do to analyze and make sense of the data? How will (or did) you assure the data will be of high quality? Where will the data be archived, and in what form?

**Your response:**

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## VII. Anticipated Difficulties and Pitfalls

What obstacles can hinder or disrupted your research? Do (or did) you successfully mitigate these risks, that is, were you able to prevent or minimize their effects?

**Your response:**

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## VIII. Anticipated Benefits

Who will benefit from this research: will (did) you contribute to solving the problem noted above? How? Who might be disturbed by the proposed study and why? Do you anticipate this research will develop into a long-term line of inquiry?

**Your response:**

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