**DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

The proposal is an extension of the dissertation prospectus and is used to evaluate the viability and feasibility of the study. It includes the first three chapters of the dissertation and will be used as the basis for the preliminary defense prior to submission of the IRB application.

The proposal will be evaluated to ensure clarity, conciseness, and manageability of the study's research questions. The design method's appropriateness and alignment in relation to the study's purpose are ensured. The feasibility of the candidate to complete the study using their respective skillset, available resources, and allotted time frame will be considered. The detailed explanation of where the study fits within the current literature and the gap it seeks to address will be analyzed. Lastly, the data collection and analysis procedures will be assessed to ensure the manner in which the data was collected, from whom it was collected, and how it was analyzed, will adequately answer the research question(s) posed and determine accuracy of the hypotheses (if applicable).

As the proposal is a plan for research, the future verb tense will be used. Once the research receives IRB approval and is complete, the tenses of verbs must be changed to the past tense.

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**TITLE OF DISSERTATION HERE CENTERED WITH UPPERCASE LETTERS**

**UPPERCASE BOLDFACE LETTERS APPEARING AS AN**

**INVERTED PYRAMID**

Doctoral Proposal

Submitted to the

Faculty of the College of [College Name]

Westcliff University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of [Program Title]

Concentration: [Concentration Title if Applicable]

by

[Doctoral Candidate’s Full Name]

[Month, Year]

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## 

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter One of the dissertation introduces the study problem, background of the problem, and identifies the framework of the research. In the introduction to this chapter, provide context of the chosen topic, clarity of scope in how this research will engage with the topic, and an overview of the structure of the dissertation and chapter flow. The following subsections are required at minimum, but additional subsections can be included if deemed appropriate.

### Problem Background

The problem background will provide information regarding the central problem of inquiry the research seeks to address. A focused, timely, and relevant problem, as supported by the current scholarship, is required. In this section, verify the existence of this problem through evidence-based research, the extent to which it spans, who or what it impacts, and how it has been presented within current scholarship. Objectively identify what the research will achieve within the context of this centralized problem and the continued inquiry into the problem that is needed.

### Problem Statement

Based on the context of the central problem identified in the problem background section, this section indicates specific problems that this research addresses. These problem statements form the basis of the research question(s) posed. Each problem statement should be evidence-based and contextualized within the current scholarship. Problem statements are written as single sentences but should be followed by discussion on the origins and potential impact of each problem as it connects to the aforementioned centralized problem. Add a maximum of three problem statements in this section. The format of the problem statements should follow:

**Problem Statement 1:**Identify the specific problem.

[Include discussion in paragraph format with APA citations].

### Purpose of the Study

Based on the context of the centralized and specific problems indicated above, this section will explain, in general terms, the purpose or reason for this study. Identification of the research method and design, direction, objective, and overarching goal of the study is incorporated and expanded upon in this section. This section begins with the statement: The purpose of this study is…

### Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This section explains the theoretical or conceptual foundation of the research and its credibility in the context of previous studies and/or commonly accepted theoretical understandings. A conceptual framework identifies the expected outcome(s) of the research through identification of the variables and how they connect or impact one another. A theoretical framework identifies, compares, and synthesizes prevalent theories established in literature that support the basis of the study and its theoretical context.

### Research Questions

In this section, identify the research question(s) that will guide the research. This question(s) should align with the problem statement(s) and ensure appropriate collection of data to achieve the purpose of the research. Research questions are formatted as simple interrogative sentences, address one issue per question, and cannot be answered with a yes or no response. In addition to listing the question(s), explain in subsequent paragraphs how the answers to the research question(s) will cumulatively lead to the achievement of the purpose of the research. As noted in the problem section, the research questions must be directly aligned with the problem statements and study purpose. The format of a research question should be incorporated as follows:

**Research Question 1:** What is your research question?

[Incorporate information regarding how this question will lead to the achievement of the aforementioned purpose].

### Hypotheses

This section is optional and will be dependent upon the type of study conducted (verify with the Dissertation Chair). Hypotheses primarily identify the expected outcomes of a quantitative or mixed methods study and must be directly aligned with the research question(s).

### Nature of the Study

This section provides an overview of the study’s method, design, and data collection and analysis methodology. Note that this section is more general, as the doctoral candidate will expand upon the details of the research methodology in Chapter Three. The following subsections are required at minimum, but additional subsections may be included if deemed appropriate.

#### Research Methods

#### This subsection identifies if the study is quantitative, qualitative, or both (mixed methods) and explains the rationale for the selection in the context of the purpose of the research. Include the research design, justification for the design, and an overview of the plan for implementation of the study.

#### Data Collection

This subsection describes the primary and/or secondary data to be gathered for the study and how and why the specific data collection method(s) will be employed. A description of the data collection instrument(s) and method to be used in the research is explained, and the rationale justified. Indicate the underlying population, sampling method, and minimum sample size to be gathered from the target population.

#### Data Analysis

In this subsection, the doctoral candidate identifies the data analysis methodology chosen for the study and presents justification for the selection. The data analysis method must be aligned with the study method and design choice for the research. The software application to be used for analysis should also be noted here as well as any data assumptions to be tested prior to data analysis to address the research questions.

### Significance of the Study

The significance of the study explains the potential impact of the study. Specifically, the doctoral candidate describes, in scholarly, objective, and unbiased language, the study’s potential contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the chosen topic and the relevant field. Doctoral candidates can stipulate who or what may benefit from this research and the extent of that benefit.

(Note: The doctoral candidate must use non-confirmatory language, such as: *The potential findings of the study* ***may*** *lead to a better understanding of the effectiveness of computer assisted instruction; the evaluation of employee attitudes* ***could*** *help improve productivity*).

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins with an introduction defining the context, explaining the reason for the review, identifying the sequence/organizational approach followed, and specifying what the scope of the review entails. Following the introduction, use an APA level one heading and appropriate heading levels thereafter, depending upon the organization of content. At least one paragraph of the Chapter Two introduction section must describe the literature sourcing strategies and techniques to be used and include the academic databases, keywords, and key phrases to be used for sourcing.

**[Add Section Heading]**

The organization of the literature review varies depending upon the approach chosen by the doctoral candidate to present the information logically and cohesively. Section headings in the body of the chapter will be organized by headings that reflect each area of the literature reviewed. The literature review should be a comprehensive synthesis of previous research. The review should predominantly focus on literature published within the last five to 10 years and should consist of comparing, contrasting, and identifying patterns and limitations within the most prevalent studies related to the doctoral candidate’s topic. The literature review will end with the identification of a gap present within the literature reviewed, to which the dissertation will address.

### Summary

In this section, the doctoral candidate summarizes the main findings from the literature review chapter and transitions into the next chapter. There should not be any subsections in the summary.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter begins with a brief restatement of the nature and purpose of the study. In the text of this chapter, the doctoral candidate provides a detailed explanation of the method choice, design of the research, procedures to be followed, and analysis to be conducted using the data acquired in order to achieve the goal of the study. In this chapter, all aspects of the methodology applicable to the research must be explained in such a way that other researchers could replicate the procedure. This chapter must include the following sections and subsections at minimum. Additional sections and subsections may be added if deemed appropriate.

### Research Design

In this section, a description of the plan for implementation of the research design and procedure is provided. Identify the steps to be followed in order answer the research question(s) and determine the accuracy of the hypothesis(es) (if needed). The alignment of the research design with the purpose of the study must be evident throughout the content of this section and justified when applicable. The specific choice of design and the design conventions must be described within the context of the study.

#### Target Population

#### This section identifies the target population, size of the population, sampling method, minimum sample size, and demographic characteristics of the sample. Justify the rationale for choices made in selection of the sample to ensure the study sample is reflective of the target population.

#### Data Collection

This section is an extension of the data collection procedure and the nature of the collected data identified in Chapter One. Elaborate upon the instrument chosen for data collection and reliability (quantitative) or transferability (qualitative) of the data collection method and instrumentation to be used to collect reliable and valid (quantitative) or trustworthy (qualitative) data. Indicate any inclusions or exclusions of data throughout the collection process.

Please note, if the instrument that will be used for data collection was not created by the doctoral candidate, copyright or intellectual property permission must be obtained, specified, and presented in an appendix. Additionally, each applicable instrument used must be presented fully as separate appendices and referenced in this section.

### Data Analysis

This section explains how and why the data will be analyzed using the chosen data analysis method . Ensure there is no information included regarding the findings or results of the data collected. This section must only focus on the process of analysis and justification of the decisions made throughout the process.

### Assumptions and Delimitations

#### Assumptions

This subsection describes study assumptions for the dissertation. Validity and conformity of these assumptions must be justified.

#### Delimitations

This subsection identifies the boundaries set for the study, focusing on intentional exclusions made by the researcher. The reasons for setting the boundaries of the delimitations are stated and justified in this subsection.

**Trustworthiness**

This section explains how the doctoral candidate will ensure trustworthiness of the data to be obtained and methods to be used for the study. Defend the protocol and procedures set to ensure the rigor and worthiness of the study. This section is generally accompanied by subsections, dependent upon the type of study conducted. Acknowledge any personal bias(es) that could impact the results. For qualitative research, trustworthiness of the data must be evaluated and assured for the four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For quantitative research, the assessment of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity must be described.

**Summary**

In this section, the dissertation candidate summarizes the main findings from the methodology chapter. There should not be any subsections in the summary.

**References**

The reference list contains all sources cited in the proposal. There should be one-to-one correspondence between the citations in text and those included in the references. The references follow APA 7th edition and start on a new page after the summary of the methodology chapter of the proposal.

While formatting references, ensure:

1. They are organized alphabetically.
2. A hanging indent of 0.5” is used.
3. They are double-spaced with no additional space ‘before or after.’
4. DOIs are used whenever available, and hyperlinked.
5. Database URLs are not included.
6. References are predominantly from the last five to ten years.
7. References are from credible sources.

## General Information on Appendices

Appendices are referenced in the text of the dissertation and organized alphabetically, not numerically (Appendix A, Appendix B). The appendices section will begin with a cover page. The title of each appendix begins with a level one heading and is included in the table of contents.

Number the pages in the appendices consecutively. Each appendix should contain only one item. A sample of the appendices cover page and an associated appendix can be found below.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Type Appendix A Title Here**

[Add appendix information here]

**Proposal Formatting Guide**

Please see the following formatting guides below. Delete this page prior to submission of proposal.

**General Guidelines**

1. The proposal text should be double-spaced with all paragraphs indented.
2. Font should be black and Times New Roman 12-point (except for tables/figures, see below).
3. All margins should be set to one (1) inch (top, bottom, left, right), on all pages.
4. Align text to the left (do not use full justification).
5. The spacing should be set to zero (0) point before and after lines of text (paragraph spacing).
6. Seriation should follow APA 7th edition guidelines.
7. Level headings should follow APA 7th edition (except for chapter titles - see deviations from APA 7th edition below).
8. In-text citations should follow APA 7th edition guidelines. All claims and references to ideas or conclusions found in a source must be properly cited. Results of the doctoral candidate’s findings do not need citation support.
9. Language used in reference to people or people groups should adhere to the bias-free guidelines stipulated by APA 7th edition.
10. Using survey instruments developed by third parties requires the owner's written permission to use or proof of purchase. In this case, the permission or the proof should be provided in an appendix separate from the one that contains the survey.

**Opening Pages**

1. The dissertation title should be bold, in all caps, and in an inverted-pyramid format.
2. For the Title Page, there should be no visible page number, though it is counted in the numbering. The Table of Contents should be numbered by Roman numerals. The pages in the main body of the proposal should be numbered by Arabic numerals.
3. Entries in the Table of Contents should not be bolded or italicized.

**Tables and Figures**

1. Tables and figures may be displayed in color to enhance clarity.
2. Contents of tables and figures must be no less than 9-point font; notes for tables and figures must be no less than 10-point font; table/figure numbers and titles must be 12-point font.
3. Tables or figures used from alternative sources require copyright permission and should be stipulated in the note under the table/figure.
4. If a table requires more than one page, divide the table so that all separated portions share a common heading row. Wide tables may be presented in landscape orientation.
5. All tables and figures should have an in-text callout and should be placed as close to their callout as possible.

**Deviations from APA 7th Edition**

1. Chapter titles are to be centered and in all caps.
2. The appendices section will begin with a cover page.