

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PROPOSAL**BACKGROUND TO 500 WORD RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

(Endorsed by Faculty Graduate Studies Committee June 2003)

Applications for admission to a research degree (PhD, Master's by Research) need to include a 500-word preliminary research proposal¹ as an attachment.

The purpose of the proposal is to encourage pre-enrolment planning/preparation by the student, supervisor and Faculty Research Group that will assist prompt commencement of research work and timely completion of the candidature. This pre-enrolment planning and preparation is University Policy and is described in the Universities Postgraduate Studies Handbook. The written plan also provides the supervisor with an opportunity to judge the applicant's writing skills.

The candidate should include in the written proposal the information that most clearly shows that suitable preparation has occurred. This information will obviously vary quite widely but as a minimum the proposal should include:

- **Title:** Working title for the thesis.
- **Academic staff contact:** Name(s) of the supervisor or other academic staff with whom you have discussed your proposal and/or candidature.
- **Synopsis:** Issues, research question and hypothesis to be investigated.
- **Background:** Description of the context and background reading leading to the applicant's interest in this research question.
- **Significance:** Brief explanation why the research question is significant.
- **Methodology:** Research methodology or approach to be used.
- **Resources:** Identify resources required to complete your research.
- **Work plan:** An initial plan for completion with annual milestones.

The expectation is that the supervisor will have read and commented on drafts of the proposal. The proposal will be reviewed with the application by the Associate Dean, Research Students, who is required to ensure before admission to research degree candidature that there is every likelihood of a successful outcome.

¹ The Faculty Graduate Studies Committee in March 2003 endorsed the following as equivalent to the 500 word proposal: (i) submission of the project synopsis where the applicant is going to work on an NHMRC or ARC funded project and (ii) submission of an ethics approval letter listing the applicant as one of the authorised personnel together with the project description from the ethics submission. With either method the supervisor needs to certify that the applicant has appropriate writing skills.