Contents and Style of MY Professional Doctorate Research Proposal - A Compelling Grant Proposal

- **1. Title Page**
  - a clear working title
    - what will i call your project?
      - at that time a short title of 40 characters or less must be submitted
- **2. Abstract of Thesis Proposal**
  - this is the summary of the thesis proposal containing: the problem statement, the rationale of the study, the hypothesis, the methodology that i am proposing to use, the expected result and the significance of my study
    - what KEYWORDS would describe my proposal?
    - this is an overview of the proposal, mainly focused on presenting the idea in layman language
- **3. Introduction /Background /Rationale/Problem Statement**
  - i should explain the background of the study starting from a broad picture narrowing in on research questions
    - a brief introduction/backround on the topic and its significance within the relevant field
      - introduce the proposal by outlining the research topic and its relevance to educational practice or policy or theoretical/conceptual debates or relevant empirical applications or studies
    - broad theme-->particular topic-->problem within the topic
      - this should introduce the research proposal but also convince the reader that the topic and approach presented here is interesting and worthwhile
        - the introduction should be at a level that makes it easy to understand for readers with a general background in the correspondent field
  - **a description of the research problem**
    - **an argument as to why the problem is interesting and important**
- **3a. Literature Review**
  - some background knowledge and context of the area in which i wish to work, including key literature, key people, key research findings
    - how does my work link to the work of others in the same or related fields?
      - would my work support or contest the work of others?
    - how does my work relate to the expertise within the department i am applying to?
      - i must show an ability to integrate and synthesize the literature and to develop new ideas and innovations
  - Background information/Brief summary of existing literature
    - i have to provide a critical review and be able to relate the literature to the proposed research
      - i should point to areas overlooked or inadequately addressed by previous studies and discuss how my proposed research could contribute
  - **a review of the literature relevant to the research problem**
- **4. The hypothesis and the objectives/Key Research Questions/The Central Research Question**
  - a clear statement about what i want to work on and why it is important, interesting, relevant and realistic (dont forget that it has to be feasible as well)
    - what are the main research objectives? could be articulated as hypotheses, propositions, research questions, or problems to solve
      - what is the problem, shortcoming, gap or the proposed new service/product?
        - the primary research question should be broad enough to cover my whole proposed research
        - the subsidiary research questions and hypotheses are more specific and each of them should focus on a certain aspect of your research
          - these hypotheses usually form chapters or sub-sections of the final thesis
          - i should explain how these research questions and hypotheses are formulated
    - what difference my research will make?
      - why does this research excite me?
        - is my research achievable in the time allocated? (e.g. 3 years full time)
    - what research gaps i am filling with this project?
      - how might my research add value to the subject?
        - is the proposed research realistic and feasible?
  - **a description of the way in which the problem will be approached and the proposed research methodology**
- **5. Methodology**
  - this section explains how i am going to conduct my research
    - i should demonstrate that i am fully aware of the alternative research methods and explain how my proposed methodology is more advantageous than the others in attaining my stated objectives
      - will i use existing theories, new methods/approaches or develop new methods/approaches?
        - how might i design my project to get the best results/findings?
        - some consideration of the methods/approach i might use
  - how will my proposed method provide a reliable answer to questions?
    - what practical considerations are there?
      - are there any potential problems/difficulties that you foresee that might affect your rate of progress?
        - discuss the limitations of the proposed methodology, the assumption and the range of validity in data collection
  - for quantitative research i should include:
    - the research design, e.g. a questionnaire study or a laboratory experiment
      - the subjects or data source, e.g. who will participate in the data collection, the sampling size and sampling methodology
        - the instruments, e.g. the kind of measuring instruments or questionnaires and the reason for choosing these instruments
      - procedure, e.g. how i am going to carry out my study? what activities are involved and how long does it take?
        - the methods of analysis, e.g. modelling techniques or statistical methods
  - for qualitative research as there are no well-established and widely accepted general rules or principles, i need to elaborate more on the data collection process and how i will analyse the results
    - i should be more detail in my research methodology
      - e.g. how to collect data, how many samples to take, what specific methods will i use in analyzing data
- **6. Timeline and Research Planning/Reflections**
  - some indication of the strategy and timetable for my research project and any research challenges i might face
    - what would be the main stages of your project?
      - how will the research be communicated to the wider environment?
    - what would i be expecting to do in each year of my PhD?
      - in this section i need to identify the tasks and make realistic estimates of the time required for each task / in a table - in a chart format - in a Gantt format
        - setting important milestones definitely help to monitor the research progress
    - what challenges might i encounter and how might i overcome these?
- **6a. Budget**
  - think about the budget and how it is related to my research plan
    - everything in the budget must be justified by the proposed work in a realistic mannner
- **7. Expected Outcomes/The supervisory provision as well as specialist and transferable skills training**
  - how my proposed research will make an original contribution to knowledge
    - obviously i do not have results at the proposal stage; nevertheless i need to have some idea about what kind of data i will be collecting, and what methods will be used in order to answer my research question or test my hypotheses; i should also state the contribution expected from my reseach efforts
  - it should be possible to speculate about the ways in which my research will make a contribution to knowledge
    - what the potential impact of my reseach could be and for whom
- **8. Ethical considerations**
  - where the thesis research involves human subjects, i must also obtain the approval from the appropriate ethics committee
- **9. Summary and Conclusions**
- **10. References / Bibliography**
  - should be listed in the appropriate convention for the subject area

Personal reasons for undertaking a professional doctorate/ why i am suitable for this research

- why do i want to do a professional doctorate at this point in time?
  - the role of a researcher is to be curious and inquiring about a critical problem and find ways of investigating that problem so that new understandings are possible
    - my doctoral studies will enable me to bring insights from prior published work into my investigations
      - **IMPORTANCE: the proposal should present the importance of the research forcefully enough**
  - what is the organisational issue driving my research interest?
    - remember that the proposal is a preliminary indication of my suitability for PhD research so first impressions do matter
- which are my career aspirations post doctorate?
  - may be create and present a personal achievements plan from past to the future
    - the proposal should be presented in a ay that conveys my professionalism and academic ability / be well-structured, clear and legible
- what is my previous experience in research?
  - the research for a professional doctorate may be in a field where i have extensive work-related experience
    - nevertheless, personal experience is only the starting point for the research

- INTRODUCTION
  - Introduce the area of research
    - to demonstrate that the research will really add something in the existing body of literature and findings
  - Review key publications
    - to provide a literature review which helps to set the context of my research and help the reader understand the questions and objectives
      - choose key research papers or public documents
  - Identify any gap in the knowledge or questions which have to be answered
    - the proposal has to be based on sound hypotheses and reasoning
      - it is not necessary to fill a gap; may be complete or follow on from previous researches or applying new methodology to a known field
  - Hypothesis
  - A Short Summary of Aims and Objectives, including a brief description of the methodology
  - How is my research beneficial and to whom
- MAIN BODY OF TEXT
  - When drafting the proposal, it is worth asking yourself the following questions trying to answer them in text:
    - why should anyone spend funds on my research and research training?
      - Who is my research going to benefit (the stakeholders) or being of use to (the end users)?
    - Is there evidence , in the literature that my research will fill a gap in knowledge or a market demand? How will it build on the existing body of evidence?
      - Is my research timely, innovative or responding to a new trend?
      - How will my research proposal address my training needs as well as, if applicable, the needs of my employer?
    - Which are the expected outputs to be achieved by the research
      - e.g fundamental knowledge of a new or existing field; new database; development of a new service; contribution to a new policy
    - Describe the milestones of the research that will demonstrate to the reviewer in realistic terms, how you are going to conduct your research
      - e.g a Gantt chart
  - Accepting PhD students onto a research programme depends on many factors including:
    - the nature of the proposed research, the quality of your ideas, your ability to commit to an intensive period of research study, the effectiveness of the research proposal in communicating your ideas, the "match" between the proposed study and the potential supervisor, and the capacity of the research department
      - you need to demonstrate independent critical thinking and analysis as well as that you are capable of communicating your ideas clearly
- METHODOLOGY
  - It is important to present the proposed research methodology
    - e.g techniques, sample size, target populations, species choice, equipment and data analysis
  - Explain why is the most appropriate to effectively answer the research question
    - It may be a good idea to justify the methodology by explaining what alternatives have been considered and why these have been disregarded
      - You could also point out how your research fits with the research environment of your prospective place of research and why your chosen University is the best place to conduct your research, in particular if you have access to unique expertise, pieces of equipment or data
- ABOUT YOU - PERSONAL RECORD
  - the quality of your ideas combined with your ability to carry out the project successfully will be a useful addition in research proposal
    - provide a small section to present how your research interests, previous achievements, professional background, may support current proposal
      - do try to point out: the most important achievements of your career, degrees, IT Skills, successful projects you have been involved, your best characteristics: motivation etc
- DISSEMINATION
  - indicate how you will be communicating with colleagues and your supervisors as well as the wider community and the funding body supporting the research
    - e.g Internal Seminars, Regular reporting to stakeholders, Publications, Conference presentations, Exhibitions, Outreach and Public Engagement events
- SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS
  - should be concise, clear and informative; keep in mind that some reviewers start by reading the conclusions