

Study and Presentation Skills

Paper A - Research Proposal

Spring 2024

Assignment Question Paper

Sample Assessment

The Assignment - Paper A (70 marks)

Introduction

Paper A requires you to demonstrate your learning from this module by using your research and study skills to produce a 1,000-word, referenced, research proposal that addresses a topic of your choice related to a subject from one of the units from the Level 3 Diploma in Computing course.

Format

Your submission should be structured using the guidelines below:

- Title
- Introduction - topic and rationale
- Literature review
- Research Objectives - Question/Hypothesis
- Research Methods and Design
- Ethical considerations and other challenges
- Implementation plan
- Bibliography

It will be assessed using the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the module with marks awarded for the task elements shown in the marking scheme.

The proposal should be a single, word-processed document 1,000 words long.

Guidance for Students

Purpose of the assignment

The aim of this assignment is for you to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required in study and presentation skills in Higher Education.

On completion of this assignment, you should have produced a research proposal. Your work will be assessed on your ability to research and identify an appropriate topic and apply your knowledge and skills to produce a proposal for a research project capable of being implemented. This will draw on what you have learned across the unit: managing and organising your time, using appropriate sources, academic writing, research skills (including data collection), and applying critical thinking.

Consult your tutor if you are uncertain about any aspect of the assignment. It would be wise to discuss your preferred subject and topic with them.

Choosing a topic

Choosing a topic upon which to focus comprises three steps:

1. Select a unit from your course.
2. Select a **subject** from that unit/module in which you are particularly interested.
3. Identify a **topic** in that subject area on which you propose research be conducted. Use web resources and academic, practitioner, and other authoritative sources to explore the field to help you decide.

Structure of the assignment

In completing the assignment, pay attention to each of the elements in the brief.

- **Title**

Prepare your title with care so that it grabs attention and indicates the topic of your proposed research.

A good title reflects what your study is about. It is simple, and specific and encapsulates what you intend to do. For example:

Focus and concentration during revision: an evaluation of the Pomodoro technique.

It should grab attention and tell us the key issues/concepts you want to explore in no more than 15 words.

- **Introduction**

The introduction should provide a clear rationale for undertaking the proposed research. It should give the context, explain the issue you are examining, and tell us why it is significant.

Set the scene; describe the general subject area to be studied and locate your topic within it (e.g., psychology of language, second language acquisition, teaching methods.) Integral to the research design, this sets the parameters and tells the reader what will and will not be included, and why.

- **Literature Review**

A *brief* review of what is already known about this area that tells the reader where your proposed research ‘fits’ within the existing literature. Highlight details of previous work, particularly important studies, in the proposed field.

You can include information from textbooks and class, but the bulk should be from authoritative sources you identify. Cite these using Harvard style. This review provides a framework of ideas against which you should highlight how your proposed research might fill a gap or extend what has already been done. What question(s) do these studies leave unresolved that are worthy of study? Choose one or two of these questions to pursue yourself. Using the example of the Pomodoro technique (above), we might propose to research its use in certain age groups or subject areas.

- **Objectives of the research**

This section should provide a clear outline of the goals of your research project and the specific question(s) that you want to address or hypotheses you want to test.

Depending on the study, it could cover some of the following:

- What is the purpose/overall aim of your research?
- What specific research question/s will be addressed?
- State clearly and briefly the specific question(s) that you are exploring.
- You may test a ‘Hypothesis’ - and informed judgement generated through your initial reading. It will likely be a statement you want to test or disprove.
- Explain how these research questions are related to the larger issues raised in the introduction.

So here we may see a question to answer or a statement to test in the research. We may ask:

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Pomodoro technique?

Or test the hypothesis that...

... the Pomodoro technique aids focus and concentration for study when used regularly.

- **Research methodology**

A central part of the research proposal as it outlines the research methods you will use to conduct your research. It tells the reader 'How' you will be doing your study and 'why' you are doing it that way, thus justifying your choices of methodology and research design.

So, this section not only describes how data is to be collected (practical) but should include some discussion of theoretical issues relating to research methods on which you based your decision.

In practice, you should explain your choice of:

- Methodological standpoints
- Methodological approaches
- Techniques for data collection and analysis
- Indicate how you will present results.

Some key questions will be:

- What secondary sources (literature) are you going to consult?
- Are you going to use primary sources (e.g. databases, statistics, interviews, questionnaires, experiments)?
- Are you going to focus on a case study?
- Is the research going to be qualitative or quantitative?

Remember your research questions guide the inquiry process. Describe how you would go about collecting data and test the questions you propose to examine. You are not required to come up with a new or original method. Look at journal articles to see what methods are usually used to research your chosen area and adapt one of these for your needs.

- **Potential challenges and ethical issues**

This section covers specific ethical issues of your research.

- Will your research need ethical clearance?
- Do you need to conform to any specific ethical codes or guidelines?
- How will you protect confidentiality, and anonymity, and ensure informed consent?

You should also show you have thought of other challenges or obstacles that might arise.

- **Implementation plan**

Provide a timeline showing the sequence of your research phases and the period within which you will complete each.

The timeline can be presented using different formats such as bullet points, tables, and Gantt charts. Whichever format you use, your plan should be a realistic estimate and should demonstrate awareness of the various elements of the study such as literature research, empirical work, drafting, re-drafting, etc.

- **Bibliography**

The works referred to in your research proposal and other significant works you will refer to in the research project.

The list should include the bibliographical information of all the sources you cited in the proposal, listed in alphabetical order.

Word Count

The word count for this assignment is 1,000 words. Remember to note the mark allocation for each element of the task and allocate your words with that in mind. Some tasks need fewer words than others. You must not exceed the stipulated word limit by more than 10%.

Any words written beyond the stipulated limit will not be read by the examiners; no marks will be awarded, and no feedback provided for any text beyond the prescribed limit.

In accordance with accepted academic practice, the word count includes the following:

- All titles or headings that form part of the actual text. This does not include any cover page or bibliography.
- All words forming the titles for figures, tables, and boxes. However, this does not include the text within boxes, tables, or figures themselves.
- All in-text (bracketed) references.
- All directly quoted material.

Appendices

There is no requirement for appendices nor a penalty for not including them. Appendices are not included in your word count nor allocated any marks. but well-produced appendices can support your report and help you gain marks for those sections to which they refer.

Mark Scheme

As well as these instructions, please read the mark scheme thoroughly. This outlines what you need to achieve to gain marks. It will also show you how effective and thorough your work needs to be to achieve a certain level.

Academic Rigour

You should give clear and specific justification for your proposals. They should be based on evidence, good research and analysis, and thorough critical analysis using the theories, approaches, and methods you have learnt whilst studying this unit.

You should cite every source you use and give clear references using the Harvard referencing system. It should be written in an academic style.

Your assignment must, of course, be entirely your own work and there are severe penalties for plagiarism outlined in the NCC documents *What is Academic Misconduct? Guidance for Candidate* and *Avoiding Plagiarism and Collusion: Guidance for Candidates*.