

How to Write a PhD Research Proposal (A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC))

The University of Oslo (UiO), Norway, and Jimma University (JU), Ethiopia, have developed a free online course, a MOOC, on how to write a PhD proposal as part of the mobility and capacity-developing project NORPART: EXCEL SMART. It is funded by DIKUs NORPART program and the Faculty of Medicine at UiO.

This online course is based on a scientific writing workshop delivered by Dr. Jeanette Magnus and Professor Anne Moen in Addis Ababa and Jimma under the NORHED: SACCADE program funded by NORAD. So far over 5000 participants have had the chance to follow the MOOC, and this August it will run for the third time.

The online course is open for registration on the FutureLearn platform (www.futurelearn.com) and runs for four weeks from August 17th. We recommend that all participants start from Week 1, to get the full benefit of interacting with fellow participants as well as Prof. Anne Moen. Although it will be possible to join the course at any time throughout the four weeks run and even for four weeks after. I.e. deadline for joining will be October 11th. The course is free and available to participants all over the world as long as you have internet access.

Prof. Anne Moen spearheads the course and is the lead educator, while carefully selected PhD candidates at UiO from Jimma University from the SACCADE program, who completed the Scientific Workshop courses, and Dr. Jeanette Magnus contributes by presenting several video lectures.

Please read more about the course in the following sections, or go to the FutureLearn website to here: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/how-to-write-a-phd-proposal>

About the MOOC

Understand and harness the key elements of a succinct research plan while preparing your PhD proposal

Learn how to develop a successful PhD proposal

Successful PhD research requires systematic preparation, planning, critical thinking and dedicated work. In this course, you will harness the key elements of the main sections in a research proposal and solve common challenges when planning and writing a PhD proposal.

You will learn how to structure, define and present your research idea in writing. During the course, you can develop your own research objectives and sub-questions, argue for their importance, and outline the context and the setup of the study. You will also learn how to manage a project.

Although we are starting from a focus in health sciences, the content of the PhD proposal, and the planning strategy of a research study is relevant in other disciplines.

What topics will you cover?

- Defining the research idea, writing a research statement with objective with sub questions
- Identifying and writing a literature summary and review
- Empirical, conceptual or theoretical foundations of a research study
- Research ethics, fraud and plagiarism in research
- Research design and methodological approaches
- Data collection strategies, sampling, instruments and biases
- Fieldwork and contingency planning
- How to organize your PhD project

What will you achieve?

At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Present your research statement with objectives and sub-questions
- Identify gaps in the relevant research literature and argue for why your research matters
- Ensure that the planned PhD-study follows the conventions for sound ethical conduct
- Appraise your work with the help of peers, course educators and mentors
- Discuss the setup for sample, data collection strategies and present a plan for data analysis
- Explain how you will organize your PhD project
- Evaluate what you learned by giving and receiving feedback on your weekly assignments
- Collaborate with peers and find ways to solve possible challenges in your PhD proposal

Who is the course for?

Primary target group: Future PhD students aiming to develop a PhD proposal and improving their skills in research proposal writing.

Secondary target group: Any junior researcher working on harnessing their small research grant application skills.