<div align="center">**Common Research Proposal Outline**</div>

Proposals are always crafted according to the format specified by target audiences such as the IRBs, thesis committees, funding agencies, or publication outlets. Be sure to use major and minor headings and follow the APA style and format rules when working in the field of Education. Craft an overall compelling argument and be sure to consider your reviewers when determining what details to include/exclude from the proposal.

<div align="center">**Common Content**</div>

Title (short and explanatory) **and abstract** (120 words with a clear statement of the problem, description of the design, measurement qualities, anticipated findings, and anticipated conclusions)

Introduction

Raise your question, frame the theory/background, and offer clear action plan for your project.

Opening paragraphs — Using as much lay language as possible, build a strong and compelling statement of your research problem and defend it to the reader. This is ideally no more than 3 paragraphs with no more than 5 sentences in each. It helps readers decide whether they will bother to read on and so should be as compelling as possible without overstating the value of the work being proposed. Similarly, it should not include detail that distracts the reader from your main agenda.

1. Open the story with brief statements that reveal an interesting problem. End the first paragraph with a clear statement of how you plan to explore the problem, using jargon-free language.
2. Elaborate on the research problem by emphasizing some of the following issues.
   a. Background should reflect what we already know about the problem—and foreshadow the ideas elaborated on later.
   b. Rationale should reflect what we need to know, yet with specific attention to why your approach will be ideal for helping to fill the gap.
   c. Significance should reflect why it is important to know what you hope to discover with your research. It should reflect concerns with substance, timeliness, and value, foreshadowing the discussion section of the proposal.

Theoretical and empirical justification — Introducing only the most essential jargon, connect the research problem to relevant theory and evidence as you build a defense for your research design. Well-crafted "bodies" of a research proposal conveys to the reader the authors' philosophical, epistemological, disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological stances as each guides the new study being proposed. (In a long proposal, this is a good place for a substantive heading that announce how these various stances are aligned with the research question, but in a short proposal, broader situational claims are embedded in the selection of particular theoretical directions and it is this set of theoretical choices that convey the scope of the project. (Concept/Construct maps are the major organizational component of all proposals.)

1. This part of a proposal often includes multiple sections, aligned with the qualities of the concept map that has guided the design of your project. Sections are ordered using the overall concept/construct map and design of the study as a guide. On the whole, you are expected to convey your current knowledge of the available literature as well as your predictions about how you can use that information to make reasonable predictions. Reviewers can use this section to determine if you are familiar with existing work in the field and if you have an accurate understanding of that information. This can be demonstrated by
   a. Briefly defining major concepts/constructs as they connect to the opening problem statement;
   b. Retaining order in which essential ideas are needed to fully understand the nature of the research problem;
   c. Explaining why each concept/construct is essential for the new research and possibly situating that in relation to time, place, and value;
   d. Remembering to clearly indicate why you have included/excluded particular studies, concepts, and constructs.

2. Using a broad picture as a guide, nesting each section in a broader hierarchy, there remain guidelines for what to include in a section as well. Each section should offer a critical synthesis of literature by considering the following rules.
   a. Organize the story clearly, using subheadings to represent the major concepts of your study. (See the APA style manual for guidelines on how to use multiple levels for headings to tell a story.)
   b. Ensure that each section has a beginning, a middle, and an end that reveals what we already know as well as what we need to know, but do not. These evaluations often entail the identification of points of agreement, conflict, and alternative points of view that are not currently debated.
   c. Although each sections is a mini-essay, with an introduction, body, and conclusion, it is also aligned with the general outline of the paper. That outline is dictated by the order of constructs or variables as you name them in your problem statement and is consistent with the overall concept map.
   d. Write a conclusion for each section that summarizes the main point of various subsections and establishes relevance of these concepts to the general research questions. It is here that authors usually state the predictions that follow from the available literature reviewed. (Realize that hypotheses come later and that this is a stock-taking of what we know and might assume.)

Final paragraph – Using the opening problem statement and the order in which each of the elements in the overall design of a project is introduced, the introduction ends with a paragraph that reveals the specific predictions/hypotheses that will be evaluated in the proposal. Rather than restate the information provided earlier, this paragraph achieves several things.
1. A more detailed representation of the opening research question is restated using any necessary jargon situated so that readers can see the connection between the opening agenda and the plans that follow in the rest of the proposal.
2. Revealing the extent to which the proposed research will be descriptive or experimental in quality, this paragraph includes hypotheses or predictions with as much directionality as the existing research allows you to imagine.
3. The more advanced a field, the more narrow the hypotheses are likely to be and the more unlikely readers are to find predictions stated as questions. Therefore, the authors' choices here convey clearly whether they are as fully aware as they might be of the available knowledge in the field.

Methods
Describe what you will do and who/what will be involved. This is NOT a "Methodology" section unless your project is really a study of methods.

Design statement — Clearly convey the relations between variables that will be evaluated in this project. Ideally, this can be done in a single sentence and when it cannot, the project may be too broad in scope to add new knowledge to the field. A few reminders to think about.
1. Remember that the design statement tells readers what type of data analysis to expect in the results section, but IS NOT a statement of your statistical analysis procedures or of the null hypotheses you plan to evaluate in the results section of the paper.
2. In what way are you offering a very specific interpretation of the broader concept that is guiding your research? Does your plan include qualities we expect to see in an experimental or quasi-experimental design? Is your research plan primarily descriptive?
3. How will you aggregate data? Will you use a comparison group? How will you assign participants or entities to be compared to groups? Randomly? Another way? What features of your design are wholly determined by the participants/elements in the design?
4. Compare your choice of verbs to determine if these reflect the limitations of the design you plan to use with enough accuracy.

Participants or entities to be studied — where will the new information to be acquired in your study come from? Will you focus on people or inanimate entities? How will you select the targets of your investigation? How will you assign these targets to groups for comparison? Will that be necessary?
1. Compare the characteristics of the population to the sample you plan to collect. What are the population characteristics? Which sample characteristics can you accurately represent? Which sample characteristics are unavailable to you in this project? Realize that your answers to these questions reflect the breadth to which your findings can be generalized.
2. Determine the size of the samples you need to obtain to be able to validly evaluate your research questions. Be sure to think practically as well as idealistically. When using statistical analyses, also be sure to evaluate the size of your sample in terms of the power needed to evaluate your data.
3. Name the environmental or demographic variables that are central to your design. Is your sample strong enough to offer a valid assessment of these characteristics?

Procedures — Consider when and how new data will be collected or obtained. These details should be aligned with the design statement in the same sequential order that will be used to evaluate predictions or test hypotheses.
1. Describe your use of any existing data sources such as agency records or automated information systems. (We usually include instruments as appendices in a proposal.)
2. Outline any procedures you plan to use to gather new data. Ideally, readers should see a step by step sense of what it is like to be a participant in the study or the sequential steps that will be taken to gather new evidence.
3. Describe any special training or skills that will be needed to obtain new evidence.

Materials or Instruments – Outline the measurement instruments that will be needed to evaluate each of the variables in your design. Like other parts of the proposal, these should be placed in the same order as the variables are introduced in the research question, design statement, and procedures.
1. Explain whether you will use existing measures or create your own and why.
2. Note how you will evaluate the reliability of each instrument for collecting data.
3. Note how you will verify the validity of instruments used in your study for the purpose you intend to use them.

Data Analysis Plan/Results
Situating your evaluation plan either at the end of the methods section or as the results section of the proposal, outline how you plan to evaluate each of the predictions/hypotheses using the data you obtain for this project. These should also be presented in the same order as your design statement and hypotheses.
1. Explain any statistical methods you will use to evaluate your data in relation to each hypothesis? Remember to include information about the distribution of the responses in your sample and other descriptive qualities of your data.
2. If possible, draft sample data displays such as graphs and charts to convey how you will report the answers to your research question.
3. If your project is ethnographic or involves ideas that cannot be evaluated using statistical methods, how will you achieve your goals and keep readers' attention in any written report?

Conclusions/potential implications of study (In a proposal, this offers evidence that you have thought deeply about both the strengths and limitations of your work)
1. Describe the limitations of your study?
   a. Identify the design-based threats to internal validity.
   b. Identify the design-based threats to external validity.
   c. Identify the measurement-based threats to internal and external validity.
2. Anticipate how the findings of your study relate to other research that you have discussed in your literature review. Are the findings likely to be similar/different? Why?
3. Describe some of the potential implications of your study for theory and practice.

Human subjects protection (Use the IRB forms if you are ready, but address these questions where needed if you are not that far along on this project.)
1. What are potential risks to clients/subjects?
2. Describe procedures for ensuring voluntary and informed consent.
3. Include a consent form or verbal consent protocol, as appropriate.
4. Describe possible risks of your project to the participants, yourself, and society.
5. Describe possible benefits of your project to the participants, yourself, and society.

Final reminders
Double check the clarity of the total proposal's organization and writing as well as its alignment with APA format and style.
It is fine to organize your proposal like you might organize a publishable paper. Results would be "mock" results in that you could try to outline the findings you hope to obtain or the kinds of tables you hope to build.
Before submitting work to an external source, align the information about your project with the requirements of the organization that will be reviewing the work.