**Research Proposal (Plan) or Prospectus**

An academic research proposal or prospectus is expected to contain these elements:

* A rationale for the choice of topic, showing why it is important or useful within the concerns of the discipline in which you are writing.  It is sensible also to indicate the limitations of your aims.  In other words, don't promise what you can't possibly deliver.
* A review of existing published work ("the literature") that relates to a topic.  Here you need to tell how your proposed work will build on existing studies and yet explore new territory.
* An outline of your intended approach or methodology (with comparisons to existing published work), perhaps including costs, resources needed, and a timeline of when you hope to get things done

Particular disciplines have different ways of organizing a research proposal or prospectus. As such, it is wise to ask within your department what the standard guidelines are in organizing your research proposal/prospectus.  Research proposals/prospectuses are often longer than abstracts (up to 500 words).  Often it is helpful to begin with a research question that you would like to investigate/attempt to answer.

Other general tips in putting together a research proposal/prospectus include:

* Start with why your idea is worth doing (its contribution to the field), then fill in how you will address your idea (the technicalities about the topic and method).
* Give enough detail to establish the feasibility of your proposal, but not so much as to bore your reader.
* Show your ability to deal with possible problems or changes in focus (which will often happen in a longer research project or thesis/dissertation).
* **\*\*\***Show confidence and eagerness by using the first person "I," as well as using active verbs, concise style and positive phrasing.