

Writing your research proposal

Your research proposal

If you are considering applying for a CAMS Award (ACTF Fellowships, CAMS Calls), there are different options available to you depending on your career stage: PhD, Fellowship or PostDoc. You could be a researcher contributing to a bigger project or designing your own research project.

In either case, when making an application for a CAMS Award, you will be required to provide a research proposal which will form a central part of your application.

This guideline will help you through the process of developing a research proposal.

Plan your research proposal

Check all requirements for your research proposal. At a very early stage, you may want to start thinking about some of the key drivers of your proposal, such as:

- What unanswered questions underpin your research idea? Why are you doing it? What difference will it make?
- What 'original contribution' will your research make to the field and how will you achieve this?
- Will your research provide new knowledge, or re-interpret existing ideas in a new way?
- How do you intend to execute the research i.e. the methodology you'll use and how you'll structure your work?
- How can the academic/industry partner support your research?
- What will be the outcome and how will you disseminate your findings beyond CAMS?

Ask for advice

It is a good practice to discuss your ideas with peers in your research area and use their suggestions to further your understanding and strengthen your proposal. During this process you should start making detailed notes. You might also want to start structuring your research proposal. If anything is unclear, write an informal email to get clarification during the early stages of your proposal planning.

Find a supervisor/mentor/peer

Choosing the right supervisor/mentor/peer is one of the most important steps towards a successful and rewarding research project.

Before approaching someone, you'll need to have a clear idea of the research you hope to undertake.

Once you have established a relationship with a potential supervisor/mentor/peer, you can ask them to read the first draft of your research proposal. They can give you valuable feedback and help you refine your ideas before you submit your application.

Write your proposal

You may now be in a position to start writing your proposal. This is central to your final application.

A strong research proposal:

- formulates a precise, interesting research question
- establishes the relevance and value of the proposed research question in the context of current academic thinking
- describes the data or source material your research requires
- outlines a clear and practical methodology, which enables you to answer the research question
- states clearly what you hope to discover at the end of your research and what new areas it might open up.
- provides a practical, achievable timeline required to execute the work.
- indicate how the funding will contribute and to what aspects of the proposed research.

The exact content and structure of your research proposal will depend on your subject area.

Some of the common steps to put together your first draft:

1. Articulate your idea: Start by answering what, why, when, where, who and how about your research question.

What is your vision, the current state of art and what are your objectives?

Why are you the best candidate for the award? Your track record should indicate this.

When, Where, Who and How - will the research take place? Your methods and your deliverables.

2. Identify what you'll need to complete the above: consider time, resources and amount of funding for executing the research described above.

3. What activities might you use to engage and communicate your funded work?

Proofread your research proposal

Once you have completed your proposal, check it through thoroughly. You should make sure all the information you have cited is accurate. Correct spelling and punctuation is also essential.

Write in clear sentences and structure your research proposal in a logical format that is easy for the reader to follow. Avoid the use of jargon. Proposal introductions should be clear and easy to understand by no specialists but with technical background.

It is easy to miss errors in your own work, so ask someone else to proof-read your research proposal before submitting it.

For questions regarding the CAMS/ACTF Awards application process please contact:

CAMS Secretariat
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