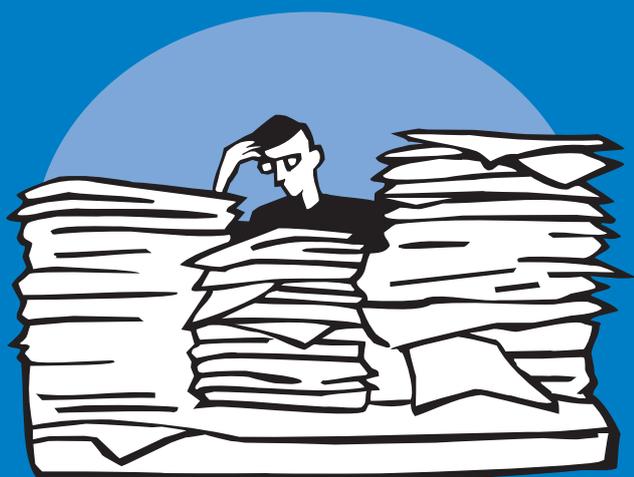


Successful Educational Research



Guidelines for
getting going,
getting funded and
getting published

Roger Deacon and Ben Parker
in conjunction with the Centre
for Education Policy Development



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**Koninkrijk
der Nederlanden**

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Preface

These Guidelines are produced as part of the Teacher Education Research and Development Programme (TEP), funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands from 2005 to 2009.

Recognising the vital role of the teacher education system to South Africa's development and the large number of bottlenecks preventing its effective functioning, five organisations formed a consortium in 2005 to implement a Teacher Education Research and Development Programme (TEP) with support from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Pretoria).

The consortium consisted of the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) based at the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), and the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE). (The subsequently disbanded Education Foundation Trust was originally part of the consortium.)

TEP had as its *overall goal* to contribute to the knowledge and information base for policy formulation and implementation regarding organisation and practice of teacher education, with a particular emphasis on initial teacher education (both pre-service and upgrading), as well as the professional development of school leaders and managers through a *blend of research and development projects*.

These Guidelines were developed in the context of this wider project aimed in part at developing research and research capacity in teacher education. Between March 2007 and March 2008, in acknowledgement of the research initiatives and expertise of higher education institution staff (including both those who had recently completed master's or doctoral studies and actively researching senior staff), small teams of staff of the Department of Educational Studies at Tshwane University of Technology voluntarily participated in a series of workshops intended to translate their current or prior research into publishable formats. The Guidelines were both among the inputs into the workshops and modified in the process.

Acknowledgements

The development and production of the Guidelines was funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Pretoria, South Africa. Their support is gratefully acknowledged.

Thanks to the Tshwane University of Technology Department of Educational Studies staff who participated in the Guidelines workshops and contributed to the development of the Guidelines through providing valuable input and feedback on drafts.

Thanks to Tessa Welch and Jenny Louw of the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) for advice and assistance regarding Creative Commons licensing options and requirements.

Introduction

If you are a university academic, researcher or postgraduate student in the field of education who wishes to get your research started, funded and/or published, these Guidelines have been framed and designed specifically for you!

At the same time, the Guidelines will be useful for anyone undertaking research in the broader humanities and social sciences, as well as for researchers in NGOs.

It is hoped that *Successful Educational Research* will assist in improving both the quality and the quantity of educational research in South Africa.

Working with the Guidelines

The three Guidelines focus on getting going with your research, finding research funding, and getting your research published, respectively, but are also connected through hyperlinked cross-references at appropriate points.

If you are already engaged in research, hyperlinks from the Contents Map on the first page may ease your navigation through the content. However, it is strongly recommended that you work sequentially through the Guidelines, covering all the content. This is particularly important in the case of Guidelines 1, which provides a step-by-step process and practical and sequenced exercises for developing a research project.

Where the Guidelines prompt you to engage with the content by doing an exercise, you will need to set up an appropriately-named folder and files on your computer, or use a hard-copy notebook to record your responses. Working on computer would be most practical, because in doing the exercises you will be building the basis for your electronic document – the research proposal, research funding proposal or research findings document itself.

The Guidelines do not provide assignments or assessment as such; rather, the test of the usefulness of the Guidelines will be whether they assist you to produce a research proposal, research funding proposal or published article/paper/book.

Feedback will be welcomed

After working with the Guidelines, please feel free to provide your opinions and constructive feedback on any aspect/s. Your feedback might include comments on your opinion of:

- the Guidelines content;
- the Guidelines structure;
- the Guidelines layout and appearance;
- the Guidelines ease of navigation and use; and
- the Guidelines practical application.

Please send an e-mail to: info@cepd.org.za

Guide to icons

Icons at different points in the content assist your reading and navigation.

Icon example

Icon explanation



The **Contents Map** on the first page of each Guidelines provides an overview, at a glance, of the Guidelines content, and hyperlinks to the different sections of the document.



Throughout each Guidelines document convenient links are provided back to the Guidelines **Contents Map**.



Note: is included to emphasise important content.



Tip: signposts additional smart information.



FOR EXAMPLE: draws your attention to examples provided to clarify a point.



Outcome: flags the outcome you can expect as a result of a step in a particular process.



The cross reference icon draws your attention to how a particular Guidelines document relates to the other two Guidelines, or to an Addendum.

Main menu

SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

GUIDELINES 1: Getting research going

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These Guidelines:

- focus on helping you – whether novice or seasoned researcher – to get your research project going;
- explain the entire process of conceptualising, developing, planning and managing an educational research project with the specific aim of producing papers for publication; and
- provide practical and sequenced exercises that lead you through the necessary steps, from start to completion.

SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

GUIDELINES 2: Getting research funded

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These Guidelines:

- focus on helping you to obtain funding for your research project – and provide extensive information about actual donors who might be approached;
- discuss identifying the right donor/s, understanding your donor/s, putting together and submitting your funding proposal, understanding how agencies process proposals, knowing what to expect after submitting, dealing with rejection, and reporting back on progress; and
- touch on issues of research ethics and intellectual copyright.

SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

GUIDELINES 3: Getting research published

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These Guidelines:

- focus on helping you to get the results of your educational research project published – and provide suggestions regarding whom you might approach;
- discuss orienting your research towards publication, cultivating good reading and writing habits, preparing your paper for submission, surveying the field and selecting the right journal/s, investigating specific journal/s further, understanding how journals process submissions and what to expect after submitting, dealing with rejection, and revising a paper based on reviewer comments;
- advise on getting your book published; and
- provide useful support resources for getting your work published.

Guidelines 1: Getting research going

The aim of these Guidelines is to explain the process of conceptualising, developing, planning and managing an educational research project with the specific aim of producing papers for publication.

The Guidelines lead you through all of the steps below, from start to completion. Even if you start out with no idea – or only a vague idea – of your research project, following the process outlined below will enable you to make planning and managing a research project a reality.

Each of the areas of focus listed below (in the Contents Map) contains one or more practical and sequenced exercises designed to help you – whether an aspiring or established researcher – reflect on and refine your research activities.

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We have laid out the sequence of steps to follow in framing and undertaking a research project. However, bear in mind that this is not simply a linear process but rather requires you constantly to revisit your previous thinking and to keep refining your ideas. The exercises are designed to assist you precisely to achieve this.



These Guidelines provide step-by-step assistance with **developing a research proposal**.

If you will need to **seek funding** for your research, your research proposal will be a crucial basis for generating your funding proposal. Guidelines 2: Getting research funded provides clear and detailed instructions on using your research proposal as the core of a successful funding proposal tailored to meet the requirements of individual donorspage 29

Guidelines 3: Getting research published provides the information you need to share your research findings in **published form**page 50

1. Develop a clear statement of purpose

Every project must have a purpose and is built around a plan, here called a research proposal. It is important to clearly define the *purpose* of the proposal, which becomes the foundation upon which everything else is built. The purpose should capture what is important and interesting to you about your planned research.



Note: The best research is first and foremost from the *heart*, and this personal commitment will be reflected in the quality of the research produced. Given the amount of effort and energy that goes into research, especially the reading and writing, you must feel strongly about it. You must, in other words, *be passionate about your research purpose*.

Do the following exercises to help you develop a clear purpose statement:

Exercise 1: Identify the broad problem area

Write down 10 different possible research ideas, with a maximum of one sentence for each idea. Then see how many of these different ideas are in fact similar, or overlapping, or otherwise connected. Link them together and, on the basis of their similarities, formulate one large research idea.

One way of getting started would be to ask yourself:

- 'If I had all the time in the world, what would I be most interested in researching?'

This exercise should help you to identify the broad problem area that currently interests you most. The following exercises are designed to help you turn the problem area into a research question.

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Exercise 2: Brainstorm the problem area

Spend 10 minutes writing down, as fast as you can, whatever you can think of about your problem area. Do not worry at this stage about neatness, spelling, intelligibility, feasibility or relevance.

You can begin this exercise by asking and answering questions like:

- Who will benefit from this completed research?
- This research is necessary and useful because...
- Knowing more about this problem area will help me to...
- Knowing more about this problem area will help others to...

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Exercise 3: Mindmap the problem area

A different sort of exercise, but with the same purpose of generating information about a problem area, is to draw a mind map. Focus on identifying the key ideas and how they are connected.

This exercise ought to produce much of the same information as in Exercise 2, but because it is structurally and visually different it can often generate new and additional insights.

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Exercise 4a: Sharpen the problem area

Now take what you have generated in Exercise 2 and Exercise 3 and imagine that you have to explain it to a friend who is not an expert in the field. (Even better, find a non-expert and actually do this.) Encourage the person to ask questions where things are not clear. This exercise will help you to identify those aspects of your problem area (key concepts and issues) that are not clearly articulated yet and need you to give them further thought. It will also help you to keep focused on the purpose of the proposal, on what it is that really motivates you to do this research.

Exercise 4b: Further sharpen the problem area

Another useful technique in this regard, suggested by Hunt (2005: 42–43), is to imagine that a reporter has just pointed a microphone at you and said: 'I hear that you're planning to do some interesting research. What's it all about, and why are you doing it?'



Tip: As you explain your proposed research to your friend or to a reporter, make additional notes to help clarify and elaborate on specific areas.

Exercise 4c: Rewrite

Finally, rewrite your now expanded Exercise 2 and Exercise 3 using full grammatical sentences and paragraphs.



Outcome: You should now have in front of you a fairly logical piece of writing, one or two pages in length, that describes what it is that you want to do and why – you have, in other words, a clear *statement of purpose* for your research. That is a real achievement!

The next step is to find out a little about what others may have already written about your proposed research.

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2. Clarify and describe your research project

To find out what literature already exists on the research area in which you are interested, begin with any general reference materials you have close at hand – a textbook that you have used before, an encyclopedia in your local library, even a knowledgeable friend or colleague. Electronic databases, and Internet resources like Google and Wikipedia, are also especially helpful in searching for more information using keywords and key phrases. Soon, however, you will find that general works aren't able to tell you anything more than you already know, and you should then start to utilise more specific sources of information, such as books, journal articles, conference papers, research reports and theses.

As you are reading up around your topic, begin to make a list of:

- *themes* that occur again and again; and
- *authors* who are mentioned repeatedly in the literature.

Identify and remember two or three of the major themes, and two or three of the main authors, because it is likely that your research will have to say something about these themes and have to make use of one or more of the important authors in the field.

In addition, while you're reading, make sure that any notes that you take are sufficiently *referenced* so that, later, you will know where you got them from – always note the author's full name, the title and date of the text, the place of publication and the publisher, and the number of the page/s containing any information you thought important (see the set of References at the end of these Guidelines for one of several possible referencing styles). If your source is a website, record the URL or website address and the date that you visited the site (date of access).

Checklist:

Have I noted the following?

- author full name
- date of publication
- title of publication
- place of publication
- publisher
- page number/s
- URL
- date of accessing URL

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Exercise 5: Structure and order your information in terms of ideas/themes

Once you've accumulated a certain amount of information from several sources, try to identify each of the main ideas (often connected to the main *themes* you've been noting) in your notes. Formulate each of these ideas in separate paragraphs. Then, group similar paragraphs together. Next, summarise each group of paragraphs. Finally, organise the summaries into some kind of logical order, and number them accordingly.



Outcome: You now have at your disposal a certain amount of information, structured in terms of themes or ideas, and arranged in some kind of order. Well done! This is the *embryo* of your research project.

The next step is to extract your actual research question/s from the information at hand.

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3. Define the research question/s

At this stage, your proposed research project is probably still very general and you will need to narrow it down. While it is always a good idea to start off big and ask mind-bogglingly huge questions about the 'meaning of life, the universe and everything' (with acknowledgements to Douglas Adams' 1979 book, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*), eventually it becomes necessary to curb your ambitions and *set boundaries* or *parameters* to your question/s.

Setting boundaries also helps to further clarify your research by indicating what you are *not* planning to investigate.

As a rough guide, a completed piece of research should have one good idea that forms its central focus and is your answer to the question/s with which you began the research. The value of your research will be directly related to two things: the interest of the question/s you ask (you want your readers to think to themselves: 'Hmm, I hadn't thought of that'), and the insight shown in the answer you give to the question/s.

Define the contextual (space and time) parameters of your research question/s by reflecting on how you wish to investigate the ideas and themes that most interested you in Exercise 5.

Exercise 6a: Define the *space* parameters of the question

The first step in this exercise is to *define the space parameters* of the question. Ask yourself:

- Where is my question located? Is it South Africa, or Africa, or developing countries, or the world?
- Am I looking at any and all educational institutions in every country in the world (a near-impossible task), or just at schools, some schools, perhaps only one country, even only one school?
- And what particular aspect of this school or schools am I interested in?



FOR EXAMPLE: You may want to study a curriculum question ('How have teachers responded to the introduction of the new curriculum?') or a question about school management ('Why are some principals effective managers?') or a policy question ('How are national education department policies on nutrition being implemented in schools?').

You have to be clear about which specific context you are studying and writing about. This helps you to limit the size of the project and the amount of effort and energy needed to do it. Not only will this ensure that your project is feasible and viable, it also helps you to *define your audience* – the people who will be interested in your question and the answer you give to it.

Exercise 6b: Define the *time parameters of the question*

The second step in this exercise is to *define the time parameters* of the question. Ask yourself:

- What period of time am I interested in?

The length of this period of time will probably be closely linked to the 'size' of your question: big questions require more evidence over a longer period to answer.



FOR EXAMPLE: If you simply ask, 'How do teachers respond to curriculum change?' you may be committing yourself to a study ranging over the past several centuries! By limiting the scope of the question, you also limit the scope of the evidence required. A question like, 'How did teachers at Sepalma Secondary School in Gauteng Province in South Africa respond to the introduction of the new FET curriculum?' restricts your main focus to a definite space and a specific period of time.

Thus, bigger questions are often too general or too abstract, and in turn this can weaken your answer, because there may not be enough evidence available or obtainable and it will be hard to say anything insightful. Very often, close studies of small things lead to the most interesting insights (and at a later stage, if needed, these insights can be tested on a wider scale).

Think about the level of abstraction at which you want to pitch the paper.



FOR EXAMPLE:

- Are you talking about a specific teacher – and describing her biography, opinions, perceptions and ways of doing things?
- Are you talking about most of the teachers in a school, a district or a province?
- Or are you talking about teachers in general, perhaps historically or philosophically?

This level of abstraction is critical to the value of your arguments. You can't interview one teacher, or survey one province, and use that interview or survey as evidence for a statement about all teachers, or an entire country!



Outcome: You now have at your disposal your research question/s, defined and articulated in terms of space and time.

The next step is to start working on the actual research proposal.

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4. Draw up a research proposal

Armed with your research question/s, you are ready to start writing your *research proposal*. By this point, you should have a good sense of the purpose/s of the research, what strongly motivates and interests you to do this work, and the actual research question/s you wish to ask.

All research proposals should contain the following sections:

Section	Suggested length
Title	1 line
Description or explanation of the project	1 page
Justification of the value or significance of the project	half a page
Set of aims and objectives	half a page
List of research questions	1 paragraph
Review of the relevant literature, and	2–3 pages
List of references	1 page
Theoretical framework	1 page
Appropriate methodology	1 page
Timetable/project plan	1–2 pages
Budget	1–2 pages
Indication of how research results will be disseminated	1 paragraph
Outline of the qualifications, expertise and prior experience of the researcher/s	half a page
Total	Approximately 13 pages



Note: These sections may overlap, merge, and expand or reduce in size, but all will be present in every research proposal. However, *before* starting to write the research proposal, *plan the entire project* by following the suggestions and carrying out the exercises discussed above. You will find that your planning will almost write the proposal for you. In other words, based on the work you have done in the exercises so far, you are now more than ready to structure your information in terms of the various sections. Work through each section below and you will have at the end of it a completed research proposal.

The different sections of the research proposal are discussed in order below, but, as will become clear, by far the most important section of them all – in terms of *conceptualising* your research project – is the literature review. Once the design and conceptualisation of your research is clear, the budget and timetable/project plan become extremely important – in terms of successful *implementation*.

Title

Give a working or provisional title to your project. Your main research question will provide you with the basis for your title. It should be clear, simple and short. It will remain a working or provisional title until all the research is complete, in case your findings suggest an alternative title. (Like introductions in articles and books, titles are among the *last* things that ought to be finalised.)

Description of the project

The thinking and writing that you did for Exercise 1, Exercise 2, Exercise 3 and Exercises 4a, 4b and 4c will provide you with the basis for this section. You need to indicate what you want to do, why you want to do it, what you may already have done on it, and what has already been done on it by others – thus indicating in a brief summary form that you are aware of the wider literature and debates (your actual literature review will follow later), and stating why your approach is unique, better or different.

Justification of the value of the project

The work that you did in Exercise 2 and Exercise 3 will give you all that you need for this section. Remember how you answered the questions, 'Who will benefit from this completed research?', and 'This research is necessary and useful because...'

Set of aims and objectives

The aims (*what* you want to achieve) and objectives (*how* you want to achieve it) of your research are already implicit (implied though not plainly expressed) in the project description and justification that you have just written, and are probably even more evident in your research question/s.

This section makes those aims and objectives explicit – i.e. stated clearly, in detail and leaving no room for confusion or doubt.

This section could be fused with either the two previous sections (Description of the project and Justification of the value of the project) or with the following section (List of research questions); alternatively, if it stands alone, it should distil the essence of these two sections and also make reference, in slightly broader outline, to what you refer to in the sections, Appropriate methodology and Timetable/project plan (below).

List of research questions

The clarifications that you did for Exercise 6a and Exercise 6b (space and time parameters) will provide you with the basis for this section. Later, once you have conducted your literature review

(below), you may wish to further refine or reformulate these research questions in the light of any new information or ideas that the literature review produces.

Review of the relevant literature, and list of references

Your research proposal will need a brief (2–3 page) overview of the literature that is relevant to your question. The purpose of this overview is two-fold:

1. It must show readers that you have sufficient knowledge of the field to be able to carry out the project successfully.
2. It must provide you with an idea of what aspects of the literature you still need to investigate in greater detail.

Accompanying the literature review should be the full biographical details (i.e. the full reference) of the key texts in the field, at least two-thirds of which you should already have read and no more than one-third of which you still intend to read.



Note: Your list of references should be about a page in length.

Writing the two or three pages of the literature review may sound easy, but this requires a substantial amount of background reading on which you have made notes. In order to write an adequate summary of the literature, which is also useful for your actual research, you will need to have read most of that literature, or at least have found out enough about that literature to know what is essential for you to read if you are to carry out your project. Thus, you have to 'map' the literature field and at the same time indicate the 'vantage point' from which you are doing the mapping.



Note: In 2. Clarify and describe your research project, and specifically in Exercise 5 above, you have already found out a little about what has been written on the topic. You have identified two or three of the major themes, and two or three of the main authors. Also, in recording where you obtained this information, you have already identified a few useful sources. The literature review you must prepare is merely a more extensive and thorough exercise than what you have already done – one that maps out the textual terrain in which your work is going to be located and establishes a vantage point or conceptual position from which you are going to describe what you see. Establishing your own vantage point entails consciously and deliberately adopting an informed subjective position in relation to (i) the problem, and (ii) the literature on the problem. You can approach this task systematically, first by clearly stating your personal perspective on your research problem and the related research question/s, and second, in the way in which you read the relevant literature.

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Exercise 7a: Adopt an informed subjective position in relation to the research problem

In relation to your research problem and question/s, ask and answer the following two questions:

1. With which aspects of the problem do I agree, and with which do I disagree?
2. What is my informed but non-neutral, non-'objective', and passionate opinion on the problem?

You have to take a stand when answering your own research question. Be subjective! Express an opinion, offer a perspective, adopt a standpoint, choose a side! In this – as in so many other ways – research is necessarily 'political', because it is necessarily *passionate*. There are no neutral positions.



Note: In many ways the success of your research project is going to depend on how well you carry out this task. It is here that you are most likely to come up with an interesting and unusual idea, with something that will interest other people. In the process of choosing your own vantage point, you will simultaneously start working out what are the other vantage points and conceptual positions that dominate the field you are investigating.

Exercise 7b: Clarify and articulate your opinions on the literature on your research problem

In relation to the literature on your research problem, ask and answer the following two questions:

1. With which texts, arguments, concepts or findings in the literature do I agree, and with which do I disagree?
2. What is my informed but non-neutral, non-'objective', and passionate opinion on the literature as a whole?

In addition to these two broad questions concerned with the literature in general, you should be asking the following more specific questions about each and every article, chapter and book that you read:

- From what position does this text speak?
- What is the author trying to say?
- What is the author's perspective on the problem that they are investigating?
- Is the author or text saying something without knowing it?
- Is the author or text implying something – i.e. suggesting something but not stating it directly – without admitting it?
- What is the author or text *not* saying (that I think ought to be said)?

Your purpose here is only partly to find out *what* the author is saying, but also to find out *why* they are saying this. What is *their* 'vantage point'? Do they agree or disagree with the various solutions thus far proposed to the problems they're concerned about? From which main authors do they draw most of their understanding of the problem? Do they explicitly or implicitly describe their own approach in terms of one or other major theorist or theory (for example, do they appear to be arguing from a 'Weberian', 'Marxist', 'postmodern', or 'neo-liberal' perspective, or are they adopting a 'behaviourist', 'hermeneutic', 'functionalist' or 'structuralist' approach, apart from a host of other '-isms' and '-ists')? Are they using a particular psychological, or historical, or philosophical, or economic, or sociological theory as their primary language of description? And which are the two or three main 'vantage points' from which the key concepts in the literature as a whole have been derived? In this way, you are extending and deepening what you did in Exercise 5, above.

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Exercise 8: Draw a mind map of the literature

Draw a mind map of the literature as a whole. Identify the key concepts that recur, and the main themes and authors that can be identified, across the literature. At the same time, identify the similarities and differences, or comparisons and contrasts, within the literature.



Outcome: You now have a 'picture' of how your field is described by other authors – a *map of the textual terrain*.

Now, in relation to these authors' vantage points and conceptual positions, you can revisit your own vantage point, and more firmly identify the theories that you are going to use, the research questions you are going to ask, the authors with whom you agree or disagree, the concepts you found illuminating or useful, and the arguments that convinced you, or that you found wanting. This will help you to both further develop your research questions (see List of research questions, above) and write your theoretical framework (see Theoretical framework, below).

A NOTE ON THE PROCESS OF WRITING THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The process of writing the literature review can be understood as a *cycle*, or a *spiral*, whereby:

- you start from any point that initially makes sense ('sounds interesting', 'appears attractive', 'is of concern', or 'seems intriguing'); then
- move on to see if, and how, that point is addressed in the literature; then
- revise your initial position in the light of what you find in the literature; then
- criticise those parts of the literature that do not conform to your own revised position (in the process delineating the different approaches that the literature takes to your problem, as well as those approaches that adopt a broadly similar position); and also
- locate your now more developed problem in terms of the literature as well as its context and relevant concepts.

So, as we depict in the diagram, you move from:

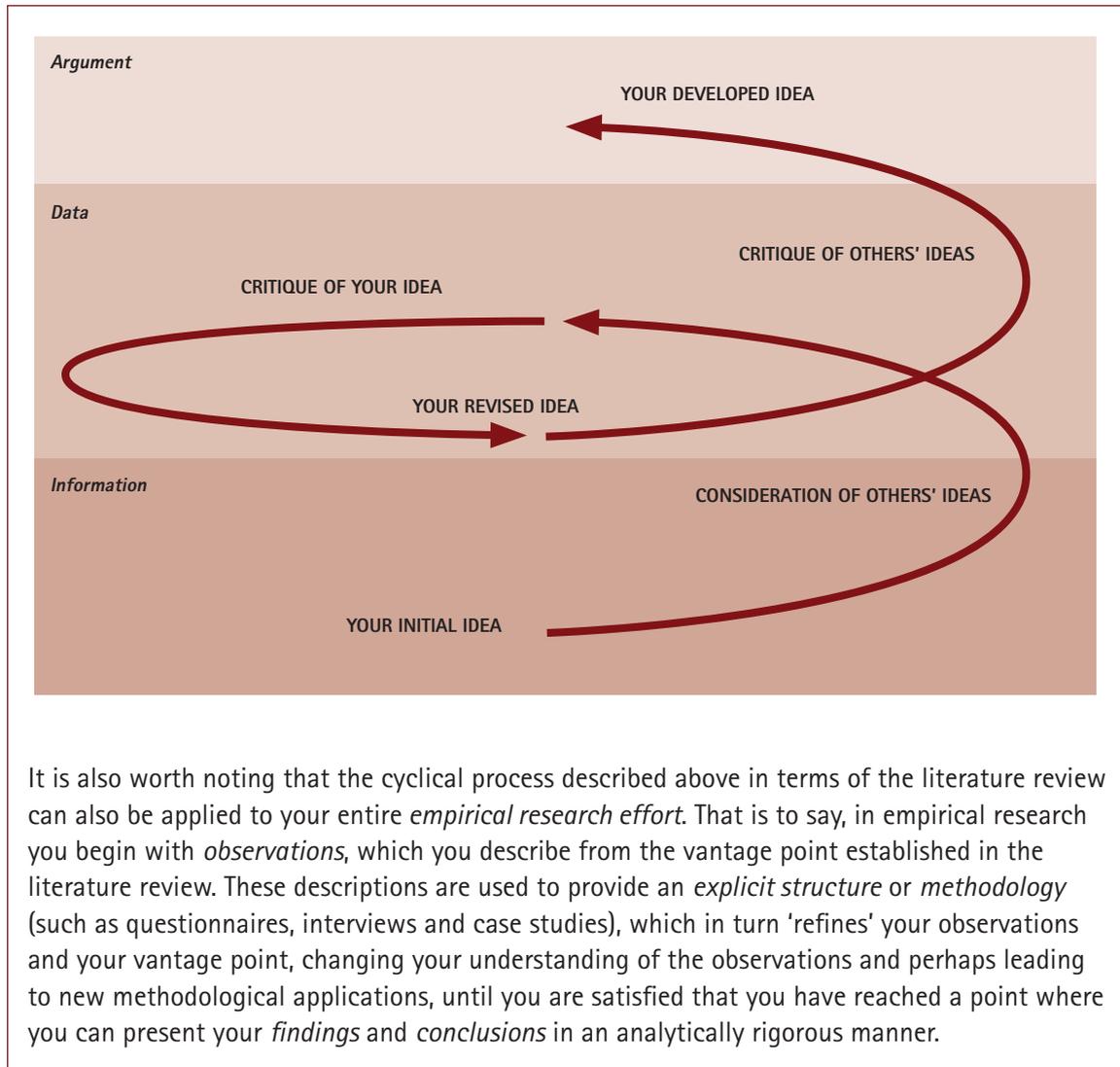
- *information* (your initial problem, plus the initial literature on that problem)

to:

- *data* (a more discerning literature-informed problem, plus the literature that agrees with or provides evidence supporting your problem as well as the literature that disagrees with or provides counter-evidence)

and then to:

- *argument* (a critical, passionate perspective on a problem located in, but not exhausted by, the literature).



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Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework emerges directly from the literature review. The identification of your vantage point in Exercise 7a and Exercise 7b, coupled with Exercise 8, means that you have already identified all the key theorists, concepts and arguments that you might want to deploy in attacking your research problem.

All that remains, for the purposes of stating your theoretical framework, is to give a brief description of the form that your overarching argument will take, in the process showing that you have already chosen your own position and know which key concepts, theories and arguments you intend to apply.

Appropriate methodology

An appropriate methodology derives in part from the kinds of research question/s you have already identified, and in part from the methodologies already adopted by others in your research field – methodologies that you will have discerned in the course of the literature review. Above all, your choice of methodology should depend on the kind of *data* (see above) that you hope to obtain about your research problem.



Note: Research begins with ideas and problems, in relation to which methodologies are *secondary* and *subordinate*; that is to say, the research itself to a large extent dictates what methodology or methodologies you use. Moreover, despite the common tendency to place methodologies in different watertight boxes (such as 'quantitative' or 'qualitative'), they are seldom completely distinct, and often overlap.

ASSISTANCE WITH CHOOSING YOUR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are numerous texts that offer descriptions and applications of a whole range of methodologies; two of the most useful are Bell (2005) and Denscombe (2003).

Bell (2005: chapters 7–11) discusses the following methodological (data collection) tools, which can be used within a range of different methodological approaches:

- documentary analysis;
- questionnaires;
- interviews; and
- diaries and observation.

Denscombe (2003) discusses the above, as well as the following additional data collection tools:

- surveys;
- case studies;
- the Internet; and
- experiments.

Denscombe (2003) also discusses the following methodological approaches, which may make use of the tools listed above:

- action research;
- ethnography;
- phenomenology; and
- grounded theory.

Timetable/project plan

It is very important to formulate a timetable/project plan, in which you schedule the various stages and activities of the research project. You will need to identify priorities, and set deadlines. Very sophisticated timetables/project plans can be structured, using any one of several specialised software programmes, in the form of timelines, flow charts and Gantt charts, but all that is really required is a list of what needs to be done, when, and by whom.

First, ask and answer the following questions:

- What are the main activities and sub-activities that need to be undertaken?
- What is the sequence of activities? In other words, which activities must happen before other activities can take place, which can happen sequentially (and what is the sequence), which can take place simultaneously, and which can only take place once other activities have been completed?
- How long should each activity take? Think in terms of 8-hour working days in order to calculate time, and bear in mind existing workloads, and how much can be done during normal office hours, given existing commitments. For example, if you estimate that the literature review should take a month's work (which translates into approximately 21 working days), but if you have teaching commitments on 3 days of every week of that month, then barring taking leave, you may only be able to allocate 1 working day per week and 1 day per weekend, which in turn requires a revised estimate of about 3 months to complete the task.
- Who will undertake each activity?
- If more than one researcher is working on an activity, how are tasks allocated, to whom, and how many days will be assigned to each researcher for the completion of their tasks?



Tip: Deadlines need to be kept, but be realistic about your capacity to meet them. Your research time is precious and needs to be managed effectively; sometimes that requires that you learn to say 'No' to competing work or leisure opportunities.



Note: You may need to revisit your answers to some of the above questions, and make some adjustments, not only before finalising your research proposal but also possibly just before beginning the actual research project, since a preliminary needs analysis may reveal additional information that needs to be planned for.

Second, plot the envisaged research activities in the form of a timetable/project plan that includes number of days and projected due dates. Look at the example provided here of a timetable/project plan built around the hypothetical example of a research project investigating some teachers' perceptions of the introduction of a new curriculum. (It begins at the point where the research proposal that will guide the project has been developed and completed to the satisfaction of all concerned.)

Example of a timetable/project plan

Description of tasks		Person days	Outputs	Projected due dates
Activity 1: Planning and preparation				
1.1	Confirmation of final research proposal	1	Final proposal confirmed	31 Aug 2012
1.2	Undertake literature review	23	Literature review	15 Dec 2012
1.3	Preparation of interview instruments	8	Interview instruments	31 Jan 2013
1.4	Workshop instruments	2	Recommendations for instrument revision	6 Feb 2013
1.5	Revise interview instruments	2	Revised interview instruments	13 Feb 2013
1.6	Develop templates for data capture and analysis	2	Templates developed	20 Feb 2013
1.7	Team meeting	5	Minutes of meeting	25 Feb 2013
Sub-total		43		
Activity 2: Data collection and analysis				
2.1	Identify and gather relevant documentation	3	Documentation gathered	5 Mar 2013
2.2	Review documentation	3	Summary of documentation	10 Mar 2013
2.3	Visits to schools	10	Site visits recorded	15 Apr 2013
2.4	Undertake interviews	20	Interviews recorded	15 Jun 2013
2.5	Transcribe interviews	8	Interviews transcribed	1 Jul 2013
2.6	Analysis of data	20	Analysis written up	31 Jul 2013
2.7	Team meeting	5	Minutes of meeting	15 Aug 2013
2.8	Analysis presented at workshop	2	Workshop held	30 Aug 2013
2.9	Revise analysis	3	Analysis revised	15 Sep 2013
Sub-total		74		
Activity 3: Preparation of final research report				
3.1	Prepare draft overall report	10	Draft overall report prepared	15 Oct 2013
3.2	Present overall report to funders	2	Workshop held	30 Oct 2013
3.3	Incorporate funders' comments	5	Revised draft report	8 Nov 2013
3.4	Finalise and submit report	3	Final report submitted	30 Nov 2013
Sub-total		20		
Total number of days		137		

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Budget

The costs of a research project can vary enormously. Budgeting for these costs may appear to be a daunting task, but once you have a clear timetable/project plan, budgeting becomes quite simple and straightforward.



Note: Remember that the sequence of steps to develop your research proposal does not have to be followed in a linear fashion. Rather, you should be constantly moving backwards and forwards in the sequence as you revisit your previous thinking and refine your ideas. This applies to your budget, too; your cost estimates will flow from your understanding of the research activities required, and these in turn may require modifications in timetabling/project planning, methodology and even your research questions, until all aspects of your proposal are in agreement with one another.

There is also a range of software available (such as Microsoft Excel) that can create budget templates with built-in formulae, so that whenever you make any changes to any of the values, the budget recalculates itself automatically.

Estimate your research costs as accurately as possible, and try to leave a margin for possible unexpected expenses. If you need to put together a research team to carry out your research project, a significant part of your budget will relate to *personnel* or *staffing* costs, which requires budgeting for how many days, and at what hourly or daily rate, each member of the team and any external consultants will need to work on the project to achieve the desired outcomes. Some projects may extend over several years, and their budgets may have to cater for the effects of inflation on rates and costs; other projects are specifically designed to include and mentor or train new or inexperienced researchers, which also has cost implications.

Another area of budgeting relates to any *equipment* you may need to purchase or hire, such as laptops, digital cameras and recorders, or specialised software. Price the specific equipment you will need, so that your budget is realistic, and don't forget that insurance and maintenance costs may also need to be factored in.

Travel and *subsistence* costs (air fares, car hire, shuttle services, accommodation, meals and incidentals) may be incurred, if you need to make site visits, undertake fieldwork or attend a meeting or conference (which may also entail registration fees). If your project wishes to host a meeting or hold its own workshop (to share research findings or train fieldworkers, for example), then the costs of hiring a venue and providing refreshments must be considered.

In addition, make provision for what are called *direct costs* or *project consumables*, such as books, stationery, printing, copying, postage, telephones, computer services and publication costs.



Note: Before you start budgeting, check the funder's or institution's regulations regarding what items can be budgeted for. For example, some funders assume that universities cover staff salaries, and therefore they will not subsidise staffing costs. In this case, if certain services are not available in your institution, you will need to demonstrate in your proposal why it is necessary to outsource that function or activity. Also remember that funding proposals that are directed through a university's Research Office may be required to reflect an administration fee, to cover indirect costs incurred by the institution (such as office space, telecommunications, electricity and so on).

Finally, it is important to make very clear any assumptions underpinning your budget, so that a reader will know exactly what the project intends to do and what resources are required in order to do it successfully. Don't make the mistake of under-budgeting in the belief that this will improve your prospects of obtaining funding, because this increases the chances that you will be unable to properly complete the project as set out in the proposal, and could negatively impact on your ability to obtain funding in the future.

Indication of how research results will be disseminated

Research that never gets published or that never informs something that is published is useless research!

The primary purpose of these Guidelines is to get research published in the form of journal articles or chapters in books, but research can also be presented at seminars and conferences, written up as reports, published on websites and turned into books and theses.

It is worth bearing in mind the expected market, audience or readership of the research project; this can help conceptualise how and why the research is being carried out in the first place.

Outline of the qualifications, expertise and prior experience of the researcher/s

Research proposals (and especially research funding proposals), are often expected to be accompanied by a Curriculum Vitae (CV) for each researcher, or some other means of indicating the capacity and ability of researchers to carry out the proposed project.



Outcome: Well done! You have succeeded in creating a first draft of your research proposal!

The next step is to *fine-tune* the research proposal (see more on this below) and then to start on the exciting process of actual project implementation.

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5. Plan and manage your research project

You now have a first draft of your research proposal. You cannot put your feet up yet, however, as you have a little way to go before you are ready to *implement* your planned research.

Assuming that the required time and resources are available, and that any necessary authorisations have been obtained (such as ethics approval from your institution's research committee, or permission to visit a certain research site, access certain records or register for a course of study), your research project is all ready to begin.



However, should you still need **funding** for your research project, Guidelines 2: Getting research funded will assist you with putting together a funding proposal.

Take the time to double-check your research proposal and plan the project as a whole. This includes undertaking a preliminary needs analysis; and considering whether you can undertake the research alone or whether you need to put together a research team.

UNDERTAKING A PRELIMINARY NEEDS ANALYSIS

A useful practice, prior to actual project implementation, is to undertake a *preliminary needs analysis*.

What is a needs analysis?

Quite simply, it is an exercise that aims to generate an improved understanding of particular needs; i.e. an analysis of needs. In this case, the basic question you are asking and answering is: 'What will I *need* in order to undertake this research project successfully?' Your method of asking and answering this question could be formal (interviews, surveys, questionnaires, focus groups) or informal (reflection on your own, conversations with others), depending on the type of project and number of players involved (see the note below on putting together a research team).

By identifying and obtaining in advance (by getting yourself or others to critically reflect upon your research proposal) as many as possible of the things that you will need, you can increase the odds of carrying out a successful project.

For instance, ask and answer the following questions:

- Will I have time to do the project during weekdays, or will I have to do it in the evenings or on weekends?
- Will it be necessary to arrange for leave, or a sabbatical, to carry out part of the project?
- If I have to interview people, will this be possible in the evenings or on weekends?
- If I post out questionnaires, how much will it cost and how long might it take to get them back?
- What will I do if very few questionnaires are returned or answered?
- If I need access to a library, to help with the literature review, when will I do this and which library will I use?

- Am I going to have to travel in the course of the research?
- From where or whom will I obtain certain data/statistical analysis that I might need?
- Do I have the skills and time to undertake all aspects of the project, or will I need to hire assistance?
- Do I need to consider putting together a research team?
- How much is all this going to cost, and will I be able to afford it if I don't have access to other funds?
- Has this needs analysis highlighted additional costs that I had not built into the budget? (If so, you will need to go back to the budget and adjust it.)

Some projects are simply too big for one person, and you may need to put together a *research team*.

PUTTING TOGETHER A RESEARCH TEAM

Creating a team is a slow and difficult process. You have to identify people who can and want to work together, who share your motivation and purpose, and who can collectively demonstrate that they have the necessary skills and experience to successfully complete the project.

You will need the following:

- *Personnel/team members* – keep the team as small as possible, at least in the beginning.
- *A team co-ordinator* – if you are not going to be the co-ordinator, then who is?
- *Special skills* – these depend on your research question/s, context, scope and methodologies.
- *Research assistance* – you may want some assistance with onerous fieldwork and/or literature searches.
- *Expert assistance* – for example, a statistician, data coder, data capturer, translator, transcriber, editor and so on.

Think carefully about the inter-personal dynamics of the team. How can you shape interaction between the team members in ways that will nurture a positive and constructive spirit? Which senior team members would be amenable to, and capable of, mentoring new or less experienced researchers? Which team members might be geographically best placed to carry out certain distant research tasks?

Also keep in mind relations with other people outside the research team, such as colleagues and peers, and whether your project might need their cooperation, for instance by taking on part of your usual workload while you are off doing research. Try to factor in your relationships with superiors: for example, how is your head of department going to react, and what can you do to secure their support?

Finally, if your research project is funded by or carried out under the auspices of an institution like a university or a donor agency, you will be expected to provide regular *progress reports* (for which provision needs to have been made in your timetable/project plan).

Different institutions have different progress report templates, but will usually expect feedback on the following areas:

- The extent to which the aims of the research project are being or have been achieved.
- An indication of work completed, especially research findings, and any papers, publications or reports deriving from them.
- An account of any difficulties or challenges experienced.
- An indication of what remains to be done, and by when.



Outcome: Congratulations! You have now completed and polished your research proposal and undertaken the necessary steps to plan project implementation. These are indeed achievements!

References

Adams D (1979) *The hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy*. London: Pan

Bell J (2005) *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science*. Maidenhead: Open University Press

Denscombe M (2003) *The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects*. Maidenhead: Open University Press

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Guidelines 2: Getting research funded

The aim of these Guidelines is to help you obtain funding for your educational research project, with the specific aim of producing papers for publication.

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These Guidelines discuss, among other things:

- how to identify the right donor/s 31
- what details you need to know about your potential donor/s 35
- how to put together your funding proposal 38
- how to submit your funding proposal 44
- how donor agencies process proposals they receive and what you can expect after submitting 45
- how to deal with rejection 45
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Throughout, the Guidelines provide information about actual donors who might be approached.

In this regard, see also:

- ADDENDUM 1: Potential sources of funding 48

The Guidelines also touch on questions of:

- research ethics 42
- intellectual copyright 43



These Guidelines assume that you are **seeking funding** for a research project that you have already thoroughly and meticulously conceptualised and planned. In other words, the assumption is that you already have at your disposal a *research proposal*, in which you have clearly articulated every important aspect of your research project and which will form the core of your funding proposal.

Guidelines 1: Getting research going provides step-by-step assistance with **developing a research proposal**page 8

Guidelines 3: Getting research published provides the information you need to share your research findings in **published form**page 50

1. Identify the right donor/s

There are many potential donors and funding agencies all over the world, spread across all disciplines and areas of research. They include government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), corporations, universities, foundations and other institutional donors. In South Africa, much of the government funding is administered by the National Research Foundation (NRF), and there are also many business and foreign donors.

The field of education is well served by donor agencies. In South Africa, research projects in education attract approximately R1 billion per year. Successful projects can also generate their own income; for example, through publishing articles in accredited journals, since most universities reward authors by paying them a portion of the government research subsidy.

Many donors already have established funding programmes, and will not fund research outside of these programmes; but others are more eclectic.

Some donors fund only other organisations and institutions, rather than individuals, or restrict their support to certain regions or countries.

Some donors do not fund 'self-initiated' research (or research projects proposed to them) but instead commission their own research projects or put out calls for tenders.

Some donors prefer to fund only *applied research*; others are willing to support *pure research*.



Note: We discuss the distinction between applied and pure research in more detail below, because you need to be sure to match your research activities with donor agencies, and vice versa.

Some donors emphasise policy research, others empirical fieldwork, and yet others prefer cross-disciplinary investigations.



Tip: Whatever your research project, a golden rule of seeking funding is: Match research activities with donor agencies, and donor agencies with research.

It is important to be clear about the 'nature' of your project and about the 'identity' of potential donors who may be interested in a project of that nature. In other words, as in all research, you have to start by doing your homework, which will provide data on the basis of which you can choose to whom to send your funding proposal.

Applying to an 'academic' research funding organisation like the NRF requires very different strategies from those required by a corporate social responsibility programme.

If you have to give a presentation on your funding proposal to a potential donor, make sure that you have 'read the context' and the organisational culture accurately. For example, do they expect

a PowerPoint presentation? In this case you will need to ensure that the appropriate equipment is available – and if it is not you will need to provide it.

Don't think that you can have just one funding proposal that you send to different donors or funding agencies. Rather, by conceptualising your specific research field from different angles, you can tailor your core proposal to appeal to a range of different donor agencies, for whom you produce individual funding proposals. That is to say, you need a *strong basic core* to your proposal, which you conceptualise clearly and then attune to the identity and interests of the donors you have targeted.



Note:

- While the *core* of your funding proposal will stay the same and will be based on your careful conceptualising of the research project itself (i.e. on your research proposal document – as developed in Guidelines 1), you will have to adapt the style, presentation and some of the content of your funding proposal to the specific audience/donor to whom you are sending it.
- It makes sense to submit an individually tailored funding proposal per donor. However, for reasons that we discuss later in these Guidelines, we advise that you do *not* submit your funding proposal to more than one potential donor agency at the same time.

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THE 9 MAIN CATEGORIES OF DONOR AGENCY

- National government departments, like the Department of Education, or the Department of Arts and Culture.
- National universities, and research agencies like the NRF.
- National NGOs, with SANGONeT providing information on funding opportunities.
- Foreign embassies and governments, especially European (including the European Union) but also the USA, Japan and Australia.
- International organisations, such as various United Nations agencies.
- International NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch.
- National and international corporations, especially those with large corporate social responsibility programmes or associated foundations (such as the Ford Foundation or the Zenex Foundation).
- Churches and philanthropic organisations, such as the Catholic Institute of Education, or Save the Children.
- Independent foundations, usually established by wealthy individuals (like the Shuttleworth Foundation, or the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation).

So, a useful approach is to develop the core of your funding proposal (see 3. Put together your funding proposal, below) and then investigate potential donor agencies by browsing online using key concepts linked to your proposal. (Potential sources of funding are provided at the end of these Guidelines.) Taking such an approach will also help you develop the purpose of your project by seeing ways in which the project can make a positive contribution to the challenges and concerns of different donors.



FOR EXAMPLE: There are many challenges waiting to be addressed in the schooling system. A project that can make a difference to some aspect of the quality of schooling will have strong appeal to a number of donors.



Tip: Before you begin investigating donors, make sure that you know what you want! Know yourself and know your project, along with its strengths and weaknesses. For example, are you more interested in doing 'pure' research – where you will need to demonstrate that you can use sophisticated research methodologies to gather and analyse evidence with the purpose of adding to our theoretical knowledge? Or are you driven by a passion to do 'applied' research and development that will make a practical difference to people's lives?

BE CLEAR ON WHETHER YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT IS PURE OR APPLIED RESEARCH

A wide range of research activities attract funding. An important distinction here is between *pure* and *applied* research.

Research projects of a more pure, theoretical or academic variety will appeal to very different donors from those interested in applied and practical research and development activities. The former – i.e. pure research projects – tend to be linked to the national higher education system. The latter – i.e. applied research – tend to be linked mostly to foreign governments and national and international foundations.

Pure research projects can be small- or large-scale. Typical pure research activities for which you could raise funding could include the following:

- Undertaking your post-graduate studies, especially PhD and post-doctoral research. National research funding agencies (in South Africa, the NRF: www.nrf.ac.za), as well as individual universities and think-tanks worldwide, often provide fellowships for or fund studies that may contribute to their research priorities. You can even trawl websites that list such opportunities, e.g. www.findaphd.com.
- Attending a training programme or short refresher course.
- Cross- or multi-disciplinary studies, where a researcher qualified in one field may want to gain expertise in another.
- Research collaboration and exchange programmes, whether between individuals, institutions or countries, or for government or industry.

It is also possible for you to motivate for funds for the equipment, accommodation, travel, premises, staff and so on necessary to carry out your pure research project.

Applied research and development activities are usually intended to have a practical outcome that benefits people and/or their environment. There are many more applied research and development activities than there are pure research activities.

Because of South Africa's history, and its status as a developing country with a strong 'appeal' to international donor agencies, applied research and development activities can draw from a large pool of available funding. However, it is important to stay attuned to your environment. This funding climate can change very rapidly. External political and economic events can turn other countries into the 'flavour of the month' and impact indirectly, and negatively, on South Africa.



FOR EXAMPLE:

- The war in Iraq lowered the levels of funding emanating from the US and the UK.
- Although recent initiatives to address poverty in Africa seemed to indicate more funding becoming available during the next few years, global economic recessionary conditions have impacted on donor agencies with endowment amounts invested in stock markets as well as on those whose funding is a percentage of their country's GDP.
- In the immediate post-1994 period, South Africa benefited from very generous education funding. Recently, though, a significant amount of donor funding has shifted from education to health, especially HIV/AIDS research, and also to the environment and global warming.

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In some instances, research proposals and funding proposals may overlap, or may need to be combined.

When you are *tendering* for a research project it is likely that the donor organisation will provide clear guidelines and/or a template for writing up the combined research/funding proposal. If not, however, go to Guidelines 1 on writing a research proposal and then also follow the advice provided below in 3. Put together your funding proposal.

Understanding the research and funding environment is important for the success of your proposal and is an integral part of identifying the interests of your target donors.

Many universities and research organisations have a Research Office, which will assist you to identify appropriate donors and will help you to approach them. If such services are available to you – use them! You are entering a highly competitive field. There is a significant amount of money available for research, but there are lots of people competing for it and many of them are professional consulting groups that make a very good living from doing 'consultancy' research.

The South African education and training field has experienced a rapid growth in the number of national and international NGOs and consultancy companies working in the country and specialising in offering research and research development services. These people do this for their living, are highly professional and often have a track-record of expertise and experience. Their competitive disadvantage, however, lies in their costs. If you are working in a university, your personnel/staffing, infrastructure and resource costs are likely to be much lower. You already earn a salary and you probably have access to an office and computer, telephone, and faxing and

photocopying facilities, and having resources like these at your disposal allows you, as an individual researcher, to compete against even the best consultancy companies.



Note: Bear in mind that most universities now insist that externally funded projects pay a percentage – currently around 15% – of the funding to the university to cover your 'free' use of these resources, so remember to build this into your budget.

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2. Know your donor/s and what they want

Once you have conceptualised the core of your research project (and remember to use Guidelines 1 to do so), and identified a donor or a number of donors who seem to match your research activities and from whom you would like to request funds, do further research into the donor/s.

Identify:

- their specific interests;
- their area/s of focus;
- their key contact person and their address; and
- any particular research or funding preferences that they may specify.

Consider the sort of things that donors are looking for, including some or all of the following:

- Value for money.
- To maintain or enhance their good reputation.
- To fund work that may impact on policy development or implementation.
- To fund work that improves access and quality.
- To fund work that is innovative.
- To be associated with excellence.
- To improve their operation (even if that operation is primarily giving out grants).



Tip: A particularly desirable buzzword among donors of all sorts is *sustainability*, namely, that the projects that they fund will have long-term and ongoing effects rather than fizzle out the moment the project and funds end.

Not least, all donors want to be sure that any money they invest in your project will be spent in accordance with the approved budget and in compliance with strict accounting and auditing practices.

Check that the agency does actually fund research of the kind that you are proposing, by finding out more about their funding patterns and predilections over the last few years. Where possible, try to align your interests with theirs, particularly if they have dedicated funding programmes for certain countries or certain kinds of research.



Note: Adjust your proposal to conform to the agency's style, and follow to the letter any instructions or guidelines they might give to potential researchers. If they have a specific proposal template, use it!

Donors do not just expect their advice to be followed; given the vast number of badly prepared or poorly targeted proposals they receive each year, they are often impressed with a research proposal that clearly shows that you've done your homework on them.

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DOING YOUR HOMEWORK ON DONOR CRITERIA

Bear in mind that donors usually have criteria or parameters by which they *exclude* the majority of applications, and many of these criteria are related to the following:

- Amount of funding being requested.
- Length of time for completion of the research project.
- Governance and financial arrangements.

If you think about it, the above criteria have nothing to do with the *actual* content, value and purpose of your proposal. And yet they are often paramount in a donor's mind when they first consider your proposal. In other words, find out the donor criteria with regard to the above, and check your funding proposal in terms of compliance with these criteria.

Find out in advance *how much money* (minimum and maximum) the donor agency usually grants per successful proposal, so that you don't err by asking for more than they think appropriate or less than they think important.

Find out, too, the *average period of time* for which the donor usually awards funding – it's not worth sending them a proposal for a five-year project if they only fund projects for one year. Funding is often given once-off, though (ironically) usually to sustainable or long-term research programmes, and even so is seldom granted for more than a year or two.

Find out the donor criteria with regard to *governance* and *financial management* – the procedures and forms of accountability that are in place to assure the donor that their money will be spent properly and in accordance with the budget.

Tailor your proposal accordingly, to ensure that you do your utmost to avoid giving the donor cause to exclude your proposal on grounds unrelated to the proposal content.



Tip: While it is not actually *unethical* to send your funding proposal to more than one potential donor agency at the same time, in practice there is little to be gained and much to lose by doing so:

1. Each proposal will need to be suitably tailored, of course.
2. If more than one agency decides to offer you funding, you may find yourself in the predicament of having to decline one offer, or else entering into awkward negotiations as to which specific aspects of your research project are to be funded by which agency, and who will get the credit and acknowledgements.

Since donor agencies are usually run on efficient business lines and should be able to give you a response without unnecessary delay, it is generally better to send your proposal out one donor at a time.

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TENDERING FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

Another approach to obtaining research funding is to do so in an *indirect* way, as it were, by tendering for research projects that an organisation or institution might want done. Naturally, this requires that you and/or your research team have the research experience and expertise to carry out a broad range of research activities in the particular area of research being tendered for.

You will need to:

- regularly check the press and other relevant publications, including online services that contain tenders; and
- put your name down on mailing lists for particular donor agencies and government departments.

While responding to a call for tenders usually offers the advantage of arming you with more information about the organisation's interests and requirements, it is still important that you do your homework in terms of matching your research activities to the culture, identity and expectations of the commissioning organisation.

It is important to bear in mind that, in tender-based research, the commissioning organisation will usually have pre-determined the research topic and the main research questions (as well as the maximum budget and the timeframe), and will expect those responding to the call for tenders to engage with these by mapping out the field and providing a sound methodology. Since there is often stiff competition for tenders, the profile of the research team (in terms of experience, expertise and qualifications) and their ability to meet deadlines are critical.

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3. Put together your funding proposal

Obviously, as we have pointed out already, you will need to have planned your entire research project (see Guidelines 1) *before* you start to contact potential donor agencies with a funding proposal.

Try to apply your current ideas and your already completed research to other fields. This gives you a track record to impress the donor/s. Do not try to reinvent the wheel; rather, work with others or pick up where others have left off. You need to have a clear sense of the relevant literature and work that has already been done (again, see Guidelines 1).



Note: The content of your *research proposal* will inform your writing of the *funding proposal*, for which we provide step-by-step instructions below. Once you have at your disposal your core funding proposal, as worked out in the format below, you will be in a position to tailor it to any prescribed application formats, if required, to suit different donors.

Some donor agencies may expect you to provide a very short 'concept paper' in advance of any formal funding proposal; such a concept paper is expected to be precisely that: very short (often no longer than a single page) and to the point. Its purpose is to allow the donor to consider whether or not to take the next step and call for a formal funding proposal.

Keep even your funding proposal as short as possible (10/11 pages, or even shorter if possible), without omitting any of the sections described below. Then check the length, format and style requirements of the specific donor to whom you are sending the proposal.

All funding proposals should contain the following sections:

Section	Suggested length
Title	1 line
Synopsis	half a page
Description of the project to be funded	1 page
Justification of the value of the project	1 page
Set of objectives to be achieved	half a page
Indication of awareness of possible obstacles	half a page
Indication of available resources	half a page
Description of the governance and financial management arrangements	half a page
Timetable/project plan	1–2 pages
Detailed budget	1–2 pages
Research ethics policy	1 paragraph
Copyright policy	1 paragraph
Outline of the qualifications, expertise and experience of the project leader/s	half a page
Your contact details	a few lines
Total	Approximately 11 pages



Note: To some extent, these sections may overlap, merge, and expand or reduce in size, but *all* will be present in every funding proposal. Remember that most of the content of the funding proposal will be readily drawn from your existing research conceptualisation, i.e. from your *research proposal*.

Work through each section below and you will have at the end of it the core of your funding proposal.

The different sections of the funding proposal are discussed in order below. They are all crucial and you should work through all the sections below. As will become clear, though, one of the most important sections of a funding proposal is the budget.

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Title

Give a clear and concise title to your funding proposal. Your objectives should provide you with the basis for your title; it should be clear, simple and short.

Synopsis

The synopsis is a short (300–500 word) summation of the funding proposal as a whole. It should especially emphasise:

- the value and main objectives of the project;
- the expected beneficiaries;
- the amount of money being sought; and
- the estimated time of completion.



Tip: Write the synopsis after you have written all the other sections.

Description of the project to be funded

This description should provide the potential donor with the contextual features of your research project, indicating:

- what you are doing or plan to do;
- why you want to do it; and
- what may already have been done in this regard, both by you and by others.

The purpose of this section is to convince the donor that you've done your homework, know what you're talking about, and are suggesting a new, better or qualitatively different approach than any similar endeavours.



Tip: Draw the donor's particular attention to the ways in which your project dovetails with the donor's own publicly-stated aims.

Justification of the value of the project

Whereas a *research* proposal should emphasise the importance and relevance of the proposed study for knowledge in general or for a community or society, a *funding* proposal ought to emphasise the usefulness and importance of the proposed project for the goals of the targeted donor agency.



Note: You will rewrite this section for each donor to whom you send your funding proposal.

In addition, indicate who will directly benefit the most from a successfully funded and completed project (i.e. stipulate who the research project *beneficiaries* will be).

Set of objectives to be achieved

This section should follow logically from the previous sections, which described and justified the importance of the project that you wish to be funded.

The objectives should be simple, realistic and, most importantly, achievable.



Note: You may have to modify your objectives in the light of the varying goals of different donors, so ensure that this section is rewritten each time you rewrite the previous section (on justifying the value of the project) for a new donor.

As emphasised before: you need to be very clear about the 'core' of the project and how to package it for particular donors.

Indication of awareness of possible obstacles

Identify in advance any and all possible obstacles to your project and to achieving your objectives, and indicate how you will meet, avoid or overcome them. Some funders require a section outlining assumptions and risks.



Tip: You could also show here that you are aware of other similar projects, past and present, and of their successes and failings.

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Indication of available resources

These are resources that are already available to you, such as current or past funds and donors, permanent, temporary or volunteer staff, premises, equipment, key individual and organisational contacts, and access to the people and places necessary for the project.

Description of the governance and financial management arrangements

Governance and financial management arrangements consist of those procedures and forms of oversight that assure the donor that their money will be spent properly and in accordance with the budget (below).

Such arrangements often vary in relation to the size of the project, especially the number of staff involved in it.



FOR EXAMPLE:

- If your project is a one-person investigation, and you are working in an institution, the institution's own financial systems and procedures (such as a research account or cost centre, and a faculty committee or Research Office) will probably be sufficient – provided that you are allowed to use them *and* that their policies permit you to spend monies in the ways intended in the project proposal. (Some institutions follow rigid supply chain management policies, which require that all sub-contracts for amounts greater than a certain minimum – say, R10 000 – must be put out to quote or tender and comply with strict cost and equity criteria, and this may make it difficult or time-consuming for you to sub-contract the specific expertise your project requires.)
- If your project involves more than one person, and/or is a large-scale investigation, and/or you cannot make use of an institution's procedures, you ought to establish or have recourse to a formal reference group or steering committee, composed of people who are well respected in the field, to 'oversee' your management of the donor's money.

Timetable/project plan

It is very important to formulate a timetable/project plan, in which you schedule the various stages and activities of the research project. You will need to identify priorities, and set deadlines.

The timetable/project plan should consist of the precise activities and operations that are intended to achieve the objectives listed under Set of objectives to be achieved (above). Built into the timetable/project plan should be some idea of the 'benchmarks' that will indicate when the objectives have been achieved. Many donors like objectives to be linked to performance indicators, which set out 'deliverables', 'products' or 'outputs' to be achieved by the project. This could include reports, publications and workshops, but in many cases you will need to link the plan to tangible changes that are seen as socially worthwhile, such as informing policy, facilitating a process or improving quality of life.

The timetable/project plan must list all that needs to be done, when, and by whom. Identify the priorities, and indicate deadlines – including the performance indicators.



See Guidelines 1, *Timetable/project plan*, for detailed examples.



Tip: Be realistic and modest. Don't set yourself up for failure. Choose deadlines and deliverables that you know you can achieve. At the same time, be sure to take into account any requirements that the donor has in terms of their organisational progress reporting timeframes, review schedules etc.

Detailed budget

This, along with the value of the project and how it links with the donor's own interests (see Justification of the value of the project, above), is probably the most important section of the funding proposal.



These Guidelines assume that you are seeking funding for a research project that has been clearly conceptualised and planned, which includes a clear idea of what your project will cost. As discussed in Guidelines 1, your project budget is derived from a good understanding of the size and makeup of your project team, and the activities to be undertaken in the course of the research (as outlined in your timetable/project plan). The budget that you developed in the course of writing your research proposal in Guidelines 1 will directly inform your funding proposal budget here.

Your detailed budget should include (if possible in spreadsheet format, perhaps attached as an addendum to your proposal):

- what you have already spent (if anything) on the project;
- what you are currently spending on an ongoing basis;
- what you still plan to spend;
- how much funding you are requesting in this proposal, and over what period;
- any quotations received for specific planned costs (such as travel, subsistence and accommodation, stationery, equipment, rent or salaries); and
- an indication of from where else funding has been sought.



Note: Estimate costs as accurately as possible, and try to leave a margin for possible unexpected expenses. This is particularly important if the project budget will be paid in foreign currency as it is very difficult to predict foreign exchange fluctuations.

Research ethics policy

All research needs to be guided by an ethics policy. Most institutions will have such a policy (often on their websites), but if you are not affiliated to an institution, you will need to describe the ethics policies you will be using or, in certain instances, apply – for a fee – to the Human Sciences Research Council for ethics clearance (or to the Medical Research Council, if your research project contains any aspect of bio-medical research).

The basic ethical principles are to do no harm and to promote well-being. This requires that research must be carried out honestly, meticulously and with integrity, in terms of rigorous research methodologies and without falsification of evidence or plagiarism of the work of others. When the subject of your research includes people, you must obtain their informed consent and guarantee their anonymity and the confidentiality of your findings.

Copyright policy

This section really only applies if the donor agency to whom you are applying has no copyright policy of their own (which is very rare) or if you have come to some prior arrangement with them regarding ownership of the products of the research.

Most donor agencies claim copyright over the research that they fund; they have paid for it, so they own it. If you wish to be able to publish the results of the research in your own name (while obviously also acknowledging the donor's contribution), ensure in advance that the copyright policy of your target donor allows for this. Most donors are delighted to let you publish articles, although they may claim copyright over any 'reports' that you produce for them.



Note: The ownership of intellectual ideas is still a legally contested concept, so it is important to be clear about who has rights to what. If the donor agency has no copyright policy, then assert your rights to the intellectual property produced by the project. After all, if you come up with some brilliant and influential findings, you don't want to see them 'owned' by someone else simply because you failed to assert your rights to them!



See also the section in Guidelines 3, *Pay attention to copyright*, for guidance on copyright issues with regard to getting your paper published.

Outline of the qualifications, expertise and experience of the project leader/s

Attach to the proposal the CVs of the key team members, as well as those of members of any steering committee, and make particular reference to any experience you may have had in successfully leading or managing projects of a similar type. Try to ensure that the formats of the various CVs are consistent, but first check to see if the funder has a specific template format for CVs. Cultural and gender diversity among researchers or team members is often considered important by donors.

Your contact details

This should include your name, title, position, postal address, telephone and fax numbers and e-mail address.

In addition, and if possible, attach a *covering letter* to your funding proposal, ideally addressed directly and by name to the agency's key contact person.



Outcome: Well done! You have succeeded in creating your funding proposal!

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4. Submit your funding proposal

The submission of funding proposals is increasingly handled online, often with specified deadlines at different points during the year, and in certain required formats usually explained by an online Help document. Find out when the donor might be having annually scheduled meetings to discuss funding proposals received in particular areas, and try to meet one of those deadlines.

As mentioned above, a CV is also usually expected, and should include details of your track record of research, especially of successfully completed projects. If this is your first project, it may be sensible to find a more experienced researcher who will collaborate with you.

In terms of the appearance of your funding proposal document, be sure to use the following.

Checklist:

- headings
- logical ordering and numbering of sections
- short paragraphs
- clear language
- consistent font style and size (such as Times New Roman, 12 point font)

Ensure that there are no spelling, printing or grammatical mistakes. Always proofread your proposal yourself, and have it proofread by others, several times.

Provide accurate and complete reference details for any texts you may refer to, either at the end of the proposal or immediately at the relevant point in the text. (An Oxford-style footnote will take up less space and be less distracting than a Harvard-style insertion of author, date, and page number in a sentence or paragraph.)



Note: You should be prepared to invest some time, effort, imagination and even expense in the presentation of your proposal to make it look attractive and worthy of closer scrutiny – to make it stand out from the numerous other research proposals that the donor agency staff will no doubt be reviewing.

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5. Know what to expect after submitting

It can take as long as 18 months to find a donor for a viable project.

Within a few weeks of submitting your proposal, you ought to have received an acknowledgement of receipt. This communication will probably also indicate what process the donor agency will be following, and how long it will take; some agencies meet only at specified times of the year to consider only proposals that fall into a specific research field.

In general, though, it shouldn't take more than six months before you hear if you have been granted funding. If you've still heard nothing, send a polite query, asking if they have any feedback for you on your proposal.



Tip: Bear in mind that donors may receive hundreds of proposals, and often have to deal with many of these at the same time and in the same meeting. The better proposals will stand out clearly, as will the very weak or unfeasible proposals. Since most proposals will fall somewhere in the middle, it is important to make your proposal catch the eye, and this will depend not only on the focus, value and feasibility of the proposed research but also on the quality of the presentation. As mentioned above, it is important to invest some money and effort in ensuring that your funding proposal document looks smart, professional and eye-catching.

Proposals are usually discussed by a committee of very busy people, who sometimes have to compare or rank proposals that are very different from each other, and may have to weigh up and choose between conflicting reviewers' reports on those proposals.



Tip: Remember that a funding proposal is more likely to be successful if:

- it is relevant and persuasive;
- the project it proposes is feasible, manageable, and useful to others; and above all
- it fits with or corresponds to the donor's own view of what kinds of research are important.

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DEALING WITH REJECTION!

The vast majority (i.e. over 80%) of requests for funding are rejected, and so you need to prepare yourself for many possible disappointments before you eventually succeed in finding someone to fund your research project.

Do not take failure personally; rather, learn from it.

The most common reasons for rejecting a funding proposal are the following:

1. It falls outside the donor agency's focus.
2. It ignores the agency's proposal submission template or guidelines.
3. It is not accompanied by a covering letter.

4. It does not contain all the required information.
5. It has not been properly proofread.
6. It was submitted too late for a specific donor meeting, or too early for the next meeting.
7. The agency is already funding a project/s in the same research area.
8. The agency has already spent all its money for this year.

Note that reason 1, to some extent, can be avoided by thoroughly doing your homework on the donor agency; while reasons 2, 3, 4 and 5 are areas where you, as the person putting together the funding proposal, can ensure that you don't fall into the trap of carelessness. The other reasons, however, do not have much to do with the actual content, feasibility or quality of your proposal.

In other words – assuming that you have followed the guidelines set out here as well as any explicit instructions from the agency – rejection is often more of a reflection on the donor agency's focus and preferences than on your proposal.

Possible outcomes...and possible responses

If your proposal is unsuccessful... Thank the donor agency politely for their time, re-jig your proposal to conform to the focus and interests of another donor, and submit it there without further delay.

If the donor is kind enough to provide reasons why your proposal did not succeed, try to modify or develop your proposal accordingly before sending it off again.

If your proposal is successful... Pay close attention to and follow the terms and conditions that will inevitably accompany the funding grant. Among these may be an altered timetable, suggestions for additional work, and the expectation of progress reports and financial reports in the future, as project implementation unfolds.

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6. Expect to report back on progress

In terms of progress reporting, different agencies have different templates (and number of required progress reports per year), but all usually expect feedback on the following areas:

- The extent to which the aims of the research project are being realised.
- An indication of progress, especially the achievement of specified benchmarks and any publications, reports, actions or events emanating from the project thus far.
- An account of any obstacles or challenges that have arisen (and what can be done about them or how you plan to face them).
- An indication of what remains to be done, and by when.

You may also be required to prepare and submit reports on what you have spent (or not) and on what and when, so be sure to keep meticulous financial records and to file any slips and proof of project-related purchase or expenditure.

Your donor may provide you with a financial template to fill in with all the relevant income and expenditure details; if not, you are going to need to prepare a simple document listing the same.

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ADDENDUM 1: Potential sources of funding

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Some of the larger or better-known donor agencies and institutions are listed below. While some of these do not directly fund research, they may either put research out to tender or require consultants to carry out currently funded projects.

 **Note:** Organisations are listed in alphabetical order by name. Some organisation names and/or web addresses may change over time.

Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust	www.fergusontrust.co.uk
Association of Commonwealth Universities	www.acu.ac.uk
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	www.gatesfoundation.org
British Council	www.britishcouncil.org
Carnegie Corporation	www.carnegie.org
Catholic Institute of Education	www.cie.org.za
Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)	www.um.dk/en
Department for International Development (DFID)	www.dfid.gov.uk
Department of Education (DoE)	www.education.gov.za
Ford Foundation	www.fordfound.org
Fulbright Commission	www.fulbright.co.uk/awards/index.html
Global Finland	global.finland.fi
Government Communication and Information Service (GCIS)	www.gcis.gov.za
Human Rights Watch	www.hrw.org
Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)	www.jica.go.jp/english
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	www.jrf.org.uk
Leverhulme Trust	www.leverhulme.ac.uk
MacArthur Foundation	www.macfound.org
Medecins sans Frontières	www.msf.org.za
National Research Foundation (NRF) with special funding for specific strategic areas, new or promising researchers, women etc. The NRF also administers several bilateral international research funds intended to promote research collaboration.	www.nrf.ac.za
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)	www.norad.no
Rockefeller Brothers Fund focuses on basic education, including Early Childhood Development, lower primary education and Adult Basic Education and Training.	www.rbf.org

SANGONeT See its Proposal and Opportunities Section: www.sangonet.org.za/url/ry , which contains information on grants, awards, calls for papers, fellowships and scholarships, mostly in South Africa.	www.sangonet.org.za
Save the Children	www.savethechildren.org
Shuttleworth Foundation	www.shuttleworthfoundation.org
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	www.sida.se
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	www.sdc.admin.ch
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	www.unesco.org
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	www.usaid.gov
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	www.hewlett.org
World Bank	www.worldbank.org
Zenex Foundation	www.zenexfoundation.org.za

Online directories of potential donor agencies

There are many useful websites (some of which are listed alphabetically by name, below) that list and describe donor agencies, both for specific countries and internationally, and/or provide up-to-date information on current funding opportunities:

Find A PhD.com	www.findaphd.com
Funders Online	www.fundersonline.org/grantseekers
Fundsnet Online Services	www.fundsnet.com
Grantmakers without Borders	www.InternationalDonors.org
Research	www.research.com
The Grantseeker's Guide to the Internet	www.online.nonprofit.net/info.guide.html
Web of Science/ Web of Knowledge	http://scientific.thomson.com/products/wos www.webofknowledge.com

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Guidelines 3: Getting research published

The aim of these Guidelines is to assist you in getting the results of your educational research project published.

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These Guidelines discuss, among other things:

- how to orient your research towards publication 52
- how to cultivate good reading and writing habits, and to prepare your paper for submission 53
- how to survey the field and select the right journal/s 54
- what to find out about the specific journal/s to which you plan to submit 55
- how to submit your paper 56
- how journals process submissions, and what to expect after submitting 57
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- how to revise a paper based on reviewer comments 60
- how to go about getting a book published 61

The Guidelines also:

- touch on questions of intellectual copyright in the context of publishing 60
- provide some useful support resources for getting your work published 63

In the course of these Guidelines we provide extensive suggestions regarding whom you might approach to get a paper/article, book chapter or book published.

At the end of these Guidelines we provide helpful samples:

- ADDENDUM 1: Sample journal submissions policy and referencing style 64
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These Guidelines assume that you are involved in research and are seeking to get your **research findings published**.

However, if this is not the case and you need **assistance with conceptualising and planning a research project**, see Guidelines 1page 8

Or, if you have a research proposal written but **still need funding**, see Guidelines 2page 29

1. Orient your research towards publication

First, a few comments on the actual research process are in order, because:

- the process of doing research overlaps somewhat with the process of getting published;
- you should keep publication in mind while you are carrying out the research; and
- research that is never published may to some extent legitimately be seen as research that should never have been done in the first place.



Note: *Research starts and ends with reading.* In the beginning, you read to find out what research has been done by others (and, by implication, what has *not* been done); and at the end, others read what research has been done by you.

In the process of finding out what research has already been done, you are able to identify what research has not been done, or still needs to be done, or done differently, or done better.

Most research consists of a new take on an old idea, or a reworking of existing material. It is seldom utterly original. As we point out in Guidelines 1, you want the people who read your research findings to think to themselves: 'Hmm, I hadn't thought of that' and to find the insight that you show in answering your research question/s interesting and engaging. Thus, it is worthwhile, in conceptualising your research project, to make the effort to *define your audience* – the people who will be interested in your research question/s and answers and will be likely to read a published article on them.

In the course of your reading, you are likely to be inspired by attractive and arresting styles and approaches taken by other researchers; by all means aim to emulate or imitate them; but always remember that this should *never* extend to copying or plagiarising.

So: reading is the most important thing in research. The second most important thing is *writing*. Whenever you read, you should also be writing, taking notes, expressing opinions or recording criticisms, and all this should be happening, if not immediately, then as soon as possible after you have finished reading a book, an article or a report, or have presented a conference or seminar paper or lecture etc. Good research is underpinned by an iterative process of reading, writing and reflection.



Tip: The more you read and write, the easier it becomes to read and write.

Reading and writing, and thus research, take time; and the more time you devote to them, the better they become.

The sooner you start to read and write, and the more constantly, the sooner you will have a draft, or sections of a draft, that can be improved, interconnected, reworked, added to, edited, developed etc. And as soon as you have a written draft, you are more than halfway to getting published.

CULTIVATE GOOD READING AND WRITING PRACTICES TO PREPARE YOUR PAPER FOR SUBMISSION

Map the textual terrain: Good research knows – and shows this by demonstrating it – what other research has been done in this and related areas, and also knows which of this other research is important enough to be used, cited or criticised. Demonstrate that you are aware of the context of your material, and that you can locate your own material in that context. Also, outline how your material differs from existing published work in the same area or on similar topics. (Guidelines 1 provides comprehensive and step-by-step assistance with undertaking your review of the literature – mapping the textual terrain and establishing your own vantage point.)

Collect and keep everything that you write, on paper or electronically: Never delete or throw any writing away: text doesn't take up much space on a hard drive, and you might find a use for a phrase, a sentence or even a whole paragraph at some future point.

Start small: A good way to start publishing is by writing letters to newspapers or magazines, contributing to in-house newsletters, booklets or reports, or writing reviews of books you have read. The last, book reviews, is probably the best of all three, because book reviews are regularly published by academic journals. Book reviews are also useful in that they help kill several birds with one stone:

- You get to read a book that you wanted to (or had to) anyway.
- You get to summarise the main aspects of the book as well as to formulate your ideas about it, in a compact manner.
- You start to make your name visible among your target audience.
- You can learn about the publishing process at the same time.

Target your journals well: some journals simply do not accept unsolicited book reviews; most will only publish reviews that fit with their focus and style.

Be prepared to review and revise: Every published academic writes more than one draft of each article.

Ask family, friends and colleagues to read and comment on your first full draft. As Wager (2005: 4) suggests, you should target specific people to provide you with specific feedback: for example, ask a senior colleague to check your methodology and presentation; ask a family member or friend to check logical flow; ask a librarian to check references; and ask a statistician to check the data. Then, write a revised draft incorporating any useful suggestions as well as any ideas for improvement that you yourself have had on rereading and reflecting.

Stay focused and don't give up: Writing up your research findings might at times feel challenging, almost overwhelming. Fortunately, you are not alone in having such reactions! There are countless sources of support and encouragement online, including websites where published authors share wisdom on the hurdles and joys of researching and writing for publication. One good example is to be found at www.stanford.edu/group/howiwrite.

Establish a good routine: The *challenge* of turning your research findings into a publishable paper can be minimised to some degree by getting into the habit of writing regularly, thus making steady and consistent progress towards your goals.

Get organised:

- Develop a clear and logical outline for the structure of your paper and use that to guide your writing.
- Write your paper's Conclusion only after you've written your Introduction, and write your Introduction only after you've written the rest of your paper. Then, if necessary, adjust the signposts in the main part of the paper to ensure that they concur with what you have written in the Introduction and Conclusion.
- Ensure that each and every reference in your paper is included in the list of references at the end, and that the list of references includes only those sources actually cited in the paper (i.e. do not include references for reading you have done but not cited in your paper). As we advise in Guidelines 1, during the course of your research-related reading and literature review, be sure that you always meticulously note full references for any notes you take.
- Aim to keep sentences short and clear and to avoid using unnecessary jargon. Write in the active rather than the passive voice (e.g. 'The questionnaire revealed..!' rather than: 'It was revealed by the questionnaire...').
- Take care with spelling and grammar, and have your work proofread by someone else.
- Standardise in terms of the format and layout of your paper. Microsoft Word is probably the most common programme used in academia, with a Times New Roman, 12 point font. Use double line spacing throughout.
- Check that the document setup is correct and that the pages print as they should.

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2. Survey the field and select the right journal/s

Market your product (i.e. your paper)!

There are literally thousands of academic journals published in the world today: at last count, more than 160 000. There are several large publishing houses, dozens of reputable university presses and an exponentially growing number of e-publishing opportunities, and you could even publish yourself – termed self-publishing – at a price. There are also vast numbers of commercial publishers of both fiction and non-fiction.

Of course, you will need to narrow these journals down to those dealing specifically with your particular discipline, and then further down to your actual specialisation or sub-field.

But also bear in mind the rapidly expanding interdisciplinary field, and the possibility of approaching your research data from different angles and tailoring it for publication in journals in different fields.

CONSIDER THIS: YOU ARE IN A FORTUNATE POSITION!

An important but often overlooked advantage of working in the field of education is that your publishing opportunities are relatively broader than for those working in other disciplines.

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

- Educational psychologists can target both educational publishers and publishers of pure psychology.
- Mathematics educators can write for both mathematics education journals and hard mathematics journals.
- Those working in educational theory or foundations of education can often publish in a wide range of arts- or humanities-related journals as well as in educational journals.

In addition, interdisciplinary research is highly valued, and there are more and more eclectic journals being established.

Investigate possible target journals by browsing university libraries, especially online. *More importantly*, scan the online lists of accredited and hence subsidy- or incentive-bearing journals:

- The Arts and Humanities, Science and Social Science citation indexes of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI).
- The International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS).
- The national Department of Education's (DoE) list of approved South African journals.



Note: The national DoE website www.education.gov.za provides up-to-date lists of all approved South African journals, as well as those accredited by IBSS and by ISI. Click on 'Documents' and then on 'Publications'.

For a detailed list of electronic, scholarly, peer-reviewed, full text and free education journals, see: <http://aera-cr.asu.edu/ejournals>.

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3. Do your homework on the specific journal/s you select

Do research into the journals and/or editors to which you wish to submit your paper. Identify each journal's:

- area of focus;
- editor's name;
- contact address;
- editorial board;
- submissions policy; and
- referencing style.



See ADDENDUM 1: *Sample journal submissions policy and referencing style*.

Check that the journal does actually publish articles on topics like yours, by looking through their last three years' worth of issues. Where possible, try to exploit a certain relevant theme or trend, or a current debate. Free sample copies of journals can often be obtained from publishers, or are available on the journal's website. Try to read one or two of an editor's own articles, whether in the same journal or elsewhere; it will give you an idea not only of their interests but more importantly of their own technical ability to utilise references, write abstracts and generally present their work.

Adjust your paper to conform to the journal's referencing style, including:

- their specified article length (i.e. number of words);
- whether they use UK spelling (e.g. analyse; labour) or US spelling (e.g. analyze; labor);
- their house style; and
- their bibliographical instructions (i.e. regarding referencing).



Note: In deciding which journals to select, *aim high!* Identify a minimum of three target journals:

- the most prestigious, most-widely-read or most-cited *international* journal in your field; plus
- a second international journal; plus
- a *local* journal.

Send your paper to the most prestigious journal first, and then, if rejected, immediately to the next journal on the list, and so on. Avoid submitting the same or very similar papers to different journals *at the same time*. 'International' here means an ISI- or IBSS-accredited journal, which includes several South African journals. 'Local' here means those journals that are not accredited by ISI or IBSS but are on the national DoE's list of approved South African journals.

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4. Submit your paper

When submitting your paper, be sure to include:

- a covering letter;
- a cover page for your paper;
- an abstract;
- keywords;
- a brief biographical paragraph;
- word count; and
- the full paper, referee-ready.

Apart from the last item above (the full paper itself) the other information can either be included as separate items or as part of the covering letter.

Covering letter

Ideally address the covering letter to the actual editor by name (e.g. 'Prof. Jane Smith'), or else address the letter generally to 'The Editor/s'. Note that some journals or editors expect you to state categorically in your covering letter that your paper has not been simultaneously submitted to another journal nor previously published in any form.



See ADDENDUM 2: *Sample covering letter*.

Abstract

Include an abstract of approximately 100 words, in which you provide an overview of the paper's key argument/s and conclusions.

Keywords

Include five keywords; these will assist readers and reviewers to ascertain the subject matter of the paper and, if the paper is published online, will assist with online searching.

Brief biographical paragraph

This lists your institutional affiliation/s, your most important or most recent publications, and your current research interests. Ensure that you include all your own contact details: postal address, e-mail address and telephone and fax numbers.



Tips:

- Depending on the journal's submissions policy, remove all references to yourself and your previous publications from the actual paper itself.
- If they require hard copies of the paper, send the right number of copies to the right address.
- Don't e-mail submissions if they say 'don't e-mail submissions'.

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5. Know what to expect after submitting

What do journals and editors do upon receiving a paper or manuscript?

1. The editor in chief or the managing editor first considers its relevance and value, usually in consultation with other editors or sub-editors.
2. If they think that it fits the journal and may have something interesting to say, then the paper is sent 'blind' (with all references to the author removed) to two or more reviewers/critical readers/referees (we use the term 'reviewer' for the rest of these Guidelines). This is known as 'peer

review'; basically, subjecting an article to assessment by others – your peers – with expertise in the field.

3. Reviewers may take several months to read the paper and write a report, which is sent to the editor.
4. On the basis of at least two review reports, and their own considered opinion, the editor/s will decide whether:
 - to accept the paper as is (very rarely); or
 - to accept the paper pending certain specified minor revisions (occasionally); or
 - to reject the paper in its present form but invite the author to revise it in terms of certain specifications and then resubmit the article to the journal (usually); or
 - to reject the paper without the option of revision (often).



See ADDENDUM 3: *Sample journal referee sheet*.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND ABOUT THE PROCESS

The bottom line for editors is to gather together enough above-average to good articles to fill their next issue, and the next, and the next. It could take you anywhere between three months and three years to get your paper/article published.

A journal's response time depends partly on the quality and prestige of the journal and partly – though probably most of all – on the efficiency of its reviewers. The more prestigious journals are often inundated with submissions and, even if they are willing to get a second opinion on your paper by sending it to reviewers, their forthcoming issues are often completely full, sometimes a year or two in advance. If their reviewers approve of your paper, the editors will still have to decide if and when they can fit it in to their publishing schedule. Reviewers are usually academics themselves, often the leaders in their fields; they have other academic duties and their own publishing commitments; and they don't get paid for their review and referee work. They need to find time to read and comment on your paper and get back to the journal editor.

Generally, allow a minimum of three to four months from when the journal will have received your paper. Then send a polite query, asking if they have any feedback for you. While you are waiting for a response, grow a thick skin!

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6. Expect rejection!

Statistically, most (60%+) submissions to journals are rejected. The second most common journal response is to call for major revisions, i.e. to ask the author to revise and resubmit, with no guarantees.



Tip: If/when your paper is rejected, take heart from the following:

- As an academic boldly putting your ideas out into the public domain, it's almost inevitable that at some point you will experience rejection – better that it happens sooner rather than later!
- It's not *you* that is being rejected; it's your paper.

COMMON REASONS FOR REJECTION

Common reasons why journals reject an article include the following:

- It falls outside the journal's focus.
- It ignores the journal's submission guidelines.
- It is not accompanied by a covering letter.
- It has not been properly proofread.
- It is too long or too short.
- The journal has recently published, or will soon publish, another article on a similar topic or with a similar argument.
- The journal already has accepted sufficient articles to fill the next several issues.

Note that *none* of these reasons has anything to do with the actual content of your paper or the quality of its arguments.

In other words, by doing your homework on a journal and its guidelines, and submitting your paper in the correct format, you can ensure that the editor and the reviewers cannot reject it for the 'wrong' reasons – i.e. reasons that are not related to the content and arguments. In turn this means that, even if the paper is rejected, it will be rejected for 'good' academic reasons, which reasons will probably accompany the rejection letter. This in turn means that you will have material in hand with which to revise and improve the paper before sending it elsewhere.

Possible outcomes...and possible responses

If the journal declines to publish, without further comment...immediately send your paper off to the next journal on your list.

If the journal declines to publish, but provides comments and suggestions on the paper...immediately incorporate the more useful suggestions and make relevant modifications, and send it off to the next journal on your list.

If the journal asks you to revise and resubmit your paper...seize the opportunity with both hands. There are three very positive aspects to such a journal response:

- The journal has expressed an interest in the paper.
- They have provided you with feedback, either from editors or reviewers or both.
- They are willing to consider the paper again.

This is great news!

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7. Revise your paper

Revising a paper is a lot easier than writing a paper from scratch.

Address all feedback

Pay close attention to reviewers' comments. They may be very critical; they may expect you to do additional reading and writing; they may require a major restructuring of the paper. However, no matter how poorly or crudely a reviewer might phrase their response, remember that they are criticising the paper, not you.

Be sure to respond to all comments, either directly, in the paper itself, or indirectly, in a letter to the editor accompanying the revised paper. Ideally, do both; at the very least, clearly indicate to the editor exactly what revisions you have made and where in the paper. If you think a comment has even the tiniest bit of validity or relevance, modify your paper accordingly. If you think a comment is completely inaccurate or irrelevant, justify your view in a separate letter to the editor. If you think a reviewer has misunderstood your argument, clarify your argument so that there can be no misunderstanding.

Plan timeframes and communicate your intentions to the journal

Make sure that journals and editors know where you and they stand with regard to your paper, especially if you intend to revise and resubmit it. Put down your intentions and timeframes in writing to avoid misunderstanding.

Unless a journal has given you a specific time limit or deadline to revise your paper, don't send your revised paper back to them in only a week or two – they may think that the revisions have been superficial. Alternatively, except by prior arrangement, don't take more than a couple of months to complete the revisions, since editors can lose interest if they think that you're taking them for granted, and they can be sidetracked by other submissions.

Acknowledge all correspondence

In writing, politely thank journals and editors for their time even when they reject your paper; you never know when you might want to submit an article to them again.

Pay attention to copyright

Journal editors and publishers will usually expect you to complete and sign a copyright form, allowing them and not you more or less unlimited rights to reproduce and disseminate your article. Read the small print carefully, in case you need permission to be able to use the article for different purposes or to publish it elsewhere in a different format, such as on a website.



See also the section in Guidelines 2, *Copyright policy*, for guidance on copyright issues with donor-funded research.

Respond promptly to requests to check your work

Many journals will send you the page proofs of your soon-to-be-published article, often in the form of a .pdf file, and ask you to check it and send back any corrections. Note that they will not accept any substantial changes or additions to the article; all they want to ensure is that the article accurately mirrors the originally accepted paper, and that there are no typographical, spelling or formatting errors. Proofs are often sent to you directly from the typesetters or printers, and an immediate response is expected (often no more than a few days). If you fail to respond in time, you will have no one but yourself to blame if the article is published with glaring errors!

Get a copy of your article

You will always receive at least one hard copy of the issue of the journal containing your article. Some journals may send more than one copy; some also send off-prints, or semi-bound copies containing only your article; some again send .pdf files, which you may distribute. Most journals also offer discounts to authors who wish to purchase additional quantities of the issue.

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8. Get your book published

The process of getting a book published is similar to the article publishing process already discussed, with a few key nuances.

There are two possible ways of approaching it:

- Either write the book first, then find a publisher and a market; or
- Target a potential publisher or market first, and write a book for them.

Often it turns out to be a bit of both. Key steps include the following:

- Investigate potential publishers.
- Write a prospectus/book proposal.
- Send your prospectus to various publishers.
- Wait for replies.

Investigate potential publishers

As with identifying suitable journals to which to submit an article, so too when looking for the right publisher you need to survey the terrain of book publishing in your field and come up with a shortlist of possible publishers.

Much of the advice in 2. Survey the field and select the right journal/s (above) will apply here. Many book publishers publish series, in which you might locate your manuscript.

WHERE TO GET PUBLISHED

Here we list (in alphabetical order) a number of local and international publishers active in the field of education. The list is necessarily incomplete because there are hundreds of such publishing options, and part of your investigation is to consider this list and also search for additional options.

Blackwell Publishing	www.blackwellpublishing.com
Cambridge University Press	www.cambridge.org
Heinemann	www.heinemann.com
Juta	www.juta.co.za
Kluwer	www.springer.com
Macmillan	www.macmillan.com
Maskew Miller Longman	www.mml.co.za
Oxford University Press	www.oup.com
Routledge	www.routledge.com
Sage Publications	www.sagepub.com
Taylor & Francis	www.taylorandfrancisgroup.com

Various South African university presses, including but not limited to:

UCT Press	www.uctpress.co.za
UKZN Press	www.ukznpress.co.za
UNISA Press	www.unisa.ac.za/press
Wits University Press	http://witspress.wits.ac.za

Write a prospectus/book proposal

Rework the Introduction to your research report, thesis or monograph into a prospectus.

Tips on writing a prospectus/book proposal:

- Give it a catchy title.
- List proposed chapter headings.
- Identify the book's likely readership/market.
- Indicate whether your manuscript is complete or still being revised.
- State the total number of words (either actual or estimated).
- Indicate if you think your work could become a textbook, and at what level.

Send your prospectus to various publishers

It is *quite acceptable* to send your prospectus to many potential publishers at the same time; but if one of them is interested enough to ask to see the entire manuscript, then give them sole preference until they indicate whether they will accept or decline.

Wait for replies

Expect most to decline, some to suggest alternative publishers, a few to ask to see the full manuscript, and hopefully at least one to accept it!

Useful support resources for getting your work published

Bell (2005) provides a useful list of questions (paraphrased below) to ask yourself before handing over what you think is your final draft:

- Is the meaning clear throughout?
- Is it well written?
- Is the referencing complete?
- Does the abstract clearly indicate what the text contains?
- Is the title an accurate indication of what the text contains?
- Are the objectives clearly stated?
- Are the objectives attained?
- Has a sufficient amount of relevant literature been studied?
- Is the literature review an indication of the state of knowledge of the subject? In other words, is the text located within the context of the available literature?
- Are all terms clearly defined?
- Is the methodology clearly described and explained, and suitable?
- Are any limitations clearly presented?
- Is the data analysed and interpreted or merely described?
- Are the results clearly presented, and tables and figures well drawn?
- Are the conclusions based on evidence, and well substantiated?
- Is the text free of bias and unacceptable language?
- Is the data sufficiently reliable for another researcher to replicate the results?
- Are any recommendations feasible? (Paraphrased and adapted from Bell 2005: 244–245)

Day (1996) suggests the following five criteria for quickly assessing any article (including your own):

- Is the purpose of the article clearly stated on the first page?
- Does the article flow logically from point to point, with relevant subheadings, introductions and conclusions to sections?
- Are the implications of the article's argument clearly stated?
- Is the article readable, being free of jargon, having relatively short sentences and being easy to follow?
- Would you like to read the article more thoroughly? (Paraphrased and adapted from Day 1996: 70)

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ADDENDUM 1: Sample journal submissions policy and referencing style

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All academic journals have submissions policies and a house style (including their rules for referencing), and make such information available to contributing authors on request or via their websites.



FOR EXAMPLE:

The *South African Journal of Education* offers contributors the following guidelines:
www.journals.co.za/ej/images/educat_auth.pdf.

Similarly, journals such as *Perspectives in Education*, *Studies in Higher Education*, *Southern African Review of Education*, and so on provide authors with information about their policy and preferences.

We include here a *sample* journal submissions policy and referencing style guidelines – the journal in question is fictitious but the information provided is based upon typical journal requirements.

The Education Journal (TEJ)

ISSN 1234-5678

NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

The Education Journal is a high quality, peer-reviewed journal of education-related research, which appears on a quarterly basis.

Contributors are invited to submit articles on any current educational issue.

All submissions are subject to blind review by a panel of local and international experts. Manuscripts will not be returned.

Articles should not be longer than 6 000 words. Book reviews are also welcomed: they should not be longer than 1 500 words.

Articles should use double line spacing with ample margins.

Three copies of the manuscript, as well as an electronic copy of the paper on disk or CD-Rom, should be submitted to:

Professor XYZ
The Editor: *The Education Journal*
Department of Education
University of the South
12345
South Africa
xyz@universityofthesouth.ac.za

Please include an abstract of no more than 100 words, up to five keywords and a brief biography.

Figures, tables and pictures should be included separately, with an indication in the text as to where they are to be inserted. Figures, tables or photos should be submitted as TIFF (300 dpi) or EPS (800 dpi) files, black and white, with all fonts embedded.

Please ensure that the name and full contact details of the author/s are supplied.

The Education Journal prefers references to be cited in the text as follows: (Jones 2006: 85); and for full bibliographical details to be supplied in a separate list of references at the end of the article.

Single quotation marks should be used (with double quotation marks inside these for quotations within quotations).

Upon acceptance, authors will be required to submit a copyright agreement, and are responsible for obtaining all necessary permission letters for reprinting or modifying copyrighted materials.

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ADDENDUM 2: Sample covering letter

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Professor XYZ
The Editor: *The Education Journal*
Department of Education
University of the South
12345
South Africa

5 April 2012

xyz@universityofthesouth.ac.za

Dear Professor XYZ

Please find enclosed three copies of a paper entitled "_____", for consideration by *The Education Journal*.

Included are: a cover page containing keywords and a brief biography, an abstract, and a disk containing all of the above in electronic (MS Word) format.

I have removed all references to myself from the paper; the omitted references are also included on a separate sheet.

The paper has not been published before, and is not currently under consideration by any other publication.

Yours sincerely

Ms ABC
Department of Education
University of the South-East
54321
South Africa

Tel: +27 61 891 0112
Fax: +27 61 891 0113
abc@universityse.ac.za

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ADDENDUM 3: Sample journal referee sheet

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Below we include a sample referee sheet. Again, it has been put together to represent a *typical* referee/reviewer sheet – it is for the fictitious journal featured in Addendum 1 and Addendum 2. We drew on the following journals as sources for this sample: *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, *South African Journal of Education* and *Perspectives in Education*.

SAMPLE REFEREE SHEET

'THE EDUCATION JOURNAL'

(Please mark with a cross, on a scale of 4 = High/Good and 1 = Low/Poor)

1.	How relevant is this article for the readers of this journal?	4	3	2	1
2.	Is the title appropriate?	4	3	2	1
3.	Is the research original?	4	3	2	1
4.	Is it well-presented, clear and readable?	4	3	2	1
5.	Does it adequately describe its focus, aims and/or objectives?	4	3	2	1
6.	How appropriate is its theoretical framework?	4	3	2	1
7.	How adequate is its literature review?	4	3	2	1
8.	Does it properly clarify or define its concepts?	4	3	2	1
9.	Is the referencing adequate?	4	3	2	1
10.	How appropriate is/are its:				
	research design?	4	3	2	1
	use of evidence?	4	3	2	1
	analysis of evidence?	4	3	2	1
	presentation of evidence?	4	3	2	1
	conclusions or recommendations?	4	3	2	1
11.	Is the argument clear, coherent and logical?	4	3	2	1
12.	Does it contribute to current theoretical debates?	4	3	2	1
13.	Is it a useful contribution to current practices?	4	3	2	1
14.	General recommendation				
	A Publish as is				
	B Publish after revisions as suggested				
	C Revise and resubmit in the light of suggestions				
	D Reject				

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References

Bell J (2005) *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science*. Maidenhead: Open University Press

Day A (1996) *How to get research published in journals*. Aldershot: Gower

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