



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
FIRENZE

DISEI
DIPARTIMENTO DI
SCIENZE PER L'ECONOMIA
E L'IMPRESA

**Development Economics and
Local Systems – DELoS
PhD Program**

DELoS Research Proposal Template

PhD applicant:	
PhD program:	Development Economics and Local Systems - DELoS
Cycle	
Curriculum:	

Title:	
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Date:	
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Development Economics and Local Systems – DELoS PhD Program

Your Research Proposal is an integral part of the PhD Degree application process, and as such, it is worth investing time and energy to ensure that your proposal is strong, clear and effective.

In the DELoS PhD program the Research Proposal is required when you apply to provide the selection committee with (i) information about the topic the applicant is interested in, and (ii) elements to assess the applicant's background, ideas and skills.

The Research Proposal topic not necessarily will be the research topic developed in the PhD dissertation. In fact, at the end of the first year the DELoS Student has to present a Research Project that can confirm or change the topic presented in the Research Proposal.

Your Research Proposal needs to outline the nature of your proposed research, identify your knowledge of existing literature and provide an indication of how you will conduct your research.

Research Proposals are also used to correctly match you with an appropriate Supervisor. If you are interested in the work of a specific potential Supervisor, and especially if you have already discussed your proposed project with this person, be sure to make reference to this in your Research Proposal.

When writing your Research Proposal, it is important to:

- highlight its originality and/or significance;*
- explain how it adds to, develops, or challenges existing literature in the field;*
- identify the importance of your proposed research;*
- demonstrate why you are the right person to undertake this research project.*

The Research Proposal body (i.e. from Introduction to Conclusions) should not exceed 3000 words. It is preceded by a front page including a short abstract (max. 150 words), keywords and JEL codes. After the Research Proposal body you should include a Bibliography comprehensively listing the most relevant literature for your research (only the references you explicitly refer to in the Research Proposal body must be listed).

The guidelines provided in this template are meant to be used creatively and not, by any means, as a cookbook recipe for the production of your Research Proposal.

Abstract

The abstract is a brief summary of your Ph.D. Research Proposal, and should be no longer than 150 words. It starts by describing in a few words the knowledge domain where your research takes place and the key issues of that domain that offer opportunities for the scientific or technological innovations you intend to explore. Taking those key issues as a background, you then present briefly your research statement, your proposed research approach, the results you expect to achieve, and the anticipated implications of such results on the advancement of the knowledge domain.

To keep your abstract concise and objective, imagine that you were looking for financial support from someone who is very busy. Suppose that you were to meet that person at an official reception and that she would be willing to listen to you for no more than two minutes. What you would say to that person, and the pleasant style you would adopt in those two demanding minutes, is what you should put in your abstract.

Perhaps, having a look at the suggestions reported in the instructions for authors of major journals such as *World Development* may help in drafting your abstract.

Keywords

This section is an alphabetically ordered list of the more appropriate words or expressions (up to 6) that you would introduce in a search engine to find a research proposal identical to yours. The successive keywords are separated by commas.

JEL codes

The JEL classification system was developed for use in the *Journal of Economic Literature* (JEL), and is a standard method of classifying scholarly literature in the field of economics. List the codes (up to 5) that best fit to your Research Proposal. For further info on JEL classification and guidelines on how to use it, visit <https://www.aeaweb.org/jel/guide/jel.php>.

1. Introduction

The introduction gives an overview of the research project you propose to carry out. It explains the background of the project, focusing briefly on the major issues of its knowledge domain and clarifying why these issues are worthy of attention. It then proceeds with the concise presentation of the research statement, which can take the form of a hypothesis, a research question, a project statement, or a goal statement.

The research statement should capture both the essence of the project and its delimiting boundaries, and should be followed by a clarification of the extent to which you expect its outcomes to represent an advance in the knowledge domain you have described.

The introduction should endeavor, from the very beginning, to catch the reader's interest and should be written in a style that can be understood easily by any reader with a general knowledge background.

2. State of the Art

The State of the Art, also known as the Literature Review, serves several very important aims. First of all, it demonstrates that you have built a solid knowledge of the field where the research is taking place, that you are familiar with the main issues at stake, and that you have critically identified and evaluated the key literature. On the other hand, it shows that you have created an innovative and coherent view integrating and synthesizing the main aspects of the field, so that you can now put into perspective the new direction that you propose to explore.

The State of the Art must give credit to the authors who laid the groundwork for your research, so that when, in the following sections, your research objectives are further clarified, the reader is able to recognize beyond doubt that what you are attempting to do has not been done in the past and that your research will likely make a significant contribution to the literature.

The State of the Art should include comprehensive references, which you list at the end of the proposal. Ideally, all influential papers, books, book chapters and other texts produced in the knowledge domain you are exploring which are of importance for your work should be mentioned here and listed at the end of the proposal. You have to make sure that no document you refer to is missing in the final list of references, nor vice versa.

You should follow very strictly the appropriate referencing conventions used in the economic field that is the so-called Harvard Style (for guidelines on how to cite according to it, cf. <https://www.mendeley.com/guides/harvard-citation-guide>).

3. Objectives

This section explains what you plan to do to tackle your research problem. It clarifies the research objectives of your project, taking as its background your description of the state of the art.

The clarification of the research objectives should build solidly on the State of the Art and relate your research to the work carried out by others. It should elucidate what your work develops from their work and the extent to which it diverges from theirs to open up new and yet unexplored avenues.

4. Methodology

This section explains how you plan to tackle your research problem. It describes the methodological approaches you have in mind to face the key research challenges of your project and the data you want to use to address them.

This section should be detailed enough to let the reader decide whether the methods you intend to use are adequate for the research at hand. It should go beyond the mere listing of research tasks, by asserting why you assume that the methods or methodologies you have chosen represent the best available approaches for your project. This means that you should include a discussion of possible alternatives and credible explanations of why your approach is the most valid.

5. Current Work and Preliminary Results

This section is optional and should be included only if you have already carried out some work on the Research Proposal topic. It focuses on the progress you have made toward the aims of the project. You should concentrate on the parts that contribute specifically to the goals of the proposal, avoiding detailed descriptions of digressions you may have attempted in the earlier, more exploratory, phases of your work. If you have already obtained preliminary results, this is the place where you should provide them, in a structured manner that helps supporting the rest of the proposal.

6. Work Plan

Not all research proposals lend themselves easily to the creation of detailed work plans. However, even when the topic to be researched is exploratory

and elusive, the steps to achieve your objectives should be identified, possibly establishing specific milestones and timelines.

Your work plan should anticipate the problems likely to be found along the way and describe the approaches to be followed in solving them. It should also anticipate the conferences and journals to which the work is expected to be submitted. In short, it should be able to reinforce, in the mind of the reader, the conviction that your approach is feasible and solidly oriented toward results.

6. Conclusions

This section briefly restates the objectives of your research project, recaps the research approach you plan to follow, and clarifies in a few words what you expect to find out, why it is scientifically valuable to find it out, and on what basis you expect to evaluate the validity of your results.

References

In this section you should list all the references you have made throughout the Research Proposal, making sure that you comply with the referencing conventions or citation styles that have been established for your specific field.

You have to make sure that no document you refer to in preceding sections is missing in the final list of references, nor vice versa.

You should follow very strictly the appropriate referencing conventions used in the economic field that is the so-called Harvard Style. For guidelines on how to correctly make report your references to according to the Harvard Style, visit <https://www.mendeley.com/guides/harvard-citation-guide>.