

# Research Methods for Business and Management

Session 9- Research Proposal  
Assignment Guidelines 2016-17

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# Research Proposal overview - structure

The standard format for a Master's **dissertation** is seven chapters.

The **research proposal** should comprise an initial draft of **the first three chapters of your Dissertation:**

## 1. Introduction

Title- Gives industry, location, timeframe, level and object

Problem- The problem you are interested in and its context/background

Rationale- what is the research Issue?

Why is it a issue?

Why is it a issue now?

What could this research shed light on?

Research Question(qualitative) or Hypotheses (quantitative)

Research Aim

Research objectives

## 2. Literature Review

Demonstrates your knowledge of the literature

Makes a critical link with the facts of the problem and its context

Create a **conceptual model**

For the **proposal**, you must critically review **no less than 6 sources**.

### **3. Research Design**

- Type of investigation.
- Data collection method.
- Sampling method.
- Accessibility issues.
- Ethical issues.
- Data analysis plan.
- Research limitations.

### **4. Timetable and References**

- Provide a Gantt chart
- You will need to justify your plan.

# Chapter 1- Introduction

- This section should set the context of your research
- When the examiner reads this section they should thoroughly understand:
  - Exactly what you are doing
  - What is the **strategic problem** you are trying to solve
  - Why it is important to solve this problem
  - Your aim and objectives of the research

# Introduction Breakdown

- Title:
  - Remember we do not want an overlong title
  - Must be a name to what you are doing, like a novel
  - Should capture the readers attention
  - **Not** a description of what you are doing

# Introduction:

- 1.1 Background:
  - Start with a brief introduction into the **topic** area
  - Maneuver into the industry, sector or organization that you are researching
  - Discuss the particular area (department or division) where the problem exists
  - Outline any necessary information that is needed to get the reader into a frame of mind that will allow them to understand your research
  - **Do not** write 10,000 words on the company history, leave that for your Dissertation

# Introduction:

- 1.2 Problem /Issue Definition
  - Link background to problem area
  - Remember the issue/problem must be of a Strategic nature
  - **Why is it an issue now**, today?
  - Discuss the **main issue** or problem under research
  - Discuss subpoints/problems
  - Must provide evidence as to the size of the problem
  - **Get Empirical evidence** that the problem exists (research data, from secondary sources)

# Introduction:

- 1.3 Rationale or Worth:
  - Should give **reason as to why** this problem should be understood
  - Must say why this problem should be solved
  - Must provide **evidence of the rewards** of solving this problem to the industry, sector or organization
  - Could say how the research outcome will be of **value** in solving the problem
  - **Use theory** to provide the **strategic benefits** and **to support** your research idea, that it can indeed solve the problem



# Introduction:

- 1.4 Research Question:
  - Avoid a question that will give you a yes or no answer
  - Avoid words that suggest relationship between variables such as: effect, influence, impact, determine, association
  - Usual to begin RQ with **WHAT, HOW, CAN**
  - Avoid using IS or WILL
- Be sure to illustrate your **strategic intent** through your RQ

- Make sure to **discuss** the research question
- Providing a question alone would not be very useful
- **Justify** the research question by saying that this would involve doing exploration, explanatory etc research
- Discuss the focus of your research
- Remember that your problem definition would have clearly lead you to the RQ

# Introduction:

- 1.5 Aim:
  - **One** aim is all we need
  - The aim should be the end product of the entire research
  - i.e. the major outcome of the tedious research process
  - Should **provide an answer to your RQ**
  - Remember to use a **high level verb**

# Introduction:

- 1.6 Objectives:
  - **3 to 4** objectives is sufficient
  - The objective should represent milestones in your research project
  - It should build up to the aim at the end
  - It should be documentable in your report
  - Remember that project tasks are **not** objectives
  - Think of the things that you would have to do in order to answer your RQ or achieve your Aim
  - **Progressive, Action, Outcome, Evidence**
  - Do not forget to **use high level verbs**

# Chapter 2- Literature Review

- The theme or areas review **MUST** be linked to your RQ and Objectives
- Think of the areas that you need to understand in order to answer your RQ
- Develop a **theme/s**- tell a story- Relevance Tree
- Start by introducing the topic area
- Establish the link to the situation being investigated
- Critically review the literature!

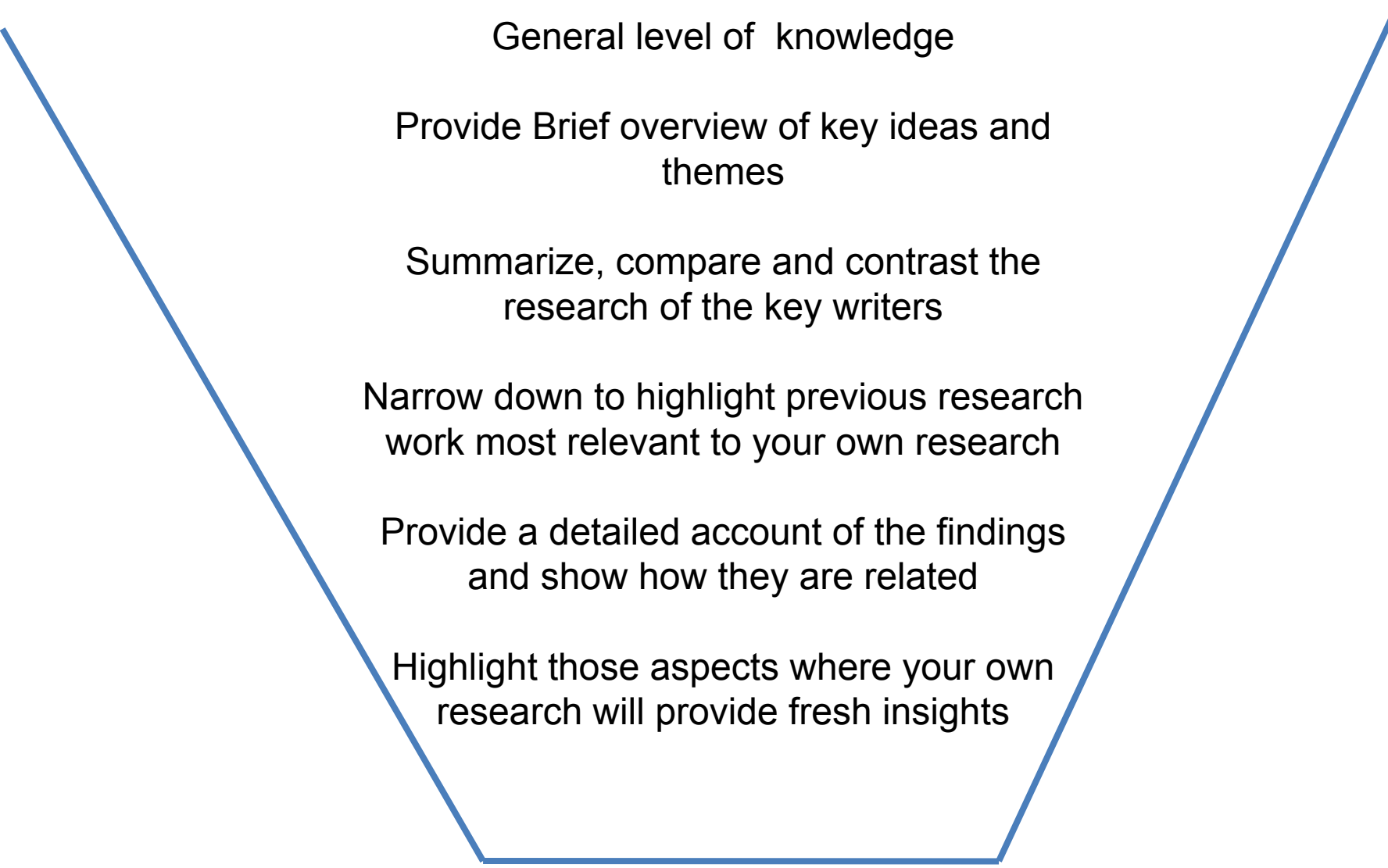
# Literature Review:

- Critical means to bring out the debate or argument- for, against, neutral, **your position**
- It is important that you say **so what?** Of the literature
- **Highlight gaps in the literature**
- Remember **get to the source** of the work, do not rely on others to say what someone else have said
- You need to review **5 or 6 sources** at this stage
- Might be useful to review **one case study** of the phenomena you are researching

# Literature Review

- Must demonstrate a command of the Literature at the end
- Should set up a Conceptual framework for the research
- Don't be afraid to **use headings and sub-headings**

# Structuring your Lit Review



General level of knowledge

Provide Brief overview of key ideas and themes

Summarize, compare and contrast the research of the key writers

Narrow down to highlight previous research work most relevant to your own research

Provide a detailed account of the findings and show how they are related

Highlight those aspects where your own research will provide fresh insights



## Structuring Cont'd

- The idea is that you try to **funnel** your discussion
- Start with a broad discourse i.e. general
- Then **drill down** to the key work which is most appropriate to answering your research question (well as much of an answer as you can get)
- Most importantly organize your discussion according to a **THEME**, sort of like telling a story

# Developing a Conceptual Map

- A conceptual map is a visual display of the theory or theories that is relevant to your study
- A picture of what the theory says is going on with the phenomenon that you are researching
- A concept map consists of two things:
  - concepts and
  - the relationships among these

- At the end of the Lit Review you must build a **Conceptual Map**- an integration of the key theories and concepts reviewed
- The Conceptual Framework is developed as you review the literature, theories or concepts in the body of the Lit Review
- The key is to:
  - Include the concepts and theories that are relevant to your RQ and Objectives
  - Link the theories to your Research Issue
  - Be critical
  - Use a theme

# A useful technique

## Theme A

Concept	Notes	Author/Source	Interpretation or your Point of View

## Theme B

Concept	Notes	Author/Source	Interpretation or your Point of View



# Common Faults

- No theme connecting all the elements together
- Too narrow a view of the topic area
- Only a justification for the research idea is given
- Repeating the same materials several times
- Too few sources used
- A narrow range of sources is used i.e. only internet ones
- Poor use of citations
- **No student content and the work relies entirely on the quotation or paraphrase, etc**
- The student has no idea whether they are quoting, paraphrasing, summarising, analysing, etc
- Plagiarism

# Basic Structure of Lit Review

- **Introduction-** start strong by bring relevance to the topic area, outline the key aspect that will be reviewed
- **Body-** this is were you build up the conceptual framework, review the key concepts and theories
- **Summary-** here you summarize your framework, convey and highlight the concepts that were central to analyzing your subject.  
Present the Conceptual Framework

# Chapter 3- Research Design and Methodology

- Most student omit relevant details in this section
- This section requires careful thinking
- Your research design **operationalize the objectives** of the study
- It is the **HOW?**
- How are you going to achieve your objectives
- **Must outline all key areas:**
  - **Research Paradigm**
  - **Research Methodology**
  - **Research Technique/Method**

## 3.1 Research Paradigm

- Start with a discussion of **Epistemology-** Knowledge and Knowing
- Move on to the idea of **Ontology-** Reality
- Discuss whether your research will be based on Objective or Subjective Reality
- You must decide on whether you are using a **Phenomenological OR Positivistic paradigm OR Pragmatism/Mixed Methods**
- Justify your choices by using theory and apply to your research context.



- You must then relate that to whether you are following a **Quantitative or Qualitative approach**
- Must discuss whether you are **using Inductive or Deductive**
- Should also **discuss the type of investigation e.g.** descriptive, explanatory, exploratory.
- It is important that you justify your choices given the context of your research
- It might be useful to say why the other cannot work or why it might not be applicable

## 3.2 Research Methodology

- Must outline the strategy chosen either; action research, survey, ethnography, case study etc.
- Should justify your choice, again use theory and apply to your research context.
- Explain how the methodology would be rolled out i.e. your idea for action:
  - Full details needed here
  - Not good enough to only state choice
  - Must give the time horizon of your research, either **Longitudinal or Cross Sectional**

# Research Methods

- Research Method:
  - There are two sections to be discussed:
    - Data collection
    - Data Analysis and Presentation

- 3.3 Data Collection:
  - Must specify **what primary and secondary data** will be required
  - The **source of the data**, where it will be collected from?
  - Access issues, permission needed?
  - **Sample size** and **Sampling method** with justification
    - Confidence interval, margin of error, population size, proportion or percentage required.

- Choice of Collection methods: Questionnaire, observation, interviews, focus group
- Discuss each one separately e.g.
  - 3.3.1 Questionnaire
  - 3.3.2 Interviews
- Must go on to say **how each of these method will be administered**. Specific details needed
- Should discuss the idea of **triangulation**
- At the end, include table summarizing data collection in relation to research objectives

Objective	Data needed	source	Method to be used

- 3.4 Data Analysis:

- This section will specify **how** you intend to **transform the data** you will collect **into the form of answer** for the RQ
- It should not be generic, it must be based on the data collection techniques you plan to use
- Must say **how** you are going to collated the data collected
- Must explain **how it will be analyzed**
- Must specify whether **quantitative or qualitative analysis** or both will be done
- Each must be explained in detail

– 3.4.1 Quantitative Analysis:

- Descriptive Statistics- Tables, Distribution Frequencies, Cross Tabulation, Central Tendency (Mean, Median, Mode), Scatter Diagrams, Graphical Forms (Pie, Bar etc)
- Inferential Statistics- Forecasting, Time Series, Pearson's Coefficient, Spearman's Rank Coefficient, Chi Squared and Student t-test

– 3.4.2 Qualitative Analysis:

- Analytical Induction, Grounded Theory, Repertory Grid, Thematic Analysis, Narrative Analysis

– It will not be good enough to say you will be using SPSS or Excel or graphs etc

– **Must be specific!**

- 3.5 Ethics:
  - Remember that you will always have to collect data from participants
  - **Do not deceive** them
  - Must consider what issues the participants may have as a result of providing data
    - ***Confidentiality, privacy***, etc
  - So you must outline your 'anti deception' tactics
  - Must say that a letter of approval needed and would be sort- **Informed Consent**
  - **HOW** are you going to deal with these ethical issues?



### 3.6 Limitations to Methodology

- Every methodology would have some margin of unknown or **area of uncertainty**
- You may also be working at this stage on many **assumptions**
- You need to state these
- Issues that might affect the quality of the research
- What obstacles you may encounter e.g. response rates, access to interviewees etc

# Timetable and Reference

- 3.7 Research Timetable
  - Include a short explanation of, your proposed dissertation structure. This can be in tabular form.
  - Outline the chapters that would make up your final report and what each chapter entails.
  - Standard chapters:
    - Introduction, Literature Review, Research Design and Methodology, Findings and Analysis, Conclusions and Recommendations

## 3.8 Project Plan

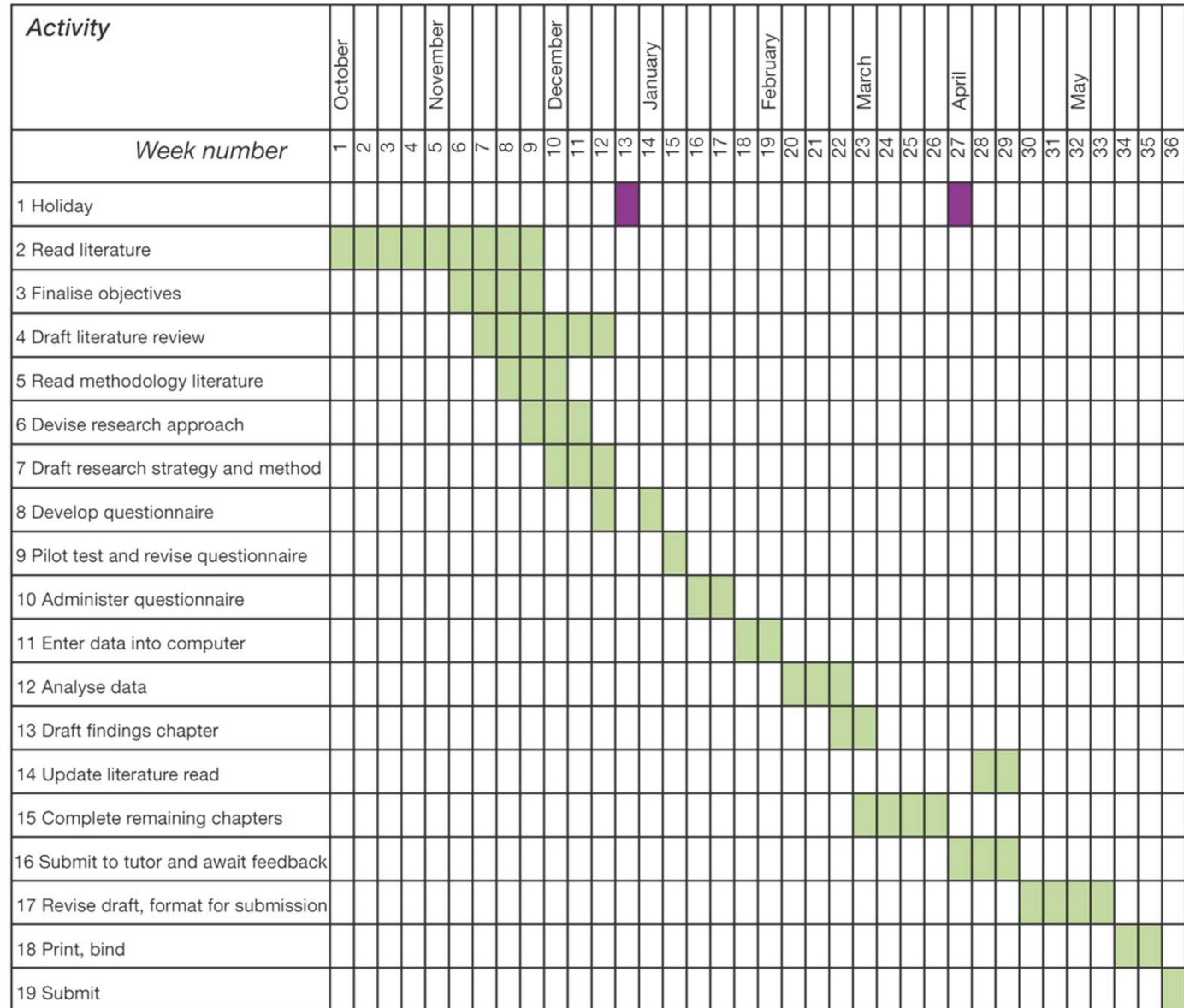
- This is obviously linked to the dissertation structure
- Use **MS Project to build Gantt Chart**
- Remember the basic structure of the dissertation
- Introduction to Conclusion
- Consider all the work to be carried out
- Consider doing tasks simultaneously (overlap/parallel)

# Example

<i>Task</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>Completion date</i>
Meet supervisor to discuss proposal	May 2009	May 2009
Conduct literature review	May 2009	Continue up to 2 weeks prior to submission
Formulate research questions	June 2009	June 2009
Data collection	June 2009	September 2009
Data analysis	September 2009	December 2009
Writing up	January 2010	March 2010
Submission	April 2010	

# Gantt chart

## Gantt chart for a research project



Source: Saunders et al. 2010. *Research Methods for Business Students*. Harlow: FT Prentice Hall. p45.

- Be realistic with setting timescales
- Findings and Analysis is considerably long
- Start date should be mid trimester 2
- Finish Date end of trimester 3
- **Print Gantt Chart on one page**

# References

- Be sure to the Harvard Ref Style
- The sources cited throughout your proposal should be listed
- The list should reflect your research topic

# Word Limit

**Word limit: 2500**

- ✓ Written assignments must not exceed the specified maximum number of words.
- ✓ All assignments which do so will be penalised.
- ✓ The penalty will be the deduction of 10% of the maximum marks available (i.e. 10%).
- ✓ Assignments will not be accepted without a word count on the cover sheet.



**Presentation issues:  
title page**

**A good title includes concise detail:**  
*Scope (level/object of investigation)*  
*Industry you are examining*  
*Variables under examination*  
*Theoretical approach taken*  
*Location of study*  
*Date range covered*

***Student ID ONLY – NOT YOUR NAME!***

**You should also include the  
module title, code, faculty, tutor  
name and submission date.**

Advisor motivation and investment  
outcomes: a behavioural finance  
approach to client relationship  
management in the UK private banking  
industry, 2008-11

ARU ID: 1066732/1

Module: Research Methods for Business  
and Management

Code: MOD001105

Faculty: Lord Ashcroft International Business  
School

Tutor: Andre Samuel

Date: 14 May 2015

**Presentation issues:**  
**Contents page**

*Preliminary pages*  
Should be numbered in Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv etc.)

Chapter titles in bold,  
with page numbers of the  
*main text pages* in  
Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4 etc.)

Sections are logically numbered

And page numbers for each section  
given

**Contents**

List of tables	i
List of figures	ii
Glossary, abbreviations	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Declaration	v

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Behavioural finance	3
1.3 Private banking	6
1.4 Research aims	9
1.5 Hypotheses	11

<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Classical models	13
2.2 Applicability to private banking relationships	19

## Presentation issues: format

### A legible font

Like Arial  
Calibri  
Times New Roman

Set in 12pt – no larger

Line spacing should be 2.0 or 1.5

*Ideally, you should also put the title  
of your work and your student  
ID number in a HEADER on each page  
(just in case pages get separated)*

And you must number each page

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Background

In the United Kingdom, private banking constitutes a significant, durable and profitable part of a financial services sector which is second only to New York's in scale and profitability (Cohen 2010: 16).

A benign, principles-based regulatory regime gives more scope to wealth managers in the UK than to their American counterparts, who must observe the strictures of detailed

**Good Luck**

Andre Samuel