

December 2015

**MD6005 Creative Digital Environments-Proposal Guide for
Essay and Practical piece (1000 words)**

Deadline: 9 January 2015

This standard proposal serves as a generic guide

What is a Proposal?

This proposal is a careful description of what your practice-based research project will be about, and how you intend to carry out the work involved till its completion. It is a really useful document that challenges you to think very carefully about what you are going to do, how you will do it, and why. You are required to submit a proposal in order to present this to the class and the module leader and receive feedback so that he/she can judge whether:

- i. The subject and suggested project (practice + essay) conform to the requirements of the module.
- ii. It is a feasible project in respect to scope and practicality.
- iii. You have identified some questions or issues that are worth investigating.
- iv. Your suggested methods for information collection and analysis are appropriate (visual research, methodologies, processes, documentation)
- v. The expected outcomes (practical work + essay) relate to the aims of the project.

Writing/Completing a proposal is the main opportunity to crystallize your thoughts before you embark on the project. It is a sober consideration of how much you will be able to actually achieve within the few weeks/months allowed. You will not be able to sit down and write your proposal without referring to your background research. A good proposal will indicate how your chosen topic emerges from issues that are being debated within your subject field, and how your work will produce a useful contribution to the debate. At this level of research, you do not have to make any earth-shattering discoveries, but it is necessary to produce some useful insights by the appropriate application of research practice, theory and methods.

The length of the proposal is only 1,000 words. This means that a lot of thought has to be put into its production in order to cover all the matter to be conveyed, in an elegantly concise manner. You might need to do several redrafts. Producing a really informative proposal will give you a good and clear guide to the structure and content of your essay and the intentions for your practical piece, technology chosen and theme discussed. It will also help to get you focused back on the important issues if (probably, when) you get diverted up branching paths of investigation later on in the project. It will also be a great help as the bases for your final written essay.

The main sections of the proposal should be/are as follows:

Part I. Introduction.

The first step is to summarize the broader concepts and issues related to your topic in order to place your subject in a broader context. Then, you must present the main enquires and potential argument or standpoint. Get straight to the point; do not drift around in some aimless way. You must have a way of encapsulating in a few sharp, snappy sentences what this project is about.

Part II. Conceptual Framework. (This includes aims, objectives context and background)

i) Aim and research enquires

Define briefly your subject and the main concerns of the investigation, including aim and a set of enquires, which will guide your research.

As your proposal is primarily practice based, you should use this section to describe your vision of your practice aim and enquires in connection to context, theory, and technology. It is worth thinking hard about this section, as it will form the basis of your study for the next few months (though it will inevitably evolve as you make progress). After defining your subject, you might find it helpful to think about the main concerns of the project as questions you are asking yourself, to which you hope to find the answer.

The aims and research enquires of the project should be presented in three or four bullet points. This provides a very succinct summary of the thrust of the research, and an introduction to the rationale that follows. If you find this difficult to write, then you have probably not thought sufficiently about what you are actually going to do. Some useful indicative words you can use are: to explore, to test, to investigate, to explain, to compare, and to predict.

The aims and enquires are important because they, in a sense, declare the criteria for your investigation, against which the success or failure of your project can be assessed. If you find it difficult to articulate them you might find it helpful to think of your aim as the most significant question or problem you hope to tackle. Your proposal should normally have one or two aims, followed by a series of around 3 to 5 research enquires.

ii) Background or Context

Anyone reading your proposal for the first time needs to be informed about the context of the project and where it fits in with current thinking. Do not assume that the reader knows anything about the subject, so introduce it in such a way that any intelligent person can understand the main issues surrounding your work. That is one function of the background section. The other function is to convince your module leader that you have done the necessary reading into the subject, and that you have reviewed the literature sufficiently. It is therefore necessary in this section to have references.

The references should refer to history, theories, relevant data, accepted practices, contentious issues and recent publications dealing with your subject of study. It requires an effort to get a lot of information across in a succinct manner. Use the notes you have made from your reading.

Check that the most important theories, writers and artists have been mentioned. You will find these in the main publications about your subject. Expect to cite about 4 references in this section.

- **Historical Context:** There is no single history that suits all investigations but you should identify the various strands of history that relate to your particular research. It may be a history of ideas and concepts that have influenced the development of a particular area of art and design, the history of the medium or technology in which you work, or a particular part of the history of New Media Art or Design.
- **Contemporary Context:** As far as you are able, define the contemporary work that relates to your field of investigation. You must do this for the following reasons:
 - to demonstrate that you are aware of the field in which you are working
 - (to form the basis of links with other research work to which you will contribute or on which you will build).
- **Theoretical Context:** There is a great choice of options in this area; none of them exclusive. An element of theoretical context is important for every kind of project, though the degree of theoretical content will vary, particularly for practice-based work. You should be able to demonstrate the ways in which you evaluate your own work and that of others, and the sources you use to inform your evaluation. A theoretical context will help to support the reflective approach needed. The theoretical context towards a practice-based proposal can incorporate:

Critical Theory - definition of the critical concepts and terms you will use in order to evaluate or critique your experimental work

Theoretical fields - definition of theoretical fields which may share concepts with your experimental work.

Digital technology- New media theories used to define intention and guide the experimental work you will do.

Part III. Methods

This is the practical part of the proposal where you explain what you will do, how you will do it, and why? It is important to demonstrate the way that your research activities relate to the aims and enquires of your project, and thus will enable you to come to conclusions relevant to the research project. Different methods will be required for different parts of the research. At this stage you do **NOT** need to know in detail how you will implement them, but you should quite easily be able to choose those that seem appropriate for different aspects of your enquiry.

In practice-based areas of study, methodologies are less well established, so you may like to think about the following:

- try to describe the basic methods and procedures you will adopt in discovering and recording research information;
- if it is a practice-based proposal, how does the theory relate to the practical experimentation?

- how is practice and theory intertwined?
- what process of experimentation will you use?
- how will you record what you do and keep track of what you have done? (video, blog?, sketchbook?)

Part IV. Practical piece: Prediction of the Form of the Final piece

How do you envisage the final practice-based project to be and exhibited/published (website, video, installation...) Include any photographs or diagrams or sketches which might help to understand the project.

Part V. Project requirements

Estimate the resources required to complete the practice-based project. Take into account the equipment required (computers, software, cameras etc), the assets that will need to be prepared, and any other production demand.

Part VI. Project timeline

Outline when each phase of the project will be completed and what each phase involves.

Part VII. Bibliography

(Harvard Style): List the main reference works (bibliography, online resources, practical work) which you will use for your research.

Creating a bibliography is self-explanatory. Students should begin their bibliography as soon as they begin taking courses in order to catalogue works used throughout the breadth of their educational experience. A bibliography should always be a work in progress as new information is published and other information becomes irrelevant as research questions change over time. Ultimately, it is easier to subtract those references not needed.