

## Guidelines to preparing a research concept note.

A good concept note does not have to be a lengthy document to address the essential points relevant to a research study. A five-to-ten-page concept note is sufficient in most cases. The concept note is prepared as part of the application to provisional admission and needs to be uploaded as part of the application material on SUNStudent. Candidates that are provisionally admitted, will work with their academic supervisors to prepare a full doctoral proposal that needs to be approved by a departmental admissions committee.

A guideline to the basic elements that can be included in a concept note is provided below.

1. A preliminary **project title**.
2. The preliminary **literature study**:
  - Provides the theoretical and applied background through a review of the academic literature relevant to the proposed study.
  - Cites the key publications relevant to the proposed topic.
3. The preliminary **research problem and objectives**:
  - The literature review should lead to a problem statement that outlines an argument to justify the need for the study.
  - This need is addressed by the **research objective(s) or research question(s)**, which formulates the main goal(s) of the study.
  - It is advisable to have one overarching (primary) objective that the study sets out to achieve, which can then be broken down into two or three specific (secondary) research objectives.
4. The preliminary **research design and methodology**:
  - **Data**: For example, quantitative, qualitative or both. The data must align with your research objective(s).
  - **Method(s) for collecting data**: Will the study use primary or secondary data sources (or both)? The data needs to be accessible and there needs to be a limit on the data you are going to collect. The data must be reliable and valid.
  - **Method(s) for analysing data**: What methodologies can be used to extract meaning out of your data to address your research objective(s)?
5. **Potential contribution**:
  - What is the potential theoretical (academic) and applied (practice or policy) contributions of your study. The possible contributions need to be highlighted through a clear line of argumentation that ties back to the preliminary literature review.
6. **Reference list**.