UQ Rural Clinical School Research Group: Research Proposal Guidelines

These Guidelines are designed to provide you with enough information to complete the Research Proposal Template prior to contacting the Rural Clinical School Research Group (RCSRG) offices. Completion of the Template will provide the RCSRG researchers with sufficient information to determine whether, and how, they may assist you with your proposed research.

Action	Help
1) Defining the research topic: *What question will your research answer (research question): e.g. How do…? Why does…? What is the difference…? *What do you expect the answer to be (hypothesis)?	Talk to colleagues who will understand the research question. This will not only help you to identify points you may have missed, but also helps to bring them on-board later when you may want to involve them to help you identify or recruit participants/patients, etc.
2) Conducting a literature review to identify existing knowledge on the subject: *What has already been done in this area? *How does your project fit in? *Why is this research important – to patients, community, nationally, economically, socially…?	Liaise with your institution's librarian for help. If there is no dedicated librarian available, contact a University of Queensland Rural Clinical School librarian: Ms Jacky Cribb – j.cribb@uq.edu.au Ms Kaye Cumming – k.cumming@uq.edu.au You are advised to use referencing software to track your references. If in doubt, ask your librarian for assistance.
3) Method: how will you investigate your research question? a) Defining variables and outcomes: *What will you manipulate or vary in each patient/participant (e.g. treatment modes/times), and how will you vary it **OR** what aspect of each patient's experience will you examine ?	Your literature review will help you to identify methods used in similar research projects and how the outcomes can be operationalised.

*What will you measure or compare to determine the outcome?

*What data will you be collecting, (e.g. demographics/ physical assessments/ health assessments/mental health variables)?

*How will it be collected, (e.g file audit/ clinical procedures/diagnostics/questionnaires/interviews/online/phone/post?

*How frequently will it be collected, (e.g. once only/pre-post intervention/at monthly intervals/annually/for how long?

*Does it require special equipment or tools, or staff training? Do you have access to these?

*Who will be collecting it? Do you have staff available to collect the data or will you collect it yourself? Does it require someone going off site/working outside normal hours?

*How and where will this data be stored, (e.g. in a pass-word protected/ encrypted database/ excel file/ paper-format?

b) Identifying tools:

*What tools, questionnaires, or instruments (if any) will you need? What special equipment or material? Are they already available or will you need to create new ones?

*If you intend to use data that has already been collected, who owns it and how will you obtain access to it?

c) Identifying participants:

*Who will you include in your study? Who will you exclude?

*How will you recruit them, or collect their data?

*How will you obtain their consent to collect their data?

d) Analysing the data:

*Does it require special equipment, software or training?

c) Participants – Sample size: HRECs require an indication of sample size, and statisticians may use this to determine whether you have a big enough sample size to produce meaningful results (depending on the type of research you are doing).

c) Participants – Inclusion/Exclusion: What are the inclusion criteria for participants? Equally important, who will be excluded, and why? This might be due to difficulties with the language, co-morbidities, distance, or financial constraints.

c) Participants – Recruitment: There are constraints around privacy and confidentiality which do not allow researchers, even if they are the medical practitioner who gathered the patient information, to use information in patient records without the patient's express permission. The National Health and Medical Research Council also has clear guidelines around recruitment of persons into research by those in a position of power, whether perceived or actual, (e.g. recruitment of patients by a treating doctor).

Your HHS Ethics Office will be able to advise you about legal requirements; UQRCS research staff will provide guidance to develop appropriate recruitment methods.

d) Analysing the data: UQRCS Research Group can provide expert advice and analysis.

4) Ethical issues: Are there likely to be ethical issues raised by your research? What are they and how will you manage them? *Is your subject matter sensitive? *Are you recruiting from a vulnerable population? *Does the intervention or measurement involve invasive procedures?	All research involving humans must be reviewed and approved by at least one Human Research Ethics Committee. Discuss your proposed project with your HHS Research Coordinator to identify any potential ethical issues. Your review of the literature may identify some of these issues and describe how other researchers have dealt with them.
5) Resources: *What resources do you have available, (e.g. a nurse to collect samples or review patient files and extract data; access or proximity to radiology or pathology services, software packages)?	
6) Budget: What is it likely to cost? Is it feasible? *What costs can be met by 'in-kind' contributions by the HHS? *What costs will need to be met by an external funding source?	The HHS will consider any time allocated to the conduct of research by HHS staff as costs incurred by the HHS. While this may be covered as 'in-kind' costs, it will need prior approval by your Head of Department. Also consider the cost of printing participant information sheets and data collection tools, postage and phone calls, reimbursement of out-of-pocket costs for patient/participants, consumables used in sample collection and examinations. Some standardised survey tools require the purchase of a license, and some agencies, such as A.I.H.W., have charges associated with data extraction and/or linkage. Discuss what costs can be covered by your HHS with your Head of Department.
7) Identifying funding sources:	Explore your institutional support (both in-kind and cash). Hospitals have research foundations and offer modest amounts of funding to get you started. UQ subscribes to a number of grant databases. Contact the UQ librarian (see Point 2) for further information on how to access and subscribe to those databases. UQ academics can suggest potential

	funding sources varying from philanthropic agencies to organisations such as the NHMRC and ARC.

8) Timeframe:

Consider the time required for the following steps and generate a preliminary timeframe: *Review the literature *Develop a full proposal *Submit and receive ethics approval/s *Possibly extract or link data *Possibly apply an intervention *Collect data *Analyse and interpret data *Write, submit, review, rewrite and resubmit a manuscript for publication, usually in collaboration with other authors	Consider clinical work-load and upcoming leave of all investigators, as well as patient/participant availability. For further guidelines on the expected timeframes, please refer to the *Steps for Developing a Research Project* document on the RCS Research Group website.