MSc (Engineering) Research Report Proposal

Your proposal should be a concise document that provides the Faculty Postgraduate Committee that you have chosen a topic that is appropriate in scale and content for the qualification. The proposal should be in the following format:

1. Introduction

The background to the research problem or question; why it is important and relevant in an academic context; how it advances our knowledge of the field; objectives of the study; expected outcomes.

2. Research question or problem statement

Try to formulate this as a question that can be answered in the study. You may want to outline your hypothesis briefly in the proposal. This is your expected answer to the research question, based on your current knowledge of the field.

3. Literature review

This is a brief preliminary review that highlights the main authorities and arguments that relate to your research question. The Committee will use this to determine whether your topic has academic validity (is part of an accepted body of knowledge) and that your work makes a contribution to this. For this qualification, it does not have to be a major contribution or open up completely new intellectual territory – save this for a PhD! This said, you need to show that the material that you plan to cover has not been done by others – you may, for example, be looking at a different angle, area of application, or case studies that have not been researched. This section of your proposal should be 3-5 pages

4. Methodology

Describe the methods that you will use to collect information, and how you plan to analyze and evaluate your material. This needs to be robust, preferably using one or more of the methodologies recognized in the field. It is not sufficient to state simply ‘desk-top study’ or ‘interviews’ – you need to be specific, and preferably reference some sources that discuss the methods that you will be using.

Please note that if you are planning to do interviews or surveys, you will have to get Ethics Clearance. This can take several months, as the Ethics Committee meets only once per month. Consult your supervisor for the necessary documents.

5. Programme

Give a timeline with the main milestones for your research so that the Committee can be assured that you have a realistic idea of when you will complete your research and the steps that you will be taking to get there. This part of the proposal can act as a guide for your supervisor and as self-motivation!
6. Equipment and other resources

If you will be needing laboratory equipment or other resources to be provided by the University, these must be outlined here. This is to allow the School to plan for equipment usage. If you require specialized equipment that the School or University does not have, you will need to indicate how you plan to organize access (eg from another research institution). The University does not provide Postgraduates with PCs or office space as a matter of course, although you will be able to access Internet facilities.

7. References

Give a list of the references consulted to date, especially all those cited in the proposal. Use the Faculty Style Manual for the correct referencing system. You may also wish to list works that you plan to consult that are not mentioned in the proposal.

It is essential that you work with your supervisor during the preparation of the proposal.