

SAMPLE OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR PhD Advisory Committee

Date of enrolment in the programme and expected date of completion

Descriptive Title of Your Research Project

Your name

Supervisor's name

Department

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The proposal should be written in size 12 font and should be limited to 15 pages.

BACKGROUND

Describe current state of the art. Why is this research needed? Outline previous work in this field (i.e. literature search). How would the results of the proposed research fill this need and be beneficial?

OBJECTIVE (s)

"The objective(s) of this research project are to....."

SCOPE

Following tasks will be undertaken as a part of the proposed research.

Task 1

Task 2

Task 3, etc.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

This section needs to answer self-imposed questions and should reflect that the student has good understanding of the problem and of the barriers in the path. Some of the questions that should be answered include:

- (a) What are the constraints (if any)?
- (b) What are the technical challenges and uncertainties?
- (c) What are the different approaches to this problem?
- (d) What is your preferred approach and why?

Explain your methodology to conduct the research and to obtain the stated objectives.

FACILITIES TO BE USED

Explain the facilities to be used.

- (a) Is all the necessary hardware/software in place?
- (b) if not, how will it be acquired and how long will it take to put everything in place?
- (c) Does it have any resource implication? (This must be prepared in view of the Budget below.)

BUDGET

- (a) What is the total budget for the project?
- (b) Have the funds been already acquired?
- (c) If not, where is the money coming from?
- (d) How long will it delay the process?
- (e) Will it impact the thesis work and/or are there other remedies to the problem?

DELIVERABLES AND PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Month from the Start of the research

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Task 1 x x x

Task 2 x x x

Task 3 x x x

Itemise the list of deliverables with specific dates so that you can make concerted effort to achieve them.

REFERENCES

List all the references here.

Research Proposal Sample 1:

Research Proposal (Example)

To: Professor J. Smith

From: Chris Student

Date: 1 April 2009

Subject: Research proposal

Proposed Research Topic: A situational analysis of shared leadership in a self-managing team *[provide a brief description or a descriptive title or a research question]*

Purposes: Alvesson (1996) claims that a situational approach enables leadership to be viewed and studied as “a practical accomplishment” (p. 476) rather than starting with a conceptualisation of leadership as whatever the appointed leader does. This approach seems particularly well suited to self-managing teams (SMTs), in which leadership is presumably shared. In this project, I will explore how members of a self-managing team enact leadership in their regular team meetings. In particular, I will focus on how SMT members influence the direction of the team as well as the relationships and identities of individual members and the identity of the team as a unit, and how their interaction is enabled and constrained by social and cultural influences (eg, organisational culture,

national/ethnic culture, and gender). Such a study should give insights into the workings of SMTs, an organisational form that is rapidly gaining in popularity and acceptance. Also, the study will test the usefulness of a perspective (the situational approach) that is underdeveloped in the leadership literature.

[Expand on the topic/question by describing what you hope to accomplish, and the desired outcomes (especially the practical or theoretical benefits to be gained)]

Background: I will conduct my study in a team that is within the Roadworks Division within the Hamilton City Council. Roadworks has 12 SMTs, each of which is responsible for maintenance of roads within one geographical section of Hamilton. This particular team includes four men and a woman. Three of the men are in their thirties and one in his early 50s; the woman is in her thirties. They are assigned to an area around Chartwell. They start each day with a brief (15-45 minute meeting) on an agreed upon site, often just gathering around the back of a truck for their meeting. I will attend these three mornings a week for four weeks, and will stay on to observe their work for approximately 20 hours during the four week period. My primary focus will be on their interaction in meetings, although I will also observe (and perhaps enquire about) interactions during their other work.

[Describe the context of the proposed research, making it clear how this context will allow you to accomplish your stated purposes]

Scope: I will engage in participant-observation over a six-week period, from 8 April to 22 May for approximately four hours per week. I will typically observe the morning meetings and stay for an hour or so to observe their other work. On some days I may come at other times of the day for comparison. I will not schedule structured interviews, but will interview team members informally, as needed to clarify and provide insight into specific conversations. *[Describe such things as the time you will invest, when the field work will take place, the number of participants, and the number of interviews you will conduct]*

Theoretical framework: I will be guided most generally by the interpretive perspective, and more specifically by Alvesson's (1996) situational approach. The interpretive perspective places the focus on interpreting the meanings and perspectives of cultural members, and how these meanings are negotiated (Trujillo, 1992). I am exploring the meanings the sales staff and customers have for themselves as individuals and for their relationships, as well as the meanings sales staff have for the organisation, group, and profession of which they are members. The situational approach directs me to choose one or a few specific interactions to explore in depth. Thus, an appropriate means of investigating the topic from this perspective is observation of conversation, plus interviewing the interactants to understand the meanings they have for their symbolic interactions. *[Briefly identify and explain the theoretical framework you will use to guide your investigation, how it fits your purpose and its implications for the research methods]*

Method:

1. Conduct a literature review on leadership and communication in SMTs.
2. Observe the group four hours per week for six weeks, focusing mostly on conversations at team meetings, especially those conversations in which the group addresses changes to their work processes and issues of team relationships and identity(ies).
3. Interview team members to clarify and provide insight into conversations. I will attempt to conduct these interviews shortly after conversations of interest. While the interviews will not be formal or structured, the kinds of questions I will ask include the following. The general strategy for the interviews is to start off with broad questions and follow up on the interviewee's responses, to capture her or his meanings and to avoid imposing my meanings on the interviewee.
 - a. Tell me about the conversation you just had with X.
 - b. What were you thinking during the conversation?
 - c. What do you think she/he was thinking?
 - d. What do you think she/he was trying to do (or accomplish) in the conversation?
 - e. What did you mean when you said, "....."?
 - f. What were you thinking when you said that?
 - g. What do you think she meant when she said "....."?
 - h. When you think about what you did and said in that conversation, how would you describe yourself?
4. Undertake a situational analysis of the field notes and interview notes, guided by Alvesson's theory.
5. Write a research report that combines my understanding of the relevant theory and previous research with the results of my empirical research.

[Describe in detail the steps you will take in attempting to answer your research question]

Timetable:

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| Prepare proposal by | 1 April |
| Complete literature review by | 15 April |
| Complete fieldwork by | 22 May |
| Complete analysis by | 29 May |
| Give presentation on | 3 June |
| Complete final report by | 16 June |

Limitations: Time constraints of the semester require less time than may be ideal for an ethnographic study. By being in the organisation for only four hours a week for five weeks, there are bound to be aspects of leadership practice, organisational culture and team communication that will not be revealed during my observations. Being an outsider may also limit what is revealed to me. The team members may be guarded in their conversations around me, especially in my initial observations. *[Describe conditions beyond*

your control that place restrictions on what you can do and the conclusions you may be able to draw]

Delimitations: I am choosing not to observe multiple teams, even though such comparisons might be valuable, in order to allow more depth of understanding regarding the group on which I will focus. Additionally, I will not use structured interviews in order to minimise my obtrusiveness and my influence on the team members. *[Describe the boundaries of the study that you determine]*

References

[List all references cited that are not on the course reading list]

Research Proposal Sample 2:

PhD research proposal

John Smith, Autumn 2009 Proposed supervisor: **Hugh Grant**

Computer support of creativity in music composition for cinema and television

Overview

My research will be at the junction of three areas: creativity support, musical composition and human-computer interaction. I will investigate methods for extending the support of high technology for artists composing music, particularly focusing on music composition for feature films and advertising. The idea is to provide new ways of interaction with computers that artists can easily and fully appropriate for themselves and so freely express their creativity with.

Introduction

Music clearly plays an essential role in film making, as it creates atmosphere and colours the tone of the picture. It is this unique ability to influence the audience subconsciously that makes music truly valuable to the cinema and television.

Constant evolution of technology tempted many composers to adopt digital tools from hardware to software (samplers, sequencers, virtual instruments, synthesizers, etc.). These tools usually facilitate technical tasks such as making mock-ups, applying sound effects, or editing records and many more.

The Problem

Although digital tools are more and more powerful and can now perform very complex tasks they may also restrain music composers. Indeed, the power of these tools tends to reduce

the range of artists' creativity as they are a lot more complex to utilise. Artists have to learn their use thoroughly to keep a full control on their work. Thus it may happen, as well as in other forms of art, that technology diminishes the room for maneuver of artistic expression. Moreover, the digital tool support faces more difficult challenges and unpredicted problems due to the unique characteristics of the film industry. Indeed, different specific constraints have to be taken into account. For example the music has to make particular emotions stand out, either to support the story of a feature film, or to induce adverts viewers to buy a certain product. Another major constraint is time synchronisation, as music must be tightly coupled with the pictures. It also has to be considered that composers are generally not the only actors – in fact, film music composition is often a collaborative work achieved by composers, music editors, directors and producers.

Numerous books and essays have been published about general principles and different attitudes of music for the film and TV industry by famous composers such as [1] to [5], and [10]. These references can give a good guideline as what needs to be taken into consideration. Beside these general principles, the state-of-the-art research works endeavoured in this domain in a larger scope has been also undertaken (see [7] and [8]). For my own work I propose to focus on the creativity aspects similarly to the approach taken by [6] and to the research orientations taken at the Creativity and Cognition Studios, at the UTS.

Although music composition for films is a recent art, there is often a certain stigma attached to film music, accusing cliché-ridden material and lack of creativity. My research is to fill this gap by providing film composers with tools that genuinely encourage a creative approach rather than a conservative one. I believe that the effective interaction through digital tool support can help composers to escape from established conventions and therefore express their personal creativity to shade emotions, lighten or darken moods, heighten sensitivities in a way that will make their artistic work original and unique.

Research Plan

I will conduct my research adopting an empirical and iterative approach.

First and foremost, a preparation phase will involve a study through literature of the history and evolution of the film music composition practice. This initial phase will build an essential basis for the rest of my work, as it will provide an overview of the different processes of how music can be produced for movies, as well as the different basic rules and conventions that have been set in this domain. A study of the solutions and reflexions raised by previous research endeavours will also be conducted to complete and narrow down the orientation I will take for the following steps of my project.

Then a few months will be dedicated to an analysis phase, during which I will realise a survey (structured interviews in person and by phone as well as a questionnaire) with composers for movies, in Australia and world wide. I compose music myself, and I am a member of a few communities through which I have already contacted many composers in particular from France, the USA and Australia. Moreover, I am also in relation with some music producers and people working in the cinema industry in Sydney, through which I will be able to reach a lot of professionals of the local industry. These relations will be a good opportunity to extend the scale of the survey and so collect a maximum of replies. The previous preparation phase would have provided me with an orientation for the questions aiming at bringing out the composers needs and expectations in terms of creativity and computer support as well as to learn about the characteristics of the different current practices. In a local scope I will organise some meetings, and beside that I will also set up a website with the questionnaires so they will be easily and widely accessible.

Then, as often, it can be difficult to extract relevant information from questionnaires and interviews with professionals and especially artists, as they are not used to describe their thinking process. So I will explore different methods such as protocol analysis [9] to guarantee the significance of this survey.

All the results and relevant outcome will finally be synthesised and published, and a feedback will be given to all participants.

As a result of the analysis phase, I will be in a position to identify problems and opportunities for computer support of the creative process. Thus, I will elaborate prototypes integrating the cutting edge tools (software and hardware) available at the Creativity and Cognition Studios, at the UTS, which amongst others are gesture recognition, movement tracking, graphical programming environments (MAX/MSP, Jitter), musical instruments and recording devices. The perspective of these prototypes will be to break off from conventional tools. They could either be completely original, or propose bindings and patches with existing tools. Thus, as an imaginary example, we could consider the integration of gesture recognition to allow the composer to set the volume intensity of a virtual instrument by the way he moves his arms up and down.

Every prototype will be evaluated with the partnership of some music composers, ensuring the participatory and user-centered design approaches of my research, as recommended in [6]. The most interesting prototypes would then be shown in exhibitions at the UTS or in art galleries of Australia. Videos, music files and descriptions will be publicly accessible from the internet.

The evaluations will aim at revealing new concepts and reorienting the research to another analysis phase and so starting a new cycle. Thus, this process will be iterated along my thesis

(analysis – prototypes – evaluations), each iteration aiming at focusing on the interesting ideas, developing new ones, and finally refining and enhancing the different prototypes.

Therefore, at the end of my PhD, I expect to come out with a set of evaluated tools to be shown in exhibitions, and also develop some packages that may be commercialised and/or utilised in further research projects on related domains. The tools and demonstrations will illustrate the conceptual advances made within the PhD as well as providing an approach to evaluating those advances in practice.

References

- [1] Fred Karlin, Rayburn Wright, John Williams. *On the Track: A Guide to Contemporary Film Scoring*.
- [2] Richard Davis. (1999). *Complete Guide to Film Scoring. The Art and Business of Writing Music for Movies and TV*.
- [3] Tony Thomas, *Music for the movies*, 2nd edition.
- [4] George Burt. *The Art of Film Music*.
- [5] Jeff Rona. (2000). *The Reel World, Scoring for Pictures. A Pratical Guide to the Art, Technology and Business of Composing for Film and Television*.
- [6] Candy, L., and Edmonds, E., ed. *Explorations in Art and Technology: Intersections and Correspondence*. London: Springer Verlag, 2002.
- [7] Abrams, S., Bellofatto, R., Fuhrer, R., Oppenheim, D., Wright, J., Boulanger, R., et. al. (2002). QSketcher: An environment for composing music for film. *Proceedings of Creativity & Cognition, October 14-16, Loughborough, UK*. New York: ACM Press.
- [8] Sloboda, J.A: *Composition and Improvisation*, in *The Musical Mind*, chapter 4, Oxford, pp.102--150, 1985.
- [9] Anders K. Ericsson, Herbert A. Simon: *Protocol Analysis: Verbal Reports as Data*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993.
- [10] Robynn J. Stilwell: *Music in Films. A Critical Review of Literature, 1980-1996*, in: *The Journal of Film Music*.