

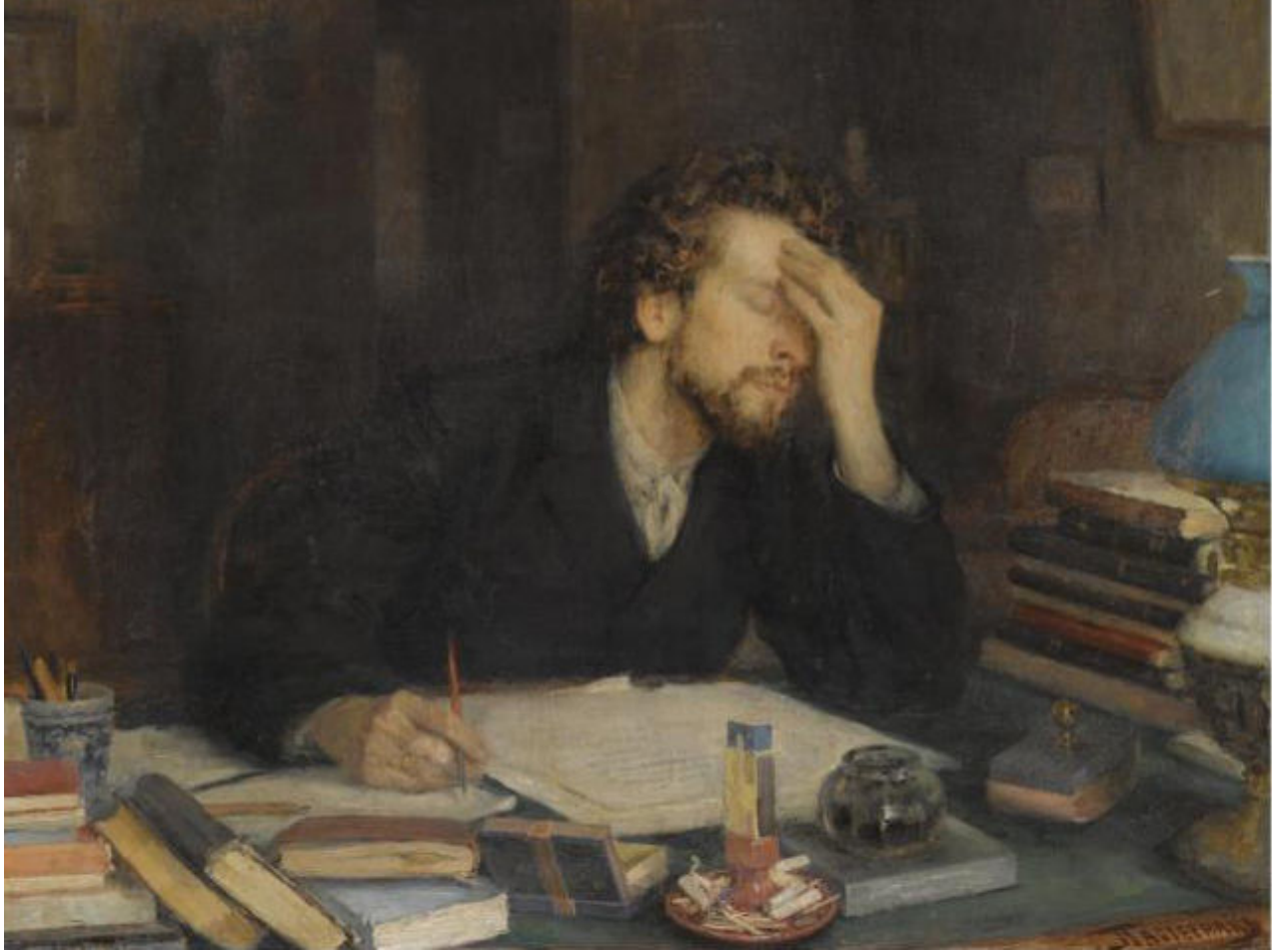
Proposal problems



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What students struggle with

- The newness of the idea
- Transitioning to independent research
- The purpose of a proposal
- The contents of a proposal
- Conventions of proposal writing
- “Meta” issues



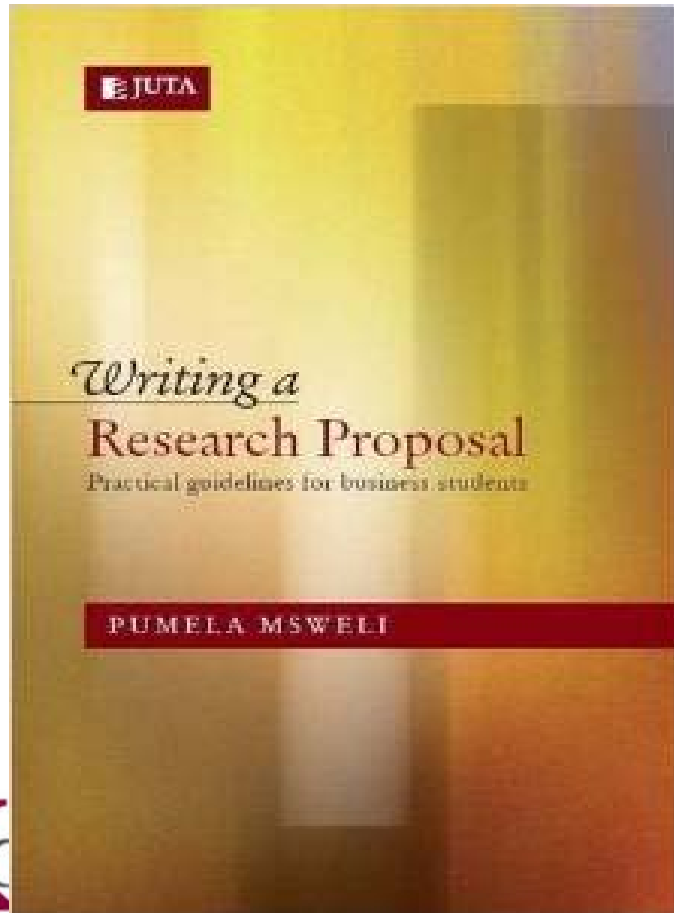
Proposal challenges

- The research is still hypothetical
- The topic is too broad
- The format of the proposal is unfamiliar to the researcher
- The researcher is still finding his/her way
- Sometimes the researcher knows too much
- The researcher is battling to say what is necessary while keeping to the strict word limit



Proposals fail because....

(Msweli, *Writing a research proposal*, p.3)



- Lack of original ideas
- Failure to create a research space and context
- Failure to delimit boundaries
- Insufficient knowledge of literature
- Failure to cite landmark studies



Proposal failures, cont. (Msweli, p.3)

- Failure to present other researchers' theoretical and empirical contributions accurately
- Absence of acceptable scientific rationale
- Failure to stay focused on research question
- Superficial research plan



Proposal failures, cont. (Msweli, p.3)

- Citation lapses and incorrect references
- Unrealistically large project
- Questionable design approach
- Lack of methodological detail
- Poor writing skills



Potential hazards

“Too many proposals simply describe an interesting research subject or issue, but fail to outline a specific problem and a means of addressing that problem. Conversely some proposals simply describe the analysis to be undertaken, without explaining why that analysis should be undertaken, what problem it will address.” (Research Proposals, 2010)



Some problems you might not expect

Some common problems with proposals according to the Bureau of Occupational and Vocational Education (USA):

- 18% had no page numbers
- 73% had no table of contents
- 81% had no abstract
- 66% had no plan for project evaluation
- 20% did not list the objectives of the project

Proposal writers can be tripped up by not following basic instructions.





Not all problems are complicated

- Even proposals require a writing process
- What would you expect a student to do when preparing to write a proposal?



The proposal paradox

A proposal is a form of pre-writing, but it is simultaneously a finished product



Discussion

“The most common reason proposals are rejected is that the writers fail to tell reviewers exactly what they will DO.” (Rice)

Are you struggling to do this? Why?



Exercise

- What are you researching?
- Why is this topic important / relevant?
- What is your aim?
- I am researching...
- in order to learn how and/or why...
- so that...



“IF I WAITED FOR
perfection
I WOULD NEVER WRITE
A word.”

- MARGARET ATWOOD



More organisational tools for starting out

“Create a Research Space”

- Establish credibility (share knowledge, justify need)
- Offer a line of inquiry (discuss current problems)
- Introduce topic of paper

(Swales & Feak, 2004)

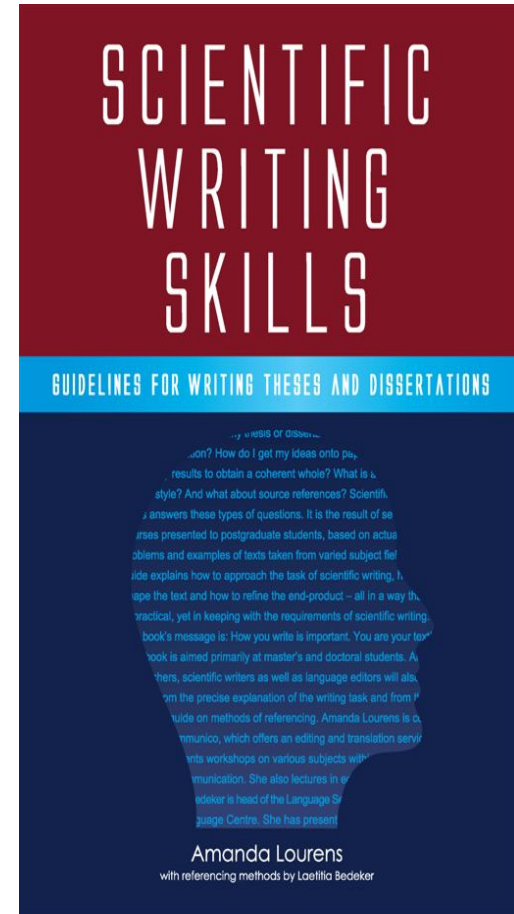
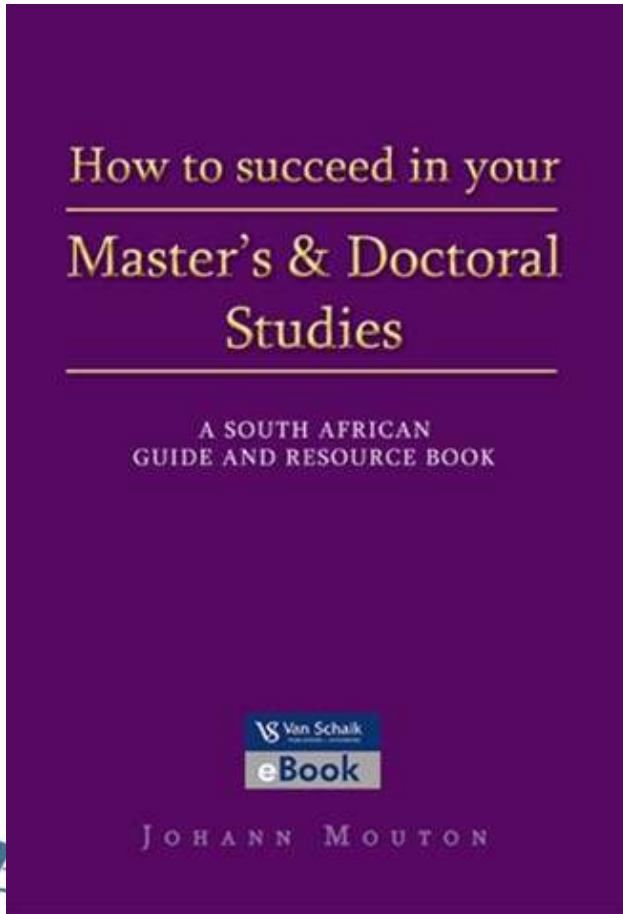
“Sentence skeletons”

- Pick a strong introduction from an article
- Remove the content
- Insert your own content into the skeleton

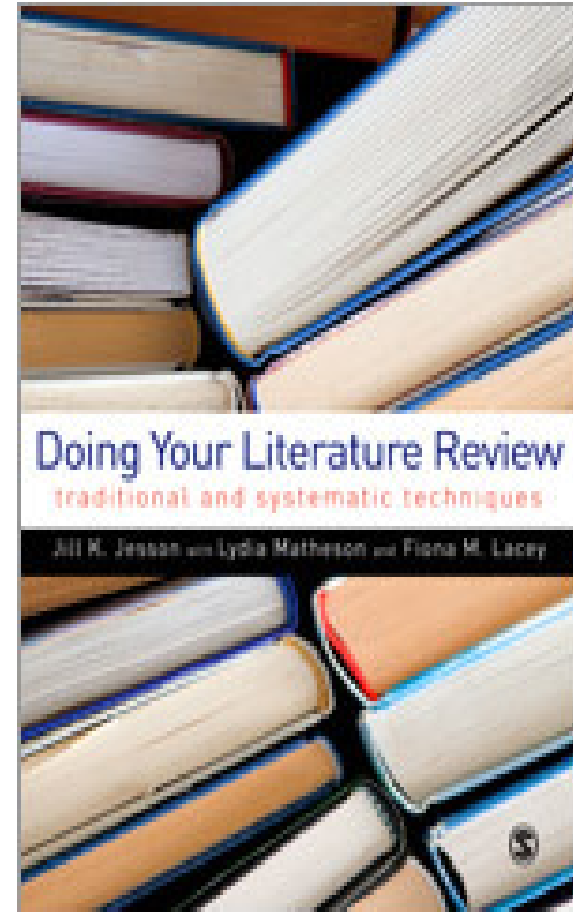
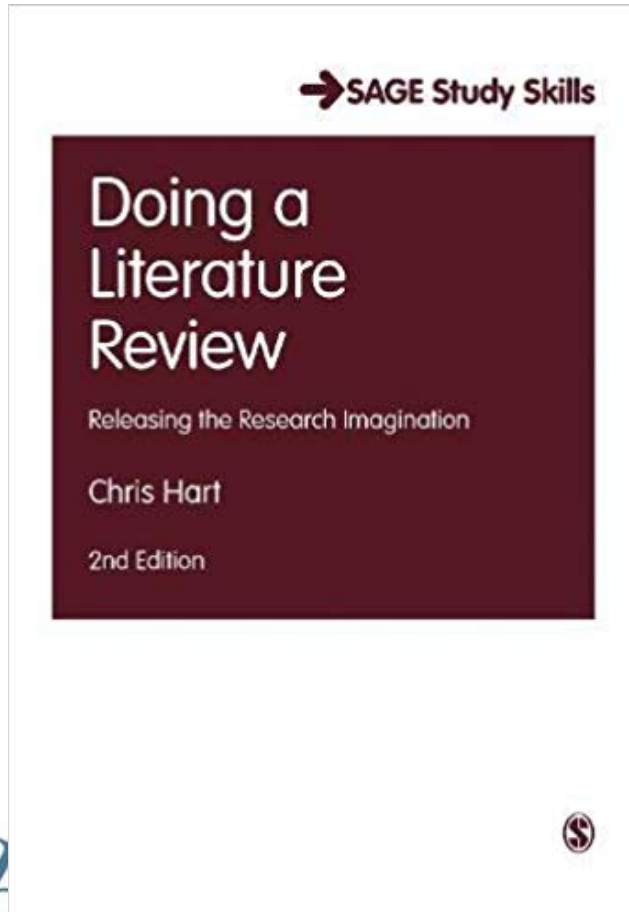
(Thomson & Kamler, 2013)



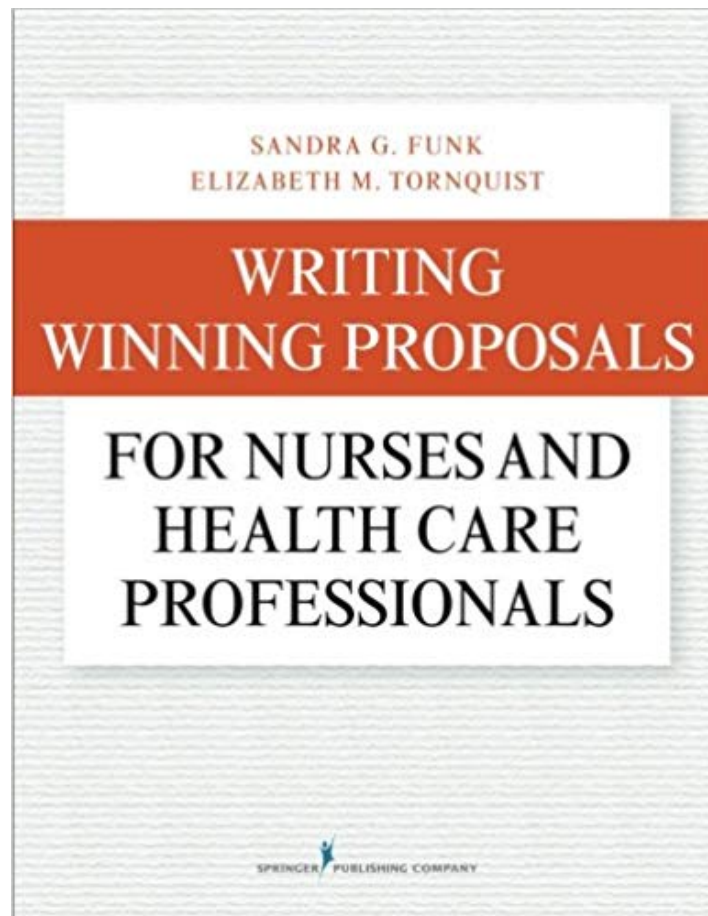
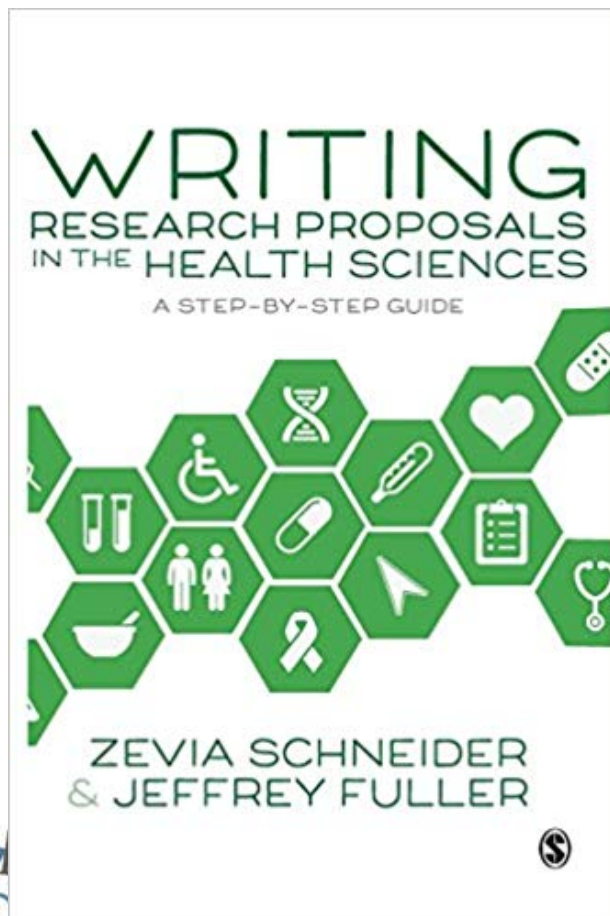
General resources



Literature reviewing resources



Health Sciences-specific resources



Writing consultations!

- One-to-one consultations
- Your own consultant
- Your own written work
- English or Afrikaans
- As many consultations as you need
- Call 021 808 2161 / 021 808 2989 or email vhartley@sun.ac.za / amlackay@sun.ac.za



The end

Thank you for not checking Facebook during my presentation!

