

Questions to support project planning

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- What is the broad aim of the PhD project?
- What is the justification for and background to the project? Why is it worthwhile doing?
- What are the objectives of the project?
- Are the project objectives SMART (specific, measurable, agreed, realistic, time-framed)?
- Which objectives are more important than others, and why?

TASKS INVOLVED

- What are the specific accomplishments and deliverables of the project?
- What are the detailed tasks required to produce the deliverables and achieve each of the objectives?
- Are some tasks dependent on the completion of other tasks?
- What is the estimated duration of each task?
- What is the estimated cost associated with each task. Do the costs exceed the budget?
- Which tasks are most important? Why?
- Which tasks are most time-consuming?
- Which tasks are most difficult? Why?
- What are the responsibilities of other supervisors, other agencies, or other individuals associated with the project?
- What methodology and methods will be used in the research?
- What specific skills or resources are required e.g. statistical analyses, interview techniques, laboratory methods, improved writing skill or computer software?

RISK ASSESSMENT

- Will all of the required skills and resources be available?
- Which tasks in the project are associated with highest risk?
- What factors might threaten the successful completion of task?
- How can you minimise or eliminate any of these threats?
- Are there low-risk tasks that can be an adequate back-up in case of failure in the high-risk tasks?

MONITORING OF PROGRESS

- What are the key milestones? Key dates, key outcomes.
- How will you monitor progress (review meetings, GANNT charts, reports)?
- Have you built in time as contingency for when things go wrong?