A research proposal is not an essay but project description for a research which has not yet been begun. It should thus not stick to advancing a certain thesis. Rather, it should raise a question and advance reasons why an answer to this question is not only interesting but also how it supplements or improves the current research in its field. The most important feature of a research proposal is an original idea.

I. Structure of a research proposal

A. Opening
   A. Title
      The title should capture the most important features of a research proposal; it should be straightforward and easy to understand
      The name of the author should be placed below the title with some spacing
   B. Abstract
      The abstract should outline the essence of the whole research proposal in short and simple sentences. It should not be longer than 300 words.
   C. Introduction
      The introduction should not be longer than two paragraphs and explain i) the research topic in question, ii) justify its importance, and iii) account for its relevance in contrast to current research

B. Main Part
   A. State of research
      this section should mention the most important works on the topic of the research proposal and state the most important results in the field
   B. Research question/hypothesis
      This is the heart of the research proposal. This section should explain the research question and/or the hypotheses put forth with the research proposal. The main aim of this section is to explain its significance and novelty. The research literature just surveyed is a major point of reference for this section.
      This section could be designed in an open fashion by formulating research questions; that is, actually articulating questions (mainly in the cultural sciences). Alternatively, this section could state and explain the hypothesis/-es.
   C. Method
      This section will sketch the method(s) employed in the research and its theoretical framework. A main aim of this section is to provide reasons that the research proposal in question can be realized.

C. Bibliography
D. Optional Sections
   A. ethical considerations (for instance in research concerned with interviewees)
   B. conclusion

II. Style of a research proposal

- the research proposal should be written in a **clear, simple and objective language**; no blathering; no repetitions; no general statements such as „China is now one of the most important economies in the world“ or similar statements
- use **short and simple sentences**
- all sections of the research proposal should be marked by headings
- all the aims of the research proposal should be explained (it is insufficient that something „is interesting“); also, please make sure that logical connectives such as „therefore,“ „thus“ etc. are used properly