

FORTUNE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

New Delhi

Executive Fellow Programme in Management

(EFPM) · 4 Years · Executive (Part-Time)

For leaders who refuse to choose between impact and inquiry.

Research Proposal Guidelines · 2026 Admissions

Programme at a Glance

Programme	Executive Fellow Programme in Management (EFPM)
Suitability	The EFPM program is well suited for senior practitioners who encounter complex problems in their professional roles and wish to investigate them rigorously. It allows them to pursue doctoral level research while continuing their careers
Duration	4 years (part-time, executive format)
Format	Weekend residential modules + independent research periods
Focus Areas	Strategy & Leadership · Finance & Accounting · Marketing & Consumer Behaviour · Human Resources & OB · Operations & Supply Chain

About the EFPM Research Proposal

The FIIB EFPM is built for a specific kind of professional: someone senior enough to have seen the limits of conventional wisdom in their field, curious enough to want to investigate those limits rigorously, and driven enough to pursue doctoral-level research without stepping away from the responsibilities that define their career.

The Research Proposal is the centrepiece of your EFPM application. It tells us what you want to investigate, why it matters, and why you are the right person to investigate it. It does not need to be perfect — we expect it to evolve significantly as you progress through the programme — but it must be honest, specific, and grounded in genuine professional insight.

What We Look for in a Strong Proposal

- A specific problem rooted in professional reality — not a broad industry theme, but a concrete challenge or puzzle you have actually encountered.
- A clear connection between the practical management problem and a gap in the existing academic literature.
- Evidence that you have read and thought carefully about what scholars have already written on your topic, and identified what is missing.
- A compelling personal motivation — the committee should feel that this is your problem, grown from your experience, not borrowed from a textbook.
- Clear, professional English that a reader outside your industry can follow.

Format and Length

Your Research Proposal should be 1500-2500 words (excluding references). Use a standard font (Calibri or Times New Roman, 11–12pt), 1.5 line spacing, and normal page margins. Number your pages and include your full name on the document.

Write for an intelligent reader who is not a specialist in your industry. Avoid jargon and acronyms without definition. Structure your proposal using the eight sections described below, with each section clearly labelled.

The Eight Sections of Your Proposal

Section 1 · The Research Problem You Want to Solve – upto 500 words

Start with what you know from professional or academic life. Identify a specific, observable problem in management or organisational practice — not a broad theme, but a real tension, failure, or puzzle that demands investigation.

Your research problem should be one you have encountered in your working life. You may like to highlight the specific industry or organizational context where you experienced this problem. The best EFPM proposals come from professionals who see something in their organisation or industry that no one has properly explained. Draw on that knowledge — it is your greatest asset as a researcher.

This section must end with a clear, focused research question. A strong research question is specific, researchable, and genuinely open — it cannot be answered by a quick Google search or a consultancy report.

Section 2 · What Scholars Already Know — and Where the Gap Lies upto 800 words

You are not expected to have completed a full literature review at the point of application. However, you should show that you have read widely and critically on your topic.

Identify the key theories and frameworks connected to your research question. Engage with both academic debates and insights emerging from industry practice. Reference relevant authors, practitioner publications, and industry or consulting reports. Since this programme is designed for working professionals, drawing on practitioner knowledge and industry reports is particularly valuable.

Then move to the most important step. Identify the gaps. Explain what current literature does not fully address. Where is the knowledge still incomplete, debated, or not yet tested in practice. That unexplored space is where your EFPM research will make its contribution.

Use Google Scholar for open-access articles if you wish to cite academic publications. Once enrolled, FIIB's library provides access to major databases. Strong proposals typically draw on peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and credible industry or policy reports.

Section 3 · Why This Research Is Necessary and the Contribution Your Research Will Make upto 500 words

In one or two paragraphs, make a persuasive case for your research. Why does it matter that this question gets answered? What will organisations be able to do better? What will the academic field understand more clearly?

Think of this as your argument to a sceptical committee member who asks: 'Why this question, why now, and why you?' If you cannot answer that in plain language, the proposal needs sharpening.

Doctoral research must generate original knowledge. Describe, as specifically as you can at this stage, what your research will add to both theory and practice.

On the theory side: will you develop a new framework, test an existing theory in a new context, or challenge a widely-held assumption? On the practice side: will you produce tools, evidence, or recommendations that help managers make better decisions or design better organisations?

EFPM graduates make contributions at the intersection of scholarship and practice. Your research should produce knowledge that is academically credible and immediately usable by the professional community you serve. You must highlight the practical impact your study will create and if caters to a particular industry, Where possible, articulate who the beneficiaries of your research will be.

Section 4 · Your Proposed Research Approach upto 250 words

Describe your initial thinking on how you will conduct the research. You will develop a rigorous research design during the EFPM — full methodological expertise is built through the programme — but you should indicate a broad direction.

Will your study be primarily qualitative (interviews, case studies, ethnography), quantitative (surveys, secondary data, modelling), or mixed? What kinds of organisations, managers, or datasets will you study?

For EFPM applicants, your existing professional network is a major methodological asset. Please describe how your current role or industry connections give you access to data, participants, or organisations relevant to your research. This access often distinguishes strong EFPM proposals.

Section 5 · Your Personal and Professional Motivation upto 250 words

The EFPM is designed for professionals who are unwilling to pause their careers and also are unwilling to stop growing intellectually. That is not a small thing. We want to understand what drives you to take on doctoral research alongside a demanding professional life.

Describe the professional experiences, observations, or frustrations that led you to this research question. Explain how completing a EFPM connects to your long-term goals — not just professionally, but personally. The committee reads many proposals on similar topics. What makes one proposal memorable is the human being behind it. Be honest, specific, and write in your own voice.

The committee may want to know your plans to manage doctoral research alongside your professional responsibilities.

Section 6 · References

List all sources cited in your proposal using Harvard referencing style (Author, Year, Title, Journal/Publisher). Every source listed must appear in the body of the proposal, and every source cited must appear here.

Aim for 6–12 references — we encourage you to include industry reports, practitioners alongside academic papers. Reputable industry reports and government white papers are encouraged where directly relevant.

You may refer to the following APA reference list to understand how references should be formatted.

<https://apastyle.apa.org/instructional-aids/reference-examples.pdf>

Section 7 · Any Other Relevant Information

Use this section for anything that adds important context to your application: prior research experience or publications; professional roles that give you privileged access to data or organisations; language or regional expertise relevant to your study; or any other information that helps the committee understand who you are as a researcher and professional.

Please include your full name clearly on the document.

Note * *"If you have not written an academic research proposal before, do not worry. The purpose of this proposal is not to test your academic knowledge. It is to understand whether you have identified a real problem, can think clearly about it and have the curiosity and commitment to investigate it rigorously. The programme will equip you with the research skills you need."*

Practical Tips Before You Submit

Narrow your question. 'Digital transformation' is a topic. 'Why do mid-sized Indian logistics firms fail to sustain digital transformation initiatives beyond the pilot stage?' is a research question. Use your professional knowledge to find the specific, real question.

Connect Section 1 and Section 2 explicitly. The link between the management problem and the academic gap is the heart of your proposal. Spend extra time on this bridge — it is what distinguishes a doctoral proposal from a consultant's report or a white paper.

Show access to data. Your professional network is a research asset. Mention it explicitly — which organisations, managers, or datasets can you access through your current role or career history?

Draw on concrete examples. References to real organisational situations — even without naming organisations — make your proposal vivid and credible. Abstract arguments are harder to evaluate than ones grounded in observed reality.

Proofread carefully. A proposal with significant errors signals a lack of care. Ask a trusted colleague to read it before you submit.