

Work Packages

This tip-sheet offers hints and tips on how to structure work packages in a research proposal. A research proposal is essential for fellowships, lectureships and grant applications.

1. What is a Work Package?

Work packages are a planning tool for making decisions and detailing the major steps in a research proposal. Providing a precise description of the work to be carried out, what happens when, who does what and the duration of tasks during your research.

2. Why are work packages important in a research proposal?

In fellowship applications they are a useful tool to break your research proposal into defined sections, making it easier to visualise the specific aspects of the research proposal.

Work packages help you:

- At the writing stage – allocation of resources, time and tasks
- Create a logical structure - this provides a coherent and effective work plan, which supports the main objectives of your research proposal.
- Detail what you will be doing, when, where, who is involved (collaborators, staff, students), outputs and risks
- Highlight the importance / novelty / value of the specific aspects of the research proposal.

How do work packages fit in a research proposal?

Work packages are one way of making the research proposal within the fellowship application concise and ensuring there is a clear link throughout the application.

All fellowship applications should have an overarching question/challenge/aim/hypothesis that is being addressed. This overarching aim can be subdivided into main objectives (Ob) that help detail the main components to reaching the overarching aim.

Work packages need to be aligned with the main objectives and these should answer your aim / hypothesis.

Work package (WP):

- Group of related tasks within a project.

Task (T):

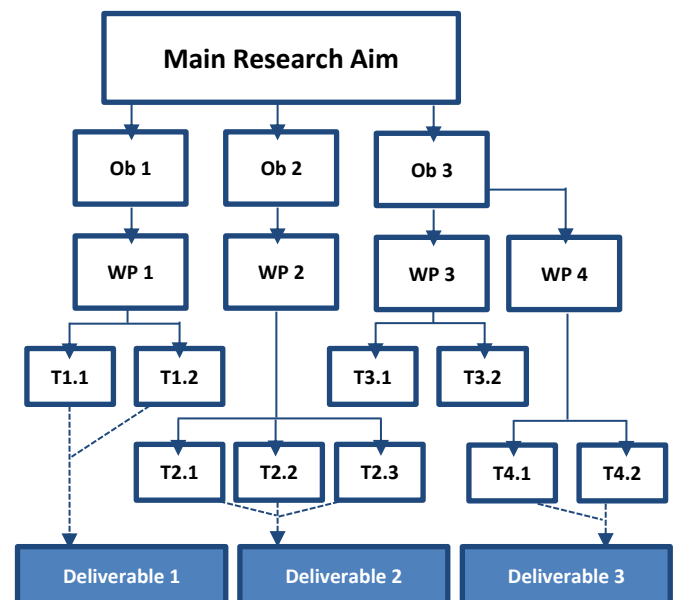
- Specific actions that you need to take to ensure the work package is completed.

Deliverable (D):

- Measurable and verifiable outcome or object that completes a work package/task
- E.g. publication, product, tool

Milestone (M):

- Describes the status of the project represented by a moment at which one or more project activities are complete – marks a critical decision point / turning points.
- E.g. data collection complete, model built



3. Example of a work package

WP1: Title of the Work Package (duration of WP)

Give a brief introduction and detail the aim of the work package / how it links with the main objectives.

T1.1 – Task title – detail the specific activities that will take place to achieve the objectives of the work package

T1.2

Include support from collaborators or visits to collaborators.

Is there any risk in this WP?

Deliverable of WP 1 – what will be the outcome?

Milestone of WP 1 – what's the significant marker?

What should a work package include?

- Title – a brief informative title.
- Objective of the specific work package and how it links to the overall project objectives.
- Tasks: description of the different tasks that you will perform and how to do that.
- The outcome of the research - what will happen when this work package is finished?
- Deliverables for the specific work package.
- Milestones for the specific work package.
- Collaborators involved or visits / secondments planned.
- Specific resources required.
- What risks need to be considered (can be included in a separate Risk section or within each work package) and what risk mitigation have you built in?
- Timing (linked to Gantt chart).

How many work packages to have?

The number and structure of work packages will be project dependant and based on the size, duration and complexity of the research project.

PI, staff and students time

Work packages can detail the tasks allocated to the PI (fellow) and any staff / students costed into the fellowship – including research associates or PhD students. Highlighting the time allocation and workload split between the team and over the project duration.

How do the work packages link together?

It is important to consider / detail how the work packages within the research plan are connected.

For example is WP 2 dependant on the outcomes of WP 1 or can they be completed in parallel?

Does a WP depend on results from multiple previous WPs? Is it relying on a collaborators' work?

4. Visualisation of the Work Packages in a Gantt Chart

You should aim to include a timeline or a Gantt chart in your research proposal. This will combine your work packages, deliverables and milestones so the whole proposal can be visualised.

The timeline should span the total duration of the project and can include:

- Work packages and tasks
- Deliverables
- Milestones
- Dissemination prospects (conferences, papers, outreach activities)
- Visits to collaborators
- Work at other institutions
- Training you proposed to undertake

A timeline or Gantt chart can be designed or built in numerous ways, below is one example.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
WP 1			
T1.1			
T1.2			
WP 2			
T2.1			
T2.2			
T2.3			
WP 3			
T3.1			
T3.2			
WP 4			
T4.1			
T4.2			
Deliverables		D1	D2 D3
Milestones	M1	M2	M3 M4 M5 M6
Conferences		C1	C2 C3

However you build your timeline, use the same denomination as in your research proposal (Work package 1 – WP1, Tasks - 1.1, 1.2, Deliverable – D1, and so on).

If space allows include the titles of the work packages and tasks to aid continuity.

5. Make your research proposal easy to follow

You know your research inside out and others don't. Fellowship applications will go through different stages of review and assessment. Successful proposals need to be clear, credible and understandable to a broad range of readers (experts, peer reviewers, funders) with different backgrounds and areas of expertise.

Work packages can help articulate a research proposal, making it easier to follow. This is key to help readers visualise your research. Emphasising the aims of specific aspects of research proposal, the importance / novelty / value of the specific aspects of the research proposal hence showing casing how ambitious the proposal is.

6. Checklist

- Does each work package have a clear title?
- Are tasks well defined?
- Have you written I/my throughout the work package? (instead of 'We')
- Do all work packages have deliverables and a timeline?
- Have you include risk and risk mitigation?
- Is it clear how the work packages connect?
- Is it clear how the work packages are related to the main research aim and the research objectives?
- Have you kept the denomination between work package and the timeline the same?

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