Before putting together a proposal, check with your tutors that the specialist area you wish to study is appropriate for your course. Also, check whether there is a prescribed format for the proposal and make sure you follow it.

A research proposal makes a case for doing an independent research project, usually as part of a dissertation or business report. Proposals are typically 1000 to 1500 words in length and tend to include the following sections.

Title – summing up the objective of the research and proposed methodology

Explanation of the research problem – stating:
- what problem you are going to research
- how it is relevant to your apprenticeship programme
- why it is worth researching
- what is already known about the problem (a brief literature review)

Explanation of the proposed research methodology – which may include:
- a research hypothesis (i.e. what you think you are going to find out) that your research will test
- a detailed outline of how you intend to conduct your research: laboratory experimentation, observation, sampling, interviews, surveys, questionnaires, numerical analysis, textual analysis, etc.
- an outline of measurement instruments or data collection procedures and data analysis techniques you intend to use. Explain how those instruments or procedures were developed, how they have been used, and the outcome.

Timeframe – a realistic time plan for undertaking each step of the research. Try not to overestimate what you can achieve in the time.

Bibliography – a list of the sources referred to in your outline literature review.