PhD Proposal Form

Please fully complete all sections as requested.

The proposal will be reviewed by members of academic staff. Assessors wish to gain a clear understanding of your proposed research topic and existing knowledge. We will also consider the suitability of the project in relation to supervisory expertise and capacity within the School. We recognise that your research questions and methods may change when you begin your research.

Discovering Your PhD Potential: Writing a Research Proposal - 5 week online course
*If you want to learn how to write an excellent research proposal for a postgraduate application, this **online course** will give you the awareness, skills and tools to write a well thought-out and achievable research proposal, helping you improve the quality of your application. It will also give you a taste of the self-study required in postgraduate doctoral research.*

Your name:				
Please refer to the staff research interest pages and name at least two academics in the department who might support your research as PhD supervisors:				
Where offered on the PhD Subject page please tick your preference.	**Standard PhD**		**Practice Based PhD**	
1. Working Title **This should be as precise as possible - broad subject areas are too large for the scope of a PhD**				
2. Abstract **This is a short summary of the proposal. It should state the research problem, its context, and its significance.** **(Suggested word count: 150)**				

3. Research Questions

You should identify the research questions which you will be seeking to answer and explain why they are significant. What is the rationale of your proposed study, and what will be its original contribution to knowledge?

Provide a statement of your research question/aim, ideally in the form of a central over-arching question/aim and two or three sub-questions/aims.

Your research questions/aims can appear in any form, and certainly do not need to be expressed in the form of testable hypotheses. Do ensure however that they are sufficiently narrow – one of the reasons why many research degree applications are not successful is because the terrain outlined in the relevant proposal is simply too broad for a doctoral project. Please also remember that the research degree thesis is first and foremost an academic endeavour, not a consultancy or applied research project.

(Suggested word count: 250)

4. Summary

Explain the academic context from which your research emerges. This applies both to theoretical and empirical research. The important thing to establish here is the extent to which your proposed thesis research makes a contribution - i.e., adds something theoretical, conceptual, methodological and/or empirical which is not already offered in this literature(s). This section should therefore introduce the issues that will be addressed by your research questions, and explain the importance of the research to others. In other words, it should establish the rationale for your proposed thesis.

(Suggested word count: 500)

5. Literature Review

You should refer to the key articles and books in the proposed area of research, showing on the one hand how they will support your research, but also demonstrating that there is a need for your research.

(Suggested word count: 500)

6. Methodology Statement (*refer to the detailed guidance at the end of this form. Tick either A or B and complete this section as appropriate)

(Suggested word count: 500)

A: Empirical research		B: Theoretical research	

7. Timescale

You should sketch what you hope to achieve in each year of your research - three years for a full-time PhD or six years for a part-time/distance learning PhD.

(suggested word count: 300)

8. Ethics

Do you foresee any ethical issues with your research?

Ethical approval will be needed for any research involving human participants. Research that raises ethical issues such as environmental damage or political and social tensions will also require approval.

(suggested word count: 150)

9. Bibliography

This should be a short list of the key articles and books mentioned in your application. Quality is more important than quantity - demonstrating engagement with the literatures both subject-specific and methodological as appropriate.

(suggested word count: 300)

Date proposal submitted:

Guidance for Methodology Section
Please focus on either A or B below.

Most research topics will involve empirical research, and therefore you should fill in part A. Your methodology may include some of the following elements. Please note, you do not have to include them all –

- Methodological framework;
- Approach to organising and analysing data;
- Sampling;
- Ethical considerations;
- Strengths and limitations of the design.
- Potential challenges and ways to overcome them.

A: Empirical research

This section should outline the empirical work you plan to undertake, if relevant. You should identify the method or methods you propose to use, and justify these choices - i.e., explain why this method is being used in preference to others. You should also provide details of your proposed sources (textual, film, sounds etc.), sample/s (numbers of respondents and type of sample) and/or secondary data sets, and again offer justification for these choices. Further you should indicate how and why you will achieve empirical access, if this is a pertinent issue. Finally you may also indicate the status of the data you will gather – e.g., to what extent will these data capture or mirror the 'reality' of the phenomena under examination? How objective can you as a researcher expect to be?, and so on.

You will certainly need to refer to the literature on research methods. Please also be aware that another reason why many applicants are rejected at proposal stage is because they fail to offer sufficient detail of their proposed methodology, or indeed to defend the choices they have made, or to demonstrate any engagement with the relevant literature in this regard.

B: Theoretical research

For those applicants who wish to undertake theoretical research where neither primary nor secondary data will be used, the methods section above should be replaced with a section which explains exactly how the relevant theory will be cross-examined in order to answer the research questions. Theoretical research typically involves an analysis of a chosen research issue/question which engages critically with appropriate theorists or theoretical traditions. You should explain what these traditions or theorists are and why they have been selected to address your research question.