

DRAFTING YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The responsibility for formulating a viable research proposal for a research degree leading to the MPhil/PhD rests with the applicant, however applicants may want to consult informally a potential supervisor in the School of Law before formulating a formal proposal.

The research proposal that is submitted for consideration should use the following headings, and provide as much detail as possible – but succinctly - about the proposed research:

1. **Title:** Create a clear working title for your research project
2. **Introduction:** This should contain an identification of your proposed research question, including a brief background to the rationale for selecting your question
3. **Adding to existing knowledge:** In the case of a PhD application particularly, the proposal should show some indication as to how your proposed research will contribute something new to the research literature in the field. This will require some appraisal and review of existing literature in your proposal.

Research methodology: An indication of the research methodology to be used and how your methods will ensure that your research question is addressed, along with a plan and timetable of work. In the case of an applicant proposing to carry out empirical research, the design of the research should be specified as precisely as possible, including how access to data/research participants will be achieved, and ethical issues.

Please note that for all empirical research involving human subjects (ie all projects involving questionnaires, interviews, or observations), ethical approval from the university will be needed before starting to carry out the work.

4. **Expertise and interest:** An account of relevant expertise gained from previous research, academic training or employment (if any) to the proposed research.
5. **Fieldwork:** If you envisage your research as requiring a period of fieldwork, then you need to indicate in your proposal: (1) the period during your 3 years (full-time, or 6 years part-time) of study that the fieldwork will take place; (2) the length of time that you need to spend in the field; and (3) the approximate financial costs that the fieldwork will entail – will there be travel/accommodation costs involved?

The *complete* proposal should be no more than 2,000 words in length, including your list of references. *Proposals longer than 2,000 words in total will not be considered.* Ultimately, a top-quality research proposal will display evidence to a reader of:

- an ability to articulate a cogent and original research project or research question;
- a credible plan for doctoral study which can be completed in three years (or six years, part-time);
- engagement with existing research and methodology; and
- A good awareness of the place of the proposed research within the current field.