

GUIDANCE ON HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

We ask that you provide a written Research Proposal of no more than **1000** words that gives a brief synopsis of your research project. Please also provide the title of your proposed programme of research. If you exceed the word limit your application will be made ineligible, as this would be an unfair advantage over other applicants.

The Research Proposal plays a key part in the assessment of your application. Whilst we recommend that you discuss the content of this section with your proposed Supervisor, **it is crucial that the detail of this section is your own work**. The assessors are looking for evidence of high quality and strong potential for postgraduate study.

Enthusiasm and interest are important, but panel members are interested in:

- evidence of intellectual purpose and originality
- details about your reasons for, and approach towards undertaking your proposed study
- a good awareness of the research context

You need to present your case clearly and concisely. Use the subheadings below to set out as clearly as you can the work you intend to undertake. You do not have to address every point listed below; this is intended as a guide to help you structure your case.

Your reasons and purposes for undertaking this project

State briefly what the key area or issues of your project will be and why you wish to pursue this research project. How does your proposed work relate to what you have studied already? Where there is a significant overlap between your Master's dissertation (if you have completed one) and your doctoral study, you should demonstrate clearly how the project goes beyond your Master's study and state clearly the added value of continuing to research in this area. This does not mean that the assessors expect your research programme to be in the same area as your previous study, but they will need to know that you have sufficient experience to complete your project. Finally, you should say how your doctoral study relates to your eventual career aims.

Your research project

In a competition as fierce as this, your Research Proposal is crucial, so you should use clear and concise language, avoiding jargon. Bear in mind that the assessors might not be experts in your particular specialist field. You should identify the research problems or questions you intend to address in your doctoral study. These should be clearly defined in your proposal. You should describe:

- the research problems or questions you intend to address
- the research context (background) in which those problems or questions are located. In describing the context, you should refer to the current state of knowledge and any recent debate on the subject
- the particular contribution to knowledge and understanding in this area that you hope to make. You should explain why the work is important. The fact that an area has not been studied previously is not, in itself, a case for the work to be supported. We are also seeking a description of relevance beyond the development of your own skills or experience, though this is important too
- the methods and critical approaches that you plan to use to address the problems or questions you have set. We don't just need to know what you are going to work on
- we need to know how you plan to go about it
- the sources that you will use, if appropriate. You will need to state where these sources and materials are located and how these will be accessed. For example, if you are undertaking an archaeological project, do you need a permit to access a particular site, and how will this be obtained? It is sometimes helpful to put forward alternative strategies or approaches if you are aware that problems might arise
- you should say, as far as you can, how the project will develop or how you will structure the work over the period of the award
- you should identify and address any ethical issues relating to the research project
- if you have already begun your doctoral study, it is important that you give some indication of the work you have undertaken to date, e.g. information on any chapters or major pieces of work you have completed

- preparation and previous experience: you should give a brief indication of any previous experience or preparation that is relevant to your proposed doctoral study. For example, you may wish to highlight key areas of your Master's study. Where applicable, you should also include training and preparation, additional to the formal undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications already listed, which is relevant to your proposed study
- for practice-led subjects, you should include details of your professional or work experience (including relevant voluntary work or exhibitions), as the panel will be looking at your track record. For example, if your application is for doctoral study in creative writing, please describe the kind of writing (published or unpublished) you have undertaken. If your work experience was completed over several short periods, it would be helpful to give an overall number of weeks or months, e.g. 3 months' gallery experience.