

FSD Research Proposal GUIDELINES For applicants for MPhil and PhD

Purpose of Research Proposal

When making application for candidature in the above research degrees a candidate is obliged to provide a research proposal that sets out an outline of what the candidate intends to achieve in their thesis. A research proposal will allow the faculty to consider:

- if the candidate has appropriate supervision for the proposed thesis topic,
- if the proposal has sufficient merit to justify the completion of an MPhil or PhD
- if the candidate has the capacity to research and to express themselves in a manner which will be required for the thesis.

The research proposal should be approximately 2,000 – 3,000 words. The research proposal will be used by the faculty along with the CV, academic qualifications and available supervision to determine if the candidate will be accepted for enrolment in the degree.

Structure of Research Proposal

Introduction: State, as succinctly as possible, what the legal issue, problem or proposal you want to research, why it is important, how your research will contribute to the solution, and how it will differ from what others have already said about the issue. An interdisciplinary topic will be considered but it should be primarily focussed on legal or jurisprudential theories, concepts or ideas.

The research question: Describe the question that will be asked and hopefully resolved by the thesis. This section includes a definition of terms. Great care should be given to phrasing the proposition, which will determine the thrust of the research efforts and point the student firmly in the right direction of solving a problem and take knowledge forward in an original direction. Note a thesis is not a long essay or a literature review, it is a process that starts with a thesis, idea or hypothesis beginning from current knowledge requiring the candidate to research the area chosen leading to a proving of that hypothesis in a manner that results in original research.

Background: Provide an indication of what current literature says about the problem at hand. Do not attempt to include everything that is available on the topic, however, do provide a number of sources. This section is designed to show you are sufficiently well read in the area, and that there is indeed a gap in the literature that requires filling.

Research Methodology: This should include a description of the theoretical or conceptual framework and a proposed research design.

Statement of Significance: Finish with a short discussion of the research significance of your proposed research. Why is this worth doing for a higher degree research program?