



Research Proposal GUIDELINES

For applicants for MPhil and PhD.

Purpose of Research Proposal

When making an 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 Business School 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 student has sufficient knowledge of the research topic that they appreciate the task that they are undertaking to avoid a lengthy period early in the candidature to determine the appropriate topic and approach to the thesis,
- 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

Proposed Title

Draft table of contents: This should be a couple of pages in length at most. It will provide a preliminary organisational structure, it will simplify for both candidate and supervisor what will need to be undertaken and when, and indicates the dimensions of the topic.

Introduction: State, as succinctly as possible, what is the purpose of your 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. What are the expected outcomes? An interdisciplinary topic will be considered but it should be primarily focused on business, concepts, or ideas.

Literature Review: What does the current literature say about the problem at hand? When citing theories or studies, state why these are important to the work you are planning on undertaking. Include key ideas and important studies from leading researchers in the field. Do not attempt to include everything that is available on the topic, however do provide an even spread on the issues (rather than a biased view). This section is designed to show you are well read in the area, and that there is indeed a gap in the literature that requires filling.

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 focus 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, 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.

Research Methodology: This will be the bulk of your proposal. It should include a description of the theoretical or conceptual framework, models, methodology, data collection and research design, and a timetable for completing the thesis. The methodology may be quantitative, qualitative, case study, empirical, etc, or a combination of these methodological approaches. If you do not understand what these terms mean you need to research possible research methodologies.

Rationale: This is where you highlight the importance of your research. How is your research innovative? What impact will your research have? What is the intended contribution of your research?

Limitations: Consider the feasibility of your approach, identify potential limitations and constraints.

Bibliography: This should incorporate approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the proposal. It indicates to the supervisor the calibre of the sources you have considered, and allows them to provide suggestions for anything which may have been overlooked. It also provides the supervisor with an indication of the depth of research you have undertaken on the topic prior to creating the proposal.