



Research Proposal GUIDELINES

For applicants for LLM (Research); SJD (Research) 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 LLM(Research); SJD (Research) 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

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, 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.

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. 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 procedure: This will be the bulk of your proposal. It should include a description of the theoretical or conceptual framework, sources of evidence and authority, methodology and research design, and a timetable for completing the thesis. The methodology may be doctrinal, comparative; empirical, historical; social/legal or based upon another methodology or a combination of these methodological approaches. If you don't understand what these terms mean you need to research possible research methodologies.

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.

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.