

## Guidance for graduate applicants on writing a research proposal

When writing your proposal, please consider carefully which of the academic groups your research would best fit within and **state the name of this group clearly at the top of your proposal**. If you have identified a potential supervisor, please state their name clearly on your application form in the appropriate space on the application form.

Your research proposal needs to give those assessing your application an impression of the strength and originality of your proposed research, and its potential to make a contribution to knowledge. It should be written in clear, jargon-free, and unexceptional prose. Grammatical mistakes and typographical errors give a very bad impression. Please make sure you cover the following:

- **The topic that you propose to research:** This should consist of a clear outline of the research question or questions and an analytical justification of the choice of topic on academic and educational grounds.
- **The research context:** relate your proposed research to other work in its field or related fields, and indicate in what ways your research will differ; you might mention monographs on the subject, as well as important theoretical models or methodological exemplars: this is a chance to show your understanding of the background against which your research will be defined
- **The contribution that your work will make to the field:** This is your chance to show how you have arrived at your position and recognised the need for your research, and what it is that makes it both new and important; you should indicate what areas and debates it will have an impact on, what methodological example it sets (if appropriate) - in short how it contributes to knowledge and to the practice of our subject. Give examples of the sort of evidence you might consider, and of the questions it might help you to raise. Show that you are already thinking about the area in detail and not only in outline.
- **The methodology and methods to be used in your study:** This section should describe the methods and methodology you propose to employ as well as a justification for the suitability of these methods in addressing your research purposes

It is vital that you show that your research is necessary. It is not enough that it happens to interest you. You should make clear that it will be of use and interest to others working in your field. You should show how your work will make a contribution to knowledge and to the practice of our subject.

It is likely that in most cases the research questions and methodology will be refined and adapted during the course of the year in consultation with the supervisor. Nevertheless, the quality of this initial presentation is a very important factor in deciding whether to offer a place to an applicant.