

Department of Politics and International Studies

PhD Applicants

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The research proposal is a vital part of the application and will be studied in detail by the academic selectors. The proposal should be around **2,000 words** (plus bibliography) and include an outline of your proposed research topic, methodology, and the source materials you intend to use. It is beneficial if you have made contact with an academic in the Department who shares your research interests prior to the submission of your application.

TITLE

The title should give a clear idea of what your project is about. This is not a title for a book meant to catch the attention of potential readers, but just a concise and accurate description of your research project.

RESEARCH PROJECT

The following points should be developed in the proposal:

1. Your main **thesis or research question**: explain in one paragraph what you will be exploring and what you will try to establish. This should be interesting, and new, for someone who already has a good knowledge of your topic.
2. The **significance (originality/relevance) of your project**: give your assessment of the existing literature on your topic and explain in what ways your own research will enrich that literature. In other words, state how you hope to advance knowledge in your chosen discipline/field.
3. What **theoretical** view will inform your research: explain how you locate yourself in the theoretical field – both the field of social theory in general and the specific field to which your topic pertains – and what set of conceptual tools and investigation methodologies will inform your research. This is a very important part of your proposal.
4. How you will **develop** your thesis: explain how you will apply your theoretical and methodological approach to the development of your main thesis (summarized in point 1), i.e. the main sections of the thesis that you envisage to write and the stages of your investigation:
 - a. the theoretical investigation; what literature you plan to survey and discuss.
 - b. the empirical investigation and your plans for **fieldwork** (if applicable); what **research method** you intend to use and how you will use it concretely (depending on your kind of research: archival and data resources, interviews, polls, etc.); what kind of evidence you will seek to substantiate the principal argument of your thesis.

5. Your work **schedule**: explain how you intend to research and write your thesis within the **three-year period** allocated for a full-time PhD research (six years part-time), knowing that:

- the first year (MPhil) is a preparatory year during which you will take part in seminars and focus on the literature review and the planning of the next two years.
- the second year is the one during which you will conduct your field research.
- the third year is devoted to writing your thesis.

The two questions you need to answer here are: what makes you believe you can pursue and successfully conclude your project in this time period? What challenges do you see?

FUNDING

Explain how you intend to fund your PhD years, whether private funding or scholarship. If the latter, clarify whether you already have a scholarship, or have applied to one or a few (which one/s?), or intend to apply (to which one/s?).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Attach a one-page preliminary bibliography focused on what is most relevant to your specific research topic and your theoretical and methodological approach.

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