

SOAS University of London
Department of Religions and Philosophies
Research Degrees

How to write a **research proposal** for the Religions and Philosophies M.Phil./Ph.D. program:

The research proposal is a vital part of your application for an M.Phil./Ph.D. in Religions and Philosophies. It is the basis of the decision making process and should be carefully composed. The proposal must indicate that you are able to undertake an academic study of a circumscribed research topic that can be completed within a four-year period.

The research proposal should be **1000 to 2000 words** long and contain the following elements:

a preliminary **title** for the research project;

- a description of the main **area of research**, specifying the religious tradition/s, region/s, time period, texts or group of people or phenomenon to be studied, and the language/s involved;
- an indication of what is **original and innovative** about your proposed research: Why should it be undertaken and how can it change the field?
- the research **questions**: What are the main questions you want to answer with your study? What is the study supposed to achieve?
- the **sources** of your study: it is very important that these are limited, so that a critical and in-depth study can be accomplished within four years ;
- the **language/s** needed to undertake the study and information about the status of your language skills; additional language training may be undertaken during the first year;
- your main **methodological approach**: studies in Religions and Philosophies are often interdisciplinary, supporting a variety of approaches (comparative, philological and linguistic, historical, sociological and anthropological, philosophical, gender studies approaches etc.); the approach/es you plan to adopt should match the questions asked;
- a brief **literature review** introducing the main literature on the subject and evaluating it critically;

We recommend that a draft of the proposal is sent to the prospective supervisor before it is officially submitted. The proposal will be the basis of the research training seminar which you are obliged to attend in year 1 of your M.Phil/Ph.D. program once you are admitted. If you have any further questions please contact the research admissions tutor.