



## Guide to write your research proposal

All research candidates are required to submit a research proposal along with their application for scholarships. The following guideline had been prepared to assist you in writing your research proposal.

### **What is a research proposal?**

A research proposal is an outline of your proposed research project that is designed to:

- Define a research question and your approach to answering it
- Highlight originality and/or significance
- Explain how it adds to, develops, or challenges existing literature
- Persuade the Institute of the importance of this work and why you are the right person to undertake it.

Your research proposal may vary in length but it is expected that it will be 3-4 pages.

### **What is the purpose of the research proposal?**

A research proposal is used by potential supervisors to assess the quality and originality of your ideas, skills and the overall feasibility of your research project. They are also used to assess your expertise in the area you are choosing to research, your knowledge of existing literature in the field, and how your project will enhance it. This provides you with the opportunity to capture the attention of readers and convince them of the importance of your research.

It is essential that you identify a prospective supervisor and contact them to discuss your proposal to ensure that it is of mutual interest and also to gain their input into the design, scope and feasibility of your research project. All scholarship applications must provide two academic referees as part of their application.

### **Will I be able to change my research proposal?**

Yes, all good proposals will evolve as your research progresses. In fact, it is normal for candidates to refine their proposal in response to literature reviews, further consideration of research approaches and comments received from your supervisory panel.



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### How do I structure my research proposal?

The following elements are essential in a successful research proposal, each item below must be addressed:

**1. The research theme/question** This can change but be sure to include key words that will relate your proposal to relevant potential supervisors, funding schemes etc. The title should be around 20 words.

**2. Name of the academic(s) with whom you have discussed the project** You may have a particular person or School/Institute in mind. When you first make contact to discuss your topic of interest, be prepared to talk about your understanding of the literature and the proposed line of enquiry. It is up to you to make the first move in outlining the topic and the academic advisor may help you to refine it.

**3. Overview of current research – where is the gap?** Justify your project from a review of literature on the topic: discuss the most important texts, demonstrate your understanding of the research issues, identify any gaps that your research is intended to address. It is also a good idea to make links between your research and the existing research strengths of the academic/s you have listed in your application.

**4. Methodology** You do not need to go into specifics here, but you do need to demonstrate that you have given some thought about how you will undertake your research. Anticipate the methods you will use to achieve the project aims and show that your research project is feasible in the time period. How do you anticipate achieving your project aims? What is your rationale for using this approach? How will you collect and analyse the data?

**5. Resource Requirements** Will you need specialist equipment? Do you anticipate any field work expenses? Will travel be required? If so, where to, how long and at what stage of your project?

**6. Draft timeline** Provide a monthly/quarterly outline of how you will complete the research within the timeframe. A full-time PhD usually takes 3 years. Part time qualifications can be expected to take twice as long.

**7. Expectations of research results** What do expect to know, prove, demonstrate, analyse, test, investigate or examine at the conclusion of your research?