Guidelines for Writing a Postgraduate Research Proposal

As part of the application process for entry on the research register (Ph.D. or M.Litt.), applicants are required to outline the research they intend to undertake for their thesis. Although projects often change significantly during the research process, your initial proposal is important to help the School assess your potential as a research student and establish whether adequate supervision in your area of research is available within the School.

We strongly recommend that you discuss your proposal with an academic staff member who works in your area of research before you start the online application process. If you are unsure who to approach, please contact the School's Director of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning for advice.

Listed below are key areas that are usually covered in research proposals. You do not have to adhere to the exact headings or order but you may find this list useful to structure your thinking and check your proposal for major omissions. We do not expect your proposal to be a full-fledged review essay at the moment of application. Good initial research proposals can be as short as a single page and they should certainly not be longer than 4-5 pages.

1. Project title
2. Brief description of your research topic (be as specific as possible)
3. Central research questions of your project
4. Aims, objectives, scope and focus of your project
5. Principal conceptual and methodological questions your project poses; investigative methods and theoretical frameworks you intend to use
6. Relationship of your project to existing research: why is your project needed; what will it add to existing scholarship; how will it change the way we look at this topic? (a Ph.D. thesis must make a significant and original contribution to knowledge in your area of research)
7. Principal primary sources for your project
8. Indicative bibliography, including key scholarly works in the area of your project and works mentioned in your research proposal

Questions?
    Please contact the School's Director of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning
    Contact info - www.histories-humanities.tcd.ie/postgraduate/research-degrees.php

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Scoil na Staire agus na nDaonnachtaí
Coláiste na Tríonóide Baile Átha Cliath,
Ollscoil Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath 2,
Éire

School of Histories and Humanities
Trinity College Dublin,
the University of Dublin,
Dublin 2,
Ireland

T: +353 1 896 2625
www.histories-humanities.tcd.ie