**When we consider a candidate for the PhD degree, one of the most important elements is the research proposal.**

It should describe in some detail the project that you want to complete for the award of the PhD and provide evidence for your engagement with the topic. As the research proposal is crucial in determining whether we are able to supervise a project, take your time in composing the proposal and consider carefully the requirements outlined below. Your research proposal should be around 2,000 - 2,500 words long.

In the proposal, you should address the following aspects and provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is already known about this topic? What are the key works and who are the prominent scholars in the field? Which aspects of this topic have generated discussion and which warrant further investigation?

By addressing this point, you can demonstrate that you are aware of previous scholarship on the topic itself and related fields and that you can critically engage with that scholarship.

1. Which aspects of the topic do you propose to investigate? How does your project relate to previous scholarship? What is new and original in your research, and why is it important?

By answering these questions, you can show that you are able to contextualise your own research within the broader field and demonstrate how it will advance and change our knowledge of the topic.

1. What are the main primary sources you want to use for your research? Will your research involve previously unexamined primary sources, ‘new’ analyses of existing source materials or some combination of both? What methodologies will you use in your research project?

This section of your proposal will explain how you will actually conduct your research, what your main sources will be and how you will approach them.

1. What possible problems and challenges can you anticipate with regard to your research, and how are you going to address these?
2. Your proposal should include an indicative bibliography of both primary and secondary sources, which you have already identified as relevant to your research.
3. Finally, your proposal should also include a provisional timetable, describing the stages through which you hope your research would move, over the three years of your degree. It is crucial that, on the one hand, your chosen topic should be substantial enough to require around 80,000-100,000 words for its full exploration, and, on the other hand, that it has clear limits which would allow it to be completed in three years.

It is in the nature of research that, when you begin, you don’t know what you’ll find. This means that your project is bound to change over the three years that you spend on it. So in submitting your proposal you are not committing yourself to completing exactly the project it describes in the event that you are accepted. Nevertheless, the research proposal should help you in devising a feasible and worthwhile research project, and it will allow us to assess the project, provide some feedback, and decide whether we will be able to supervise it.