

# PhD RESEARCH DEGREE PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

When you apply you must submit your research proposal to [tde-researchpgr@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:tde-researchpgr@brookes.ac.uk).

This document explains the nature and purpose of this proposal and provides guidance on how to write it. We appreciate that many candidates have little previous experience of research. We do not expect you to know a huge amount at this stage but we expect you to follow the guidance given here and to address any comments made by potential supervisors.

## Purpose of the PhD proposal

- To determine if the field you are interested in is one we have the expertise to supervise within the School. Links to the research degrees web pages for the different schools can be found below:
  - [School of Architecture](#)
  - [School of Arts](#)
  - [School of the Built Environment](#)
  - [School of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics](#)
- To check that there is potential for a PhD in what you are proposing.
- To provide the opportunity for relevant supervisors to give feedback and advise on its development.

## Requirements of PhD research

To write a good proposal, you need to have a clear understanding of the requirements of PhD level research. Think in terms of what you will seek to find out that we didn't know before, and what its significance will be. These are the key requirements of the research you propose:

- It should represent an original contribution to knowledge (rather than a contribution to policy or practice).
- The knowledge you create should have relevance beyond a single case and contribute to a wider discourse, theory or debate.
- This knowledge must be generated through rigorous scientific methods.

## Format of the PhD proposal

The proposal should be about four pages of A4 and should include the following:

- A title summarising the proposed research.
- Your name and qualifications.
- A background section identifying the gap in knowledge that you want to fill. You should be able to characterise what research has already been done in this area, explaining how and in what respects the research project you propose would contribute to it and why it would be interesting and/ or important to do. Your aim in this section should be to make a convincing case as to why your research would create valuable and useful knowledge. It is essential that you include references to key texts in the field.
- Aims and objectives of the research: these are clear, precise and concise descriptions of what it is that you want to find out in your research. You should break them down into a primary aim and several subsidiary objectives. If you wish they may be formulated in the form of questions or hypotheses. In either case they

should be sufficiently well-defined/focussed for you to do the research implied within the three year time frame of the programme.

- **Methodology:** This section should consist of a detailed description of how you will go about the research. Try to identify what information you will be collecting, what the sources of that information are, and which methods you will use to obtain it. In addition to your data collection methods, make sure that you state clearly how you will analyse your data. Explain what data analysis skills you will need and whether you have them or how you will acquire them. For both your data collection and data analysis methods you should indicate why you think they are the most appropriate for your research? We appreciate that this is a section that is likely to need further development once you have enrolled on the programme.
- **Contribution to knowledge:** provide a brief explanation of the nature of the findings and conclusions you will generate. What sort of knowledge will the research community have that it didn't have before? Are you developing a model for use in research and practice? How will the findings contribute to wider debates and understanding in your field?
- **Bibliography:** You should include a list of references to the books, articles and other sources that you used in writing the proposal.

Text throughout the proposal should be clear, precise and free from jargon. You should use a consistent referencing style in your research proposal. Your proposal must be written in your own words, clearly citing and crediting any sources used in your discussion. A research proposal which consists of plagiarised material will automatically disqualify the applicant from consideration for a place. This is not negotiable.

If you are offered a place on the programme, you will spend the first 6-months after enrolment receiving research training and refining your proposal. It will be possible to change your research to a certain degree at this stage.

## Entry requirements

Applicants should normally hold a 1st or Upper Second Class Degree (or recognised equivalent qualification), but appropriate applications will be considered from outstanding candidates with substantial prior experience at an appropriate level. If English is not your first language you will need to provide one of the following language certificates:

- IELTS at least 6.5 overall (with no less than 5.5 in any element);

IELTS language test results are only valid for two years. Your English language test report must be valid on the proposed start date of the programme, should your application be successful. Evidence of English language proficiency must be provided along with other supporting documents, in the form of a good quality copy of the certificate.

As a result of very recent changes made by [UK Visas & Immigration](#), please note we no longer regard TOEFL as an acceptable language test for entry to Oxford Brookes. This applies whether you require a Tier 4 student visa or not. You can find more details on our [English language requirements pages](#). If you do not meet these requirements you may be able to take our [University English as a pre-session course](#).

## When should you apply

Our MPhil, MPhil/PhD and PhD Direct programmes are three term programmes and have a choice of start dates throughout the year in September, January and April. Our Masters by Research and PhD by Published Work programmes are two term programmes and have two possible start points, September and January. Applications to the research degrees programme can be made up to 12 months prior to the start of the programme. It is recommended that you apply at least 6 months in advance to allow adequate time for your application to be processed (in the case of UK/EU applicants no less than 4-6 weeks).

You should allow sufficient time to complete the application process and apply for an appropriate visa (this usually takes between 3-6 weeks to be completed) and to make arrangements to move to Oxford in time for the start of semester.

## Current fees and funding

For further information on current fees and living costs please refer to the university [finance pages](#).

Current students have awards from a wide range of external bodies including industry, government bodies and charities, and others are self-funded. The university have a number of faculty specific and competitively allocated scholarships which, when available, are advertised on our [Research Funding Opportunities page](#) and on [jobs.ac.uk](#).

Applicants should be able to pay the university's tuition fees, either personally or through grants, sponsorship or other awards made in their favour. Applicants receiving awards should be able to present evidence of their funding at the time of application, usually in the form of a letter from the awarding body. Self-funded international students should be aware that the UK Border Agency will require evidence that a candidate can pay their first year's fees before they will grant a student visa.