

The Research Proposal



An application for a doctoral research degree (e.g. PhD) at UEL should normally be accompanied by a research proposal of between 1,000 and 1,500 words.

Your proposal is important in enabling the University to determine whether it can support your intended research, in deciding which members of academic staff may best act as supervisors and in allowing potential supervisors to suggest any alterations that might better focus your research or render it more suited to the School's expertise.

The University abides by the qualification descriptors laid out by QAA in 'The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in awarding doctorates. As such, while you are not expected to be at the specified level at the application stage, selectors will wish to be assured that you have the potential to attain the knowledge and understanding they outline. The framework is available at:
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI/default.asp>

There is no prescriptive structure for the research proposal and it is understood that proposals differ according to subject area and topic, but they will typically include or entail:

- A title that indicates the field, scope and subject matter of your projected research
- A detailed statement of the topic you intend to research and your research objectives
- Sufficient information on yourself to explain how your anticipated research fits with your experience and interests or those of your employer, sponsor or organisation
- An awareness of relevant academic literature that demonstrates your understanding of the field and your appreciation of debates within it. This literature review is likely to be supported by a bibliography
- An identification and defence of how your research will advance, and make an original contribution to, knowledge in the field
- A possible methodology, which is to say, an account of the tools or research methods you will employ, for example, experiments, archival

research, questionnaires, analytical frameworks, qualitative or quantitative methods etc.

- Evidence that you have ascertained the accessibility of such data or resources as will be integral to your research
- A timescale for your research and an awareness of the need for such planning

MPhil or Research Master's Programmes

A research proposal is needed for admission to MPhil or research Master's programmes but the above requirement to demonstrate how your research will make an original contribution to knowledge is not expected at this level. Nonetheless, you should endeavour to demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge.

Professional Doctorate

For Professional Doctorate programmes, especially those offered in collaboration with partner institutions, please refer to the programme specification and, if necessary, the programme leader or organising tutor for guidance on preparing your research proposal.

In preparing your research proposal, you may find it useful to ascertain information about the research interests and capabilities of Schools and academics therein, for instance, through direct contact with the relevant School or by checking staff profiles online at <http://www.uel.ac.uk/internal/index.htm>

The proposal is not a final statement on your research and you are not irrevocably committing yourself to it at this stage. It does, however, constitute a substantial basis for consideration of your application, and whilst aspects of your proposal may not be firmly decided upon, you should ensure your thoughts and intentions are expressed clearly and in sufficient depth to allow the School, or Schools, to reach a decision on the potential of your application.